

What's New at www.firehero.org?

Families of the firefighters who will be honored during the 2005 Memorial Weekend have begun sending in photographs and tributes to their special firefighters. We are posting them on the Web site as we receive them. To read more about these amazing fire heroes and what they

mean to their families and communities, visit the Fallen Heroes section of our Web site. Search the Roll of Honor for 2004 firefighters, and click on individual names to read more about each firefighter.

Do You Need a Listening Ear?

After the death of your loved one, you may have received a letter from a member of the Foundation's Fire Service Survivors Network. This group of 120+ survivors reaches out to others who have recently lost a firefighter. The goal is simple: to make sure survivors don't have to endure this painful journey alone. Many of you have told us what a difference it made to hear from someone who has been through a similar loss.

Pamela Reed, wife of firefighter Brian Reed (FL-2001), writes about how the Network helped her. Pam is now a member of the Network, extending the same support to others.

I received my first letter from my survivor angel, Robin, in March 2002, and we've been writing to each other ever since. I might be naïve, but I thought I was alone and nobody else could know

what I was feeling or going through. Just knowing I'm not alone and can talk to someone is a comfort to me.

It's hard to believe it has been four years since Brian lost his life. My hardest times are special occasions such as birthdays, weddings, and holidays and, of course, the different achievements my children make. I don't know if I can say it gets better, but with the love of my family, my special friends, and my survivor angel from the Foundation, we are doing alright.

If you did not receive a contact through the Network or have lost touch with the person who originally contacted you, we would be happy to put you in touch with someone. Contact Linda Hurley at (301) 447-7693 or lhurley@firehero.org.

We want to hear from you about... sibling loss.



If you lost a brother or sister who was a firefighter, we want to hear about your experiences.

After a death, siblings sometimes feel lost in the shuffle while attention is focused on spouses, children, and parents. Siblings are often busy helping others who are grieving, but they have also experienced a profound loss of their own. We would like to feature your stories in a future issue of The Journey. Tell us about your brother or sister, how the loss has affected you, what has helped you, and what you might offer to those in a similar situation. We would love to hear from siblings of all ages and especially hope to hear from some brothers so we can feature more male viewpoints here.

Please send your stories, by July 31st, to:

The Journey • National Fallen Firefighters Foundation
P.O. Drawer 498, Emmitsburg, MD 21727
(301) 447-1365 firehero@firehero.org

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The Journey

For Survivors of Fallen Firefighters

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Each year, we ask families of those being honored during the Memorial Weekend to send in written tributes to their firefighters. And every year, many tributes mention special pets. Those beloved animal friends, often considered part of the family, provide

comfort and companionship to grieving survivors and a link to the person they have lost. In this issue, survivors write about the animals that help them through the rough spots and provide daily reasons to smile.

DeDe Dizney, mother of David Rendek (2001-MT)

DeDe writes about the menagerie that shares her home.

The pets in my life include a horse named Ruby, and two mixed breed little mutts named Snickers and Chloeie. Ruby and I have been together for 17 years. I love to ride and care for her, the two of us riding along, me singing or just talking. She always listens, never complains, will go wherever I want to ride. What a friend!

The dogs are so sweet--always there, giving love, and only wanting a rub on the tummy or a lap to sit on.

On September 3, 2001, when my son, David, was killed while fighting a wildland fire in Montana, I was shattered. Then came the Twin Towers only eight days later...so much sadness and so much grief. After David's death, I found that I could not saddle up my horse and take a ride. She was pleasure, and I couldn't feel pleasure after my loss. I would visit her and care for her, but I couldn't put my saddle on her. It was such an effort just



to take the dogs for a walk that we sometimes went only once a week.

I went to grief counseling through hospice. Claire, the human angel that was there for me, said in time I would want to ride again. It took a year, but she was right. I enjoy riding again, and Ruby is still my pleasure. The dogs and I walk almost daily now.

Between my work for a local hospital and caring for the animals, I stay busy. My daughter is back home now, after graduating from college. She brought a very fat cat named Spencer home with her, and he is adjusting well to the dogs. David is with me in my heart and in my actions. The tears still flow, but not as often.

Our loved ones would not want us to give up on life, but to embrace all life has to offer. The pets in our lives help us get through this process with a little less pain and lots of love.

Ruth Mack, wife of Carl Mack (2003-WI)

Ruth shares how a tiny companion joined the family.



Carl and I would have been married 47 years in 2003, and we always had Doberman pinschers.

In our house, all our dogs had to lie in another room when we ate and were never allowed on furniture. Niko broke all the rules we had on dog behavior. I started feeding her little bits from the table, and later Carl did the same. Niko was so small that she was held all the time. My husband usually slept with her on his lap. The furniture was her domain, the top of the recliner her throne.

On April 22, 2003, Niko and I were raking leaves and Carl was changing a bulb on his truck. He hollered that I should grab Niko because he had a call. Later, listening to the scanner, I heard that a firefighter went down. I knew then that it was Carl, but had to wait an hour and a half to officially hear that it was him.

Niko is always looking for that red truck to come down the road. So am I, though I know that will never happen. Now Niko is my bed partner. She lets me get a lot of hugs and kisses. Now I know why we switched to a smaller dog. I could not have handled a large one by myself. Intuition is really something. Thanks, Carl, for my link to you.

After putting down our dog, Carmen, who was a great friend and companion, Carl said that maybe we should get a small dog. So into the community newspaper he went, and he noticed that someone had a miniature Doberman.

We made arrangements to see the dog when our four-year-old granddaughter, Morgan, could go with us to make sure the dog would be OK with kids. Needless to say, she fell in love with this four-pound dog. "Grandpa, we have to get her!" Grandpa explained that we had to pay for her. Morgan said, "Then get your wallet out and give the lady money!" We named her Niko.

Joan Scheffold, wife of Fred Scheffold (FDNY – 9/11/01)

Joan writes about a faithful friend.

In 1999, my daughter, Claudette, moved back home and desperately wanted a dog. I wasn't too happy about it, but my husband, Freddie, loved animals and was all for it. I finally relented, and we adopted a cute little puppy. Claudette named her "Simone," and even I must admit that she became everything you want a dog to be.

Freddie and Simone bonded immediately, and for two years he took her with him everywhere. They went running, took rides in the car, and Simone played near Freddie in the yard while he gardened or trimmed the hedges.

On September 11, 2001, Claudette and I got home from work early. Simone was there to greet us, tail wagging and anxious to go out for a walk. We didn't know where Freddie was or if he had gone down to the World Trade Center. I went to bed late on the night of September 11th, still not knowing where Freddie was.

When I got up around 4:30 a.m., Simone was waiting for me outside my bedroom door. All day, she followed me around and seemed to know something was wrong. As I tried to go to sleep the night of



September 12th, she came into my room and walked around the bed to my husband's side. She put her head on the mattress and looked at me. I wondered if she knew something I didn't. Could she tell that he was gone for good? Simone jumped on the bed and lay down next to me. As I was petting her, I drifted off to sleep.

When Claudette moved out to her own apartment in Manhattan, she left Simone with me. Simone now sleeps with me every night and gives me great comfort. She lets me know when someone is coming into the yard, and she

takes rides with me in the car. If I'm outside gardening, Simone is with me, watching over me. And when I feel sad, she sits next to me and looks at me with puppy dog eyes, and I can't help but smile.

Marilyn Warren, mother of Ron and T.J. Warren (NY-1980&1997)

Marilyn's dogs have been a source of comfort during very difficult times, and "the new guy" is no exception.

The new man in my life is 2 feet tall, weighs 23 pounds and is black. His name is Elfie and he is a year and a half old. He is precious! The groomer of my cousin's poodle asked if I would be interested in adopting Elfie. Of course, I



vowed never again. Just too much pain I have been through the last 25 years, but...it was love at first sight. I am a sucker for big brown eyes, and this little man has them. So he is in residence, and of course not spoiled. Ho ho ho!!!!!!

Other good news, I bought myself a new Chrysler Sebring convertible--cranberry, with tan leather interior and top. It is beautiful. I always wanted one, but my husband the firefighter removed too many people over his career. I think that is the only time he ever said no to me. If he were alive, it would be our 50th anniversary this year.

Anyway, I wanted to let my friends know that I am finally on my feet and running. Feel the best I have in a very long time, and hope my family is proud that I have rejoined the human race.

Important Upcoming Dates

2005 Memorial Weekend

Please contact us immediately if your loved one is being honored during the 2005 Memorial Weekend and you have not received Weekend information.

- July 1 Initial Memorial Weekend forms due to Foundation
- September 16 Followup Weekend forms due to Foundation
- October 6 Reception for returning survivors
- October 7-9 Memorial Weekend

Fire Service Conferences

The Foundation will have a booth set up at the following upcoming fire service conferences. If you will be there, please stop by and say hello.

- July 28-30 Firehouse Expo, Baltimore, MD
- August 11-14 Fire-Rescue International, Denver, CO
- September 18 NJ State Firemen's Association, Wildwood, NJ
- October 3-8 FDIC East, Atlantic City, NJ
- November 2-4 FireTech Reno, Reno, NV

Taking Care of Our Own® Training Class

If you are a survivor and would like to sit in on the Foundation's training class for senior fire officers, we would love to have you.

The following classes are scheduled for the next few months:

- July 30 Emmitsburg, MD
- September 26 Wasilla, AK