

# thank you

## A Word of Thanks to Our Navigator for *The Journey*

If you have met or spoken with Jenny, it won't surprise you to know that she did *not* seek out a profile piece to celebrate this remarkable milestone.

When reminiscing recently about the approaching 100th issue, Jenny shared some thoughts that we found both insightful and inspiring. We at NFFF have benefited greatly from her wisdom over the years—so it seemed only fitting to share a bit of this history and perspective with our engaged readers of *The Journey*, too.



**In May 2003**, the inaugural issue of *The Journey* began with these words:

*"If you pick up any grief brochure, you will find useful suggestions from mental health experts about what helps when you are grieving. But we also asked another group of experts, members of the Foundation's Fire Service Survivors Network, what helped them most after the loss of their firefighters. They shared insights and ideas that come only through personal experience with loss. Here are some of their thoughts." Issue #1, *The Journey**

**Eighteen years and 100 issues later**, *The Journey's* path has never been more defined—and Jenny Woodall has been at the helm every step of the way.

*"The Journey began with little snippets of what people had shared in writing or in person about their experiences. Over time, it evolved into longer pieces that are topic specific. I've been involved since the first issue."*

— **Jenny Woodall**  
NFFF Grief Specialist

### **In the Beginning: After 9/11**

Jenny hadn't been at the Foundation long when the events of 9/11 unfolded. Afterward, the NFFF was working closely with the Counseling Services Unit at FDNY on outreach specific to 9/11 survivors. The multi-faceted programming inspired Mary Ellis, then managing director of the NFFF, to seek out a communications option designed especially for those in the NFFF family network. Together, she and Jenny developed the concept for *The Journey*—and it soon became a core pillar of NFFF Family Programs.



## Today: Meaningful Stories that Matter

With every issue, the publication reaches thousands of Fire Hero Families. And for nearly two decades, readers have applauded its impact: “I look forward to every issue;” “I read it cover-to-cover;” “I’ve saved all of my issues over the years.” Indeed, *The Journey’s* quiet, long-term presence has made it a touchpoint for Fire Hero Family members across the country.

As Jenny has pointed out, maybe not everyone can travel to events or participate in NFFF’s many support offerings—this is especially true during pandemic times. But *The Journey* is there, providing the sense of community and connection that truly matters. And whatever phase of the grief journey you might be in, there will be something within it that will resonate with you.

## For the Reader *and* the Writer

Jenny is proud that the publication enables readers to have a broader, more generous understanding of other people’s grief—and not feel alone in their own. She also knows that there is value in being able to hear another person’s story. “It doesn’t have to be exactly like *your* story, but you can still take something away from it—or find a piece of connection there,” she has said.

The publication benefits not only the reader, but the writer, too. “When we write something, the brain processes it differently than it processes spoken language or other forms of expression,” Jenny has noted. This can help move people to a different point in their process of grieving *and* understanding their own loss and progress.

“I love being able to help people tell their stories *in their own words*. I stress to people that you do *not* have to be a polished writer; I can help you get your piece to a point where you will feel proud of the way it’s presented. I want it to be your voice from your perspective.”

— Jenny Woodall

## The Journey is Yours

Jenny has said that she hopes *The Journey* makes it clear that the loss that is most important is the one *you’ve* experienced. Everybody has their valuable, valid story to tell. “I’m a big believer in the importance of listening,” she has emphasized. “Reading these stories is a way for everybody to listen.”

As Jenny has been known to say, “everyone has a voice in this community.”

We thank you, Jenny, for enabling so many in the Fire Hero Family to be heard.

*thank you*

*Jenny is always looking for diverse perspectives and seeks contributors from various geographic locations, ethnicities, ages, genders, and their relationship to their Fire Hero—whether they were a career, volunteer, or wildland firefighter.*

*Jenny can be reached at [jwoodall@firehero.org](mailto:jwoodall@firehero.org).*

