



The Journey

For Survivors of Fallen Firefighters

ISSUE 87 ~ JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2019

Our mission is to honor and remember America's fallen fire heroes and to provide resources to assist their families in rebuilding their lives.

~ from the mission statement of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

Woven into the original core mission of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation is the commitment to take care of the families of firefighters who pay the ultimate price while serving others. Our scholarship program for children, stepchildren, spouses, and life partners of fallen firefighters is one very tangible way we fulfill this mission.

Thanks to a generous donation from Motorola Solutions Foundation and the NFFF partnerships with ICMA-RC, the National Association of Fire Marshals, Global Health and Safety, the Steel Family Charitable Foundation, and countless other donations:

- The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation was able to award 80 scholarships totaling over \$338,000 for the 2018-2019 academic year
- These 80 recipients included 71 children, 5 stepchildren, and 4 spouses

- 47 scholarships were awarded to previous recipients and 33 were for first-time recipients
- Cumulatively, the NFFF and its partner programs have awarded 1,357 scholarships, totaling \$4,080,178, to spouses, children, and stepchildren of fallen firefighters from 46 states and the District of Columbia

We are proud of these statistics, but the real story lies in the way this program helps scholarship recipients as they work toward accomplishing goals, realizing dreams, and living bright and vibrant lives.

Sara Hain, daughter of Ramon Hain (2009-MN)

College: Stevens Institute of Technology

Scholarships received: 2

My dad always taught me to be thankful for those around me and to give back to others in any way I am able, and as a firefighter he really embodied what it meant to give your whole self to others. When he passed away, my family received an incredible amount of love and support from the firefighting community. As a single mother, my mom was supporting me and my sister in college, and the NFFF Scholarship has helped to lift a heavy burden off my family.

I am currently a junior at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey, pursuing a combined bachelor's and master's degree in Business and Technology with concentrations in Management and Information Systems. I want to pursue a degree in business so I can bring the values and ethics that my dad taught me to the business world. I have been able to attend my dream school because of the generous support of scholarship partners. Thank you so much for everything you do in changing the lives of families and students such as myself.





Karley Simmons, daughter of Greg Simmons (2011-TX)

College: *University of North Texas*

Scholarships received: 4

I'm honored to receive this scholarship, which has made furthering my education a real possibility for me. Without scholarships like this, I would have never been able to attend college without going into debt. I'm a psychology student, and I plan to pursue a career of helping people through therapy. I have found that I, too, enjoy helping others through tough times. I will always be grateful for this opportunity to continue my education. I realize that not everyone gets opportunities like this, so I plan to pay it forward just as you have. Thank you for your kindness.

Dana Varnell, daughter of James Varnell (2016-NC)

College: *East Carolina University*

Scholarships received: 3

My dad was a volunteer firefighter for over 20 years and died in the line of duty. With my dad gone, a scholarship from the NFFF helped to ensure my college education. I was a recipient of the Sarbanes scholarship in 2016 and 2017 and the first recipient of the Al Sondej Memorial Scholarship in 2018.

Because of the support of generous donors like you, I recently graduated from East Carolina University with a master's degree in Physician Assistant Studies and have accepted a job in orthopedics. My dad died just months before I began PA school. Losing a beloved parent is hard. Besides the enormous emotional strain, there is also a significant financial strain placed on families who have lost a firefighter. Without the support of the NFFF, I would have had to put my educational pursuits of PA school on hold to help support my family. My dad dedicated his life to serving others. I am grateful that others are dedicated to helping us, the families of fallen firefighters. Through your generous support, both our dreams and the dreams of our fallen heroes are coming true. Thank you again for your support. It has made all the difference in getting me to where I am today, and for that, I am forever grateful!



Maggie Ivey, daughter of Thomas Ivey (2005-MI)

College: *Oakland University*

Scholarships received: 1

I felt so much gratitude when I found out I had received the scholarship. Although unfortunate what we all go through, it is truly amazing that something good can come out of it. I am currently working towards my Bachelor of Integrative Studies and will then pursue a Bachelor of Nursing. Thank you so much for this opportunity and my future opportunities.





Kristin Hanners-Moore, wife of Robert Hanners (2002-OR)

College: DeVry University

Scholarships received: 4

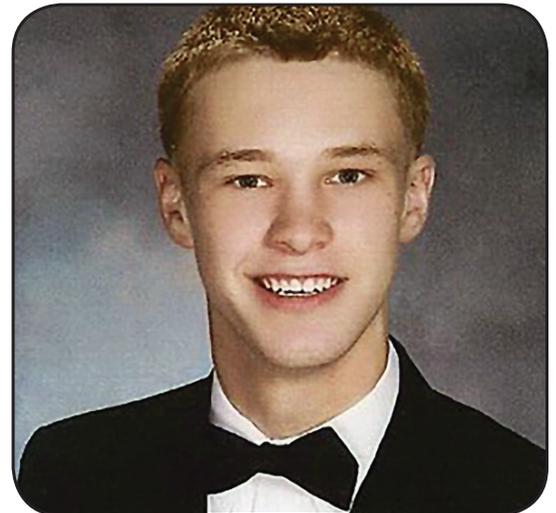
As many college students, I lived paycheck to paycheck during my time in college. The scholarships I received help bridge the gap between my student loans and my monthly bills. I started the pursuit of my bachelor's degree in healthcare management at the age of 46 and finished a few months after I turned 50. There were many times during those years when I wondered if I was crazy for trying to do this, but the day I walked across the stage, I knew it was all worth it. There are not enough words to express my thanks and appreciation for the scholarships I received that helped me achieve this accomplishment. I am currently the Administrative & Credentialing Manager of a Federally Qualified Health Center in Oregon. I enjoy my work and am excited to use the knowledge I gained from my schooling.

Sean Egan, son of Martin Egan (2001-NY)

College: University of Pennsylvania

Scholarships received: 4

Iwould like to thank the scholarship partners for their support during my four years at the University of Pennsylvania. The scholarship is a strong reminder that our country continues to remember the sacrifices of public servants like my father. I would especially like to thank the donors for their continued generosity in remembering my father and our family over 15 years after the attacks of September 11, 2001. I graduated from the Wharton School in May and am currently working at Wells Fargo Securities as an investment banking analyst.



Charity Kirk, daughter of Trent Kirk (2003-TN)

College: Southwest Tennessee Community College

Scholarships received: 4



Iam sincerely honored to have been selected as a recipient of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation scholarship in the past four academic years. I would like to thank you for your generosity, which has allowed me to further my education into Diagnostic Medical Sonography. Receiving this award has helped reduce financial uncertainties and enabled me to focus on continuing my education. In doing so, I have been able to enhance my knowledge and exceed my academic goals within my chosen program.

My father was an EMT/fireman for the City of Memphis in Tennessee. Growing up, I admired the difference he made within our community. Since his passing in the line of duty, I have aspired for a career that would honor him and the footsteps that he left behind. I am grateful for the opportunity to do so in a Christian environment, such as Baptist College of Health Sciences, and with the help of your foundation. Upon completion of my program, my goal is to become certified in multiple practices, including Pediatric Cardiovascular Sonography. Thank you for supporting the children and students of the brave and fallen.



Ingrid Perugachi, fiancée of Jonathan Croom (2009-NY)

College: Niagara College

Scholarships received: 1

I was very excited and hopeful when I learned I was one of the recipients of the NFFF Sarbanes scholarship. Ever since I was a child, I've been very interested in the sciences, so early in life I studied to become a microbiologist. However, I did not practice much in this field. While volunteering abroad with people with special needs, I discovered that my passion was in helping others. Over the course of 12 years, I built a career working with intellectually disabled adults and was always honored to learn from this vulnerable population. The scholarship from the NFFF has provided me with an opportunity to combine my core value of helping others with my interest in science by pursuing a career in nursing.

Receiving this scholarship has been inspiring and has allowed me to move forward toward new goals. Now, many more opportunities are open to me to be able to support my family. Losing my beloved fiancé is the most devastating and heartbreaking event I have ever faced. Our son, Johnny Croom, never got the chance to meet him, and raising him without his amazing dad is what hurts the most.

John was a blessing in my life. He was a compassionate, fun, and caring person who loved his job and always stood up for what he thought was right. He taught me the most important of lessons in life. Your contributions to the families of fallen firefighters have provided me with an opportunity to honor him by getting the education to become a nurse and to keep moving forward, just like he would want me to do.

On behalf of our son, Johnny, I would like to thank you for your generosity. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Robin Hadaller, daughter of Matthew Hadaller (2011-WA)

College: Western Oregon University

Scholarships received: 2

Winter of 2018 was the start of my third year of college, but my first quarter at a university, and it went amazing. I was extremely nervous and worried about classes, meeting new people, moving out of state, and leaving my mom of course, but my biggest worry was my financial stability. I remember getting the letter for my scholarship. I was at my house in Washington, and my mom brought the mail in. My mom called for me and wanted me to open it up in front of her. I know she was praying in her head for just a little bit of help, as was I. I opened the letter as I had a big grin on my face. I looked up to my mom, and she was probably as excited as I was. I received a scholarship that helped me tremendously, and I will forever be grateful for it.



I plan on graduating with my Bachelor of Arts in 2020. I may go on to earn a graduate degree; I'm still contemplating. I plan on double majoring in American Sign Language Interpreting and Psychology. When I received the scholarship, I felt less stressed, less worried about what I was going to do, less confused about what educational path I was going to be taking, and after that it was clear as day.

Before this, I knew my dad was proud of me. He's proud of everything I've accomplished—graduating from high school, graduating with an associate degree, moving hours from my mom, and becoming an adult. With the support that you've given me, though, I know my dad is going to be proud of me because of the people I will be able to help with my degree. One of the best qualities about my dad was how he tried his absolute hardest to help anyone and everyone around him, and I want to be the exact same way.

This scholarship has helped shape my career path and has given me the opportunity to further advance my education. Thank you to everyone who made this possible. Please know you are greatly appreciated.

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2019 Parents and Siblings Retreat Held in Austin, Texas



The most enjoyable part of the Parents and Siblings Retreat for me was making new friends and just being able to be yourself. Everyone there knows what you are going through...you don't have to say a word. These new friendships will last a lifetime.

—Katrina Murphy, mother of Kendall Murphy (2017-IN)



Thank you so much for the wonderful retreat in Austin and for all the work that the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation does. We had a wonderful time celebrating our fallen heroes. The healing, acknowledgement, and interacting with family members is so important to the healing process. Special thank you to the city of Austin for providing their fire and police departments. Their kindness and love were amazing.

—Grace Ambelas, mother of Matt Ambelas (2014-NY)



It was awesome to reconnect with stories from old friends and demonstrate to newbies that we have walked the same path and are still standing and laughing. Many of us started these friendships through previous conferences when we were so fragile. All our hearts relate and want to support families as they move forward.



This conference venue was small enough so conversations and laughter could be carried throughout the three days. I wish everyone would take advantage of conferences the NFFF offers. Everyone is invited to participate,

whether "new to the club" or almost "ancient," as we are. Many thanks to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation for making the conference a success.

It is important for all to see us walking, talking, and laughing. It has taken me so very long to feel like a true SURVIVOR! Until recently, it has been one day at a time.

—Carol Ransdell, mother of Mark Ransdell (2003-OR)

I was so happy to be able to attend the Parents and Siblings Retreat 20 years after we lost our brother. The Retreat was very well run, the workshop facilitators were great, and it was wonderful to meet and spend time with a surviving parent couple of whom the husband had worked with my dad in the FDNY. It made me feel so comfortable to share memories with him and to meet other siblings who really "get it!" Thank you, NFFF!

—Karen Fowler Staab, sister of Vincent Fowler (1999-NY)

Upcoming Fire Hero Family Events

May 5–8, 2019

Fire Hero Family Wellness Conference

Portland, Maine

June 28–30, 2019

Hal Bruno Camp for Children of Fallen Firefighters

Bloomington/Martinsville, Indiana

July 28–August 1, 2019

Young Adult Retreat

Moab, Utah

October 4–6, 2019

National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend

Emmitsburg, Maryland



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.

Toll-free: 1-888-744-6513

Scholarship Application Period Open for 2019–2020 Academic Year

If you will be attending college or other post-secondary education in the 2019-2020 academic year, consider applying for a National Fallen Firefighters Foundation scholarship. The NFFF offers financial assistance for post-secondary education and training to spouses, life partners, children, and stepchildren of firefighters honored at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial. For complete information, and to download an application packet, go to:

<https://www.firehero.org/resources/family-resources/programs/scholarships>

Our website lists information about other sources of financial assistance for line-of-duty death survivors, including the Public Safety Officers' Educational Assistance Program and educational benefits available in each state.

If you are in a position to help support others in achieving their educational and career goals, donations are gratefully received at <https://www.firehero.org/donate> or by mail. You can designate your donation to support the scholarship program or another NFFF program.

We want to hear from you...



Vulnerability researcher and author Brené Brown has found that people who describe themselves as joyful tend to have something in common—an active gratitude practice. We know from talking with many of you that you actively cultivate gratitude in your lives, sometimes more than you did before you experienced the death of your firefighter. Grief and loss sometimes have a way of shining a light on what is essential and letting the rest fall away. Please share your stories of how you practice gratitude

in your life, how your loss informs that practice, and how gratitude affects your day-to-day life.

To submit a piece on this or another topic for an upcoming issue, please send it by April 30 to:

jwoodall@firehero.org or

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

Attn: Jenny Woodall

P.O. Drawer 498, Emmitsburg, MD 21727

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