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**Did you know…**

**J**ust released, the Attorney General’s Guide to the Hometown Heroes Survivors’ Benefits Act provides survivors and public safety agencies with a step-by-step review of the PSOB Program and how to file claims for eligible line-of duty heart attacks and strokes. The Guide includes concise information on the history of the PSOB Program, details regarding the Hometown Heroes Act, the claims review process, and key points of contact for survivors wanting more information or seeking assistance with their claims. To access the Guide electronically, visit www.psob.gov or www.firehero.org. For a hard copy, contact the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

**Public Safety Officers’ Benefits Program (PSOB)**

Enacted in 1976, the Public Safety Officers’ Benefits (PSOB) Program provides death, disability, and education benefits to those eligible for the program. The PSOB benefit for eligible deaths occurring in FY 2008 is $303,064. PSOB partners with key national public safety organizations, including the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, to provide information and support to survivors and surviving agencies of America’s fallen officers.

**We want to hear from you…**

We have had a few recent requests from survivors on specific topics. If you have thoughts or suggestions to offer, we would love to hear from you and may use your responses in a future issue of The Journey.

“My husband has been gone almost 20 years, and some days I think it’s harder now than it was years ago. I guess it’s that empty nest syndrome and just feeling so alone. I’d like to see some articles from survivors who lost a spouse 15 plus years ago. It would be nice to hear how others deal with the loneliness this much later.”

“I am a seven-year survivor and am tired of being alone. I need suggestions from other people who are in their late fifties on how to deal with meeting new people. I don’t want to do the bar scene! As a spouse, I was forced to go back to work after my husband’s death, which limits my time. Where are people meeting people?”

Please send a Word document or e-mail to Jenny at jwoodall@firehero.org. If you don’t do computers, send a typed or neatly handwritten copy to:

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

*A note from Cole’s mom, Anne Wade:*

Cole was very young when his father died, and it’s amazing how much you don’t know exactly what your children are feeling during their growing up years. You can imagine and hope you’re covering all the bases, but seeing it in writing always shows a few things you missed.

**Cole Schoolman**

Son of Dana Schoolman (1988-IL)

I lost my father a little more than seventeen years ago, when I was only three years old. Many days, it still feels and hurts like it happened yesterday. The last time I spoke with my father was a cold and snowy day in November, but there is not a day that goes by that I don’t think about him.

**A Son’s Story**

My father was a member of the Ashkum Township Volunteer Fire Department in Illinois for many years. He was very well known and liked by many people in our small community. I had no idea how well liked and respected he was until I grew up and got to know more people in our area. It’s amazing how many people I have continued to thank for my father’s friendship and kindness to them over the years.

**The Journey**

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For Survivors of Fallen Firefighters

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**Book Reviews (continued)**

**Riding with the Blue Moth** by Bill Hancock

This was the first book that gave me hope of a better tomorrow. Bill Hancock’s book started out as a simple journal while biking across America, a trip he had always planned to take with his son. The chapters are short, which is helpful when you have limited concentration. His analogies were meaningful and easy to relate to. It was a reminder to look for the good in people when your heart is too full of pain to be able to think of others without effort. It gave me hope. It is a very real account of the loss of a son.

You can borrow these books and many others for free through the Foundation’s Lending Library. By visiting www.firehero.org (Family Programs section), or contacting Linda Hurley at (301) 447-7693 or lhurley@firehero.org. If you want to purchase your own copies, please consider buying from Amazon.com through the link from our online Lending Library. Materials purchased through the Amazon.com affiliate program will benefit National Fallen Firefighters Foundation programs and help us purchase additional materials for the Lending Library.

**Did you know…**

When a young child’s parent dies, the effects on the child last a lifetime. There is the initial, intense grief; but as children grow and develop, new aspects of grief come into focus. A three-year-old may wonder, “Who will take care of me?” That is the primary concern when you are three. But when that three-year-old is a ten-year-old, he deals with new losses, like not having Dad around as a model and a source of information as he becomes a man. And he may grieve for other things when he leaves home for the first time or becomes a dad himself.

One of the concerns survivors share with us most often is the worry about how the death will affect their children. Here is the good news: most children will be OK. They will be changed, deeply affected. The death of that parent will be one of many factors that shape who they will become. They will need extra support from those who love them. They need to know that they will be cared for, that however they are feeling is OK, and that they can still talk about the person they loved.

Adults in the family should educate themselves about how children perceive death and how they grieve at different ages, as well as the signs that a child is struggling and needs more help. It is very important to take care of yourself and get whatever help you need in dealing with your own grief. Children learn by watching the primary adults in their lives, and grief is no exception. They are watching you for cues.

There are many resources out there to help grieving children and the adults who love and care for them. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Learn about children’s grief so you know what is “normal” and what might indicate that a child needs more help. (Check www.firehero.org for a list of books available through the Foundation’s lending library.)
2. Talk with others about what helped them and their children. (Let us know if you would like to talk with another fire service survivor.)
3. If you are worried about a child in your family, find a qualified grief specialist who can help you help your child. (The Foundation can help you find resources in your local community.)

In this issue, children who lost their fathers share their thoughts.

**Cole Schoolman**

Son of Dana Schoolman (1988-IL)
met that have a special fond memory or thought of my father that they still remember to this day, some nineteen years after his death. Hearing some of the stories brings back some of my own fond memories of the short time I was able to spend with my father. I still have people to this day that will come up to me and mistake me for my father because we have such a strong resemblance in both appearance and attitude. Knowing what kind of man my father was makes me feel very good when people mistake me for him, because I know how much he was respected and well liked.

One of the hardest aspects of life to deal with growing up as a young child without a father is all of the questions others ask. When I was in grade school, teachers and other students would often ask me what my father did for a living. At that age, it is very hard to think about it, let alone be able to tell somebody else that your father has passed on. As I got older, the questions like those still sting deep down inside. But knowing now how my dad passed on. As I got older, the questions like those still sting deep down inside. But knowing now how my dad was killed, the circumstances around his death, and how much he did for his community, I am no longer ashamed.

As I got older, I became more involved with the fire department and fire community. Many members of the fire department have known me since I was born and have been with me every step of my life, pushing me to excel in everything and to be the best person you can be. Growing up this way takes a lot of support and many tears shed, but all in all I feel that growing up this way has made me a much stronger and more mature person. I will never forget my father, because he will be forever in my heart and the hearts of others. But there are ways to live life through the pain.

The strongest support group besides my mother has been the fire department and fire community. Many members of the fire department have known me since I was born and have been with me every step of my life, pushing me to excel in everything and to be the best person you can be. This strong bond of brotherhood is what made me eventually join the fire department when I was old enough.

I have found that growing up having lost a father in the line of duty is very hard to deal with. But it is not a reason to stop living or striving to be the best person you can be. Growing up this way takes a lot of support and many tears shed, but all in all I feel that growing up this way has made me a much stronger and more mature person. I will never forget my father, because he will be forever in my heart and the hearts of others. But there are ways to live life through the pain.

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