

## Upcoming Fire Hero Family Events

**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

**December 6, 2019**

**Annual Holiday Tree Lighting**  
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**

***We can't wait to see you for Hal Bruno Camp 2019 in Indiana!***



## We want to hear from you...



There's a lot of incorrect and unhelpful information out there regarding grief and loss—old theories, platitudes, misconceptions, and flat out lies. The five stages of grief. The idea that when a widowed person remarries, they have “gotten over” the spouse who died. The assumption that having fun means you can't still be grieving. The belief that the first year is always the worst.

What are the grief myths you would like to correct? What's the real story, from your own experience?

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

[jwoodall@firehero.org](mailto:jwoodall@firehero.org) or

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

Attn: Jenny Woodall

P.O. Drawer 498, Emmitsburg, MD 21727

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# The Journey

For Survivors of Fallen Firefighters

ISSUE 88 ~ MARCH/APRIL 2019

*The willingness to show up changes us. It makes us a little braver each time.*

~ Brené Brown

**T**here is a pattern that often occurs in the wake of loss. Perhaps you are familiar with it. Some of the people who you thought would be there for you—close friends, family members, people from church, members of the fire department—seem to disappear just when you most need support. These additional losses can be incredibly hurtful and difficult to understand. It's hard to say why this happens, and the reasons may be different in each situation. Some people are terribly uncomfortable dealing with other people's sadness and grief. They don't know what to say or fear they will say or do the wrong thing. Perhaps your loss reminds them that they, too, could one day be in your situation. Whatever the reasons, they retreat, leaving you feeling confused, betrayed, and abandoned.

On the other hand, people you never expected often show up in ways you never imagined. It might be an acquaintance you weren't that close to who ends up being your greatest source of support. In many cases, it's someone you meet only because of your loss, someone who has lived through something similar. And these are the people who walk with you through those darkest days. At NFFF family events, people often say, "If I hadn't lost my firefighter, I would never have met this wonderful group of friends who I now consider part of my family." Like so much of life with loss, these friendships are not what you wished for or expected, but they can become a lifeline.

## By Claire Veseth, mother of Anne Veseth (2012-ID)

**I** first met Cindy the day after my daughter Anne was killed while fighting a wildfire in 2012. Cindy was the Forest Service liaison for our family after Anne's death, and she came to the house with the Forest Supervisor to express their condolences. I was grieving and upset and wondered silently what this blonde lady could do for us. They told me she would deal with whatever we needed. Five minutes after they left, I was on the phone to her asking her to deal with the multitude of reporters that were calling us, and she continued to be there for us after that.

Cindy drove the two hours from her house to ours for the next two weeks, bringing food, comfort, and laughter. She

dealt with reporters and made arrangements when the Secretary of Agriculture called us. She found refrigerator trucks to house the salads for the funeral when the church refrigerator was full. She coordinated the honor guard and bagpipes and handled funeral logistics. She was there to support, help, and do whatever we needed to get through those early days of grieving and loss. After those first few weeks of her being at our house every day, the first day she did not come my son commented that there was something missing...and it was Cindy. She made sure she was at my house when I read the autopsy report, because she didn't want me to be alone. I found out later that it was her first



Claire Veseth and Cindy

*continued on page 2*

**Claire Veseth** *continued from page 1*

time as a liaison, and she was learning as she went, finding sources and resources so she could make our path easier. All I knew at the time that she was someone to turn to for answers, solutions, and knowledge.

Cindy and I kept in contact, and the next summer she and her husband, Bo, the district ranger, Kathy, and I took a road trip through the backcountry of Idaho. Cindy and I have done a backcountry trip every year since then. She supplies the high clearance vehicle, and I supply the other side of the conversation. Last year, Kathy joined us again as we explored southeast Idaho, and she will again this summer as we travel the MacGruder Corridor in central

Idaho. Since I moved to southern Idaho last year, Cindy's house is my stopover place when I drive back to north Idaho. She generously shares her garden produce with me, and she comes to Boise for plays and antiquing. We share in each other's lives. I helped with her daughter's wedding, and she came to celebrate my son's wedding. I cannot imagine a year without her. She has a zest for life that is contagious and hugs that infuse energy. I am so grateful for her saying "yes" six years ago when the Forest Service asked her to be the liaison for us!

There will always be a huge hole in my heart for my daughter, but it is lined and softened with the friendship of someone whom I never would have met had the hole not appeared.

***"Why are you going to another fallen firefighter event?"***

***"Isn't it depressing?"***

***"Aren't you done with that yet?"***

Have you heard these questions before? What's your answer?

**Mark Pryor, father of Kevin Pryor (2008-CA)**

**T**he answer for me is simple, and it's two-fold. First, to get together with friends made over the last 10 years. To exchange stories of our firefighter with other survivors and attend the all-important workshops.

The other reason is just as important. This year, at the Parents and Siblings Retreat in Austin, Texas, I attempted to spend time with some first-time attendees and try to help them feel at ease. I can recall how intimidated I was at our first conference in San Antonio several years ago. The first-time attendees are quiet, sit alone, and don't really want to open up regarding their firefighter. We want these families to feel at home, feel welcome, and join in the workshops and discussions. I hope I was successful, and only time will tell.

**Carole Chisholm, sister of Gail VanAuken (2000-MI)**

**W**ho wants to hear my real story?" Within our family we talk with ease and frequency about our sister Gail, who we lost in the line of duty in 2000. I always find comfort in recalling stories from the past. In almost every other relationship, I avoid talking about Gail. If I meet new people, I hold back on stories about the people I have lost. Between the ages of 14 to 43, I lost my brother, mother, father, and sister. Who wants to hear that? If we ever get to that part of my life, it seems people wish they hadn't asked my story. This frequent discomfort has taught me that most people do not want to hear all about that sadness. I find myself holding back the four stories that have really impacted my life. At the NFFF Parents and Siblings Retreat, people honestly wanted to hear the real stories. People maintained eye contact. They stayed interested. They remembered. They cared. Outside of my family, that is something that rarely happens. My story mattered, the story that influences most of my days. Thank you for giving me a moment to be genuine and heal just a little more.

*The pieces that appear in The Journey may not be reprinted without written permission.*





## Remembering...

**Trent A. Kirk (2003-TN)**

*From his wife, Donna Kirk*

**L**t. Trent A. Kirk lost his life on Father's Day, June 15, 2003, while battling a fire at the Family Dollar in Frayser, Tennessee. Since then, Our Fallen Heroes Foundation has raised funds to support children in the community by supporting their continuing education. Our Fallen Heroes Foundation awards five scholarships annually—one for the children of a LODD fallen firefighter in Shelby County, one for children of a fallen first responder (whether it is in the line of duty or from illness or accident not related to their job) in Shelby County, one for PTSD/suicide, one for cancer, and one as a community scholarship for a senior who attends our hometown Bartlett High School. The scholarships total \$11,500 in community impact annually.

Our Fallen Heroes Foundation defines "Fallen" as any first responders who have given their lives, whether in a line-of-duty death, illness, accident, cancer, or suicide. The scholarships will be available for students planning to attend a university, accredited college, or school of higher learning in the United States. The scholarships are for the children or stepchildren of fallen firefighters, police, EMS, or sheriff's department throughout Shelby County.



**EDUCATING THE  
HEROES LEFT BEHIND**

**LT. TRENT  
A. KIRK  
SCHOLARSHIP  
FUND**

Lt. Kirk was known in the community for his generosity, friendship, and dedication to his loved ones. He put others before himself. Education was a priority for Lt. Kirk, and Our Fallen Heroes Foundation continues to honor his legacy of love and dedication for his First Responder Brotherhood, community, and family through this scholarship fund.

*For additional information, requirements, and applications, please visit [www.ourfallenheroesfoundation.org](http://www.ourfallenheroesfoundation.org).*

*Use one word to describe the 2019 Parents and Siblings Retreat:*

Amazing **Helpful** Personal **Essential** Therapeutic  
**Connection** **Awesome** Refreshing **Comforting**  
Healing Cathartic **Heartwarming** **Insightful**  
**Empathetic** Relaxing **Family** Enlightening  
Interesting **Grateful** **Meaningful** Supportive