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Please remember to notify us at firehero@firehero.org when you have a change of mailing or e-mail address!

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Save The Date!

May 4-7, 2014

Fire Service Survivors Conference

Clayton, Missouri

<http://firehero.org/resources/families/conference/>

June 19-22, 2014

2014 Hal Bruno Camp for Kids (ages 4-6)

CoCoKey Hotel

Orlando, Florida

<http://firehero.org/resources/families/kids>

August 1-3, 2014

2014 Hal Bruno Comfort Zone Camp for Kids

(ages 7-17)

Camp Wyman, Eureka, Missouri

<https://www.comfortzonecamp.org/civcrm/event/info?reset=1&id=600>

October 10-12, 2014

National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend

Emmitsburg, Maryland

weekend.firehero.org

For additional information about upcoming events, please visit www.firehero.org.

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FACING TOMORROW TOGETHER

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation
A Newsletter for Fire Service Survivors



An Open Letter to the Honor Guard

By Traci Adams, Wife of Tommy Adams (2009-LA)

Dear Honor Guard:
My husband, Chief Tommy Adams, died in the line of duty on 12-12-09. As I approach the fourth anniversary of his death, I've taken time to pause and reflect back over the last four years. Tommy was honored at the NFFF Memorial in 2011. I had the opportunity to return to the Memorial Weekend this year, and I'm so glad that I did.

I thought that returning to Emmitsburg would be all about me, my journey, my need to heal, my need to revisit and take in what I was unable to comprehend in 2011. I was partially right, but I discovered so much more.

When Tommy died, life was just a blurred whirlwind of chaos and confusion. To this day, the images I have from his death, wake/visitation, memorial service, and following year swirl around my mind in a puzzling mix of truth and illusion. Life was just confusing. I seemed to stumble around in that first year, hoping that I was able to mother my children to the best of my now crippled ability. I can remember many, many, many daily prayers that were simply pleas to my Beloved God that, in my haze and grief, I did nothing to damage my children for life. My prayers were truly that simple.

As the confusion began to lift, I started to find things from the last few years that fill me with awe. This year, 2013, has turned out to be one of the most peaceful years of my journey. I've been able to see and appreciate things that could fill a book.

The Honor Guard.

Their dignified, quiet, and professional presence at every single event I have ever attended is simply a beautiful thing. They went unnoticed, standing reverently over the man that God had given to me so many years ago. God placed Tommy into the protection of his parents in childhood, then his fire department brothers while on duty for 32 years, and then he came completely into my care for the 10 months he was unable to protect himself in any way.



My watch ended at 2:39 a.m. on Saturday, December 12, 2009. The quiet presence of the men and women that took over from there was barely noticed, much less understood then.

At the funeral home, I sat in a chair for 12 hours of visitation next to his coffin. At my back was the constant watchful presence of a member of the Honor Guard. Throughout the

memorial service the next day, their silent, ever-changing guard activities filled me with a peace that I understand now. I had fought so hard and for so long to protect Tommy. I was exhausted. When I could go on no more, the Guard stepped in. They had him! I did not have to shoulder the responsibility alone any longer. The Guard stepped in and took the burden of watching over Tommy off the shoulders that could bear the weight no more.

When I returned to the Memorial Weekend this year, I was able to see and experience everything from a clearer perspective than in 2011. The men and women that served

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Honor Guard

continued from page 1

in the Honor Guard stole my heart and forever earned my respect. I stood back and watched many examples of quiet support for the families of brothers and sisters that were strangers to them.

The Guard stood, served, protected, and loved each of us as if we were all members of their own beloved families. These men and women are gifts from God during a time when they are desperately needed, but we are not mentally capable of asking for their love, support, and protection. It is just there, given freely, without thought or fanfare. The Honor Guard are like the centuries-old live oaks of Louisiana or like the thousand-year-old sequoias of the Pacific Coast that stand quietly protecting us from wind and rain, unnoticed. They just exist; they just ARE.

To the men and women all across the country that serve in the Honor Guard, you have won the heart of this survivor.



Though you ask for no thanks, I offer my thanks to you. Thank you for all you do. Thank you for watching over my love when I could not. Thank you for your service and dedication to professionalism and detail that is unmatched. Please know that now, thanks to your support and the

strength that you have given freely, I have been able to progress through this process called grief. Now, at every function I attend, I see you. I see your heart. I see the beauty of your soul. I see your strength. I see your softness. I see your dedication. I see the fruit of your hard work, and though it is not enough, I thank you.

I give you this promise:

Your sacrifice and dedication have given me back a piece of the life I lost, a piece of my sanity, and has provided a balm to my broken heart. I promise to do all in my power to give this healing to other survivors in any way possible. I promise to carry forward your good works. Thank you again for all that you do, and all that you are. ■

Did You Know. . .

The Public Safety Officers' Educational Assistance (PSOEA) Program provides vital benefits to the eligible spouses and children of firefighters and other public safety officers whose deaths or catastrophic injuries were sustained in the line of duty. PSOEA benefits may be used to defray educational expenses at institutions of higher education, including tuition, room and board, books, supplies, and education-related fees. The amount of assistance is determined by whether the student attended school as a full-time, three-quarter-time, halftime, or less-than-half-time student. In 2014, the amount of assistance available for full-time attendance is \$1003 per month.

To learn more about the PSOEA Program and how to apply for these benefits, visit

www.psob.gov/files/PSOB_Education.pdf.



BJA
Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice

Enacted in 1976, the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Programs are a unique partnership effort of the PSOB Office, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), U.S. Department of Justice and local, state, and federal public safety agencies and national organizations, such as the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, to provide death, disability, and education benefits to those eligible for the Programs.

Benefits (PSOB) Programs are a unique partnership effort of the PSOB Office, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), U.S. Department of Justice and local, state, and federal public safety agencies and national organizations, such as the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, to provide death, disability, and education benefits to those eligible for the Programs.

Toll-free: 1-888-744-6513





FIRE SERVICE CORNER



Life Safety Initiative No. 9

Thoroughly investigate all firefighter fatalities, injuries, and near misses.

By Victor Stagnaro, *Director of Fire Service Programs*

In 2004, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation held a Summit where the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives were developed through a consensus of over 200 fire service leaders who were in attendance. Life Safety Initiative #9 states that the fire service should “Thoroughly investigate all firefighter fatalities, injuries and near misses.”

In 2005, the International Association of Fire Chiefs instituted a near miss reporting system. The National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System is a voluntary, confidential, non-punitive Web-based reporting system. The IAFC Near-Miss system defines a near miss or close call as “an unintentional, unsafe occurrence that could have resulted in an injury, property damage, or fatality.” Only a fortunate break in the chain of events prevented an injury or fatality. Situations that qualify as near misses are essentially in the eyes of the reporter. If a reporter is involved in or witnesses an event and believes it is a near miss, then he or she would be encouraged to create an anonymous report.

In December 2010, Kumar Kunadharaju, Todd D. Smith, and David M. DeJoy published an analysis study that reviewed ten years of firefighter fatalities and

narrowed down the 35 most frequent recommendations made by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The recommendations, taken one-by-one by a fire department, may serve as a guide to prevent the department from going through a line-of-duty death.

Though the near miss reporting system and the NIOSH reports that are generated after a line-of-duty death are helpful in preventing similar occurrences, those specific snapshots in time don't seem to be penetrating into a department's daily operational mindset.

In the coming year, if we are able to secure the funding, it is our intent to partner with NIOSH and the Near-Miss Reporting System to develop a near-miss and injury investigative training course. Our hope is to help fire departments learn how to conduct their own injury and near miss investigations and how to link their own experiences with the events that are well documented by NIOSH and the near miss reporting system.

My father used to tell me that it's the wise man that learns from other people's mistakes. I have over and over learned the lack of wisdom I possess, but it is our desire to make the fire service wiser in preventing line-of-duty deaths. ■

Remembering

John Collins, Texas



We were sad to learn of the recent death of John Collins who, along with his wife, Marie, was a longtime volunteer with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and an active part of the fire hero survivor community.

John, 77, died peacefully on December 1, 2013, after an eight-year battle with myelodysplastic syndrome.

John served in the Coast Guard for 20 years, then served as a minister of the gospel for 38 years. He retired as the senior adult minister at Birchman Baptist Church in 2007. He served as chaplain and training officer for the Sansom Park Fire Department after the line-of-duty death of his son, Brian, in 1999. He was a hospice chaplain and patient

ombudsman for several local agencies.

Mr. Collins was a lifetime learner, earning his Master of Arts degree at age 72. He was a gifted teacher, both in and out of the church setting. He conducted CPR and AARP senior driving classes until his illness prevented him from continuing. Having been called to senior adult ministry, he spent many hours visiting, encouraging and praying with those in the hospital, nursing home and hospice. He will be remembered for his big heart, wide grin and love for people.

Thank you, John, for all you did to help others. ■



New NFFF Board and Advisory Committee Members

Chief Charles Hood of the San Antonio Fire Department has been appointed to the Board of Directors of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. In addition, Barry Balliet, Athena Schwantes-Hodge and Steve VanderGriend are now members of the Foundation's Advisory Committee.

"We are so pleased to have these long-time NFFF supporters join us in their new roles," said Board Chairman Dennis Compton. "Each of them brings expertise, enthusiasm and insights that will be invaluable as we fulfill our mission of honoring the fallen, assisting their families and supporting the fire service efforts of reducing line of duty deaths and injuries."



In 2007, **Charles Hood** was sworn in as the fire chief of the City of San Antonio, one of the largest departments in the nation. He began his fire service career in 1984 with the City of Phoenix Fire Department and was a member of the Phoenix Fire Department's Urban Search & Rescue team and FEMA's Urban Search and Rescue's National Incident Support Team. In 2010, he received the Metro Fire Chief of the Year award from the Black Officer's Committee, IABPFF.



Barry Balliet is the president of Provident Agency in Pittsburgh, PA., a company offering group insurance benefits to emergency personnel and their families since 1928. Under Mr. Balliet's leadership, Provident has garnered national recognition for its innovative insurance coverages,

customer care, and sincere dedication to emergency service related causes. He currently is the vice president of the National Volunteer Fire Council Foundation Board and serves on various committees within the fire service. Since 1983 he has been a member at the Pleasant Valley Fire Company.



Athena Schwantes-Hodge became a volunteer with the NFFF following the death of her husband, Atlanta firefighter Russell Schwantes, in 2006. She is a realtor with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices and the founder and executive director of The Etiquette Consultants, Inc. based in Georgia. Because of her expertise, Athena was asked to represent the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation to solicit change. She spoke in various cities as part of the Everyone Goes Home® "Whistle Stop Tour" and had the unique opportunity to deliver a motivational message before the U.S. Congress and Senate.



Steve VanderGriend and his wife Marci have been actively involved with the NFFF since 2010. They have been involved with Memorial Weekends, trade shows, and Survivors Conferences. Their son, Zachary, was employed by Neptune Aviation as a crew chief, serving aboard Air Tanker 09. He was killed September 1, 2008, while operating on a wildland fire in Reno, Nevada. Steve is general manager of the Sanger International Paper plant and has been with the company for over 25 years. ■

Notes of Remembrance

"I wanted to thank you so very much for your thoughtfulness and for taking the time to send a card on the anniversary of my husband's death. I rarely get those kind of acknowledgements, and it is such a warm feeling to know that he is remembered on this day." ~Remembrance Card recipient

We understand that the anniversary of the death of a loved one is often difficult for survivors. In 1995, the NFFF's Remembrance Card Program was created as a simple, but meaningful way to let survivors know that others remember them and their firefighters during this time. In the anniversary month of a firefighter's death, families receive a Remembrance Card written by another fire service survivor.

Each year, as new firefighters are honored in Emmitsburg, the number of survivors receiving Remembrance Cards increases. Fortunately, the number of dedicated survivor volunteers has increased to keep pace with this growth. In 2013, 143 survivor volunteers sent out over 3,400 Remembrance Cards to survivors!

Each month, a dozen or more packages of approximately 20 cards, envelopes, postage stamps, and a list of survivors are sent to survivor volunteers. We include everything volunteers will need to send the cards, including some suggested wording for the personal message. Also included in the package is a stamped envelope addressed to the Remembrance Card Program Manager, Beverly Donlon,

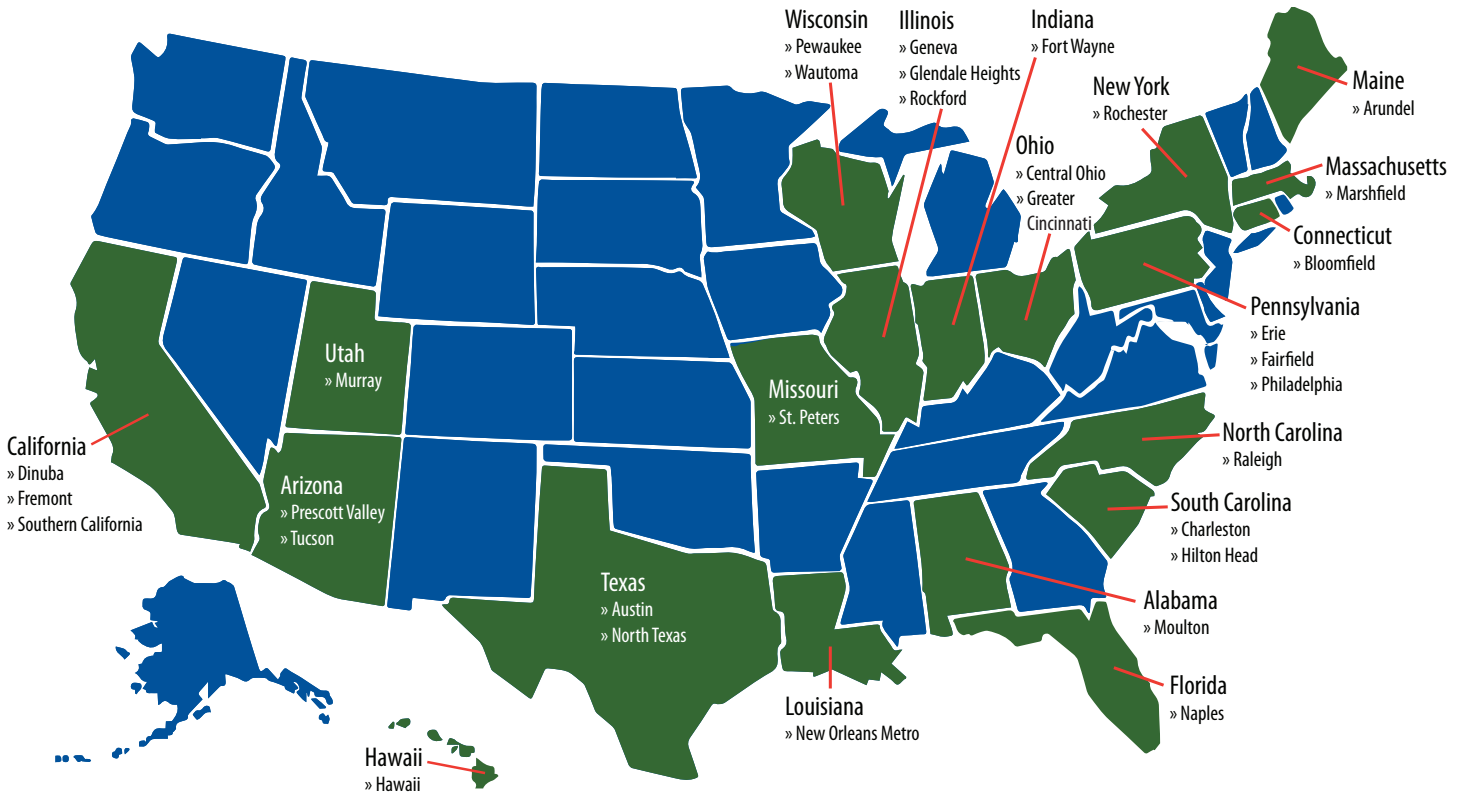


Many Thanks to our 2013 NFFF Golf Tournament Coordinators



As we close the books on our 10th season, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation would like to thank everyone who donated their time and talent in 2013. These events are organized and staffed by volunteers, and sponsored by local businesses, fire service organizations and individuals. With the generous support of all of these community partners, this program raises awareness about the NFFF, and helps to fund services, scholarships and assistance to the survivors of fire service fatalities throughout the United States.

Many thanks to all of the coordinators, volunteers, golfers and sponsors in the following communities for their efforts during the 2013 NFFF Golf season:



For more information about how you can get involved with National Fallen Firefighters Golf Tournaments in your area, please contact Tricia Sanborn Hurlbutt at golf@firehero.org or (410) 353-0216. We hope to see you on the course in 2014! ■



for the volunteer to return to the Foundation once the task has been completed.

If you currently volunteer with the Remembrance Card Program, thank you so much for serving in this way. Receiving a note from another survivor provides a special kind of comfort and connection. We literally could not do this outreach without you.

Please remember a few important things about volunteering with Remembrance Cards:

- If you volunteer with this program, please, please, please honor your commitment to send the cards on time as assigned. It is very important that each survivor who is supposed to receive a card does in fact receive one at the right time.

- We understand that sometimes things come up that might prevent a volunteer from being able to fulfill his or her commitment. If this happens, please let Beverly know as soon as possible so we can assign another volunteer.
- Please fill out the necessary paperwork and return it once the contacts are done. It's important for us to track the contacts made.

We are always happy to have new volunteers for this growing program! Remembrance Cards can be done entirely from the comfort of your own home, and it doesn't require the use of a computer. It's a great opportunity to make a difference in someone else's life. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Beverly Donlon at bdonlon@firehero.org or (301) 447-1603. ■



Hal Bruno Camp for Children of Fallen Firefighters

The Hal Bruno Camps for children are provided for children and stepchildren of firefighters who have been honored at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

2014 Hal Bruno Camp for ages 4-6

June 19-22, 2014

CoCoKey Water Resort in Orlando, Florida

This camp will provide fun activities for children while helping them with their grief. Campers and parents will have an opportunity to connect with others who have experienced a similar loss. Parents can attend a session on children's grief.

The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation will assist with travel expenses and provide lodging for campers and parents/guardians. Fire service volunteers will help with the children's activities.

Deadline for registration is May 15, 2014. For further information, please contact Bev Donlon at bdonlon@firehero.org or (301) 447-1603.

2014 Hal Bruno Camp for ages 7-17

Presented in partnership with Comfort Zone Camp

August 1-3, 2014

Camp Wyman in Eureka, Missouri

Campers will be paired with Big Buddies from the fire service. They will meet others with a similar loss in Healing Circles, work together as a team on the challenge course, play games and engage in outdoor camp activities.

The NFFF will help campers and parents with travel expenses and also provide lodging and meals. While campers are busy, parents will attend sessions on how to help their children through grief and will have free time to spend with one another.

Campers must register for the "2014 August MO Camp in Memory of Hal Bruno" on the Comfort Zone Camp web site: <https://www.comfortzonecamp.org/calendar>.

The deadline for registration is June 27, 2014. For more information, please contact Pat Stonaker at pstonaker@firehero.org or 301-447-1318. ■



My daughter can't wait to go to camp again next year. As a mother, I'm grateful that she has this time to express herself and gain the coping tools she may need throughout her life.

-Mother of camper, age 7

The feeling of support and family with this group is irreplaceable. If we are going to be on this journey, there is no need to do it alone.

-Mother of campers, ages 13 and 16

This camp is the place where you will meet more than friends. You will meet the people that "get it," lifelong friends that understand exactly how you feel.

-Camper, age 17

If you don't like swimming, smores, races, or having fun all day, then this camp is not for you.

-Camper, age 9



9th Annual Fire Service Survivors Conference

Clayton, Missouri – May 4-7, 2014

The 9th annual Fire Service Survivors Conference will be held May 4-7, 2014, in Clayton, Missouri, near St. Louis. Attend workshops on a variety of topics related to grief, wellness, creative outlets, and practical skills. Spend time getting to know one another in small groups, during meals, and in the evening.

The conference is open to adult survivors of firefighters who have already been honored at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Spouses/partners, parents, siblings, and adult children are invited to attend.

Workshop and lodging costs are covered through a grant from the Department of Justice. Attendees are responsible for transportation costs to and from the conference.

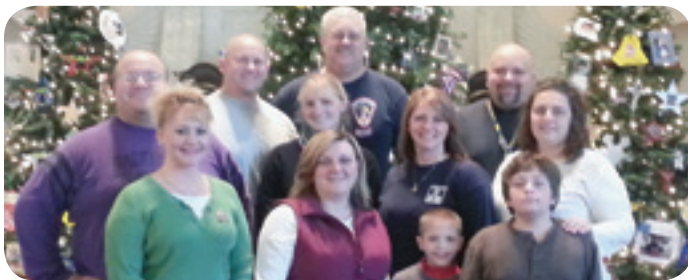
If you are interested in attending the 2014 conference or need more information, please contact Bev Donlon at bdonlon@firehero.org or (301) 447-1603. ■



Holiday Trees in Honor of Fallen Fire Heroes

By Gladys Emkey-Falkenhan

Wife of Mark Falkenhan (2011-MD)



Gladys (front center) with holiday tree volunteers

I had the true honor to help decorate the Christmas trees in the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Chapel.

I was welcomed by a very special group of volunteers and was touched as I watched them unwrap each ornament and comment on how beautiful and special each ornament was. They understood that each ornament had a special story and held a very special place in someone's heart. As the ornaments were placed on one of the three trees that stand so tall and proud on the altar, love and care was given to each one.

It was beautiful to listen to the volunteers speak about their interactions with families of the fallen heroes they had met and to share their stories of the special place we, the survivors, hold in their hearts. It had me fighting to hold back tears at times. The trees stood at attention and held our loved ones on their branches, just the way the Foundation holds each one of the survivors with pride and strength.

I wanted to share this with all of you so you know that it's not just an ornament on a tree in a chapel. It's a very special ornament, placed by a very special person, on a very special tree, in a very special chapel, in a very special place.

My wish is for all survivors to find a way to make new memories and traditions with our families and to hold our past memories and traditions close to our hearts.

Tree Lighting



Survivors attend the tree lighting

On December 12, 2013, a group of fire service survivors, NFFF staff, and members of the fire service community gathered for the annual Tree Lighting Ceremony in the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Chapel. Survivor Traci Adams, wife of Tommy Adams (2009-LA) traveled from Louisiana to tell "Tommy's Story," and to talk about the support she and their two daughters have received since his death. Attendees gathered outside for the lighting of the outdoor tree, then returned to the Chapel to wander among the beautifully decorated indoor trees bearing ornaments lovingly decorated in honor of fallen firefighters from around the nation.

Many thanks to fire service survivor Bob Stanmire and Ivy Acres Inc., for their donation of the beautiful poinsettias to decorate the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Chapel. Bob, who is the son of Robert Stanmire (1999-NJ), drove all the way from New Jersey to make this special delivery to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. (As of March, the poinsettias are still bright and beautiful in the Chapel! They have been a welcome spot of color through a long, cold winter.) ■



Bob Stanmire

