



The Journey

For Families of Fallen Firefighters

ISSUE 126 ~ NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2025

When a man becomes a fireman his greatest act of bravery has been accomplished. What he does after that is all in the line of work.

~ Edward Croker, FDNY Chief of Department (1899-1911)

The past two issues of *The Journey* were dedicated to the stories of Fire Hero Families impacted by deaths from occupational cancers. In this final issue of 2025, we want to highlight a special event that occurred in October in Staten Island, New York. This memorial event honored 176 FDNY firefighters who died from occupational cancers and illnesses related to their response to the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 and in the months afterwards. For several years, we have been honoring firefighters who died from post-9/11 illnesses at the National Memorial in Emmitsburg. Given the number of firefighters who have recently been approved to be honored, we decided to hold a special event in New York to make it easier for more families to attend. Over 700 family members attended the October Memorial in honor of their fire heroes.

The families of several firefighters who died on 9/11 and were previously honored at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial participated in the program. They want the newly honored families to know that they are part of the same group. They want to ensure that families affected by post-9/11 illness have access to the same level of support and feel the same sense of honor that they have felt since 2001. They are united by the fact that all their loved ones responded to that historic and tragic incident and its aftermath.



Maureen Santora, mother of Christopher Santora, who died in the World Trade Center on 9/11, shared a special message with the families as part of the service. Maureen said it is so important to her and her husband, Al, to let these families know the impact of their loved one's work after the terrible events of September 11, 2001. We want to share it with you here.

Sharing the Light

Maureen and Al Santora

Parents of Christopher Alexander Santora (2001-NY)

[Remarks from Maureen Santora during the Memorial Service on October 18, 2025.]

Good afternoon. Our son, Christopher Alexander Santora, died on September 11, 2001, and was honored at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in 2002.

He was our beloved son, a teacher and friend, and is deeply missed by all who knew him.

For more than two decades, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation has stood by us — and that support has meant everything.

As you become part of our Fire Hero Family this weekend, know we are here to love and to support you.

On a personal note, we want to say thank you for your firefighters' efforts in recovering many of the 343 (FDNY) firefighters, of whom our son was one. We are very grateful and very honored to be with you today.

The Remembrance Candle we light now symbolizes the enduring friendships of our Fire Hero Family.

You come here today with your own special memories of your firefighter.

As we share the light, we encourage you to reflect on those memories and to celebrate the life of your loved ones with those around you.

The light we share unites us as we remember them.

May their light and their love continue to guide your way forward with hope.

[Follow-up from Maureen Santora]

The NFFF/FDNY Memorial in Staten Island was a beautiful, heartfelt service, and I know that the families that attended were honored by the Nation. I felt very honored to speak that day. I was especially grateful to be able to finally say to all the families not only how honored I was to be in their



Maureen and Al Santora with Eve Bucca, wife of Ron Bucca (2001-NY)

presence but to say thank you for their firefighters working on that pile for up to nine months after September 11, 2001. I wanted them to know that I was representing the families of those 343 firefighters. We are very grateful for the work that all the rescue workers did. Without their efforts, my son would never have been found. Having some recovery means more than most people realize. I wanted these

families to know that we mourn with their loved ones, even though we never met. Their sacrifice helped all who died that day.

As I was leaving, many families thanked me for my acknowledgement of their loved ones' service. I was very touched that my simple words made a difference.

I have just read the most recent edition of *The Journey*. As usual, it is a wonderful read. I know that the families of those who died because of occupational cancer would appreciate hearing "Thank you" from their loved ones' fire departments. "Thank you" is such a simple thing to say, but the impact is powerful.

2026 EVENTS

Spouses and Life Partners Retreat – February 8-11 **FULL**

Parents and Siblings Retreat – February 11-14 **FULL**

Memorial Weekend – May 1-3

Kids Camp – June 26-28

Adult Children Retreat – September 13-16

Men's Retreat – September 16-19

Winter Retreat – December 2-5

[Additional information and registration to follow.](#)



By Marie Anaya

Wife of Calixto “Charlie” Anaya Jr. (2001-NY)

In 2002, The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation held a ceremony for the 343 FDNY firefighters that were killed on 9/11, including my husband, Calixto “Charlie” Anaya Jr., of Engine 4 in the South Street Seaport in Manhattan.

The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation assigned each of the families a liaison to escort us throughout the weekend event. And that’s where I met Craig Slatcher.

Craig was above and beyond helpful and understanding. Neither of us knew what to expect. This was our first experience dealing with this tragedy.

I can honestly say I don’t remember much from 9/11 or the memorial, but I do remember

the kindness and support that Craig gave to me and my children at the time.

We created a friendship with our families. His wife, Diane, is phenomenal, and his two sons have come to my house and visited many times for events like St. Patrick’s Day. We lost contact over the years, but Craig reached out on every anniversary to say he was thinking of me and my children and wishing us well.

This year, I volunteered during the NFFF/FDNY Memorial Service in Staten Island honoring FDNY firefighters who have lost their lives due to post-9/11 illnesses. I was happy and surprised to see Craig, who was representing one of the honored families.

It was a very emotional day.



Marie Anaya with Craig and Diane Slatcher, 2002 and 2025

By Craig Slatcher

Senior Firefighter-Retired, Wilmington Fire Department (Delaware)

On October 4, 2002, I was volunteering at the NFFF Memorial Weekend as a family escort. That year, the event was held in Washington, DC, because a total of 446 firefighters were being honored. Among those were the firefighters who were killed at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. I was assigned to escort Marie Anaya, the wife of Calixto “Charlie” Anaya, of FDNY, Engine 4.

When I first introduced myself to Marie, we had a casual conversation which helped develop a bond we have to this day. Over the past 23 years, my family and I have been to 9/11-related events with Marie at the quarters of E4/L15, St. Patrick’s Day parades, and even a BBQ at her home.

During the recent NFFF/FDNY Memorial in Staten Island, my wife, Diane, and I were there as family representatives for one of the firefighters being honored. Marie was also volunteering her time at the event. It was another opportunity to spend time together, reminisce, and continue to maintain our friendship.

I feel the NFFF provides for and supports the entire firefighting family. We may come from different backgrounds, but we come together when it matters most.

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Support and Connection for Fire Hero Families

Join one of our ongoing virtual support groups hosted via Zoom. These groups are provided for family members of firefighters honored or approved to be honored at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Facilitated Support Group

open to adult Fire Hero Family members, for those who are struggling with grief or do not have a strong support system; facilitated by a psychologist who specializes in providing trauma-focused support

 **Weekly, Tuesday, 8-9 PM (Eastern Time)**

Register at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/88CKSYR>

Fire Hero Family Peer Support Group

open to adult Fire Hero Family members; meet in small groups to share experiences, encouragement, and ideas; hosted by NFFF staff

 **Weekly, Wednesday, 8-9:15 PM (Eastern Time)**

Register at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/87W8ZFY>

Men Forging Ahead

open to adult men from the Fire Hero Family community; informal conversation and connection; hosted by NFFF staff

 **Monthly, 4th Saturday, 3-4:30 PM (Eastern Time)**

Register at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/X3JMT93>

Monthly Remembrance Group

open to adult Fire Hero Family members; during the anniversary month of your firefighter's death, join others who are also remembering their firefighters; facilitated by a behavioral health specialist

 **Monthly, 2nd Sunday, 3-4 PM (Eastern Time)**

Register at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PQF7X39>

If you have questions about these groups, please e-mail Erin at ebrowning@firehero.org.



Toll-free: 1-888-744-6513

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

Write About Your Journey



Many of you describe the Fire Hero Family as "the club no one wants to join." This is often followed by an expression of how grateful you are to have others who understand both the fire service life and the experience of a line-of-duty death. If you want to share your thoughts about the sorrows and joys of "the club no one wants to join," we'd love to hear from you.

To share your story, please email it, along with a high-resolution photo, to Jenny Woodall at jwoodall@firehero.org by February 15, 2026.

If you don't use email, you can submit by mail to:

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation
Attn: Jenny Woodall
P.O. Drawer 498
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

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