

Upcoming Fire Hero Family Events

December 4–7, 2019
Winter Family Retreat
 Fairfield, Pennsylvania

December 6, 2019
Annual Holiday Tree Lighting
 Emmitsburg, Maryland

March 19–22, 2020
Spouses and Life Partners Retreat
 San Antonio, Texas

May 17–20, 2020
Wellness Conference
 Branson, Missouri

June 2020—Specific Dates TBD
Hal Bruno Camp for Children of Fallen Firefighters
 Denver, Colorado

August 2–6
Young Adults Retreat
 Location TBD

We want to apologize for listing the dates for the 2020 Wellness Conference incorrectly in the last issue of The Journey. The correct dates are listed above!

Young Adults Retreat



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 want to hear from you...



When someone dies, memories become so important and so precious. For children, and even for adults, it can be stressful to think about not having memories, or that they will begin to fade over time. Memories can provoke both tears and laughter, warmth and regret. They pop up at the most unexpected times. Tell us about your memories and how they factor into your grief journey. What have you done to preserve them and treasure them? How do they

change over time? Whatever that word “memories” brings up for you, we want to hear your thoughts.

To submit a piece on this or another topic for an upcoming issue, please send it by December 1 to:

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 90 ~ SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2019

It is not joy that makes us grateful, it is gratitude that makes us joyful.

~ David Steindl-Rast

During the 2019 Wellness Conference in Portland, Maine, Vickie Taylor presented a workshop entitled **An Attitude of Gratitude**. Many of you know Vickie, who has been the lead behavioral health consultant to the National

Fallen Firefighters Foundation since its inception and is always a popular presenter at NFFF events. Vickie graciously agreed to share some thoughts on gratitude based on that workshop.

An Attitude of Gratitude

By Vickie Taylor, LCSW

Do you want to strengthen your immune system, lower the level of cortisol (stress hormone) in your body, reduce depression, improve sleep, reduce your blood pressure, increase your self-esteem, and improve how you see the world? If yes, try the practice of gratitude. Grateful people tend to have more positive coping strategies, feel higher levels of control in their lives, deal with problems directly and effectively (vs. denying or avoiding), have more self-acceptance, see more purpose in their lives, and have fewer negative thoughts and a more positive outlook on life. The practice of gratitude is not a Pollyanna view of the world. It means that we acknowledge the pain, difficulties, and sorrow in each of our lives **and** we also recognize, acknowledge, and appreciate that we are the recipients of many acts of kindness and goodness.

Gratitude is not simply an attitude; rather it is a practice. Here are some simple strategies that you can try if you want to practice gratitude:

Keep a journal.

Each day write down 3 things for which you are grateful. Use this sentence to help you structure your thoughts: I am grateful to _____ for _____.



Vickie Taylor

Share gratitude at the dinner table.

Each person says one thing from that day for which he or she is grateful.

Take time to smell the roses.

Slow down and notice what is around you by using all five senses.

Practice “Stop, breathe, remember”.

Stop when waiting in line, at a red light, etc.

Take a slow **breath** in and out

Remember a message that is powerful to you

- I am loved
- It’s going to be a good day
- I have plenty of time to do what needs to be done

Take a 20-minute walk by yourself every day for a week.

Notice as many positive things around you as you can: sights, sounds, smells, other sensations. Acknowledge each one of these positive things in your mind. Identify what it is about each thing that makes it pleasurable. Silently give thanks for each thing you identify.

Say “Thank you!”

Write a letter of appreciation to someone who has had a positive impact on your life. Schedule a visit with that

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Vickie Taylor *continued from page 1*

person, if possible. If not, plan a phone call when that person has time to talk. Read the letter to that person, then give it to him/her. If it is not possible to call or visit, imagine how the person would respond to your letter.

Gratitude amplifies the good, rescues us from the grip of negativity, and connects us with the goodness in our lives. Look for the good, receive the good, and give back the good.

By Tanisha Hall

Wife of Jermaine Hall (2014-GA)

There was a point in my life where I felt that I had everything under control and life was great—love, career, and the things that I clung to that seemingly felt important. Yet, in 2014, life had a way of humbling me and reminding me that each breath is a gift. Every moment that we are able to speak to our loved ones is precious.

The first “gut-check” that I had of gratitude was when the doctors told my family and me that there was no hope of survival for Jermaine. It was in that second that I realized I would no longer have my best friend.

I would no longer have the person that I could call and tell about my day or things that bothered me. It was in that instant, where the smallest to big things we tend to complain about are no longer important. For example, the unforgiveness that you hold on to because someone made you mad or hurt your feelings either intentionally or unintentionally. Or focusing on the mistakes that you made, which in turn shifts your mood and behavior to regret, guilt, and shame. After 2014, gratitude has been one of the things that I have learned to embrace and enjoy.

I cannot say that I have always been grateful after 2014. However, I learned to see the beauty of life and the people that God placed in my life. There were moments where I became ungrateful because I did not understand why God allowed Jermaine to die. Why did this have to happen to me at age 24? Why did Jermaine have to transition at a young age? Or, for lack of better questions, why my life? I realized that if I would stay stuck in that moment of



Tanisha Hall

with the person that has transitioned.

Overall, I knew that gratitude is one of the most essential components to receiving blessings and shifting our perspective on life. Thus, last year I decided to intentionally share what I was grateful for on social media using the #30DaysofGratitude. I can honestly say that I learned a lot about my thinking, attitude, and the areas that I needed to change. I also learned that there is always something to be grateful for—like the coffee we so need before starting our day, or the text message from that friend to let us know we are loved, and even more, the individual who paid it forward at the drive-thru.

Gratitude has been and will always be something that I hope you work on just as much as I do. I challenge you for the next 30 days to intentionally write down what you are grateful for, no matter how big or small. You will be surprised just how much your attitude shifts and how much you have been carried along the way by God, loving you through each season of your life.



By Sylvia Kratzke

Mother of Heather DePaolo-Johnny (2002-CA)

An attitude of gratitude growing from grief and loss. An oxymoron if I ever heard one. Yet, somehow...

Yes, indeed, when a loved one dies, nothing else is important, only your intense sense of sadness and loss. Everything else pales in comparison. The dusty house, the piles of laundry, the petty squabbles of your workmates, the relatives complaining of this or that, NOTHING is as important as your grief. As you work through your grief and begin to resume your everyday life, the absurdity of the petty squabbling world around you becomes glaringly apparent. What is truly important becomes crystal clear. And that feeling stays with you as you continue your journey through grief, day by day, moving forward to new life, your first reason to be grateful.

There was a very elderly nun that came to Mass at our church, and she would greet us every time with, "Good morning! Isn't it a glorious day?" It could be teeming with rain or snowing and blowing, but to her it was a glorious day. My husband, Len, and I have had numerous close family members die, culminating in a vicious cluster where we buried five family members in five months, the last being our beautiful daughter, Heather. Finding gratitude



Heather and Sylvia

was challenging. Oh, we searched for things to be grateful for, for surely there must be more than this pain of loss. We started with the easy things—a roof over our head, food on our table—and moved on to being thankful for friends, old and new, and warm furry cats for our laps in the cold winters of Buffalo. As the proverbial smoke began to clear and we journeyed on through our grief, our morning prayer routine began to include, of all things, "and thank you, God, for this glorious day."

It has been seventeen years since that time of profound grief. We can look back now and know that each day is a gift. We thought we would not survive this most terrible of losses, yet we learned to live, one day at a time, in gratitude, and from that appeared renewed joy. We have so much for which to be thankful. Len's Dad had but 53 years of glorious mornings, his Mom, 68 years of glorious mornings. My sister, 56 years of glorious mornings, our niece, 46 years of glorious mornings, and our Heathergirl, only 28 years of mornings, but each and every one was glorious! As we both approach 70 years of our own glorious mornings, indeed, we feel thankful. Each night a little death, each morning a rebirth filling us with gratitude and grace.

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Gratitude doesn't change the scenery. It merely washes clean the glass you look through so you can clearly see the colors.

~ Richelle E. Goodric

2019 Young Adults Retreat—Moab, Utah

Many thanks to the adventurous group of 24 young adults who journeyed to Moab for the 2019 Young Adults Retreat in breathtaking Moab, Utah. It may be a dry heat, but 100 degrees is still hot!

We hiked, we rafted, we swam, we ate, we rode horses, we had deep and silly conversations. We saw beautiful sights, made some amazing memories, and renewed and began friendships that will continue long after the last beautiful sunset in Moab.

Here's what a few attendees had to say:

"Thank you all so much for everything you did to make such an amazing young adults retreat. We have said over and over again how perfect everything was and how you really did think of everything to make sure everyone was prepared and comfortable to enjoy the experience! From all of the outdoor activities to Red Cliffs Lodge itself, we felt like we got the complete royal treatment all week while we were there!"

"Thank you for giving us an awesome experience in Moab, Utah. It was fun being in such a beautiful area of the country. We really enjoyed getting to go whitewater rafting and hiking. It also allowed us to make new friends with other young adults who lost loved ones. We learned a lot about ourselves and others. We will cherish this experience forever. Can't wait to see you again next year."

"Thank you for the amazing experiences in Utah and showing me to an entire new family. It truly does mean a lot to me."





New Event for Families!

Due to an overwhelming response, this event is full and closed. The registration for this event filled in just 12 hours, and we have a waitlist! We hope to make this an annual event and, based on the level of interest, will be booking additional rooms in the future so more families can attend.

This year, in conjunction with the annual Holiday Tree Lighting, we will hold a Winter Family Retreat at Liberty Mountain Resort in Fairfield, Pennsylvania, and the National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, Maryland, on December 4–7, 2019. The event will focus on service, giving back to others at the holidays, self-care, reflection, and fellowship with others. Attendees will help decorate the Memorial site and the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Chapel for the annual Tree Lighting and will attend the service. Attendees will participate in service-based activities and open discussions with other Fire Hero Families and NFFF advocates and will have time to enjoy the resort amenities.

Winter Family Retreat—Agenda

Wednesday, December 4

Arrival and welcome dinner at Liberty Mountain Resort

Thursday, December 5

Day of Service at the National Emergency Training Center

- Decorating Chapel for the Tree Lighting service
- Decorating the Memorial site



Friday, December 6

Morning:

- Self-care and recreation activities
- Create an ornament in honor of your firefighter for the tree at the National Memorial

Afternoon:

- Attend the Tree Lighting service

Saturday, December 7

Breakfast and departure

This event is open to all family members of all ages whose firefighters have been honored at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland. The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation will cover the cost of lodging and will provide meals for attendees during this event. We will also provide ground transportation from Baltimore Washington International Airport (BWI) during specific times. Travel costs will be the responsibility of the attendee.

2019 Holiday Tree Lighting

Each year the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation decorates holiday trees in memory of our fallen firefighters. These beautiful trees are on display in the Chapel, featuring ornaments from the families and departments of America's Fire Heroes from around the country.

If you would like to include an ornament in honor of your firefighter, please send it to arrive before December 1, 2019, to:

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation
Holiday Tree Program
PO Drawer 498
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

The Tree Lighting begins at 4:30 on Friday, December 6, 2019. There will be a brief service featuring speakers and musical selections, followed by a reception in the Chapel and an opportunity to view the beautiful ornaments from around the country. To attend, please contact Eric Nagle at enagle@firehero.org or 301-447-1431 at least 48 hours prior to the event to ensure that you are on the access list to come onto the National Emergency Training Center campus.