

## Remembrance Cards *continued from page 7*

For those who have not helped with this project before, here is how it works:

Several weeks ahead of the time you are scheduled to send cards, we will send you the names of firefighters who died in the line of duty for your month, along with contact information for their families. We provide the cards, envelopes, and postage stamps for the mailings. You write a short note and send a card to each person on the list. That's it!

Please contact Ashley Whitmore at [awhitmore@firehero.org](mailto:awhitmore@firehero.org) or 301-447-1365 if you would like to be added to the schedule.



**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**

**Fire Hero Family**  
*Tree Lighting*

Each year, during the holiday season, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation remembers and celebrates the lives of our nation's fallen firefighters with a Fire Hero Family Tree Lighting.

Although we cannot be together in person, we cordially invite you to join us online on December 4, 2020 at 4:30 pm.

*The Tree Lighting will be streamed live on both [firehero.org](http://firehero.org) and Facebook.*

## *We want to hear from you...*



For many families, firefighting is a multi-generational affair, a rite of passage that is handed down from parent to child. What does it mean to lose a family member in the line of duty while you are also a member of the fire service? We would like to hear from family members about that dual loss of family member and fellow firefighter. What secondary ("extra") losses or additional support did you experience as a member of the fire service? How did the death of your loved one affect your relationship to fire service? What wisdom and suggestions

would you offer to others in that situation who might be struggling?

To submit a piece on this or another topic for an upcoming issue, please send it by December 31 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 96 ~ NOVEMBER 2020

« Music can name the unnamable and communicate the unknowable. »

~ Leonard Bernstein

**M**usic, for many of us, creates a kind of soundtrack of our lives. Each season of life has music we associate with it, and a certain song can evoke memories we hadn't thought of in years. There is music for celebration, for times when we feel lost and alone, music for worship and reflection, songs that motivate us when we need a kick in the seat of the pants or an encouraging word. And seasons of grief are no exception. Music affects our mood and emotions and can be one of many healthy tools we reach for when we need to process through feelings and thoughts. It may surprise you to learn that some research suggests that people dealing with depression actually feel better

after listening to sad music. Is that because it matches their mood or helps them feel understood and less alone? Hard to say, but it's clear that we are moved and affected deeply by the music we listen to.

In this issue, Fire Hero Families share some of the songs from their grief playlists. If you are feeling up to it, we suggest listening to the songs as you read. Videos for all these songs can be accessed through YouTube. You may shed some tears, but reading about what the songs mean to each person adds a lot to the experience. Maybe you will find a new favorite to add to your playlist.

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## Jenny Brown, Wife of Dale A. Brown (2019-KY)

### **Track 1: I'm Standing with You (Chrissy Metz)**

Dale shared this song with me a few months before he passed, because it touched his heart. We knew our beautiful story was going to be changed. Our love wouldn't. His presence wouldn't. He wanted to remind me that he would always be with me, forever love me, encourage me, and memories would comfort me. This song touches my heart and brings me joy, tears, hope, and faith. I know every day, regardless of what that day brings, that he is saying, "I'm standing with you." I feel it, I know it, and with Dale and my faith, I know I am forever blessed. There was a quote that he referenced and lived by: *Every day may not be good, but there is something good in every day*. His love is my something good.



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## Kimberly Cope, Wife of Neil Cope (2019-PA)

### **Track 2: Memories (Maroon5)**

I can't listen to this song without either crying or smiling. It talks about the memories, and that's all I have of Neil, which makes me cry. Then again, those memories are so special to me. Remembering his silliness and his uncanny ability to ALWAYS make me smile when I'm so mad at him.

Then reality hits me again.



### Meledy Fenwick, Wife of Clayton William Fenwick (2019-TX)

#### **Track 3: I'll Still Be Loving You (Restless Heart)**

This song was released in 1987 and instantly became “our song.” It was our first dance as husband and wife in August of 1987, which began our 32 years of a beautiful life together. At the time it brought smiles, and today it brings tears. Little did I know at the time how powerful the lyrics would become one day. “I’ll Still Be Loving You” represented our devotional love for one another, a love that will never fade, an always and forever love. Today I hold its meaning dear to my heart for my husband, Clay, who was my best friend, my soulmate, my life!



### James Kegley III, Son of James Kegley Jr. (2018-VA)

#### **Track 4: Humble and Kind (Tim McGraw)**

This song means a lot to me. Every time I hear this song it reminds me of my Dad! It reminds me of the values he instilled in me and my brother from a very young age. This song was played at his funeral, and every time I hear it, I know he is with me in that moment!



### Sandra Clinton, Wife of Madison “Maddy” Clinton (2018-OK)

Music has always been an important part of my life. The stories told within the lyrics many times mimic my own life or feelings. After my husband’s accident I created a “Maddy” playlist on my iPod. I included songs that spoke of the death of a loved one, faith in God, and some that always made me think about our love. This was what I listened to when I took a walk in the days that followed. The songs gave me comfort, solace, and sometimes a good cry.



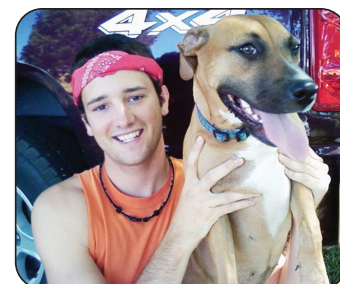
#### **Track 5: God Gave Me You (Dave Barnes)**

This was one of the songs I included in that list. When I first heard the song many years ago, I thought it fit our life perfectly. The story of how Maddy and I met is a long one that I love to share, but the general theme is God brought us together. There is no other way I would have ever met him. He and I were different, but we complemented each other. He was my rock and the one who could bring calm to my turbulent day. He helped me keep my perspective and showed me how blessed we truly were. A few months after his death, this song came on the radio as I was driving down the interstate. I started singing along then broke down sobbing, which wasn’t the thing to do going 75 mph. Some days I hear it and smile thinking about the years of happiness we shared. That song will always be special.

### Katrina Murphy, Mother of Kendall Murphy (2017-IN)

#### **Track 6: Wagon Wheel (Old Crow Medicine Show)**

Kendall loved country music. He could tell you any of the old-time artists, along with the more recent ones, and what their most popular song was. This was one of his favorites. He could sing it word for word. After his accident, my husband and I would hear this song at the most appropriate time. It always brings a tear and smile to our faces.



#### **Track 7: Cornerstone (Hillsong)**

We also have a good cry when we hear this song, because of the story behind it. On Sunday, November 5, 2017 (five days before Kendall’s LODD), my husband Dwayne and I went to Indianapolis to a birthday party for Dwayne’s great-uncle. Kendall went to church as usual. Our son-in-law, Eric, is on the praise team at church. As they were singing this song, Eric tells us Kendall was truly worshiping. His eyes were closed, hands raised, and it was like he was looking up into the face of our wonderful Lord and Savior. Any time we hear this song now, we can’t stop the flood of tears!





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**Barbara Shelton-Gerace, Wife of William Gerace (2017-NJ)**

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For Bill and me, our artist—in true Jersey fashion—was none other than Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band. Our last concert we went to was when Bruce & the E Street played the entire River album. For me, Bruce just says everything I need to say and feel around Bill. Whether it was using the extended lyrics of Blood Brothers on the back of his funeral cards or listening to his cover of Dream Baby Dream about how it's fine to move on to another person to love when that time happens.

**Track 8: Letter to You (Bruce Springsteen)**

*In my letter to you I took all my fears and doubts...all the hard things I found out;  
I took all the sunshine and rain, all my happiness and all my pain;  
the dark evening stars and the morning sky of blue, and I sent it in my letter to you.*

On what would have been Bill's 58<sup>th</sup> birthday, more than ever this song is on the top of my grief playlist. I take courage in the lyrics. It was everything I was feeling in this stage of my grief journey. It struck a chord of hope that, while I and many have taken a life path we never imagined, we would find out more about ourselves than we ever thought we would. There will still be tough times ahead, but if I balance the dark evening stars and the morning sky of blue, I'm still on the right path to being my best widowed self I can be.

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**Brittany Norton, Wife of Michael Norton (2017-GA)**

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**Track 9: Grave (Thomas Rhett)**

Music has always been healing to me. While I can't sing a bit and don't know anything about music, I love a song that I can relate to. When my husband passed away in 2017, I found the best "therapy" for me was to get in my car, drive alone, listen to music, and have a good cry. I'm sure many people at some red lights thought I was crazy. I use a music streaming service that suggests music I may like based on what I listen to that week. So, a new song I had never heard came on, and I absolutely lost it. It was like it was written just for the love my husband and I shared. The words "*You're my infinity, no end to you and me. Come hell, fire, or rain, baby, nothing can change it.*" are some of the first lyrics in the song. As soon as I heard that part, I instantly started crying.



When I'm having "one of those days," I turn this song on, and it's a good reminder. A reminder that even though this is not how I wanted our love story to go, this is not the end of us. A reminder that the love we had for each other will never end, and a reminder that he is with me all the time.

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**Anne Truman, Daughter of Randy Hiti (2015-MN)**

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**Track 10: You Should Be Here (Cole Swindell)**

Of all the songs that remind me of my father, Firefighter Randy Hiti, one stands out in my mind. The year following my dad's death, this song was released. Cole Swindell wrote the song for his father who passed. The moment the song was released I listened to it until I memorized the whole thing. It seemed like every time the radio came on it was playing. It seemed fitting, like Dad played that song just for me every time something good happened, letting me know he was there.



My dad passed in February 2015. In July 2016, I got married. During the days leading up to the wedding and the day of the wedding, I heard that song two times a day. The day I was married, it was the first song I heard on the radio. The following year, I found out I was pregnant with his first grandchild. I again heard that song many times throughout my pregnancy, and the day I went into the hospital that was the last song I heard before I was admitted. I truly feel that it was my dad sending me a message that he is here even if I can't physically see him in these important moments in my life.

### Diane Turner, Wife of George Turner Jr. (2013-NY)

#### **Track 11: Only the Good Die Young (Billy Joel)**

There are so many songs that remind me of George. He was ten years older than me, and I used to joke about marrying an old man. He would say, "Only the good die young, so I'll be around to bother you for a LONG time!" Well, that did not happen, as he died 3 1/2 months before his 61<sup>st</sup> birthday. For months, I could not hear that song without crying.

#### **Track 12: Can't Help Falling in Love (Elvis Presley)**

Whenever we were at an affair and that song played, no matter where he was or who he was speaking with, he would come get me to dance.

#### **Track 13: I Cross My Heart (George Strait)**

George was a big fan of George Strait and Garth Brooks, so any songs by them make me smile. I got to see Garth twice when he started touring again, and I know George was there enjoying the concerts. This was a favorite of his, and when I hear it, I feel he is letting me know he's still around me and helping me to move forward. George LOVED Christmas, so most Christmas music also makes me think of him.



### Karley Simmons, Daughter of Greg Simmons (2011-TX)

#### **Track 14: Man of Constant Sorrow (Dick Burnett)**

My dad, Greg Simmons, and I knew this song from the film "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" This song always brings me back to the days of my dad picking me up from school. He'd always try to embarrass me when pulling up to my school by blaring his favorite music (sometimes even SpongeBob songs), but it never worked on me! His music was my music. I have this vivid memory of driving down Main Street with my dad, windows down, this song blaring and him howling out the lyrics. He wasn't a good singer, but that just made me more inclined to join in. We drove to the lake singing our hearts out.

I listen to this song to remind myself that it doesn't always have to be a sad cry. I can smile and laugh through the heartbreak because he helped me create such beautiful memories.



### Lisa Hopman, Wife of William Hopman (2011-CA)

#### **Track 15: Remember When (Alan Jackson)**

Bill and I were married for 27 years before his passing on January 11, 2011. This song tells about all the things we went through during our 27 years of marriage. The song makes me smile, laugh, and cry. I remember. I always will remember. In January 2021, it will be ten years since Bill passed away doing what he loved to do, on a fire call, and I think of him often, feel his presence always, and I know he is looking after me and our son, Robert, from Heaven.



### Nancy Crawford, Mother of Keith Rankin (2011-PA)

#### **Track 16: Through the Years (Kenny Rogers)**

Keith and I danced to this song for the mother/son dance at his wedding. Now when I hear the song, I tear up. Keith and I were always there for each other through the years. In good times and bad, we both knew we could count on the other. Keith was always my strong one. I always said he was my rock. When things got tough, I knew I could count on him, and I was always there for him, also. I cherish this picture, because "through the years" we stayed right there for each other.





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**Cindy Anzovino, Ex-wife/Friend of John P. Kelly (2010-NY)**

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**Track 17: Drink a Beer (Luke Bryan)**

*Funny how the good ones go too soon, but the good Lord knows the reasons why I guess.  
Sometimes the greater plan is kinda hard to understand. Right now it don't make sense.  
I can't make it all make sense.*

I can remember getting that call. The shock. The disbelief. How could he be gone? How would I get through this? How could I get the kids and grandkids through this?

**Track 18: I Won't Let Go (Rascal Flatts)**

*I will stand by you; I will help you through.  
When you've done all you can do and you can't cope,  
I will dry your eyes, I will fight your fight,  
I will hold you tight, and I won't let go.*

This is my other good-for-a cry song and my promise to the kids. I will always be there. I will always have their backs. I will always be there to hold them tight.

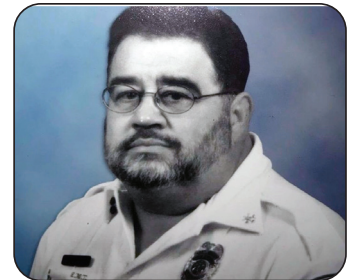
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**Myra Zeeks, Wife of Jimmie Zeeks (2009-IN)**

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**Track 19: The Fireman (George Strait)**

This is the song that I relate most to Jimmie. He had it set as his ringtone on his phone. Anytime that I hear this song, it immediately takes me back to those days when the fire department was his passion. Chief Jimmie Zeeks, LODD 8-15-09....forever in our hearts.



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**Karen Munz, Mother of Brian Munz (2008-IL)**

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**Track 20: I Can Only Imagine (MercyMe)**

My son, Brian Munz, was killed fighting a house fire in July 2008. When this song comes on the radio, I stop what I am doing to listen to the song. I am usually crying and smiling at the same time.

A short time before Brian died, he went to the funeral of a friend who had been killed in a truck accident. When Brian came home, he told me about the funeral. He said he would like this song to be played at his funeral if he ever died. I told Brian that he should write down his wishes and keep them in a safe place. A little while later, I decided to make a little form and tell him to fill it out. I wasn't sure if he would fill it out, but he did. He wrote down the song, pallbearers, etc. I put it in the lockbox at our bank with other papers.

The day we went to the funeral home to plan Brian's funeral, we included the song. It was an amazing service.

When I hear the song, it makes me wonder what Brian is doing in Heaven.

*I can only imagine what it will be like when I walk by your side.  
I can only imagine what my eyes will see when your face is before me.*

I can only imagine...



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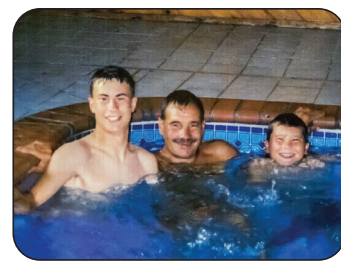
**Pat Bestgen, Wife of Bob Bestgen (2005-MO)**


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**Track 21: Who You'd Be Today (Kenny Chesney)**

This song came out the same year as Bob's death, and I thought Kenny Chesney was literally singing my heart. The words in the song are truly stinging to a family who had just lost someone so dear to them—definitely a good cry, so I try not to listen too often.

I think of the song being not about Bob though, but more *from* him to his two sons...him wondering who they would turn out to be. Every time it comes on, I think the same thing—he's going to miss so much, and so are we. He would have been proud of our boys...of that I am certain.




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**Gayle Miller, Wife of Mark Miller (2004-NH)**


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**Track 22: To Where You Are (Josh Groban)**

Mark was a firefighter from Laconia, New Hampshire. There are several songs on my playlist that have helped me, but none more than this one. I found this song very comforting. Like he is still with me every day. Sometimes you need a reminder that *isn't faith believing that all power can't be seen?* I listen to that song when I need a reminder that I'm not alone.

**Track 23: The Dance (Garth Brooks)**

This song is also beautiful and means a lot, because even though our story ended in trauma and heartbreak, it was a beautiful story. I would not want to have missed any part of our life together. We were blessed.

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**Pamela Reed, Wife of Brian Reed (2001-FL)**


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**Track 24: My Prerogative (Bobby Brown)**

When Brian and I were dating, we used to go to bars—not to drink, because neither of us drank. We went to dance and listen to the bands. When this song was played, we would dance and have a great time.

**Track 25: Endless Love (Lionel Richie)**

Endless Love was the song my wedding party walked down the aisle to. It is such a beautiful song.

**Track 26: I'm Already There (Lonestar)**

This song, which came out about the same time as Brian's death, is one of the songs that makes me have a good cry. It is about a truck driver that calls home while he's out on the road. At the time of his death, our daughters were young; Elizabeth was 10 and Donna was 4. Brian would call home on the nights he was on duty to talk to them, see how their day was, and tell them goodnight.

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**Sarah Clariday, Daughter of David J. Mosher (1994-MO)**

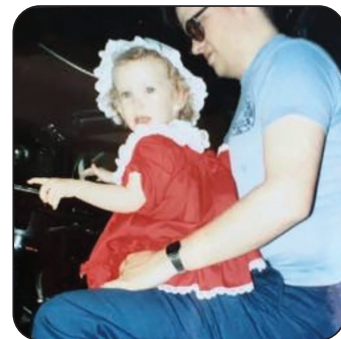

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**Track 27: Lullaby-Goodnight My Angel (Billy Joel)**

In late 1993, this song came out, and it became a house favorite. At the time, it was just a lullaby that my dad sang to his six-year-old when she couldn't sleep. When he wasn't working at the fire station, bedtime was our routine. Little did I know, the lyrics would hit very close to home just a couple of months later.

*I promised I would never leave you, and you should always know  
Wherever you may go, no matter where you are,  
I never will be far away.*

It's been over 26 years since I was able to hear him sing that song, and it's still one that makes me smile and cry at the same time. Dad may never have known how true his off-key lyrics would be, but my memories will always be with me.







**Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all NFFF Family Programs in-person events have been canceled through the end of 2020. Please check [www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org) for the most up-to-date information on the status of events.**

## NFFF Fire Hero Family Support and Connection

**W**hile our in-person programming is on pause due to the pandemic, there are several ways Fire Hero Families can receive support and connect with one another.

**1. Join our private Facebook group for Fire Hero Families**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/NFFFFireHeroFamilyPrograms>

**2. Visit our website**

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

**3. Sign up to attend a virtual support group**

Currently, we have two private weekly online support groups, which are hosted on Zoom and open to Fire Hero Families.

***Facilitated Support Group***

Tuesdays from 8-9 PM (Eastern)

- ♥ Hosted by psychologist Dr. Angela Moreland
- ♥ For those who are struggling with grief or life in general
- ♥ For those who may not have a strong support system in place

***Peer Support Group***

Wednesdays from 8-9:30 PM (Eastern)

- ♥ Meet in small groups with other families to share stories, struggles, and ideas
- ♥ Informal, just for family members, no NFFF staff or professional facilitators

**4. NEW! Meet other Fire Hero Families from your state**

In response to requests, we are building a monthly virtual meeting where you can talk with other families from your state to help build local connections. We know that some of you already meet locally to host state conferences, share information, and socialize. If you would like to participate and/or lead a group for your state, please let us know! We will be building this program over the next few months.

**5. Attend a virtual workshop**

We offer periodic family events via Zoom. Upcoming events will focus on the needs of men, widowed people, and families with young children. Check <https://www.firehero.org/events> for more information.

**6. Request a contact via our Peer Support Network**

If you want to connect with another family member one-on-one via email, phone, or video call, we can match you with a peer support person who understands firsthand what it's like to lose a family member in the line of duty.

To access any of these services, please contact Erin at [ebrowning@firehero.org](mailto:ebrowning@firehero.org) or 301-447-1365.

## Volunteer Opportunity: Remembrance Cards

**T**he anniversary of the death of a loved one is often difficult for family members. The Remembrance Card program is one way we reach out to families to let them know we are thinking of them and that they are never alone. During the anniversary month of their firefighter's death, families receive a handwritten card from another

Fire Hero Family. It is a simple way to remind families that others remember and care.

If you are a Fire Hero Family member whose loved one was honored at the National Memorial, you can volunteer to send Remembrance Cards to other families.

*continued on page 8*