

42ND ANNUAL

NATIONAL FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS MEMORIAL WEEKEND

May 6-7, 2023



Emmitsburg, Maryland



Fire Hero Family Flag

On October 9, 2014, a special American Flag was presented to our **Fire Hero Families** by the **National Honor Guard Commanders Association** as a way of honoring the families of firefighters who have paid the supreme sacrifice to their community. This flag was requested through the **United States Congress**.

The flag was first flown over the **U.S. Capitol** on Flag Day, June 14. It then traveled to Emmitsburg, Maryland, and was flown over the **National Fallen Firefighters Memorial**. From there it went to **Arlington National Cemetery** in Arlington, Virginia; the **Wildland Firefighters Monument** in Boise, Idaho; the **IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial** in Colorado Springs, Colorado; and finally, the **Department of Defense Firefighter Memorial** in San Angelo, Texas. These sites were selected as national representations of the agencies served by our fallen firefighters.

After this important and meaningful journey, the Fire Hero Family Flag returned to Emmitsburg—and has been on display in the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Chapel ever since. It is posted at the family hotel during the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend and displayed at Fire Hero Family events throughout the year.

The **United States Flag** is a symbol of strength and unity. Its history parallels our national culture and represents the core values of the **American Fire Service**. These characteristics embody our **Fire Hero Families** and **honor guard members**, too. In this way, the dedicated and permanent Fire Hero Family flag at Emmitsburg represents the **companionship and resilience** we share as we remember—together.



During today's Memorial Service, the loved ones of each firefighter on the 2023 Roll of Honor will receive an American flag that has flown above the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial and the U.S. Capitol Dome in memory of their fallen hero.



We are here for you.

May 7, 2023

This weekend, your loved one joins the more than 4,700 firefighters honored on the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial and throughout the surrounding Memorial Park. We gather to pay our nation's respects to their sacrifice in the name of service. We also honor you, as you bear the full measure of their loss.

This book chronicles the lives of extraordinary men and women and their shared stories of dedication, courage, and commitment to a calling greater than themselves. As we read their stories, the individual and collective immensity of their loss reverberates. More than anything, we recognize that they were everything to you.

The United States Congress first established the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation to honor our nation's firefighters who died in the line of duty and to assist their families in rebuilding their lives. Our mission has expanded to include supporting their colleagues and organizations and working within the Fire Service to reduce preventable firefighter death and injury. We thank our staff and volunteers for their efforts in supporting our mission. And we thank our supporters whose donations help to fund the services we pledge to provide to you from today forward.

For the first time in decades, the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend is being held in May. Within this change, we find reminders of the seasonality of our lives, and of grief. Perhaps you have felt the emergence of spring differently than before. As the world around us wakes up, it may feel overwhelming or, perhaps it is a comforting source of happy memories. As the seasons of grief come and go, we often find that we also change. Grief is different for each person. No path works for everyone, and I encourage you to be kind to yourself.

There may be some experiences unique to losing a firefighter in the line of duty that you and your fellow Fire Hero Families share. Many Fire Hero Families return to Memorial Weekend each year, offering their support now and long after we leave these hallowed grounds. We hope you have had a chance to meet and talk with some of these families this weekend, and I encourage you to stay connected with this special community.



The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and our Fire Hero Families are here to offer comfort, support, and camaraderie. We are here for you when you need us. So please—stay in touch.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Troy Markel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Troy Markel
Chair, Board of Directors
National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

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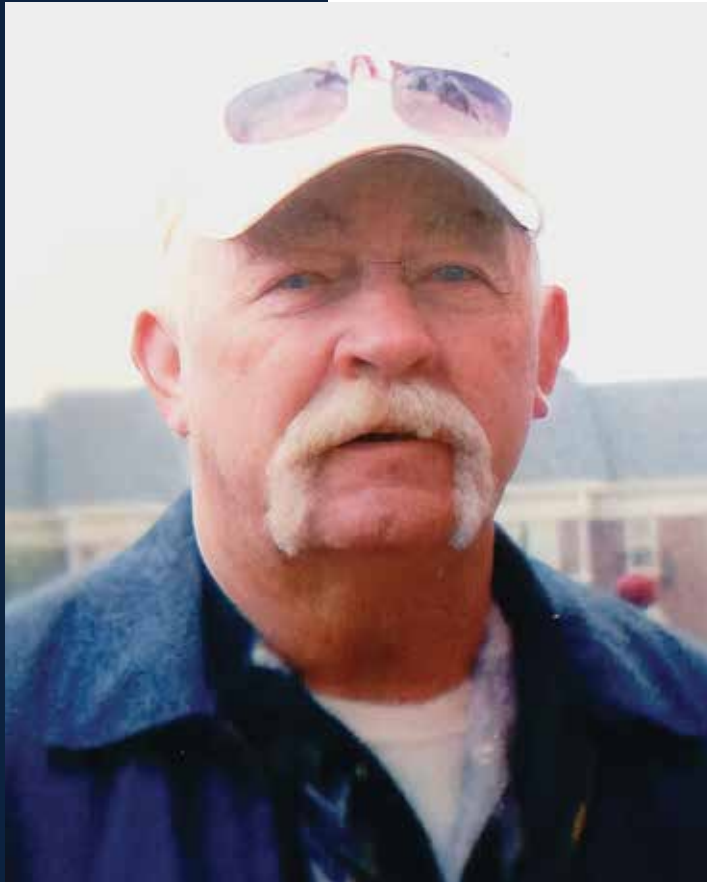
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FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Larry Wayne Harbin

Town of Lynn Fire and Rescue – Alabama ★ Volunteer Engineer/Driver ★ March 3, 2022 ★ Age 65



Larry Wayne Harbin was born in Wyandotte, Michigan, on October 17, 1956, to the late Frank Harbin and Loretta Crump Harbin. He served as a volunteer firefighter for almost 21 years, with 20 years of service with the Delmar Volunteer Fire Department. At the time of his death, he was fighting a fire with the Lynn Volunteer Fire Department. We are all grateful that he passed doing what he loved, fighting fires, and that he was around the people he loved, his fellow firefighters. He received many commendations while serving as a volunteer firefighter.

He is survived by his son, Michael Shane Harbin, his wife Ashley, and their children, Jayden Shane Harbin and Cailynn Nicole Harbin; his son, Jason Wayne Harbin, his wife Shae, and their children, Hillary LaShae Harbin, and Anna Caroline Smith; his daughter, Amy Lee Harbin; brother, Danny Harbin; and his sister, Judy Aventurato.

He loved going on golf trips with his sons. He also enjoyed spending time with his younger son at I22 dragstrip. He was an Alabama football fan and spent many Saturdays bouncing from one son's house to another to watch the game.

His greatest pride and joy were his grandchildren. He always had a bug juice and candy for the little ones. As they got older, it was money or electronics. He always tried his best to attend school activities, ballgames, and just anything that involved his grandchildren. He loved spending time with his family and his firefighter family.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Fredy C. Reeves

Ward Volunteer Fire Department – Alabama ★ Volunteer Chief ★ March 25, 2022 ★ Age 85

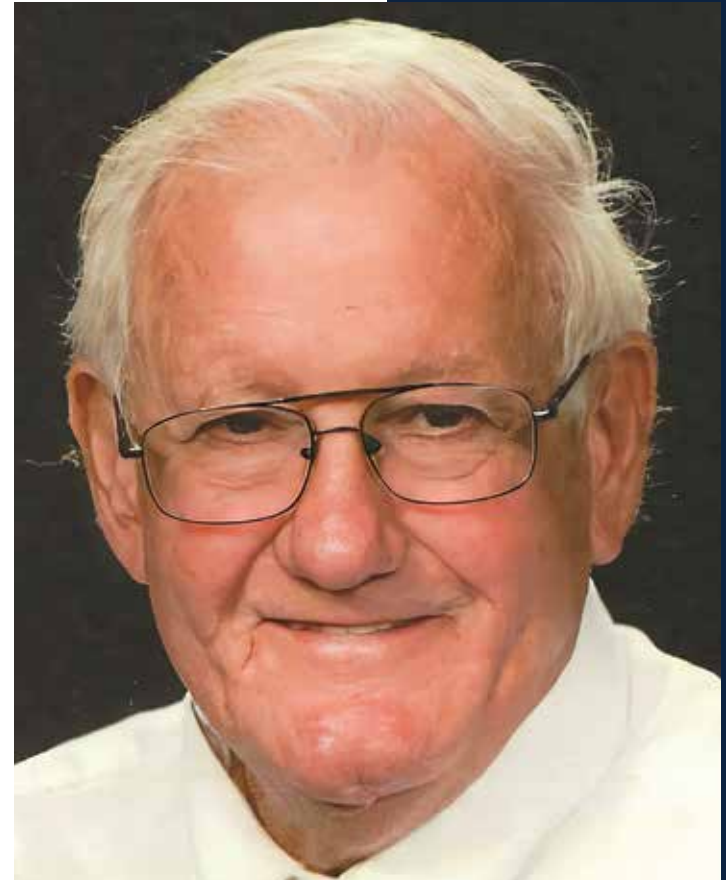
On March 3, 2022, while single-handedly fighting a brushfire in Ward, Alabama, 85-year-old Fire Chief Fredy Reeves' clothes caught fire, but that didn't stop him. Neighborhood folks came to help, and Chief Reeves drove five miles, retrieved a fire engine, returned to the scene, and called an ambulance for himself. The fire was extinguished, but it left Chief Reeves with severe burns on the back of both legs, from ankle to hip, going into the muscle tissue on the left leg. His son, Dexter Reeves, was at work when the call came out. As he was heading towards Ward, the Sumter County Sheriff's Office relayed a message to him that his dad was en route to Rush Hospital. He headed to Rush and waited for his dad in the ER. Chief Reeves was still concerned about the fire, but Dexter assured him everything was okay.

Fredy Reeves died 22 days after the brushfire had burned him. Physicians at Rush transferred him to the JMS Burn and Reconstruction Center in Jackson, Mississippi, where he fought hard to survive. After multiple surgeries for skin grafting, his heart gave out.

In addition to being a firefighter, Chief Reeves was a lifelong Gideon and lay speaker for the United Methodist Church. He was quick to lend a helping hand and share his deep faith in God with anyone who crossed his path. Fredy Carrel Reeves was born April 3, 1936, in Crestview, Florida, to Jesse Rudolph Reeves and Vallie Helms Reeves. He married Ann Radcliffe in 1957, and they moved to Ward in 1963. He worked as a forester for the American Can Company for a quarter century but is best known in Ward for starting the fire department, using a garden hose to put out wildfire that threatened a trailer on the west side of town. He and his son followed up, building a homemade firetruck that held 250 gallons of water.

Alabama officials visited Ward to get its firefighters the training they needed to be certified as an official volunteer operation. Chief Reeves, his wife Ann, and his son Dexter took firefighting and EMS courses over the next two years. Chief Reeves then helped nearby communities start their own fire departments. Through the years, he stayed active in the Ward VFD and regularly assisted other fire departments as needed.

Fredy C. Reeves was buried March 30, following a firefighter funeral service at Cokes Chapel Cemetery in Ward, Alabama. He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife, his sister, and three brothers. He is survived by his brother, Johnny; his children, Randy, Dexter, and Carol Ann; and his grandchildren, Jessica, Tommy, Kristy, Andy, Megan, Melissa, and Shannon.



Jared N. Bird

ROTAK Helicopter Services – Alaska ★ Contract Wildland Pilot ★ July 21, 2022 ★ Age 36



Jared N. Bird died in a helicopter crash while fighting the Moose Fire in northern Idaho on July 21, 2022. Pilot Thomas Hayes was also killed in this incident.

Jared was a decorated military veteran and experienced helicopter pilot. He lived in Anchorage, Alaska, where he was employed by ROTAK Helicopter Services. He was remembered as hardworking and dedicated.

Jared is survived by his wife.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Doug Ritchie

Northern Pioneer Helicopters – Alaska ★ Seasonal Helicopter Pilot ★ June 26, 2022 ★ Age 56

On June 26, 2022, Doug was flying the air support for the fire crews on the ground at the Clear Fire in Alaska.

Unfortunately, that evening his helicopter crashed, and he was killed instantly.

Doug was an exceptionally skilled pilot and will be missed terribly by both the aviation and firefighting communities.

Doug was such a wonderful husband, father, and friend to so many.

He was always smiling and so full of life. Everyone always loved to be around him. He had such a beautiful spirit.

He loved to fly and was always the first in line to help in any way he could.

Doug left this earth doing exactly what he loved to do. He now flies with the angels.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Brendan J. Bessee

Salt River Fire Department – Arizona ★ Career Firefighter/EMT ★ April 8, 2022 ★ Age 24



Brendan Jonathan Bessee was born on March 16, 1998, in Globe, Arizona. When he was just five years old, he began his career in hockey. When Brendan was 15, he was recruited to play Junior A hockey in Wenatchee, Washington, where he moved in with a host family to attend high school and play his favorite sport. He continued playing Junior A hockey over the next three years in Montana and Oklahoma, and then finished his hockey career at Grand Canyon University, where he received a scholarship to play. He made friends from all over the world and continued those relationships throughout his life.

Brendan enjoyed serving his community and volunteering, including at his local fire department. If anyone ever asked for his help, he never refused.

Brendan followed in his father's footsteps and became a firefighter for Sierra Vista Fire Department in 2020. He transferred to the Salt River Fire Department in January 2022. On April 7, he fought a large defensive fire and was positioned on the top of the aerial ladder using the master stream to extinguish the blaze. He was very excited to have that opportunity to help. On Friday, April 8, while on duty and responding to a 911 call, Brendan lost his life in an accident.

Brendan leaves behind his loving family, including his best friend and sister, Danielle, his adoring parents, Robert and Judy, along with his grandmothers, aunts, uncles, and cousins. The entire family enjoyed our annual vacations together where Brendan always brought a smile to everyone's face.

Firefighter Brendan Bessee gave the ultimate sacrifice for his community. He was a great firefighter, a hard worker, strong, a friend, but most importantly he was a good man. His family believes firefighters never die, but live on forever in the

hearts of the people they served, touched, and cared for.

Cory Collins

Pine Bluff Fire and Emergency Services – Arkansas ★ Career Engineer ★ August 21, 2021 ★ Age 32

Cory Phillip Collins was born May 11, 1989, to David and Barbara Collins. He was the middle child of three boys, but he was definitely revered as the wisest among his siblings. His brothers, Chris and Cody, always looked up to him and admired the self-assured way he carried himself.

Cory was an engineer with the Pine Bluff Fire and Emergency Services at Fire Station 6. He took great pride in being able to help those that needed assistance. He loyally dedicated nine years of his life to serving others.

He was fun hearted and loved others with his whole heart. Cory was the rock of his family and the glue that held everyone together. He left behind his soulmate, Lindsey Collins, whom he lovingly referred to as “Little” throughout their relationship and three years of marriage, a time that was cut all too short.

Cory was, without question, Mr. Fix It. If his Little had her heart set on a project, he would make it happen, regardless of whether he truly wanted to take on said project. He loved fixing up his truck more than just about anything else. Summer days spent with the windows rolled down driving to the beach were one of his favorite things.

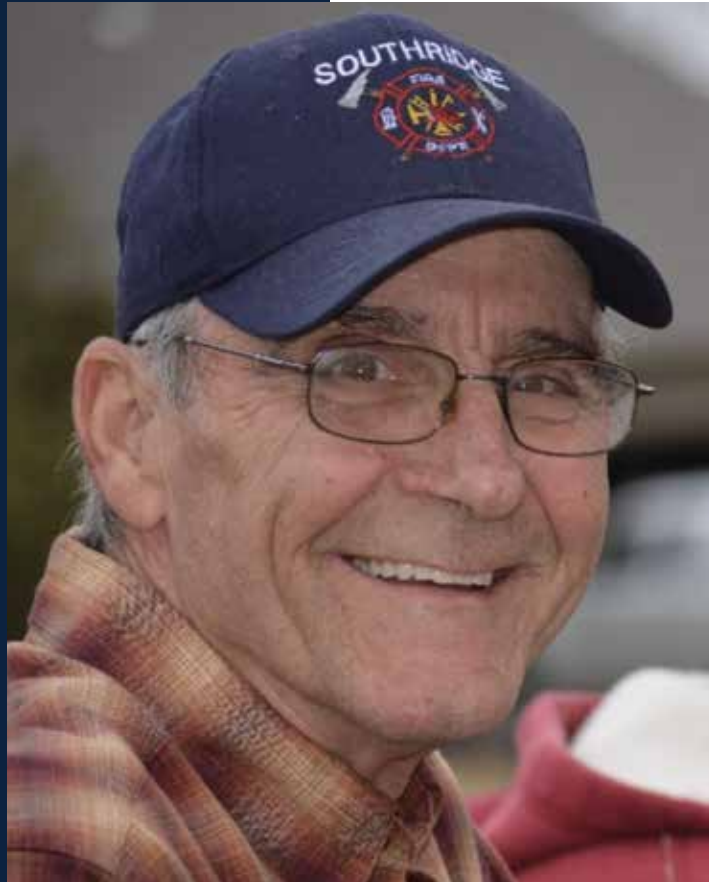
Cory leaves to cherish his memory a deeply grieving family and many friends that miss him dearly. Life will never be the same for those who knew and loved Cory best.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Dennis E. Graham

Southridge Fire Department – Arkansas ★ Volunteer Assistant Chief ★ March 1, 2017 ★ Age 69



Dennis E. “Denny” Graham was born in Jonesboro, Arkansas, to the late Ewing G. Graham and Lena Catherine Graham on January 7, 1948. He attended Jonesboro High School and graduated in 1966. He went on to attend Arkansas State University. During that time, he loved ROTC and planned to go into the Army. He passed all physicals, traveled to Memphis to receive his issued uniforms, received the nice buzzed haircut, and had one last physical exam and immunizations. To his disappointment, he was told one leg was shorter than the other and was put on a bus and sent home. A lot of men would have been relieved, but Denny was very disappointed because he wanted to serve his country. That’s just the type of person he was. He lived to help, serve, and love others.

Denny was a dedicated part of the Southridge Fire Department since 1981. For most of his time with the department, he served as assistant fire chief and training officer. At the time of his death, he was assistant fire chief, training officer, treasurer, and was serving on the board of directors. During his tenure, he was also named Fireman of the Year. The fire department’s growth was very important to Denny. He was instrumental in reducing the district’s ISO rating from a Class 9 rating to a Class 4, where it remains today. He was constantly working to acquire equipment and played a significant role in the district expanding from one fire station to three. Under his leadership the department experienced significant growth, which he was insurmountably proud of.

Denny was devoted to his family and was a loving husband to his wife, Marcia, and father to his children, Stefanie, Daniel, and Jessica.

In his leisure time, he enjoyed being outdoors, whether it was hunting, fishing, or gardening. He never met a stranger, and his death left a huge void in all our hearts. His family is honored for him to be recognized. He may be gone, but he is never forgotten.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Jerry Lynn Robinson

North Little Rock Fire Department – Arkansas ★ Career Fire Marshal ★ June 5, 2022 ★ Age 56

Retired Fire Marshal Jerry Lynn “Red Bear” Robinson died June 5, 2022, as the result of occupational cancer. He may have been retired from his job, but retired from life HE WAS NOT.

It was Jerry’s wonderful sense of humor, his generosity and charisma, that proved to be invaluable traits for his servant heart. Jerry started out in the backbreaking business of HVAC services and came to realize that he wanted and needed something more fulfilling in his life. He needed a personal connection of being able to serve others while achieving his personal goals. Once he decided that public service would help him fulfill his purpose, he began to realize his dreams.

Chief Robinson spent his 25-year career dedicated to the City of North Little Rock Fire Department, beginning with firefighter certification and following that by becoming a paramedic. He received multiple awards and recognition during his career including Firefighter of the Year, Fire Officer of the Year, and the Achievement Award.

Jerry was considered a jack of all trades and a master of most. If he didn’t know it, he would educate himself until he knew what he needed to know to do the job well. It did not take long before this man of 6’ 2” build and fiery red hair was dubbed “Red Bear” among his firefighter peers. Red for the hair and Bear for the actions. This “Red Bear” was kind, gentle, giving, and thoughtful. He was selfless in action and put everyone before himself.

Jerry loved to cook, fish, camp, travel the state with his wife and fur babies, and especially loved going to the ocean. He was a proud rider for the Patriot Guard Riders and committed his life to serving others in its entirety. If you had to describe Jerry in two words—simple and humble.

At the time of his death, Jerry was retired from his position as a fire marshal with North Little Rock Fire and was a volunteer firefighter with St. Vincent Fire Department.

Left to cherish his wonderful legacy are the love of his life, his wife Karen Mason Robinson; stepson, Ryan Hames; brothers, Harold (Heidi), James (Kimberly), and David (Teresa); four nieces and three nephews; and his fur babies, Ramsey, Daisy, and Ellie Mae.



Everette L. Watson

Calvert Township Volunteer Fire Department – Arkansas ★ Volunteer Chief ★ October 27, 2022 ★ Age 58



Fire Chief Everette Lee Watson, 58, died on October 27, 2022, after participating in fire department training.

He proudly served with Calvert Township Volunteer Fire Department for 33 years and was the department chief at the time of his death. He loved helping and serving the people of his community. He was a member of the Grant County Mutual Aid Association, an instructor for fire training, a member of the Mutual Aid Scholarship Board, and a former president of the Arkansas Fire Chiefs Association.

In addition to his fire department service, he was president of New Hope Cemetery Association and coached soccer. He enjoyed woodworking and was a great cook.

He is survived by his wife, son, daughter, brothers, and extended family and friends.

He is remembered as caring and compassionate, a good friend who was dedicated to serving others.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Darin Kyle Banks

Firestorm Wildland Fire Suppression, Inc. – California ★ Contract Wildland Firefighter ★ May 6, 2022 ★ Age 26

Born in Chico, California on February 17, 1996, Darin Kyle Banks began his journey through life. Darin was the son of the late Claude Banks and Kimberly Banwarth. Darin was a brother, uncle, nephew, grandson, great-grandson, son, and his favorite thing to be, a dad to his son, Darin Kyle Banks II. He referred to him as his true blessing and always instilled the values of being a gentleman and scholar.

Darin's love for the outdoors and passion to help people led him into his career choice of becoming a wildland firefighter. Many long days and nights of hard work was very rewarding to him, knowing he was helping people. Darin had a contagious smile, positive attitude, funny sense of humor, and would light up any room he entered. He was a deep thinker and had an old soul. Darin loved his family and showed his love every time he could. He never judged people. It didn't matter who you were or where you came from, he would give you his last or just be that person who never left your side in your time of need.

Darin enjoyed camping, fishing, hiking, snowboarding, cooking, and spending time with family and friends. He never turned down a good barbeque or a taco. Darin enjoyed music and would sing his heart out whether he could sing or not. He loved adventure, always looking for a heart-racing thrill. Skydiving was next on his bucket list.

Darin just made his one-year anniversary, on May 4, 2022; he was so proud. In fact, he told his mom, I'm so proud of myself I could just cry. He finally found a job with a purpose and could give back by making a difference. Darin tragically died after being struck by a dead tree that unexpectedly fell while assigned to a Type II Initial Attack Hand Crew, preparing an area for a prescribed burn in Tuolumne County on May 6, 2022.

Darin departed this earth doing something he loved, which brings his family and friends great comfort. We will miss him dearly, as life will never be the same without him. We will keep his memory alive and vibrant and never forget the special place he will forever hold in our hearts.



Hans Bolowich

CAL FIRE – California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection – California
Career Battalion Chief ★ May 25, 2020 ★ Age 56



CAL FIRE Riverside Unit Battalion Chief Hans Bolowich passed away on May 25, 2020, surrounded by his family, after a heroic battle with cancer.

Hans was born on December 29, 1963. His favorite hobbies included fly fishing, football, skiing, and wakeboarding. Hans played football for San Bernardino Valley College and later coached for Yucaipa High School.

Hans's career in the fire service began in 1982, when he was a volunteer firefighter at Riverside County Fire Department Station 22 in Cherry Valley for five years. In 1985, Hans went to paramedic school and later worked for AMR (formerly Goodhew) Ambulance. In 2002, Hans was hired by CAL FIRE as a firefighter paramedic on Squad 84 in Temecula. He was promoted through the ranks to fire apparatus engineer paramedic and later to fire captain paramedic, before his Schedule B assignment at Anza Station 29. Finally, Hans was promoted to battalion chief in 2019, where he was assigned to Battalion 14.

Since 2005, Hans was an instructor at Moreno Valley College, teaching pharmacology to paramedic students until his illness. Hans held a bachelor's degree in biology from Cal State San Bernardino. He is survived by his wife, Carla Bolowich; brothers, Konrad and Franz Bolowich; and sister, Heidi Jackson.

We will deeply miss Hans and will be here to support Carla and his family during this very difficult time. Hans was a highly respected member of our fire family as well as the EMS community.

— CAL FIRE Riverside County Fire Chief Shawn C. Newman.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Steven F. Casados

CAL FIRE - California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection – California Career Fire Apparatus Engineer ★ February 28, 2019 ★ Age 36

Fire Apparatus Engineer Steven Casados passed away on February 28, 2019, following a battle with job-related cancer.

Brother Casados served with CAL FIRE for 16 years. He began his career as a volunteer firefighter and worked through the ranks to fire apparatus engineer. He is remembered as a proud firefighter who loved “running the show” and working with his fellow brothers and sisters in the fire service.

Brother Casados is survived by his wife, Veronica, and children, Natasha, Jasmine, and Nathan.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Stanley Craig

CAL FIRE - California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Career Assistant Region Chief ★ April 8, 2019 ★ Age 67



Stanley, more commonly known by Stan to his family and friends, grew up in San Clemente, California. Stan referred to himself as a “beach kid” because of his love for surfing and fishing off the pier.

After graduating high school, Stan was working as a school bus driver when he applied to become a firefighter for CDF (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection). Stan was hired on July 1, 1973. He then went to paramedic school and became an engineer in January 1975. He was promoted to fire captain in 1977. Stan transferred to the Riverside Ranger Unit (RRU), Elsinore Forest Fire Station, in 1979. He enjoyed the wildland fire activity in RRU. Stan transferred to the CDF Academy in 1982, teaching HazMat, structure fire control, and the flammable liquid fire control class. Stan really enjoyed this assignment and was promoted to battalion chief at the CDF Academy in 1984. Stan watched many come through the academy and truly left his imprint on hundreds of CDF firefighters and engineers. In 1986, Stan moved to the Madera-Mariposa Unit, where he spoke fondly of working closely with the young firefighters and many of his former academy partners. Stan was promoted to assistant chief of the Madera Division in 1990 and was instrumental in developing and implementing the City of Madera Cooperative Agreement that began in 1993. Stan was promoted to unit chief of the Madera-Mariposa-Merced Unit in 2000. He led the unit until his first retirement in 2004.

Even in retirement, Stan continued to work for the department in various capacities as an annuitant. He completed various departmental program studies and filled in as the acting unit chief in the Fresno-Kings Unit. Stan was reinstated to deputy chief of the Madera-Mariposa-Merced Unit in 2007. In 2009, Stan was seeking another challenge and accepted the staff chief of management services position.

Stan was promoted once again to assistant region chief on January 1, 2011. Stan was a member of the Statewide Management Council and provided an invaluable historical perspective on many issues. Stan was an integral part of the Southern Region Leadership Team until his second retirement on October 30, 2013. Stan continued assisting as a retired annuitant until his cancer diagnosis in February 2019.

On a more personal note, Stan enjoyed camping in his motorhome in Pismo Beach, becoming a ski instructor for the Mountain Area Ski School, and spending time with his family and friends. Stan had a heart of gold and is dearly missed by everybody who knew him.

Max Fortuna

Stockton Fire Department – California ★ Career Captain ★ January 31, 2022 ★ Age 47

Regardless of where he was or who he was with, Max was always laughing and having fun. He had the best mischievous grin and loved being silly to get a reaction out of others. But above all else, the things Max held most valuable, sacred, and pure were his faith, his family, and being a fireman.

Max was the true definition of a Christian, a Christ-like man. His faith was evident in all that he did, from the words that he spoke to his actions. He enjoyed sharing his faith by playing bass in his church worship band. Max loved kids, so when the fire department hosted a Make-A-Wish event for a boy named Erik who wished to be a fireman for a day, there was no better engine company to make this happen than Max's. At the culmination of the day, Max backed up Erik while they "battled a fire" at the training center, the expression on Max's face reflecting nothing but love. Max's whole heart was in it. He was bound and determined to be the one that showed the face of Jesus to a sick child, to love on him like Jesus would.

Max met his wife, Becky, on their first day of high school, and they instantly became friends. They started dating in 1991, their senior year of high school, and remained together ever since. Max and Becky married in 1996. They celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary in 2021 and honored that milestone by renewing their vows.

Max was blessed with two wonderful children, Samantha and Joshua. Joshua was engaged to Gianmaris when Max passed; they married in December 2022.

Max started out in the fire service as a volunteer firefighter with the Ceres Fire Department. After earning his paramedic license, Max was hired with the Stockton Fire Department in December 2000. He quickly became known as a fireman's fireman. He loved the Stockton Fire Department, especially Battalion One. He was a long-term resident of Engine 12, the east side pride, and Company 2, the downtown firehouse.

Max was known for pushing hard as a fireman. He wanted the toughest assignments, to be the first to get out the door, the first on scene, the first to make the stretch, and the first to get water on the fire. Max wanted to save lives, and oftentimes he did. He was the first to start working and the last to stop. Max promoted to captain in 2008. He took pride in himself, his crew, his battalion, and the Stockton Fire Department as a whole.



Steven Michael McCann

Los Angeles County Fire Department – California ★ Career Captain ★ February 9, 2022 ★ Age 48



Steven “Steve” McCann was a beloved father, son, and brother born on July 8, 1973, in San Jose, California. He was very active in his teenage years with sports, work, and other shenanigans. He was very passionate about basketball and was captain of his basketball team at John H. Francis Polytechnic High School in Pacoima, California. After graduating, Steve enlisted in the Navy and worked in the engine room on the carrier. He played for the Navy’s basketball team in Japan and earned his “shellback” title! Steve traveled all over the world, and his job in the engine room sparked his interest to become a firefighter.

Steve graduated from Oxnard Fire Academy and got hired by LACoFD in 2005. He loved everything about the job. He took pride in his job and loved sharing his stories from the station. He never settled for mediocrity and would go above and beyond to help everyone that crossed his path. As much as he joked around with his crew and came off as a “know-it-all,” he was very protective of his crew, which he considered family. He was a very loyal and loving person throughout his career. He served 16 years in the fire department, working the majority of his career in El Monte, California.

Steve was very adventurous and loved spending time outdoors. He enjoyed traveling to new places, but he also found comfort in previous places he had visited, which included Cabo, Ireland, and many Vegas trips. During his trips, he would go scuba diving, hike, eat the delicious local cuisine, bar hop, and bring back lots of cultural knick-knacks for his loved ones. He believed he was invincible, and that mindset made him fearless. He was never scared to try new things and step out of his comfort zone.

Steven was a leader and protector. He leaves behind three daughters, a grandson, a granddaughter, and many friends who continue to be guided and protected by his spirit in their walks of life.

Jason R. O'Brien

CAL FIRE – California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection – California ★ Career Fire Captain
June 29, 2020 ★ Age 44

02/15/1976-06/29/2020

#NeverForget #firefighter #calfirebenevolent

On June 29, 2020, we lost Fire Captain Jason O'Brien after a courageous battle with job-related cancer.

Jason was born and raised in Escondido, California, where he lived with his mother, father, sister, and brother. He grew up always watching Emergency. From a very young age, Jason told his mom and dad he wanted to be a firefighter.

He dedicated 17 years of his life to his dream career as a firefighter with CAL FIRE. As a kid, he loved riding skateboards and bikes. As he got older, he enjoyed going to the desert and riding his ATV and camping.

He was always very quiet, but fun and full of life. He was a hard worker and very dedicated to his job. He was kind, caring, loving, and funny. He was an amazing husband and father to his kids—4 boys and 1 girl.

Jason will never be forgotten. He is always in our hearts and holds a special place for all those that he helped and touched.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Jason S. Pollard

CAL FIRE - California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection – California
Career Firefighter II ★ August 28, 2018 ★ Age 43



Jason Pollard, 43, passed away peacefully at home from cancer on August 28, 2018, surrounded by his loved ones. He fought structural and wildfires and was an EMT.

Jason started his career with CAL FIRE in 1991 as a FFI in the San Diego Unit. He was assigned to Julian Station 50, Valley Center Station 71, and Red Mountain Station 10. In 2003, Jason accepted an FFII position in the Riverside Unit (RRU) and remained there until his retirement in 2013. While in RRU, he worked in the Rubidoux Battalion and Quail Valley Station 5.

Jason was the son of Beatriz Pollard and the late Sam Pollard. He is survived by his mother, Beatriz; his brother, Keith; son, Liam; and Liam's mother, Jennifer.

Keith loved to go fishing. He liked fast cars and was a daredevil who loved to have fun. He loved his family and had a kind heart.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Mark Shawn Roedel

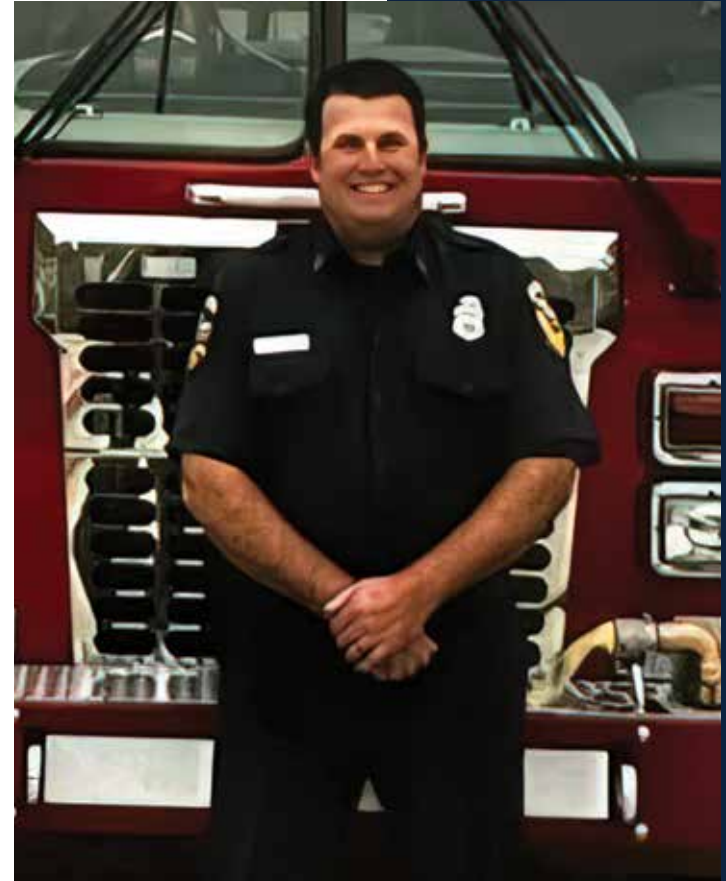
**CAL FIRE - California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection – California ★ Career Fire Captain
December 30, 2020 ★ Age 52**

Mark Roedel was a passionate fire captain with CAL FIRE for 18 years.

Mark loved to spend time with his beautiful family, loved to travel and explore in our Jeep. He was purposeful and intentional with everything he did. His goal was to make memories and live life to the fullest.

He has an amazing daughter, Abbygail, who recently married the love of her life. Mark leaves behind his wife, Lisa; his stepdaughter, Sydney; and his wonderful mother, Kathi.

He is missed dearly and loved immensely. He is well and healed now, home with our Lord.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

David A. Spink

Barstow Fire Protection District – California ★ Career Engineer ★ January 9, 2022 ★ Age 56



David Allen Spink was born June 19, 1965, in Barstow, California, to Walthal Linton Spink III and June Elizabeth, the third of three sons. David graduated from Barstow High School in June 1984.

After completing his mission, he returned to Barstow, where he met the love of his life, Colleen Ruth Sessions. After a six-month courtship, they were married in the Idaho Falls Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints on December 20, 1988. They settled in Barstow, where David worked for Culligan Soft Water Company. In 1995, David and Colleen purchased a carwash in Barstow, which they owned until his death.

In 1990, he joined the Barstow Fire Department and worked his way up through the ranks as a paid call firefighter. After graduation from the Fire Academy at Victor Valley College in 1991, he returned to the Barstow Fire Department as a full-time firefighter.

David and Colleen were blessed with the adoption of a son who they named Dallen Lincoln, combining parts of David's first and middle names. Dallen followed in his father's footsteps to become a firefighter/paramedic. David loved working for Barstow Fire Department so much that he volunteered for extended duty and overtime. He took the required coursework and was promoted to engineer.

David was a lifelong learner who loved reading and learning about how things worked. He loved gardening, the outdoors, scuba diving, skydiving, and having the swimming pool filled with family, friends, or school children. He loved spending time with family and enjoyed quad riding, riding the Segway, motorcycling, and future innovations, most recently the Tesla.

On December 5, 2021, David and his fellow firefighters responded to an accident on I-15, where he was struck by a vehicle. His fellow firefighters cared for him at the scene, and he was airlifted to the hospital with traumatic injuries. On January 9, 2023, David passed away surrounded by his wife, Colleen; their son, Dallen, and his wife, Alyssa. He is also survived by his father, Walt, and brothers, Ryan (Stacey), and Logan (Pat).

David is missed and loved. Reminiscing about all the memories keeps him alive for us. Sweetheart, I love you more than anything in this life. Each day brings me one day closer to being with you.

"I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always.
As long as I'm living, my sweetheart you'll be."

Matthew L. Watt

USDA Forest Service San Bernardino National Forest – California ★ Career Firefighter
March 10, 2022 ★ Age 34

Matthew passed away after a courageous battle with esophageal cancer. Matt was a man of faith who loved his family—wife, Audrey, and their three boys, Davonte, Matthew Jr., and Raiden—immensely. He enjoyed coaching and watching his boys in their sports endeavors, mountain biking, hiking, camping, and spending time at the beach. Unknown to most, he was a foodie. Matt loved to eat!

Matt was a beloved member of the San Bernardino National Forest whose contributions and friendship extended well beyond our borders and walls. Matt joined the forest in 2007, starting on the Del Rosa Hot Shots on the Front Country Ranger District. He also worked on several engine modules: Del Rosa Engine 30, City Creek Engine 38, and Oak Glen Engine 39. After his diagnosis, Matt worked in the Federal Interagency Communication Center in San Bernardino as a dispatcher. According to his colleagues, Matt truly loved the Forest Service. He was a magnanimous gentle giant who would give you his last two pennies.

Matthew, there are days and THERE ARE DAYS! With you and the Lord guiding me, things are getting done. Life will never be the same without you. I take solace in knowing you are with the Lord, and I will see you again.

Love You Forever



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Christopher Andre Wurster

CAL FIRE – California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection – California
Career Fire Apparatus Engineer ★ June 26, 2021 ★ Age 41



Christopher Andre Wurster was born in Panorama City, California, on October 8, 1979, to Anne Marie Jackson and Dennis Andre Wurster. Chris spent his childhood in Lancaster, California. Chris met his wife, Krystle, in 2002 while working as a motorcycle mechanic at a shop in San Diego. Chris and Krystle were married in 2012, and their 20-year relationship brought two children into the world. In 2016, their daughter, Lola Marie Wurster, was born. In 2020 they had their second child, a son, Max Bear Wurster.

Chris was known for his abilities and talents. He first showed his skills as a master mechanic when he was a child and would take vacuums and bicycles apart so that he could put them back together. Chris could fix or build anything that he put his mind to. Chris was tough and was never one to complain. He always found something positive to say, even when he felt his worst. Chris was a great listener who never argued with anyone. Chris loved life. He taught everyone around him about living life to the fullest, cherishing every moment, and loving your family and friends. He avoided anything that didn't support those ends.

Chris had always wanted to be a firefighter. While working as a mechanic, he was encouraged to follow his dream of going to a fire academy and becoming a part of the fire service. He attended the Yuba College Fire Academy in 2007 and was hired by Marysville Fire/CAL FIRE in 2007 as a resident volunteer firefighter. He was hired by CAL FIRE in 2008 and was stationed at North San Juan Station #42. In 2009, Chris was first diagnosed with melanoma cancer. With successful treatment, Chris went into remission and could continue his firefighting career. After five years of remission, Chris did not show signs of the cancer returning and officially beat it.

Chris was a great firefighter. He was reliable, courageous, honest, and hardworking. He quickly endeared himself to all his brother and sister firefighters. In 2013, Chris transferred to Nevada City Station #20 and worked there until he was promoted to fire apparatus engineer in 2020. Chris received news that his melanoma returned while attending the CAL FIRE Company Officer Academy. He was hired as a fire apparatus engineer at the Grass Valley Air Attack Base but could never begin this journey.

Sadly, Chris lost his fight to cancer on June 26, 2021.

Rest in peace, brother.

Harold J. Cordova

**Central Conejos Fire Protection District, Manassa Fire Department – Colorado
Volunteer Firefighter ★ May 1, 2022 ★ Age 83**

Harold Joe Cordova died May 1, 2022, after responding to the scene of a grass fire near Manassa, Colorado.

He was born in Manassa and worked as a mechanic for Donald's Service before starting C&B Auto Repair. He was also a farmer and rancher.

Harold was the longest-serving member of the Central Conejos Fire Protection District, Manassa Fire Department, where he had served with dedication for 66 years. He was president of the Fire Board.

Harold was remembered as a family man with a good sense of humor who always had a smile on his face.

He is survived by his wife and children and a large extended family of siblings, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Anthony Palato

South Metro Fire Rescue – Colorado ★ Career Paramedic/Firefighter ★ September 15, 2021 ★ Age 55



Anthony Fred “Tony” Palato was born in Aurora, Colorado, to Pamela and Fred Palato, on February 21, 1966. He was the oldest of four children. Per Tony’s mom, “Tony knew from a very young age that he wanted to be a firefighter and set out to do just that after he graduated from high school.”

He received his fire science degree from Red Rocks Community College in 1987, as well as his EMT-P. As he worked towards securing a career in the fire service, he worked as a paramedic for several private ambulance companies.

Tony was hired by Sheridan Fire Department in 1997 and later joined the Cunningham Fire Protection District in 2000. In 2018, Cunningham unified with South Metro Fire Rescue, where Tony worked until he medically retired on March 1, 2021.

As a paramedic/firefighter for 24 years, there is no doubt that Tony touched many lives and will be remembered as a kind, caring, and compassionate person with a true servant’s heart. He will be greatly missed.

Tony was a family man through and through, leaving behind his wife of 23 years, Megan Palato, and his two daughters, Autumn and Isabella. In a beautiful dedication to her dad, Isabella wrote, “You had to know my dad in order to understand who he was and why he was so important to this world. My dad never shamed a person for their mistakes but rather allowed one to improve and learn from their experience. He truly was the best dad, best friend, and teammate I could have ever asked for.”

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Stephen Michael Smith

West Douglas County Fire Protection District – Colorado ★ Volunteer Fire Marshal ★ April 23, 2022 ★ Age 47

Stephen Michael “Steve” Smith was born in Shawnee Mission, Kansas, on December 9, 1974, to Bill and Judy Smith. Steve was raised in Kansas and Wyoming, graduating from Evanston High School in Wyoming. He graduated from Western Wyoming Community College with an Associate of Applied Science in auto mechanics. While attending Western Wyoming, he made the dean’s list by maintaining a grade point average higher than 3.75 and was the only student taking the course to receive a 100% in engine rebuilding.

While attending high school, Steve met the love of his life, and they married after he graduated from college.

Steve served for 23 years with the West Douglas Fire Protection District. He held several different positions in the department, including assistant chief, chief, and fire marshal. He completed training for both fire inspector and emergency medical technician certifications and was an active EMT for the department. He was honored at different times during his service as Firefighter of the Year and Officer of the Year.

Steve never aspired to become a firefighter like many who answer the call do. He felt it took a special type of person to serve in that capacity. After Steve and his wife moved to Colorado, he became good friends with the fire chief, who convinced him to give firefighting a shot. After fighting his first major fire there was no turning back; it was in his blood. Steve was in a major car accident when he was younger and said, “You just want someone, anyone, to come and help.” He prided himself on being that person.

With Steve’s mechanical expertise and background, he became the department’s go-to guy to help with the specs with new equipment, ensuring equipment would run and be operated properly. He had a special ability to get the best out of the equipment.

Steve was able to serve on the fire department with his son, who became a junior member just a month before Steve’s passing.

In addition to his service to the fire department, he also served on the town water board and the safety and security ministry for his home church.

Steve would never turn away from the opportunity to help others. He was many people’s go-to person when they needed help.

Now he has been called home and leaves behind two beautiful kids and a wife of 25 years, along with all the people he has touched, who have been there for his family. The full circle of love can be seen from family, friends, and all those that support us who are now considered family.



William T. Halstead Sr.

Sandy Hook Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company – Connecticut ★ Volunteer Chief ★ July 8, 2022 ★ Age 73



William “Bill” Halstead Sr. passed away unexpectedly on July 8, 2022. He was the beloved husband of Debbie Aurelia Halstead. A lifelong resident of Sandy Hook and graduate of Newtown High School, he was born January 18, 1949, to Mildred (Casey) and Leo Halstead.

Bill was a member of the Sandy Hook Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company for over 57 years, carrying on the legacy of many family members, including his mother, father, brother, aunts, and uncles. He joined the department in January 1965 when he turned 16. He served continuously as chief of the department for 44 years after being elected in 1978. Bill worked for the State of Connecticut at the Fairfield Hills Hospital in Newtown for 25 years. He was the chief of the hospital’s fire department until his retirement in 1997. Bill also served as deputy fire marshal for the Town of Newtown from 1983 to 2001 and became the full-time marshal in 2001 until his retirement in 2016. He also served as Newtown’s emergency management director for 23 years.

Known simply as “Chief” to countless firefighters and other first responders throughout the state, Bill was a leader, mentor, and friend to many. While he was known to be tough at times and always demanded the best from his department, Bill’s main concern was always for the safety of his fellow firefighters and the citizens of Sandy Hook and Newtown and other communities he assisted throughout his life.

Bill was inducted into the Connecticut State Firefighter’s Association Hall of Fame in 2011. He also was a member of the Connecticut State Firefighter’s Association and served as the president of the association in 2020. Bill served as president of the Fairfield County Fire Chief’s Emergency Plan and was a member of many other firefighting organizations, including the Connecticut Fire Marshal’s Association, the

International Association of Fire Chiefs, Fairfield County Fire Chiefs, International Association of Arson Investigators, and the Connecticut Parade Marshals.

In addition to his wife, Bill is survived by his children, Karin Halstead (John Jeltema) of Sandy Hook, Krista Earle (David) of Southbury, and William Halstead Jr. (Allison) of Southbury, and two stepsons, Ian and Vincent Guilfoil. Of all his accomplishments, Bill was most proud of his cherished grandchildren, Ryan and Nathan Halstead, Elizabeth and Evelyn Earle, and Emma Guilfoil.

The impact that Bill has had on his family, the community, and firefighting profession cannot be measured, and he will forever be in our hearts.

Matthias A. Wirtz

North Haven Fire Department – Connecticut ★ Career Firefighter ★ December 26, 2022 ★ Age 46

Firefighter Matthias “Matt” Wirtz Jr., 46, of North Haven, Connecticut, lost his life while battling a fire at a multi-family home. Although he was already hurting, he did not leave his operator position at the engine, knowing that his firefighter brothers were inside the house searching for residents. Matt collapsed at the scene and died from a major heart attack; his last alarm was December 26, 2022.

Matt was born to Matthias and Erika Wirtz of North Haven on August 25, 1976. After graduating from Notre Dame High School, he earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of New Haven.

Matt was a decorated firefighter. He joined the North Haven Fire Department as a volunteer fireman in 1996. In 2000, he moved on and began his professional career. Over the 22 years, he served the department in different positions, including EMT and most recently as driver and operator of Engine 9. In addition, Matt supported the local units in New York after the 9/11 attacks. He taught the fire program at Gateway Community College to pass down his knowledge and experience to future firefighters.

Besides his passion as a firefighter, Matt worked as a security guard at Hopkins School in New Haven and served the community as a 4th degree Knight of Columbus. He was a member of the New Haven County Emerald Society Pipes and Drums, as well as the Meriden Turner German Society.

Matt loved sports. The Boston Red Sox and Bruins, the Washington Commanders, and especially the German soccer club 1. FC Koln were his favorite teams.

But most of all, he loved his family and being there for them. Spending time with his wife Barbara and her children was so important for him. Always operating in the background, he was the rock of the family.

Matt is survived by his wife, Barbara; his mother, Erika; Barbara’s children, Ray and Alex (husband Chris); and his sisters, Helga and Monika. He is also dearly missed by his firefighter brothers, as well as many other relatives, friends and especially his faithful companion, his dog Rosie. Matt was predeceased by his father, Matthias Sr., and his brother, Peter.

Matt’s presence inside and outside the firehouse, the North Haven community, and our hearts is irreplaceable! Thank you, Matt, for everything you did. You will never be forgotten.



Chris Allen

Hollywood Fire Rescue & Beach Safety – Florida ★ Career Driver/Engineer ★ June 6, 2022 ★ Age 58



Chris was 58 years old and had been with the Hollywood Fire Department since May 1999. Chris began his career as a firefighter and rode rescue for ten years. In addition, he was a CPR instructor and served on the Hollywood Fire Dive Rescue Team. In 2009, he was promoted to driver/engineer. In this role, Chris was assigned as one of the drivers for the department's high water rescue vehicle. He found enormous fulfillment sharing his knowledge of the job, taking any opportunity to train and encourage his brother and sister firefighters.

Chris was a proud United States Army veteran, enlisting in 1984 and serving until 1988. He was recognized as a sharpshooter with the M16 Rifle, and marksman with hand grenade. He then served with the Florida Army National Guard from 1988 to 1994. Chris was a Sgt. E5, stock control supervisor while serving during Operation Desert Shield/Storm from 1990 to 1991. He was decorated with the Army Achievement Medal/Overseas Service Ribbon/NCO Professional Development Ribbon and was honored with the Gold Eagle Award for his service in the armed forces in the Persian Gulf Conflict. While attending paramedic school, Chris also served as a dispatcher with Margate Police Department and worked a short time for Plantation Fire Department.

Chris was a devoted and loving family man, leaving behind his beloved wife of nearly 32 years, Dora Allen; and their two children who he adored and was extremely proud of, Samantha and Christopher.

Chris loved listening to classic rock and roll and always had it playing anywhere he was—at the fire station, in the car, and at home. When live music was playing, he could be found tapping his foot, singing along with the song, and sporting a broad smile on his face. He enjoyed cooking, diving, camping, and all types of travel. Each year he would plan the family vacation while reviewing the bucket list of places to visit for his family's next adventure.

Chris played an integral role in the department and our community. He was known for his love and devotion to his family, passion for cooking, his sense of humor, and dedication to the job at hand and the residents of Hollywood, Florida. Chris departed on a high note, doing something he loved, serving his community. This has been a great comfort to his family and friends that miss him dearly but know that he rests in perfect hands.

Dustin Schieber

Seminole County Fire Department – Florida ★ Career Firefighter ★ February 2, 2020 ★ Age 40

Dustin Schieber, an amazing husband, father of three, and follower of Jesus Christ, served Seminole County Fire Department for almost 14 years before relocating to his permanent home in heaven.

Dustin battled a line-of-duty cancer bravely for three and a half years, all while continuing to serve his community and family as a firefighter. He never complained or became a victim of his circumstances and even encouraged others while still going through his own struggles.

During the course of his cancer battle, Dustin always held tightly to his faith, family and friends. He continued to put others first, even in his last moments.

Dustin loved to fish, hunt, and spend as much time as possible outdoors. He created memories on the water with his children that will last a lifetime.

Dustin is missed dearly, but his family and friends maintain the confident hope that we will meet him again in heaven very soon.

In conclusion, good news. The last verse Dustin highlighted in his Bible before his departure,

This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."

Romans 1:17 NLT

Dustin lived a life of faith, and I believe he would encourage us all to continue to do the same.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Eric M. Siena

Orange County Fire Rescue – Florida ★ Career Lieutenant ★ May 11, 2021 ★ Age 46



Eric Michael Siena was born on December 12, 1974, in Rochester, New York. In 1990, when Eric was a sophomore in high school, his family moved to McMinnville, Oregon, where he attended McMinnville High School. In high school he would spend his summers with his aunt and uncle in Kissimmee, Florida, where he worked for his uncle doing lightning protection. Eric had several family members that were in the fire service in central Florida, and that is where his passion to become a firefighter came from.

When Eric graduated from high school, he moved to Florida to pursue his dream of serving his community in the fire service. Eric attended the fire academy and EMT school in Orlando and was hired with Orange County Fire Rescue in November of 2000.

He was a dedicated member of Orange County Fire Rescue for over 20 years. He was a proud member of the squad (heavy rescue) for over 17 years and was a founding member of Squad 3 since its inception in 2003. Eric was very passionate about what he did and always strived to be the best of the best. He was well respected and looked up to as one of the best in the squad program. Many came to him for training and mentoring. In 2017, Eric was promoted to lieutenant and placed on Quint 41. Lieutenant Siena received several awards during his career and saved several lives. Eric was also the vice president of the Orange County Fire Fighters Association, IAFF Local 2057.

Eric was exposed to hazardous waste as a member of the HAZMAT team on a hazmat fire, and in 2020 he was diagnosed with stage 4 brain cancer.

Eric passed away May 11, 2021, surrounded by his wife, Christy, and sister, Amber, at his home in Eustis, Florida. He was 46 years old.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Christopher Ronald Applebee

Statesboro Fire Department – Georgia ★ Career Lieutenant ★ September 9, 2021 ★ Age 43

Christopher Ronald Applebee was born November 7, 1977, at Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma. Chris graduated from Fayette County High School in Fayetteville, Georgia, in 1996, and from Ogeechee Technical College in 2000 with a degree in marketing and management. He worked in various roles at Chick-Fil-A for 18 years and was the general manager at the Statesboro Chick-Fil-A from 2002 to 2014.

Chris was passionate about serving the community and helping others. He started as a volunteer firefighter with Bulloch County Bay District Station #5, where he was the station lieutenant. He was on the Bulloch County Rescue Squad and was an instructor for the county fire department. In 2011, Chris started as a part-time firefighter with the Statesboro Fire Department and became full-time in 2014. In August of 2016, he was promoted to lieutenant.

Chris served as an arson investigator for the department, was a member of the department's honor guard, and was involved in various department committees, programs, and projects. Chris received numerous awards, including Statesboro Fire Department's Fire Officer of the Year in 2017. He was also awarded Bulloch County Fire Department's Officer of the Year in 2021, as well as Bulloch County's Public Servant in 2021. Chris had a heart for service and taught firefighting and extrication throughout the Southeast.

When Chris wasn't at the fire department, he enjoyed working with his hands at Brian's Diesel Performance in Brooklet, Georgia, for seven years and eventually became shop foreman.

Chris met the love of his life, Tracy, while a student at Ogeechee Tech. He won her over with M&Ms, his expertise in paying attention while sleeping during class, and his ability to always make Tracy laugh.

They married in 2002 and were married just shy of 20 years. Chris and Tracy's son, Caden, was born in 2004, and their daughter, Navee, in 2007. Chris enjoyed spending time with his family, going on vacation, hunting, cooking, and woodworking projects.

Chris passed away on September 9, 2021. He is survived by his wife, Tracy Applebee; his children, Caden and Navee Applebee; his parents, Ronald and Marcie Applebee; sister and brother-in-law, Haley and Keith Opdyke; and nephew and godson, Maxwell Opdyke.

Chris loved many and was loved by many. He had a kind heart and was always ready to lend a hand. Chris will be greatly missed by the community and all those who knew him.



James “J.B.” Guiler

Heard County Fire & Emergency Services – Georgia ★ Career Battalion Chief ★ September 2, 2021 ★ Age 55



James “J.B.” Guiler was born in Cambridge, Ohio, to the late James M. Guiler and Phyllis Hartman Blue on August 11, 1966.

He was a dedicated part of public safety for over 30 years and served ten of those years with Heard County. J.B. became a Georgia Smoke Driver in February 1995. At the time of his passing, he was serving as a battalion chief and paramedic.

J.B. was a devoted and loving family man, leaving behind his wife of 30 years, Kayran Guiler; son, Austin Guiler; daughters, Lacey Deleon (Dimas) and Katie Brown (Chris); and grandchildren, Noah Deleon, Abel Deleon, Antonio Deleon, Makynleigh Brown, and Kelsey Brown. He was preceded in death by his daughter Kristen Guiler.

Spending time with his family is what he enjoyed most. He also loved working on things, and there wasn't anything that he couldn't fix. If he wasn't working on something, you would find him at home sitting in his chair. You could always go to him for advice because he wasn't afraid to tell it like it was.

J.B.'s sense of humor was the best, and his joking banter gave everyone a good laugh.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Tommy Allen Hopson

Carroll County Fire Rescue – Georgia ★ Career Deputy Chief ★ August 15, 2021 ★ Age 53

Tommy Allen Hopson was born in Hartselle, Alabama, on July 7, 1968, son of Patricia Wright Hopson and the late Johnny Allen Hopson. When he was two years old, his parents moved to Temple, Georgia.

He leaves behind, his wife, Carmen Tant Hopson, of Carrollton; his mother, Pat Wright Hopson, of Decatur, Alabama; his brother, Michael Hopson, of Temple; his children, Derrek Blackmon and Sara Blackmon, of Carrollton; and special granddaughter, Malia Harris, of Griffin, Georgia.

Tommy began his career with Carroll County Fire Rescue in 1990. He worked hard and trained hard to become a Georgia Smoke Diver, one of his many accomplishments. Tommy was on the department's dive team, where he was part of many water rescues and recoveries. He never turned his back on any situation; he was the one running full speed to do all he could to help those in need. Tommy continued his training in all classes that he could and became an instructor himself. He worked his way from volunteer firefighter to deputy chief and took pride in each level.

Tommy was an avid outdoorsman. He was a great hunter and used his knowledge to help teach the Georgia Hunter's Safety Course with Georgia DNR. He assisted with the Carroll County Youth Camp, where he taught the Hunter's Safety Course, Boat Georgia Course, and other outdoor skills to local kids. He took pride in teaching them all he could about the outdoors.

Tommy hunted several parts of the country and Canada. He especially loved his yearly trips to Texas, where he eventually became a part-time guide for spring turkey hunts at Magnum Guide Service.

Tommy loved every minute of the full life he was living and showed it every day by giving back to everyone around him.



Jon Delvalle

Garden Valley Fire Protection District – Idaho ★ Career Chief ★ September 14, 2021 ★ Age 63



Jon Michele Delvalle was born to Louis and Elizabeth Delvalle. He spent his childhood in Hayward, California, and Wimer, Oregon. At a very young age, he fell in love with the land. Jon was the provider and protector of his family, which remained deeply ingrained in him all his days. Jon volunteered to serve in the army right out of high school. He was always described as patriotic, brave, fearless, and a strong leader.

Jon met his wife, Judy, in California. They married and began raising their two children, Aaron and Stephany, in Wimer, Oregon. At age 26, Jon became fire chief of Evans Valley Fire Department, where he served from 1986-1990. In 1990, Jon and Judy moved their family to Bend, Oregon. Jon started his construction company and began remodeling homes all over Bend. Fun times were spent hunting and fishing with his family and friends. In 1995, Jon and Judy moved their family to Garden Valley, Idaho, where they lived together for 26 years. Jon's construction company flourished through the years. He was a skilled craftsman and built and remodeled many homes in Garden Valley.

Jon joined Garden Valley Fire Protection District in 2000 as fire chief and led the department for 21 years. As call volume continued to increase, he closed his construction business to focus solely on the department. Jon made significant improvements to the department, establishing the 281 square mile district, additions to headquarters, new substations, equipment, vehicles, and absorbing emergency medical response. Jon and department volunteers became skilled in swift water rescue, technical rescue, rope rescue, ice rescue, Firefighting I, II, and III, emergency medical services, and much more. Jon built professional relationships all over Boise County, the state of Idaho, forest service, and law enforcement. Jon was fully dedicated, carrying out what was best for the

community and safety of his firefighters. His dedication, experience, and love for his community will forever be felt by all that knew him.

Jon loved his family without limits and was so much more to his family than the fire chief. He loved the outdoors and spent time fishing, hunting, camping, and fostering his love for the outdoors in his children and grandchildren. Jon loved sleepovers with his grandkids; swimming after training; sharing the station and the trucks with grandkids; playing cards with his kids and grandkids; running hounds with his young son; bird hunting with his son and later grandsons and lab; deer, turkey, bear, elk, moose hunting with family; watching his grandkids at rodeos; and fishing at Deadwood with family. His family will forever miss him. He was ours, and he was everything to us.

Thomas P. Hayes

ROTAK Helicopter Services – Idaho ★ Contract Wildland Pilot ★ July 21, 2022 ★ Age 41

Thomas Patrick Hayes died in a helicopter crash while fighting the Moose Fire in northern Idaho on July 21, 2022. His co-pilot, Jared Bird, was also killed in this incident.

Tom grew up in Orofino, Idaho, and dreamed of flying helicopters from a young age.

He was an experienced, skilled, and well-respected aviator who held FAA mechanic, helicopter instructor pilot, and commercial airplane pilot certificates.

He retired after an honorable 20-year career with the U.S. Army.

After his military service, he flew for Helimax Aviation and Billings Flying Service. At the time of his death, he was working with ROTAK Heli, flying Chinooks.

Friends and fellow aviators remembered him as hardworking and joyful.

He is survived by a loving family that included his children, parents, partner, sister, and extended family.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Robert “Bob” Forney

Brimfield Community Fire Protection District – Illinois ★ Volunteer District Chief
January 5, 2021 ★ Age 58



Chief Robert “Bob” Forney was a 25-year veteran of the Brimfield Fire Department in rural central Illinois. Bob held the positions of training officer and assistant chief before he was appointed fire chief of the Brimfield Community Fire Protection District in 2015. He was the epitome of leading by example and was well known for his attendance at training. His mantra was, “I’ve got mine,” in reference to his numerous certifications. Three of his sons followed in his footsteps and are members of the department.

Through his time as fire chief, he oversaw the completion of a new Fire Station 1 in Brimfield, Illinois. Chief Forney played a pivotal role in the unification of both fire stations in the district. Additionally, he oversaw the fabrication of Engine/Tender 199, the district’s largest fire suppression apparatus. He took great pride in maintaining the department’s fleet of fire trucks and ensured they were clean and presentable at all times.

Fire prevention was his passion. He spent countless hours perusing catalogs to order handouts, constructing education materials, and educating community members. Local children affectionately called him “Fireman Bob.”

He was actively involved in the community as a local 4-H leader, Peoria County 4-H poultry superintendent, and 4-H auction committee member. He was employed by the Peoria County Highway Department and was a member of Laborers Union Local 165.

Chief Forney contracted COVID-19 in November 2020. After a long-fought battle, he died from complications related to the virus. His tradition of leadership, volunteerism, service, and dedication live on in his family and those he taught.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Kevin Hauber

Buffalo Grove Fire Department – Illinois ★ Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ January 27, 2018 ★ Age 51

John “Kevin” Hauber was born January 6, 1967, to parents, Betty and Jack Hauber. Kevin has three older sisters, as well as a twin brother. His twin brother was eventually hired by the same department as Kevin. Kevin grew up in Buffalo Grove, Illinois, where he completed his entire 12 years of schooling. Once he completed high school, he began working part-time as a firefighter at Buffalo Grove Fire Department. Kevin loved the town he grew up in and always knew he not only wanted to be a full-time firefighter/paramedic, but that he wanted to serve the community of Buffalo Grove specifically. Kevin did succeed in getting hired full-time at Buffalo Grove and worked there for 24 years.

Kevin loved helping people, but he also was very much a “family man.” During the summer of 2001, he decided to make extra cash by working as a paramedic at Six Flags Great America. While working at Great America, he met Kim, who he would eventually marry in 2003. By 2007, the Hauber family grew substantially with the addition of four beautiful daughters, including a set of triplets. Despite thinking he would have liked to have at least one son, he was the most amazing “girl dad” and stepped into that role happily. His daughters remember him being supportive. “No matter how sick he felt, he would make sure to be in the stands of cheer competitions or sitting on the soccer field bleachers so he could watch us and cheer us on.” They also recall him coming home after work with his Dunkin Donuts coffee and two dozen donuts for the girls.

Kevin’s diagnosis of stage 4 colon cancer did not slow him down any. He would go to work regardless of how nauseous the chemo made him or what pain he was experiencing. He fought courageously until the very end. In fact, Kevin attended Christmas Eve with family just one month prior to his passing. We will remember Kevin not only for his dedication to serving Buffalo Grove, but most importantly as the great dad and husband that he was. We hope to honor his life by remembering his easygoing nature and trying to live out the rest of our days as he lived his life.



A bouquet of red roses is positioned in the foreground, slightly to the left of the center. The roses are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The background features a blurred American flag, with the red and white stripes and a portion of the blue field with stars visible. The entire image has a soft, warm, golden-brown color cast, giving it a gentle and comforting appearance. The text "We are here for you." is centered over the bouquet of roses.

We are here for you.

Scott A. Williams

**Argonne National Laboratory Fire Department – Illinois ★ Career Firefighter/Paramedic
November 21, 2021 ★ Age 46**

Scott A. Williams, born in Chicago on June 19, 1975, lived every day as an adventure of love, laughter, family, and service. The very nucleus of Scott's universe was his wife and childhood sweetheart, Jennifer, and his children, Anthony and Luka. He would revel in his latest role as a loving grandfather to Oliver and Lincoln.

Scott's passions spilled over into his family life. His South Side Irish roots would see him reveling on St. Patrick's Day, dancing on a balcony in New Orleans, or striding through his neighborhood on the 4th of July in a star-spangled outfit. His wife, children, family, and friends were treated daily to a cavalcade of hilarious memes and jokes. The day or the topic did not matter. What did matter was that Scott Williams was a life force that added color, magic, mirth, laughter, and joy to the day. Whether at the workplace, a party, the holidays, or even sitting in the backyard by the campfire, one could not imagine a world that did not have this incredible man in it. Scott's personality overshadowed pandemics, tragedies, and setbacks. Friends and family knew that things would be alright after spending just a few minutes with him.

Scott always wanted to be a firefighter, but never believed that dream would be realized. He joined the military in 2006 at 31 years old. Scott trained to become a combat medic and deployed to Iraq from 2007 to 2008. Scott served at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait as the senior medic for over 25 evacuations for coalition forces. He also served as a BLS instructor for coalition forces and incoming soldiers while overseas.

After deployment, Scott worked as an ER technician while he went to school for his EMT-Basic license. A career would form shortly after, as he became an EMT-B at various departments while he continued to pursue his Firefighter II certification with East Joliet Fire Department. Tirelessly, he dedicated over 600 hours to clinical and field time while working full-time and still fulfilling his military duties. Scott soon realized his lifelong dream upon gaining his Firefighter certificate. He worked as a contract firefighter at Minooka FPD as a firefighter/EMT-P and as a part-time contract firefighter at Wilmington FPD.

Scott returned to school to finish his bachelor's degree in fire investigation and went on to serve as a career firefighter/EMT-P at Argonne in 2018. The love affair with the firehouse and his fellow firefighters would bloom. The Dream would come to an all too early halt, as while at Argonne his service came to an end with his line-of-duty death on November 21, 2021.



Terry Lee Cassidy

Sparta Township Fire Department – Indiana ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ May 26, 2022 ★ Age 64



Terry Lee Cassidy responded to his last fire call on the evening of Monday, May 23, 2022. After a hard-fought battle that was representative of his tenacious spirit, Terry left his earthly home to be reunited with his parents and sister at 10:41 a.m. on Thursday, May 26, 2022.

Terry led a life full of service and devotion to others. In May of 2022, Terry suffered a heart attack on duty while performing CPR on a heart attack victim. Despite the onset of his own symptoms, Terry continued to treat the patient and disregarded himself and his own needs, a trait he exemplified throughout the entirety of his service-driven life.

A resident of Noble County, Indiana, Terry was born on September 9, 1957, to Raymond and Violet June Cassidy. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, he served as a full-time firefighter in his beloved town of Cromwell, joining the department at the age of 16. He fulfilled this role for many years before entering the military and then becoming a loving and devoted father of four—three sons and a daughter.

Proud of his commitment to Sparta Township Fire Department, Terry re-joined his firehouse family once again decades later, at 63½-years-old, just eight months prior to responding to the fateful call that ultimately became his final act of service. It was abundantly clear that Terry deeply valued his friendships in the Cromwell community, and he has been considerably missed by loved ones both on the department and around the close-knit, small town.

In addition to collecting firefighter memorabilia, Terry was an avid golfer and NASCAR fan. He was fond of plowing snow, fishing, and rooting for Notre Dame, but his most enjoyable activity was cheering for his children, and eventually grandchildren, in all their academic and athletic pursuits. He was cherished as a father, brother, grandfather, and uncle, and he will be forever missed by his children, Michael (Mindy), Austin (Tera), Jeremy, and Hollie (Caleb).

His legacy lives on through the cherished memories held dear by his children and 17 grandchildren.

Bruce W. DeArk

Jeffersonville Fire Department – Indiana ★ Career Deputy Chief ★ February 6, 2022 ★ Age 53

Bruce Wayne DeArk was born to the late Robert Lee and Pauline DeArk on August 9, 1968, in the small Ohio River town of Utica, Indiana.

Bruce's heart was set on becoming a firefighter from an early age, following in the footsteps of his dad, Uncle C.D., and cousin David. The process to become a firefighter was not easy for him, entailing 120 trips to the City of Jeffersonville Human Resources Department over a period of ten years, as required to keep your application up to date. Bruce became a firefighter on May 16, 2001. Never give up.

While serving the busiest firehouse in the city, Bruce took on the role of principal officer of the IAFF Local 558. He rose to the rank of lieutenant and, in 2012, was appointed deputy chief. Knowing the physical and mental toll of firefighting and the endless potential for occupational exposure to carcinogens, Bruce worked tirelessly to improve health and safety for his fellow firefighters. He researched gear, hoods, and cancer prevention in the fire service, purchased equipment, and implemented standard operating procedures, including more in-depth health screenings.

On March 19, 2018, at the age of 49, Bruce was diagnosed with Stage 4 metastatic colon cancer, later attributed to exposure to carcinogens on the fireground. He faithfully and dutifully served his department throughout his fight. Bruce's "never give up" mentality served him well in life, in his battle with cancer, and in his efforts to share his story. These efforts have and will continue to save the lives of many.

The greatest joys of Bruce's life are his daughters, Kayla and Tori. He was a hands-on dad from the moment they arrived in the world, taking on the role of nurse, chauffeur, chef, playmate, housekeeper, laundry attendant, and caretaker all rolled into one. Bruce was the heart of the home; his love was great and uncomplicated.

Bruce's love of his family, loyalty to his Indiana Hoosiers, and support of the Jeffersonville High School Red Devils and the southern Indiana community he called home, was unwavering. We will forever miss Bruce's beautiful blue-eyed smile, wisecracks, brutal honesty, never-ending goofiness, impatience for slow drivers, and that absolutely infectious laugh.

Bruce is survived by his wife of four years, Janet (Mayrose) DeArk; their many adventures and plans for the future were cut short. He is also survived by his daughters, Kayla Joly (Ethan) and Tori DeArk (Johnny Doss); siblings, Patty (Rick) Love, Robbie (Patty) DeArk, and Wanda (Ty) Atkins; in-laws (even though they are all Purdue fans), many beloved nieces, nephews, and greats.



Michael Loy Baker

190th Air Refueling Wing Fire & Emergency Services, 190th Fire Department – Kansas
Career Assistant Chief ★ September 21, 2021 ★ Age 52



Michael Loy Baker, 52, of Carbondale, Kansas, died in the line of duty on Tuesday, September 21, 2021, at Research Medical Center in Kansas City, Missouri.

He was born July 5, 1969, in Cleveland, Ohio, the son of Gene and Judith (Streeter) Baker. Michael was a 1988 graduate of Highland Park High School. He worked at Amoco at Holiday Square, then went on to work at Hallmark Cards, starting as a stock handler and working his way up to supervisor.

Michael received an associate degree in fire science while serving in the U.S. Air Force. He retired as a senior master sergeant after 20 years of service in the U.S. Air Force and was serving as assistant fire chief in the 190th Air Refueling Wing in the Air National Guard. Michael was also a volunteer firefighter in Carbondale for 28 years and earned many certificates throughout his career. His passion was to serve his community and his country.

Michael married the love of his life, Leslie (Ortiz) Baker, on August 29, 1992, at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church. Along with his wife, survivors include his three sons, Joshua (Johna) Baker, Jesse (McKynley) Baker, and Justin (Sharea) Baker; a sister, Jeanann (Bob) Richardson; five grandchildren, Bentley Baker, Shaylea Baker, Karsyn Baker, Madalyn Baker, and Emberly Baker; and several nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his father, Gene Baker, and his mother, Judith (Streeter) Baker. Since his death, two additional grandchildren, Waylon Baker and Kyson Baker, have joined the family.

Michael was a true servant to his country and even more to his family. He was a devoted husband, proud father of his sons, and loved spoiling his grandchildren. Michael enjoyed fishing, hunting, and spending time outdoors. He will be greatly missed by all.

Joshua C. Haynes

Linn County Rural Fire District #1 – Kansas ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ June 22, 2022 ★ Age 35

Joshua Clyde Haynes, son of Eddie and Sandy Haynes, was born March 5, 1987, in Nevada, Missouri, and departed from this earth on June 22, 2022. Joshua could only be described as a loving, dedicated, passionate father, brother, and son. He graduated from high school in Louisburg, Kansas in 2004.

Joshua leaves behind four beautiful children, Joslyn, Makayla, Blake, and Easton; his parents, Eddie and Sandy Haynes; sisters, Virginia Haynes and Renea (Josh) Marshall; four nieces and nephews; and a host of extended family and friends.

From a young age, Joshua always wanted to be a firefighter, following in the footsteps of both his parents. It was no surprise that as soon as he turned 18, he fulfilled his lifelong dream. Joshua proudly served for 17 years at Station 920, Linn County Rural Fire Department District #1.

Joshua's second love was his race car! If he wasn't busy with his fireman duties, you could always find him at the local racetracks. He was able to share his love of racing with his family, driving in the demolition derbies with his sister, Virginia. He and his sister could always count on their family to be in the stands, cheering with signs and wearing shirts that supported them both.

Outside of being a fireman and racing, Joshua took pleasure in listening to country music, spending time with friends and family whenever he was afforded the opportunity, and fishing. One memory Joshua took pride in was catching a 51.5-pound flathead with his father, Eddie.

Although his family misses him greatly, they know Joshua departed to Heaven doing what he loved to do. The family extends its gratitude to everyone who reached out to help during the time of mourning. They take comfort in knowing that Joshua Clyde Haynes is with our Lord and Savior and will see him again in due time.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Jerry Steve Ferrell

Monticello Fire Department – Kentucky ★ Career Chief ★ September 22, 2021 ★ Age 63



Jerry Steve Ferrell was born in Monticello, Kentucky, to the late Dennis and Doris Ferrell on August 8, 1958. Steve was a dedicated public servant and a proud United States Army veteran, having enlisted August 8, 1976, and retiring on November 30, 1999, as an SSG E-6 after 23 years of valiant service.

Steve joined the Monticello Fire Department as a volunteer firefighter in 1977 and became Chief Ferrell in 1994. Chief Ferrell was a volunteer for 17 years and chief for 27 years. Steve was still the fire chief of Monticello Fire Department upon his departure from this earth, serving a total of 44 years for the community that he loved.

Chief Ferrell was a devoted, loving family man, leaving behind his wife of nearly 24 years, Joyce Ferrell; daughter, Tiffany Ferrell; stepdaughter, Selena Horton (Justin Horton); stepdaughter, Kimberly Weymouth (Josh Weymouth); and grandchildren, Gracie Horton, Jace Horton, Brennan Morin, Aubrey Cooper, Cora Cooper, and Eliza Weymouth.

Steve enjoyed being on his pontoon boat fishing, camping with family and friends, spending time with his family (he adored all his grandchildren), and the fire department. Steve loved the fire department and all the firefighters as if they were family. Steve was well respected and always showed the same respect for anyone he knew or met. Although he departed this earth too soon, we will cherish all the memories made, and anytime a fire truck is seen or heard our hearts will always be reminded of Chief Ferrell 301.

301 will be no more. His number was retired by the city after Chief Ferrell's departure from this earth.

As his fellow firemen would say, "Chief, we will take it from here."

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Johnnie Jacobs

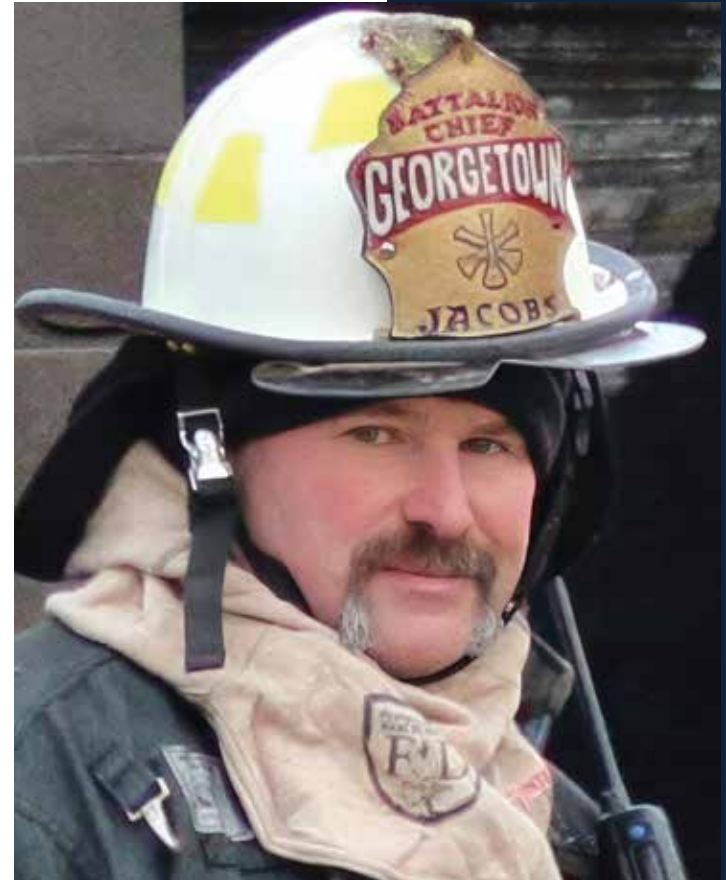
Georgetown Fire and Rescue – Kentucky ★ Career Battalion Chief ★ January 9, 2020 ★ Age 46

Jonathan Everett “Johnnie” Jacobs was born in Cynthiana, Kentucky, on May 26, 1973, to Ronnie and Charlene Jacobs. He was raised helping on his family farm with his sister, Jennifer. He was a graduate of Scott County High School and attended the University of Kentucky.

Johnnie began his career in firefighting as a volunteer and then became full-time with the Georgetown Fire Department in 1996. During his career, he moved up through the ranks as a firefighter, captain, and eventually battalion chief. He was an advocate for the health and safety of those working with him, implementing a physical fitness circuit training program to do while on shift. He loved serving his community and made it his priority to make sure that all the firefighters that worked with him made it home safely to their families at the end of every shift. He believed that training was important to be prepared for whatever happened at any time.

In May of 2018, Johnnie began having symptoms of a rare lung disease that was deemed to have been acquired during his more than 20 years in the fire service. He eventually had a double lung transplant. After more than seven months in the hospital he was released to come home. He had multiple medical issues related to the disease, the transplant, and stress on his body during his illness that plagued him until his death on January 9, 2020. He left behind his wife of 13 years, Katie; daughter, Isabella (10); twins, Hunter and Sadie (6); and dog, Macy. He is missed dearly by his family, fire family, friends, and community.

Johnnie loved all things outdoors. He was a farmer. He loved hunting, fishing, camping, and golf. He was a huge University of Kentucky sports fan! He was funny and kind. He loved watching sports, the Sopranos, and the Andy Griffith Show. He was a bourbon enthusiast. He loved his friends and family fiercely. He believed in doing things the right way even if it was the hard way. Absolutely nothing is the same without him here on earth, but we believe he watches over his people from above, continuing to support those he loved most.



John B. Martin

Louisville Fire Department – Kentucky ★ Career Firefighter ★ October 12, 2019 ★ Age 62



John Bancroft Martin passed away peacefully on October 12, 2019, after a four-and-a-half-year battle with occupational cancer.

John was a two-time Golden Glove boxing champion in Louisville. A graduate of Trinity High School in Louisville, he was a football letterman in the Class of '76.

He served four years in the United States Air Force and proudly retired after 16 years with the Louisville Fire Department. He owned and operated Martin's Lawn Care.

John loved family gatherings and his fur baby, Cassie. He also loved golf.

John will be missed for his unique sense of humor, his everlasting love for his family and friends, and the humble example he set through his service to others.

John's parents, Raymond and Mary Lee Martin, preceded him in death. Survivors include his wife, Karen; daughter, Courtney; his brothers, Raymond and Davis; several nephews, nieces, cousins, and many friends.

His legacy will never be forgotten.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Sean P. McAdam

Louisville Fire Department – Kentucky ★ Career Firefighter ★ May 11, 2022 ★ Age 49

Sean Patrick McAdam was born March 14, 1973. Sean was effortlessly charming and had an easy way about him that made him a friend to many. He was not shy about telling the people he loved that he loved them. He was an adoring father to his son, the love of his life. He was a brother to a sister completely enamored with him and a super fun uncle who was very strong and could throw you way high up in the air. He was a dad joke enthusiast and, after 20 years on the fire department, a pretty good cook! Sean attended St. Jerome Catholic Elementary School and St. Francis DeSales High School, graduating in 1991.

Upon graduating from high school, Sean joined the United States Coast Guard and served for four years. He enjoyed the Coast Guard for its comradery and came to realize that serving made a difference. Sean felt that he wanted to serve in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, and upon leaving the military he decided to apply for the Louisville Fire Department. The fire department, too, gave Sean the comradery he enjoyed in the military and a career that he felt made a difference to his community. While in the fire academy, Sean helped several fellow candidates study for exams. He even held study sessions in the basement of his house. He loved being a firefighter and loved all those with whom he served.

Sean is remembered throughout the Louisville Fire Department as having a welcoming vibe and making everyone feel a part of the family. He always wore a smile, was a hard worker that set the bar high, then encouraged those around him to push themselves to meet it. He is remembered as being one of a kind and truly missed every day. Sean is remembered by friends as incredibly hard working, always willing to go the extra mile to help someone, and he always liked to make people smile. His friends say he was one of one.

Sean leaves to cherish his memory a son, a sister, three nieces, and many extended family members, along with his fire department family of 20 years. Life will never be the same for family, friends and the Louisville Fire Department.



Stanford S. Collins Sr.

New Orleans Fire Department – Louisiana ★ Career Operator ★ September 21, 2022 ★ Age 72



If you ever had the pleasure of knowing Stanford Sidney Collins Sr., you realized early on that God put a very special piece of himself on earth for many to enjoy, learn, and benefit from. His life was one to look up to, even though he never gained or sought earthly fame and glory.

Stanford Collins Sr. was born on February 22, 1950, in New Orleans, Louisiana. He was the son of William Collins Sr. and Olivia Holt and the youngest of five siblings. He attended LSU and graduated from Delgado University. He started his career as a firefighter in 1970 and later become an operator.

Stanford never met a stranger. He was able to strike up conversations with anyone everywhere he went. He carried a strong stance but displayed a kind disposition. He assisted many family members with shelter for decades, not asking for any compensation in return. He would lend a helping hand to anyone he saw stranded on the side of the road, would do handyman work, and would cut the grass of the elderly in the neighborhood without payment for his time or the services he provided.

Stanford Collins Sr. was a multi-talented man. He had a knack to pick up any instrument and learn to play it. He made jewelry. His culinary talents brought several generations to the table, where he displayed his knowledge and gave advice to many, changing the course of many lives. Stanford's knowledge was second to none. He could speak for hours on politics, on money matters, and on historical events and how they shaped the lives of people.

When he was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in 2004, he was given six months to a year to live. He loved his job and wasn't ready when illness forced him to retire in 2006. However, that was not the end of his story. After more than eighteen years of living with cancer, he passed away on September 21, 2022, at the age of 72.

He is loved by many, beginning with the love of his life, Jacquelyn N. Collins, to whom he was married for 48 years; his two sons, Stanford Collins II and Mervin Collins Sr.; his five grandchildren; and a host of other relatives and friends, including in-laws, siblings, nephews, nieces, friends, and his firefighter brothers, who shared his life and continue to love him. There are many individuals who call Stanford S. Collins Sr. "Dad" or "Grandpa." He had absolutely no blood connection to them, but they were all family.

Paul Butrim

Baltimore City Fire Department – Maryland ★ Career Lieutenant ★ January 24, 2022 ★ Age 37

Lt. Paul Butrim was a passionate firefighter who tragically lost his life fighting a vacant house fire in Baltimore, Maryland, on January 24, 2022.

Above everything, Paul loved his family. He was a loving husband and best friend to his wife, Rachel, and the most wonderful father to his son, Nolan. There was no greater pride in his life than his son. He was born to be a father, and he and Nolan were inseparable. Shift schedules made it possible for Paul to spend a lot of time with Nolan during the week, and he was happy for that. Sadly, Paul and Rachel lost Nolan suddenly three years prior to Paul's passing.

Paul's fire service included Joppa-Magnolia Volunteer Fire Company. He was appointed to the Baltimore City Fire Department in 2005. In 2015, Paul was honored by Firehouse Magazine with a Valor Award after he located a child trapped face down in an apartment fire. He made the grab, removed the victim, and performed CPR until advanced life support arrived.

In November 2016, after hard work and study, Paul was promoted to lieutenant. His dream as a lieutenant was to work on Bush Street at Truck Co. #23 in Pigtown, 3rd Battalion. That wish came true, and he settled in as the truck boss on D-Shift. He was a welcome addition to the family, many of whom he had worked with in the past.

Paul was an avid Boston Red Sox fan, even though he was in Orioles country. He loved hockey and was a Caps fan. Perhaps his favorite of all was NASCAR. On May 1, Paul was honored by his favorite driver, #9 Chase Elliot, who drove with Paul's Last Alarm decal on his dashboard. Chase won that race; Paul would have loved it.

The Butrim family were avid campers. Nolan added a tremendous amount of fun to those trips and called the trailer his "campy." In his honor, Rachel and Paul continued camping after Nolan's passing and proudly erected a flag emblazoned with "Nolan's Campy." Rachel has vowed that those trips will continue to honor Paul and Nolan. Paul has his own flag, and both are erected as camping protocol.

The impact of this tragic loss left holes in so many hearts—Rachel, family and friends, and his fire department family. The bright spot is that one month after Paul's passing, Rachel found out she was expecting a baby girl. Paisley Joan Butrim was born on September 21, 2022. While this "gift" brings joy to Rachel and all who love her, the fact that Paul will never hold his baby girl is ever present. The only solace we have is that Paul and Nolan are together and are angels watching over Rachel and Paisley.

Rest in Peace, Paul. Always in our heart, forever on our minds.



Kelly W. Frye

City of Cumberland Fire Department – Maryland ★ Career Firefighter/EMT ★ September 29, 2021 ★ Age 53



Kelly W. Frye began as a firefighter with the Shaft Volunteer Fire Department, later joining the Frostburg Volunteer Fire Department. His career with the Cumberland Fire Department began in 1996, and he continued to serve there for almost 26 years. Kelly loved being part of the fire services and helping others. He enjoyed helping with fire safety and doing children's tours at the fire department. Kelly also loved being involved in muscular dystrophy fundraisers and often brought in the largest tallies. A dear friend and fire department brother, he was a hero to many.

Besides the fire services, Kelly enjoyed collecting firearms and military memorabilia. He had an interest in these, as he graduated from Frostburg State University with a major in history. Kelly was also a member of the Mountain Lodge #99 A.F & A.M. and the Ali Ghan Shrine club.

Kelly loved his family and especially enjoyed traveling to Williamsburg and Disney World for family vacations. Kelly was a caring, wonderful, and loving man of faith. Remembered for his great sense of humor and always trying to make others laugh, he was a great guy with an ever-present kindness and infectious smile.

Kelly was diagnosed with COVID-19 at the end of August 2021 and later succumbed from complications on September 29, 2021.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

David Insley Jr.

Salisbury Fire Department – Maryland ★ Career Captain ★ June 11, 2018 ★ Age 56

Captain David Insley Jr. served the citizens of Salisbury and the greater Wicomico County area for 27 years as a career paramedic, firefighter, and fire officer. Hired in the summer of 1990 as an ALS provider for the city's EMS department, David quickly established himself as a compassionate provider with knowledge and a skillset that offered reassurance to others when he arrived on scene.

In the late 1990s, following a merger of the city's Fire and EMS departments, David became a firefighter/paramedic and became active in the city's Underwater Recovery Unit, as well as other special operation rescue teams, including the SFD Hazmat Team and the city's collaboration with Maryland State Police, the Helicopter Emergency Aerial Team (HEAT). As the years passed, David held a wide range of titles and assignments. He served as paramedic, firefighter, lieutenant, captain, and ultimately became the commander and instructor of the city's Marine Operations and Dive Team.

In addition to his service to the citizens of Maryland's Eastern Shore, David responded as one of the "Salisbury Nine" in support of search and rescue efforts in Slidell, Louisiana, and surrounding areas following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

In early 2017, David was diagnosed with cancer and was forced into early retirement following a surgical procedure to remove tumors from his chest. Following a brief period of remission, David's cancer returned in early 2018 and ultimately spread throughout his body. David passed away at home, surrounded by family as well as brothers and sisters from various fire, EMS, and police departments he had worked with in his three decades of public service.

David is remembered fondly as a man with a quick wit and a big heart who loved helping others in their time of need.



Kenneth Lacayo

Baltimore City Fire Department – Maryland ★ Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ January 24, 2022 ★ Age 30



Kenneth was a charismatic, brave, and intelligent man. It was rare for someone not to instantly warm up to him and like him. These are just some of the qualities that made Kenneth the man he grew up to be. One thing about Kenny is that he was truly loved by all, especially his family.

Kenneth was born on May 14, 1991, in Washington, DC. Kenneth's upbringing is not like most. He was the middle child of five, born to two Nicaraguan immigrant parents. This made life at a young age a huge obstacle. But through all the hardships Kenneth strived and was able to achieve greatness. Kenneth may have been born in DC and had a huge amount of love for Montgomery County, but in the end he lived and died to make Baltimore a better, safer place.

Like everyone else in the first responder field that sacrifices so much, Kenneth hardly slept. If Kenneth was not working or volunteering, you could find him sleeping on the nearest couch at every family function, but whether he was awake or asleep, he always made time for family. This was one of Kenneth's most amazing qualities; he always put others' needs in front of his own.

When he would transport patients to the hospital, he would wait around until he made sure they were going to be okay. He was stoic until the very end. His helping hand was something you could always depend on, and his strength was something you leaned on. However, these qualities extended beyond those who knew him well.

Kenneth didn't leave any children behind, but in his heart and soul he was a second father figure to his niece. From the day she was born, and he first saw her at the hospital, it was love at first sight. Soon everything would come to revolve around her, and as she got older, they would become best friends.

From a young age, Kenny excelled. He graduated from Wheaton High School in 2009. In May of 2011, He joined the Wheaton Volunteer Rescue Squad. His dream of becoming a firefighter came true in 2012, then a paramedic in 2014, eventually becoming a founding member of the Honor Guard in 2017. He loved his job, and he was really good at it. He received awards for Top Ten Responders in 2015 and 2016. He also received an award for Rescue Paramedic of the Year in 2016. In 2018, Kenny's brave and quick actions saved the life of a pedestrian who had been struck by a car, which earned him a unit citation. In 2018, Kenneth officially became a firefighter for Baltimore City.

Kelsey R. Sadler

Baltimore City Fire Department – Maryland ★ Career Lieutenant ★ January 24, 2022 ★ Age 33

Kelsey R. Sadler (Norman) was born July 28, 1988. She was one of the most vibrant people you could ever meet. In her 33 short years, she experienced more than most do in a lifetime. She loved life and lived it like she meant it. Her hugs were so powerful you could feel her intense and supportive love. She was unapologetically and authentically herself in a way that allowed you to do the same. The room always shined brighter when she was around.

In 2015, Kelsey met her husband, Brandon. Their relationship was beautiful and filled with so much love and laughter. They complemented each other in ways you read about in love stories. Brandon and Mila were a package deal, and Kelsey took on her role as a stepmom effortlessly. Her bond with Mila was truly magical.

Kelsey cherished her family. Family also included a core group of best friends from different aspects of her life. We'll never forget her contagious laughter, sarcasm, speaking her mind, love for leopard print, taking naps, meaningful tattoos, wearing hoodies, looking beautiful everywhere she went, and disappearing at the end of a party so she never had to say goodbye. The beach was always a magical place for her. Jamaica was one of her favorite vacation destinations, and this is where Brandon proposed. Kelsey loved the outdoors, especially hunting and fishing with her dad and uncles, camping, concerts, hiking, and snowboarding. Every year she went to Wisp Mountain for their annual "board meeting." It was there she spent time laughing, playing games, hitting the slopes, and taking selfies.

Kelsey began her career with the Baltimore City Fire Department in November 2006. She transferred to 14 Engine, where she served from February 2010 until January 24, 2022. It was on that tragic morning that she and two colleagues were killed in a house collapse while battling a fire with reports of people trapped. Kelsey was the real deal—fearless, brave, and humble. Her reputation preceded her, as she was truly a badass. She was dedicated to her work family and loved her shift. Kelsey was the first and only woman to be a first acting lieutenant in the 134-year history of 14 Engine. She was posthumously promoted to the rank of fire lieutenant.

Kelsey's beautiful and loving spirit led her on a journey that touched so many lives. We will continue her legacy and carry her with us forever until we meet again. As our eyes adjust from her bright light burning out, she would encourage us to spend time with the people that matter, take all the pictures, don't apologize for being yourself, and love so big with all your heart.



James Perrine Seavey Sr.

Cabin John Park Volunteer Fire Department – Maryland ★ Volunteer Fire/Rescue Chief
September 4, 2018 ★ Age 58



An honored and beloved first responder in the greater Washington, DC area for 42 years and a key member of state, regional, and national fire and rescue organizations, James Perrine Seavey Sr. passed away September 4, 2018, after a courageous five-year battle with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

If it pertained to firefighting, Jim embraced it. His calling began in 1976 as a 16-year-old volunteer at the Glen Echo Fire Department. There he rose to the rank of assistant chief. He moved to the Cabin John Park Volunteer Fire Department in 1990 and took office as fire/rescue chief in 1992, a post he held until retiring on December 31, 2017.

Having declared from a young age a goal of becoming a career firefighter for the District of Columbia, he fulfilled his dream on May 27, 1986. Throughout his career, Jim's passion was elevating morale, empowering members to exceed expectations, and providing through example unparalleled selflessness at every opportunity.

Jim also held several positions, serving on the board of directors of the National Volunteer Fire Council, International Association of Fire Chiefs-Volunteer and Combination Officers Section, and the International Rescue Symposium. He also served as chairman of the Executive Committee of the Maryland State Firemen's Association and president of the Eastern Division of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

Jim also worked to further the U.S. fire service on an international level, fostering a foundation for international fire service cooperation and understanding. He created an opportunity for cultural, technological, and educational exchange between the U.S. and German fire services, and in recognition of these efforts the German Fire Service awarded him with the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Medals, as well as the

German Silver Cross. He also was instrumental in working with the Embassy of Chile and the Chilean Navy on the acquisition, transfer, and hands-on training on a retired fire engine from Cabin John Park Volunteer Fire Department.

In 2009, Jim was nationally recognized by Fire Chief Magazine as Volunteer Fire Chief of the Year.

An avid traveler, he cherished lifetime friendships in Halstenbek, Germany; San Felipe, Mexico; and Eatons' Ranch in Wolf, Wyoming. Jim's love for mountain and waterfront views guided him to family vacation homes in Rehoboth Bay, Delaware, and Big Horn, Wyoming.

Jim is remembered for his extraordinary devotion to family and for often undertaking duties that transcended traditional roles. He was a faithful soul and he lived with a strong love for God.

Collin James O. Hagan

**Bureau of Land Management - Craig Interagency Hotshot Crew – Michigan ★ Career Wildland Firefighter
August 10, 2022 ★ Age 27**

Collin James O. Hagan of Twin Lakes, Michigan, was born on July 20, 1995. His first six grades were completed at Elm River Twp School. Collin graduated from Jeffers High School. He attended Gogebic Community College, graduating with an associate degree in applied science and completed his Bachelor of Science degree in forestry at Michigan Technological University.

Throughout college, Collin interned with Compass Land Consultants, Inc., gaining skills in forest inventory, timber marking, and invasive species control in Northern Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

After graduation, Collin followed his interest to go west when he accepted a position in wildland firefighting. His first two seasons were with Grayback Forestry in LaGrande, Oregon, where he initiated his wildland firefighting task book. His desire to develop sawyer skills began here. His career brought him to the Flat Head National Forest in Condon, Montana, where he worked two seasons on a Type 2 Crew for the USFS. It was here that he advanced his true passion as a sawyer. Collin set his mind to pushing his skills and strengths forward with the intention of becoming a hotshot. In 2022, he was employed with the BLM on the Craig Interagency Hotshot Crew in Craig, Colorado. Collin remained friends with many of his wildland firefighting family members.

Collin was a skateboard enthusiast. Along with a special group of buddies, he ventured out to find the challenges and fun of every day. Raised on the water and called to the woods, he camped under the stars on the shores of Lake Superior. His truest little playmate was his big sister, Emily. Collin belonged to Holy Family Catholic Church, was active in a local 4-H club, and played hockey in the CCJHA. Collin was an avid hunting and fishing outdoorsman. He loved to hike and discover unknown places. Collin always took his health seriously and worked daily during the off-season to improve his strength and endurance. The “boys” in the gym looked up to Collin. He was a serious man when it came to the chain saw. Certified and skilled in the art of felling trees of all sizes, he worked his way up the ranks to number one sawman while assisting others in learning this trade.

He was known by everyone as a very kind and compassionate man. He thought of others first and just did not worry, a trait many of us learned from him. He was often quiet yet had a remarkable sense of humor. Collin made his own path in life, a path which we are all so very proud he took.

Collin is the son of Shawn and Jeanmarie (Militello) Hagan and brother to Emily (Jared) Johnson.



Ryan Leif Erickson

Blomkest Fire Department – Minnesota ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ May 12, 2022 ★ Age 63



Ryan Leif Erickson answered his last call of duty on May 12, 2022, at the age of 62. While responding to a weather watch, wind lifted a grain bin and carried it over a building, landing on Ryan. He was born on March 3, 1959, in Willmar, Minnesota, to Evie and Bob Erickson. One might say that he was born to be a firefighter, with a father who was a founding member of the Blomkest Fire Department. He joined the team at 18, spending 45 years serving Blomkest and the surrounding communities. Ryan served as chief for several years and was a member of the First Responders.

A small-town business owner, Ryan was well known throughout the area as an owner of Erickson Plumbing & Heating with his family. He will be remembered as the “go-to guy.” At Erickson’s, customers were treated like family, and it was where people came for help, how-to directions, and a friendly face. Ryan would help with any kind of problem, not only those related to plumbing and heating. After selling the family business, Ryan enjoyed his new sales position with Perkins Lumber in Willmar.

Ryan was a member of the local Sportsmen Club and the Commercial Club and served on the boards of Lake Lillian Township and Kandiyohi Power Cooperative. Ryan was always 100% invested in whatever he was doing. He put his DIY talents to work helping his wife, Kelly, at her store and will be remembered for his prize-winning floats in the local parades. Among his volunteer work, Ryan and Kelly participated in two mission trips to Bolivia, where he was able to utilize his plumbing talents.

Ryan met his wife, Kelly, on a trip to Mexico, and they were married in April of 2000, making them a family of four. He was the “Fun Grandpa” to his four grandchildren, always ready for the next adventure.

Spending time with family and friends was Ryan’s favorite pastime, and golf was his passion. He took advantage of Minnesota’s summers by golfing two to three times a week and planned trips to Arizona to golf each winter. Ryan and Kelly remodeled the barn on their property, making it the perfect place to host Buck tournaments and family gatherings. Ryan always played to win.

He is survived by his loving wife, Kelly; two daughters, Tasha (and Dustin) Hage and Jennifer (and Trenton) Adkins; and four grandchildren, Jackson and Westin Hage and Quinn and Leighton Adkins. Also surviving are his mother, Evelyn Erickson-Paulson; and three siblings, Ross (and Margaret) Erickson, Matt (and Rai-Anne) Erickson, and Dana (and Tom) Roderick, besides other relatives and many friends.

Jimmy Scanlon

Hopkins Fire Department – Minnesota ★ Paid-on-Call Assistant Chief ★ November 4, 2022 ★ Age 38

Assistant Fire Chief James “Jimmy” Scanlon passed away on November 4, 2022, from multi-organ failure after suffering an aortic dissection the day prior.

Growing up, Jimmy was smart and inquisitive! Obsessively! He was never satisfied with the simple answers; he wanted every detail of how and why that he could learn. That early thirst for knowledge served him well throughout his life. Jimmy spent his childhood playing soccer, camping, showing horses, and developing an interest in technology.

He always wanted to be a police officer growing up. In 2004, he had the chance to start working with his dad in IT at the Hopkins Police Department. His career grew from there. He joined the Police Reserve and became a public service officer, moving into dispatch and reorganizing and maintaining the property room. After 13 years, he left Hopkins PD to pursue professional growth with a position supervising the dispatch center at the Bloomington Police Department. He was given an opportunity to move into a role where he found a lot of interest and joy working with communications technology.

In 2008, Jimmy found what would end up being his true passion, becoming a firefighter with the Hopkins Fire Department. Impressing early, he was awarded Fire Fighter of the Year 2009. He progressed through the ranks to assistant chief in 2019. Highlights of his career include receiving multiple Life Saving Awards and helping deliver two babies on calls! He happily served his community with dedication and honor for 14 years. He took great pride in being a third-generation firefighter, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather who served with the Bloomington Fire Department.

Jimmy’s kids were the light of his life! He loved travel, firearms, planes, trains, weather, and history. He was smart, knowledgeable, dependable, and capable. He could wire a squad car or build a three-season porch. He knew something about everything. He could do anything. He could figure out a solution to any challenge presented to him. He was the person that everyone came to for help. He was a natural leader who people wanted to follow, because they knew that he was leading them the right way.

Jimmy leaves behind his high school sweetheart, Kat, and their children, Arabella (17), Killian (7), and twins, Laina and Liam (4). He is also survived by his parents, Bob (Kristy) Scanlon and Terri (Chris) Scanlon; his grandparents, Larry and Linda Bergquist; and his uncle, Ken Scanlon. He was preceded in death by his grandparents, Robert and Joan Scanlon and Yvonne Bergquist.



Bobby Elliott

Shannon Fire and Rescue – Mississippi ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ May 29, 2022 ★ Age 49



Bobby Joseph Elliott was born in Lee County, Mississippi, to the late Bobby James Elliott and Sarah Lee on October 3, 1972. He went to Mooreville High School. He was a self-employed mechanic all his working life before becoming disabled. He enjoyed working with his hands, repairing engines, and generally piddling in his shop.

A great outdoorsman, Joe enjoyed fishing, wheeling and dealing, auto repair, grilling and cooking, and being with his family and his fellow volunteer firemen. He loved spending time with his grandchildren.

He was a devoted volunteer fireman in the town of Shannon. He became the fire department chef and was a great conversationalist and all-around great and loving guy. He loved being with his fire guys all the time. I have heard many stories about their gatherings.

He departed this earth and left behind his wife of ten years, four daughters, and one grandson. He now has two more grandchildren who entered this world without their PawPaw.

He left this earth doing what he loved doing. He will always be dearly loved and missed.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Jessica Criddle Hamblin

**Southeast Chickasaw Volunteer Fire Department – Mississippi ★ Volunteer Firefighter
September 23, 2021 ★ Age 41**

Jessica Criddle Hamblin, born July 2, 1980, to Tommy and Teresa Criddle, was a dedicated wife, sister, aunt, and daughter. She graduated from Houston High School (HHS) in Houston, Mississippi, and then went on to Northeast Community College to study education. After her time in education, she chose a career in the medical field. A person who continually put others before herself, she was well known in the community. In 2021, during the height of the pandemic, her love of neighbor and community motivated her to join the Southeast Chickasaw Volunteer Fire Department.

Jessica, a devout Christian, was very active with her church, First Baptist Houston, and other organizations in the community. She was known by many children in the church and community as a second mother and consistently gave her all to ensure that they grew up knowing they were loved.

In her spare time, Jessica loved to travel with her husband. She also loved to listen to Christian music and attend sporting events at Mississippi State University. She was a true maroon and white, bell ringing, diehard Bulldog fan.

Jessica has left a legacy in this community that will endure and impact others for generations to come. We are proud of her and will never forget the joy and love she brought to our lives.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Michael Lacy

Tchula Volunteer Fire Department – Mississippi ★ Volunteer Chief ★ August 2, 2022 ★ Age 55



Fire Chief Michael Lacy, 55, of the Tchula Volunteer Fire Department, died on August 2, 2022, after suffering a heart attack while returning from a medical assistance call.

Michael was born to the late Elbert Young and Essie Lacy and attended school at the Tchula Attendance Center. He was employed as a custodian for Holmes County Schools and had previously worked for the Holmes County Sheriff's Department.

He is survived by his wife, children, his sisters and brothers, his grandchildren, and a host of extended family members and friends.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Dustin Wayne Brandhorst

Ebenezer Fire Protection District – Missouri ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ March 18, 2022 ★ Age 35

Dustin Wayne Brandhorst passed away in the line of duty while responding to a structure fire. Dustin died doing what he loved, in service to his community. Firefighting was his passion and lifelong dream. Dustin's number, 27, was retired in his honor.

Dustin started his service with the Ebenezer Fire Protection District in January 2019. He was an extremely active volunteer, serving in any capacity needed, logging over 700 hours of training, and responding to nearly 300 calls. In 2019, he was honored by the department for the most volunteer hours served. Dustin was in the process of becoming a certified firefighter and was planning to transition to the department full-time.

Every spare moment was spent with his fellow brothers and sisters at the Ebenezer Fire Protection District. He brought his construction expertise to the station and helped with multiple remodel projects. Structure fires were Dustin's favorite call, and he was always there to help, bringing the water that was needed to put out the fire. He had a passion for aerials, and one of his happiest days was when he got signed off to drive the aerial, Quint 4.

There were not enough hours in the day for Dustin. In addition to the time spent at the fire department, Dustin owned two businesses, Southwest Missouri Remodeling and DWB Services. Between building decks and installing Christmas lights, his name was a household one for many families in the community.

Known as "Cowboy" or "The Kid," Dustin was never seen without his cowboy boots and was almost always outside. He loved dancing, kayaking, and camping. Of all his loves, his family was the greatest. His wife, Erin, and his children, Landon and Lillianna, were his greatest joy. He was incredibly proud of them and never stopped talking about them when given the chance.

Dustin did everything big. His Christmas light displays and his eating habits were unmatched. He could eat an entire box of spaghetti noodles in one sitting. Tacos, chocolate cake, homemade ice cream and country club eggs could not be left unattended in the kitchen. As big as his appetite was, his sense of humor, his smile, and his heart were bigger.

He is survived by his wife, Erin; children, Landon and Lillianna; puppies, Bella and Hope; his mother, Dianna (Redshaw) Brandhorst; mother-in-law, Tammy Hittenberger; sister and brother-in-law, Marci and Ethan Balkin; brother and sister-in-law, Jeff and Jackie Brandhorst; and so many extended relatives. Dustin was preceded in death by his father, Marc Brandhorst, and his father-in-law, Vince Hittenberger.

Dustin served in life as an Eagle Scout, business owner, and firefighter. Even in death, he continues to serve and save lives as a tissue donor. He was the nicest guy, a friend to everyone.



Kevin Lawrence Cremer

City of Festus Fire Department – Missouri ★ Career Chief ★ January 24, 2022 ★ Age 48



Kevin served as a loyal and highly respected chief of the Festus Fire Department. He was a hero to many people and received several awards during his career, including a Life Saving Award for successfully performing CPR on his own mother-in-law and reviving her.

Kevin was married to his wife, Tonya, for 25 years. They had two adult children, Ashley and Jacob. He was father-in-law to Jake and a father figure to Kaylee. Kevin was blessed with his first grandson, Cooper, in 2017. He quickly became Cooper's hero and best buddy. In 2022, he was blessed with his first granddaughter, Marcella. She had him wrapped around her finger at first sight.

He was the son of Don and Donna, brother to Michele and Brian, and son-in-law to Rick and Karen.

The pride that Kevin's parents had in him was always evident. The love his wife and children had for him was beyond measure. He always made people laugh with his dad jokes and his signature "Wooooo!" that he would yell.

Kevin was a mentor to countless firefighters, coworkers, and family members. He made the world a better place by being in it. He is greatly missed each and every day.

Kevin has a third grandchild on the way, and you can bet that stories will be told about what a great man and hero their Paw Paw was.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Rickey Lee Hobbs

Waynesville Rural Fire Protection District – Missouri ★ Career Battalion Chief ★ September 14, 2021 ★ Age 60

Rickey Lee Hobbs was born in Waynesville, Missouri, on December 17, 1960, the son of Francis Junior Hobbs and Bonnie June (Boren) Hobbs Fritts. After Rick's birth, the family moved to Richland, where he attended school and lived out his life as a public servant.

On June 6, 1981, Rick married his soulmate, Robin Lynn Helms. They shared over 40 years of marriage while proudly raising their son, Russell, who he raised to be a successful career firefighter.

Rick had a wonderful work ethic and began working early in life at such places as Independent Stave, Ozark Fisheries, and H.E. Builds Gates. He worked as a lineman for the City of Richland for 29 years. He soon found a love for emergency services. He was a sergeant with Richland Police Department. He obtained his EMT license and served a term as a Pulaski County Ambulance District board member.

In 1980, Rick joined the all-volunteer Richland Fire Department and in 1983 became the fire chief. In 1990, the City of Richland decided to stop providing protection to the rural area surrounding Richland. Rick could not bear the thought of those people being left unprotected, so he formed Tri-County Fire & Rescue Association to protect those residents. He served as the chief of both departments. In 1997, Richland Fire disbanded and contracted protection to Tri-County. Rick built the department from the ground up, starting with a 1953 Chevy Pumper and hand-me-down equipment. In 2018, Rick received an opportunity to become a career fireman. He began working for the Waynesville Rural Fire Protection District as a battalion chief.

Rick became a member of the Fire Fighter Association of Missouri. He was the president and a founding member of the Pulaski and Laclede County Fire Chiefs Associations. He was the emergency management director for the City of Richland and worked at the annual University of Missouri's (MU) Winter Fire School Expo. These are just a few things Rick was involved with; if truth be known, there are many more that could be listed.

Rick greatly loved his family. They were his true treasures in life, especially his beautiful granddaughters, Nadia and Alaina, who were Poppy's pride and joy. He also had a newfound love of camping, golf carts, and Ford 9N tractors.

The community was greatly blessed to have such a man as Rick who truly did have a servant's heart. His devotion and dedication were unmatched. Though he may be gone from our sight, Rick Hobbs's legacy will live on forever.

The Lord is with you, You mighty warrior. Judges 6:12



Donald Mark Kisner

Hurley Fire Protection District – Missouri ★ Volunteer Chief ★ February 5, 2022 ★ Age 74



Donald Mark Kisner was born February 2, 1948, in Fairmont, West Virginia, to John and Claude (Knotts) Kisner.

On December 7, 1967, Mark joined the U.S. Army, where he became a radar operator, serving a tour in Vietnam and receiving several medals. He was honorably discharged on October 20, 1969.

Mark married Connie North in 1977, and the newlyweds moved to Hurley, Missouri. In 1979, he joined the Hurley Fire Protection District as a volunteer and later became a fire chief for several years. Mark was more than a fire chief. He was an active member in his community, the Hurley Saddle Club, and the Stone County Citizens in Action. He operated the American Pride Food Service, where he enjoyed cooking at community events. He worked at Clever Mill for 20 years and was the owner and operator of the Spring Valley Stock Farm. He spent the last four years driving for Hillhouse Pump Service.

He was a husband, a father, a brother, a veteran, a counselor, and a leader. Through the Hurley Fire Auxiliary, Mark donated money to the school lunch program so that no child went without a hot meal. He delivered food baskets to those in need at the holidays and was at community fundraising benefits to help fellow community members.

Mark enjoyed hunting, fishing, camping, visiting family in West Virginia, and being with family and friends. He also had experience working on vehicles and kept them in good condition.

Hurley Fire Chief Mark Kisner was devoted to the people of Hurley and paid the ultimate sacrifice due to a battle with COVID-19.

He is survived by his loving wife of 44 years, Connie Kisner; two sons, Jason and Steven Kisner; a daughter, Jamie Bolin; two brothers, Michael Kisner of Texas and Timothy (Susie) Kisner of North Carolina; one sister, Rebecca Edwards of West Virginia; and a host of nieces and nephews. He will be missed by his family and friends.

Robert Lee Moore

Kennett Fire Department – Missouri ★ Career Captain ★ December 4, 2022 ★ Age 57

Robert Lee Moore was born on August 8, 1965, in Dexter, Missouri, to the late Amos Cornelius Moore Sr. and the late Effie Lee Green Moore. Robert served the city of Kennett, Missouri, for over 30 years. He began his career as a part-time firefighter with the Kennett Fire Department in September 1992 and was promoted to the rank of lieutenant in November 1994. He accepted a full-time position as a police officer with the Kennett Police Department in May of 2000, while he continued to serve as a part-time firefighter. In May of 2005, Robert accepted a full-time position with the fire department and continued to serve as a part-time police officer. In August 2019, Robert was promoted to the rank of captain with the KFD. He also worked security for different housing complexes. He was a well-respected member of Kennett's public safety team and committed to seeing the success of the community.

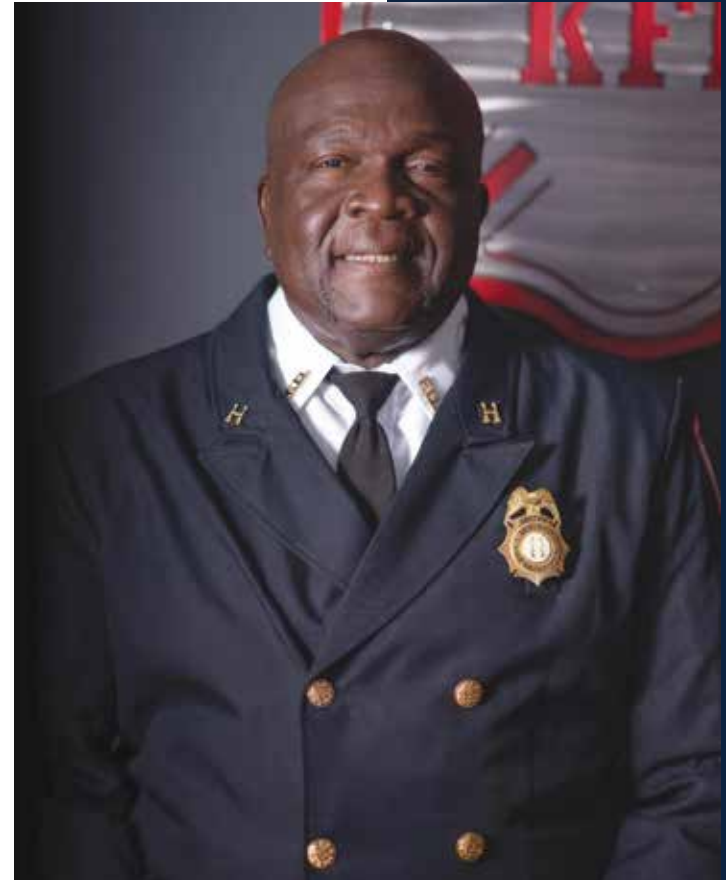
In the words of Robert Lee Moore, "It's important for me to do my best to make my community safe...I hope that if I or any of my family members are in need of help, that we will receive the same help and service I offer."

Robert received numerous awards and was recognized at the state level by officials after his heroic efforts saved several lives in the Kennett, Missouri community. He was awarded the Woodmen Life Lifesaver Award in 2017.

Robert was very hardworking, committed, and dedicated in all that he did. He lived his life for his family. Robert loved his three girls, Tiffany, Chelcie, and Hillary, and had a special place in his heart for his three grandchildren, Tyquavious, Hazel, and Ginger. He showed them unconditional and unchanging love. Robert made it his business that they didn't go without anything and was only a call away for everything. That was the type of father and grandfather he was.

During his free time, he enjoyed barbecuing and entering barbecue contests with some of his greatest friends, visiting family and friends out of town, fishing trips, going out to the deer woods, Friday pizza nights with his grandchildren, watching his favorite team play (Chicago Cubs), completing yard work, and taking vacation trips. He was looking forward to the finished build of Station 2 of the new Kennett Fire Department and retirement.

Robert is missed every second and every minute of every day. His laugh, his jokes, that good ol' barbecue, his love, his advice, and his presence were unmatched. He was 57 years old when he departed this life at his home from an apparent heart attack, hours after responding to an emergency fire call.



Benjamin James Polson

St. Louis Fire Department – Missouri ★ Career Firefighter ★ January 13, 2022 ★ Age 33



Benjamin Polson was born in 1988 in St. Louis, Missouri. He grew up in the Bevo Mill neighborhood of South City with his sister and his parents. His mother was a teacher, and his father was a city firefighter. He was close to his family. He began playing hockey at the age of just five. He attended Catholic schools where his mother taught at Holy Innocents and Saint Raphael the Archangel. Ben attended Vianney for high school. He was a strong student and athlete. He loved music and was quite the dancer. He made friends everywhere he went.

For college he traveled to Springfield and obtained an economics degree from Missouri State. He then attended Drury University, where he earned an MBA. During his time there he traveled to China with some fellow students and walked the Great Wall. He then moved to Kansas City, where he earned his law degree from UMKC.

After nine years of achievements in higher education, Ben's enthusiasm for the outdoors led him to Vail, Colorado. There he worked as a ski instructor on the slopes. He was a natural athlete. He loved to ski, mountain bike, hike, and whitewater raft.

All the while, Ben was contemplating a life of service—joining the St. Louis Fire Department to become a firefighter like his father. When the opportunity arose, he returned home to answer the call to duty. He received his badge as a graduate of the Kenneth G. Smith Sr. Memorial Recruit Class on March 20, 2020. He was very proud to be sworn in as a firefighter.

Ben was eager to be of service to the city. He began work at Engine House 26. Later he moved to Engine House 13, where he served the neighborhood of Hamilton Heights.

Ben enjoyed spending his off days with friends and family. He would often frequent Forest Park, where he spent time with his mother, sister, and brother-in-law at the Art Museum, Muny, Boathouse, and Zoo. He enjoyed going to the Lake of the Ozarks for weekends of fishing with his father, a retired fire captain. He liked to golf, play hockey, and watch football. He had many amazing friends and made time for all.

Ben's life was lost in the line of duty while battling a house fire on January 13, 2022.

Some people make you laugh a little louder, smile a little brighter, and live life a little better. Ben was one of those people. He will always be in the hearts of many.

Gregory James Thompson

Lakeview Heights Fire Protection District – Missouri ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ January 6, 2022 ★ Age 66

Greg came from humble beginnings in North Carolina. He was a good son and brother. He picked tobacco as a youngster.

As an adult, Greg went to work for DuPont doing steel construction and later moved on to maintenance supervisor with Purina Mills, Inc. This job brought Greg to Missouri where we met and married, creating a blended family. From Purina, Greg went on to a career as a dental technician with Patterson Dental. He retired at the end of 2017.

We moved to our cabin that we built at the lake, where we were planning on enjoying our retirement. In March of 2018, we attended the Lakeview Heights Fire Protection District annual dinner. During that dinner there were discussions around the need for volunteers. Out of the blue, Greg felt such a strong calling to join the organization that he joined that very night! He enjoyed the companionship with the firehouse crews, the challenges of being a fireman and first responder, and helping to make a difference in our small community.

In December 2021, a few days after his last call as a fireman, Greg contracted COVID-19, which turned into pneumonia. On January 6, 2022, Greg lost his battle and quietly passed away.

Greg was a great husband, father, and grandfather who is missed beyond reason. We were blessed to have him in our lives. He was so very proud of his work with the Lakeview Heights Fire Protection District.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Kenneth M. Lemanski Jr.

Cascade City/Farmer Rancher Rural Volunteer Fire Department – Montana
Volunteer Firefighter/EMT ★ October 20, 2021 ★ Age 37



Kenneth Lemanski Jr. was born at Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Oscoda, Michigan, to Cynthia and Kenneth Lemanski Sr. on March 13, 1984. At just a few weeks old, Ken moved to Sumter, South Carolina, where he spent the next 18 years of his life until joining the military. He was a proud United States Air Force Veteran with 16 years of honorable service.

Ken was dedicated to serving not only his country but also his community. He was a key volunteer for the Cascade Farmer Rancher City Volunteer Fire Department and an active volunteer EMT with the Cascade Country I-15 Quick Response Unit.

Ken's family was his greatest joy in life. Ken was a devoted father and loving husband. He leaves behind his wife of nearly 15 years, Crystal Lemanski; children, Abigail (Abby) Lemanski and Theodore (Teddy) Lemanski. He loved spending his time with them more than anything. He loved coaching his kids in whatever sport or activity they were involved in, from being a Girl Scout dad to wrestling coach and everything in between!

Ken was an avid outdoorsman. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, and camping with his family. Ken also enjoyed the simpler things in life. On summer nights he could be found sitting on his front porch with his wife, watching the kids play and country music on the radio. Ken enjoyed grilling. If he was at a BBQ, you were guaranteed to find him at the grill. He loved watching NASCAR and college football. GO CLEMSON!!

Ken will always be remembered for his love and support of his family and community. He left a lasting impact, not only in his community but with just about everyone he met.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

James C. Bissonette

Broken Bow Fire Department – Nebraska ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ September 23, 2021 ★ Age 34

James C. Bissonette was born on April 1, 1987, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. When he was a young child, he moved to Merna, Nebraska, to live with his great aunt and uncle, who he lovingly called Grandma and Grandpa.

James grew up in Merna, Nebraska. Through high school, he farmed and ranched with local farmers. He grew to enjoy helping with prescribed pasture burns. Following graduation, he enrolled at Mid Plains Community College, where he studied automotive technology. In high school he met Michaela Nelson. The young couple represented the true meaning of high school sweethearts. Michaela became his wife in 2011, after dating for seven years. The two were married for ten years and had two children, Ella and Jack.

In James's short 34 years, he created a life to be proud of, one which he fought to live exactly how he wanted—fiercely loving his family, diligently working hard, and attentively caring for his kids. James was not only the best family man, but also the friend everyone loved to have. He boldly advised, "what needs done," insisted on helping wherever he could, and carefully slowed down for good conversation around a summer campfire. His smile could light up a room, and his playful sense of humor could leave you with a laughing-induced side ache. He held firm to his values, didn't do anything that he didn't believe was right, and did everything true to his word. He lived each day as its own.

In recent years, he became passionate about volunteering his time with the Broken Bow Fire Department. He also loved driving the ambulance for the EMS crews. He spent a lot of time trying to perfect putting on his gear quickly, taking the kids with him to fill the pop fridge at the station, and learning everything about the new ladder truck.

His life ended too soon, but we find comfort knowing that he is in God's hands. His wife, children, friends, and family now have the biggest angel watching over them. James left this world a hero by donating his organs to help save others.



Darren D. Krull

Elwood Volunteer Fire Department – Nebraska ★ Volunteer Chief ★ April 7, 2022 ★ Age 54



Darren D. Krull, 54, of Elwood Nebraska, passed away April 7, 2022, in the line of duty while serving his community.

Darren was born on December 19, 1967, in Hastings Nebraska, to Gary and Glenda Krull. Darren grew up in Glenvil, Nebraska, and graduated from Sandy Creek High School. In 1986, he joined the Glenvil Fire Department.

On March 9, 1990, he married his wife, Cheryl (Stolley) Krull. Through the union, he gained three beautiful daughters, Tessa Sadd, Christina Davison, and Roxann Bieck. They resided in Glenvil, Nebraska, when he joined the service and was stationed in Oklahoma. Eventually they moved to southwestern Nebraska, where Darren ended up working for Aurora COOP. Here he enjoyed his time managing and serving the local community.

Throughout his life he dedicated 36 years to firefighting and EMT services and served as fire chief in the communities of Overton and Elwood for a combined eighteen years. Darren lived his life fully dedicated to helping, teaching, and serving others. Darren loved traveling with his wife, spending time with his grandkids, and woodworking in his shop. He also had a special place in his heart for his dog, Ace, who he taught to pray before meals.

Darren was a devoted and loving family man, leaving behind his wife of 32 years, Cheryl, of Bertrand; children, Christina and Christopher Davison of Bertrand and Roxann and Brad Bieck of Aurora; and grandchildren, Clayton, Amber, Tristen, Skeet, Briley, Rhett, Brek, and Piper. He is also survived by his parents, Gary and Glenda Krull, of Glenvil; sisters, Michelle Harm and family and Amy Krull and family; and many other extended family and friends.

Darren departed this earth knowing he served his community and was a leader for his fellow firefighters. We cherish the memories and take comfort in knowing that he is in the hands of our lord.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Michael L. Moody

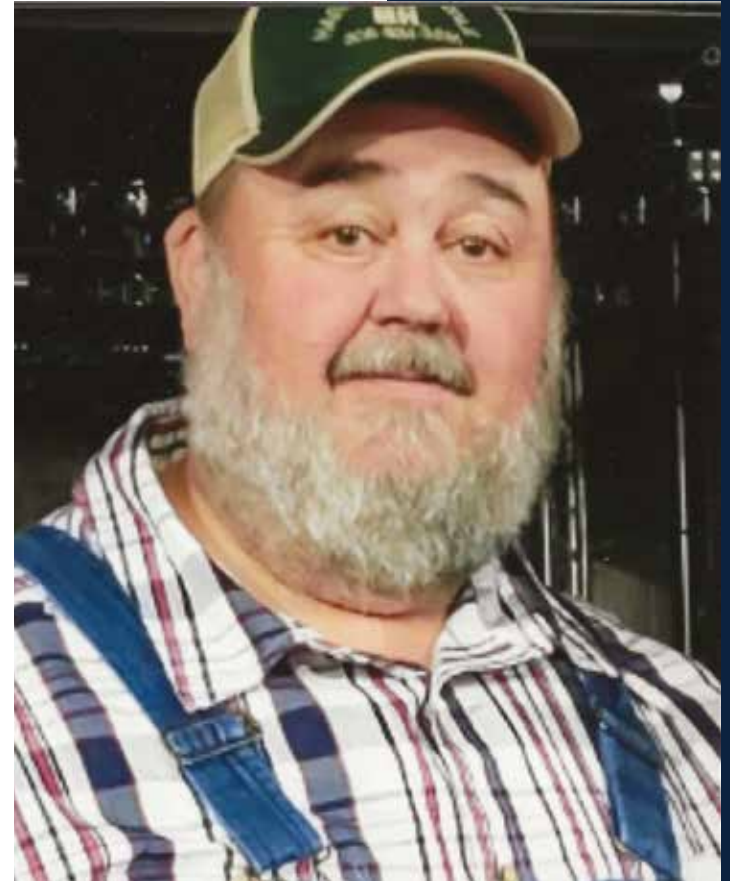
Purdum Rural Fire District – Nebraska ★ Volunteer Assistant Chief ★ October 2, 2022 ★ Age 59

Michael Lee “Mike” Moody was born on March 5, 1963. He lived his whole life in the very small town of Purdum, Nebraska, population 10. Mike began going to fires from the time he was in high school. He served on the Purdum Rural Fire Department for over 40 years. At the time of his passing, he had been the assistant fire chief.

He was very dedicated to helping others. Whenever a fire call came in, he would be the first to the truck, not because he enjoyed going; he was there to help his neighbors save their land and structures.

Mike was a very devoted family man. He had two children and two stepsons who he treated as his very own. He loved spending time with his three grandchildren. Mike would have been married for 35 years. He leaves behind his mother, Sherry Mulligan; wife, Cheryl; son, Jack; daughter, Hollie; stepsons, Jeff Pflaster and Jared (Ashley) Pflaster; and his grandchildren, Rylyn, Alexis, and Jhett.

Mike loved doing anything outside. He loved hunting and especially fishing. He loved to rise early to see the sunrise every day. He loved to take the grandkids out to see the pastures, check cows, and see what wildlife they could see. He had a great sense of humor and loved to laugh. He is missed by many, but we know he is in God’s hands, which gives us comfort.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Christopher J. Parker

Fairbury Rural Fire District #8 – Nebraska ★ Volunteer Captain ★ November 16, 2021 ★ Age 41



Christopher John Parker was born and raised in Fairbury, Nebraska. Growing up, Chris loved tinkering in the garage with his dad, taking apart anything he could get his hands on, and hopefully remembering how to put it back together. He was a wizard with a toolbox and could pick up new skills at the drop of a hat. He loved his job as the shop foreman at FPM Metals, where his unofficial title was “Jack of All Trades, Master of None.”

Chris was a dedicated member of the Fairbury Rural Volunteer Fire Department for 22 years. He was inspired and honored to serve with his father, Darrell Parker, who died in the line of duty in 2014. Chris was very passionate about fire safety and was instrumental in relaunching the town’s fire prevention program, becoming the department’s public outreach officer. He especially enjoyed managing the Fire Prevention Week programs at the schools, which included a coloring contest with the grand prize winners getting to ride to school in a firetruck! Chris was serving as a captain at the time of his death.

Chris was a committed follower of Christ and was dedicated and baptized in the Fairbury Foursquare Church, where he became a member, served on the church council, and was the church’s sound tech. Chris loved serving the Lord anywhere he was needed. Anyone who knew him can attest to his dependability, generosity, and selflessness. When no one else answered the call for help, Chris was always there.

Along with his servant’s heart, Chris will always be remembered for his whip crack humor and fun-loving spirit. He loved fishing, camping, cooking on his Blackstone griddle, and making his wife happy with DIY around the house projects. Above all else, he loved God, his family, and serving on the fire department.

Chris married the love of his life, Sarah, in November of 2009. They had two beautiful girls, Gracie and Melodie, who had Daddy wrapped around their fingers. He also left behind many family members, including his mother, Kathy Parker; his sisters, Heidi (Eli) Rogers and Michelle (Steve) Novak; grandmother, Ramona Fischer; parents-in-law, David and Marsha Lutze; siblings-in-law, Rebecca (Neil) Stroklund, James (Paula) Lutze, Libby (Doug) Ewoldt, Mary (Alex) Jacob, and Naomi (Mitchell) Holt; and many nieces and nephews. All of his family are looking forward to seeing him again some day in heaven.

Chris touched the lives of so many people. He is truly missed each and every day.

Michael J. Galimberti

Pease Fire and Emergency Services – New Hampshire ★ Career Firefighter ★ January 23, 2020 ★ Age 50

Michael John Galimberti was a dedicated public servant. His love for the fire service began in 2001 when he began volunteering for Middleton Fire. He then worked for Farmington Fire, where he received the 2007 Chief's Award for his loyalty and dedication to the department and was promoted to the rank of lieutenant, receiving the Officer of the Year award in 2011. He concurrently began working for Pease Fire in 2008, where he stayed for the remainder of his career. After moving to Wolfeboro in 2016, he also became a call firefighter for Wolfeboro Fire in his spare time. A strong sense of brotherhood and desire to help his community ran deep in his veins.

Michael was both curious and compassionate by nature and found outlets for his many interests and need for community service. He was considered a jack of all trades and was an entrepreneur at heart. His major business adventures included HVAC refrigeration, telemarketing, landscaping, barbecue concession and catering, and photography. His hobbies included drone flying, fishing, hunting, farming, bee keeping, and motorcycle riding. Michael was also an avid drummer. He was a member of the band Forte from 1990-1995 and several other bands throughout the years. He began drumming for his local church services in 2018.

Michael was an active member of the Red Knights NH #2 Motorcycle Club which allowed him to participate in one of his favorite hobbies and serve the community. Through the club, Michael contributed to several charities, including Honor Flight New England, Sarah's Ride, and the Lt. Chris DeWolf Scholarship. Michael was a considerate, jovial, caring person who enjoyed helping others. His service to others continued until his death from occupational bile duct cancer on January 23, 2020. For his last thoughtful contribution, Michael participated in the Last Wish Program, giving of himself to support cutting edge research at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

Michael was a devoted and loving family man, leaving behind his wife of 18 years, Kimberly; daughter and the light of his life, Emilia; parents, Norman and Rosemarie; siblings, Dennis and Shayna; in-laws, Pamela and Keith; nephews, Brandon and Christopher; and nieces, Morgan and Kaitlyn.

Michael was loved and respected by so many. The loss of Michael has left his family, friends, and community with a missing piece that can never be replaced. His family is beyond proud of him.



Charles W. Achong

Jersey City Fire Department – New Jersey ★ Career Captain ★ March 29, 2018 ★ Age 67



Charles W. “Chuck” Achong was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, to the late Charles William Sr. and Rita Achong, on October 2, 1950, weighing 10.4 pounds at birth! He and his only sibling, Dorothy, attended Sacred Heart Elementary School and graduated from Snyder High School. Charles went right to work after graduation as a printer for a local newspaper, The Hudson Dispatch, and as a ski instructor in upstate New York. In 1971, Chuck was drafted into the Army during the Vietnam War. After his time in the military, Charles attended Jersey City State College, where he majored in criminal justice and fire safety.

In 1979, Chuck joined the Jersey City Fire Department, where he proudly served his community for over 30 years. Over his long, prestigious career, Charles received numerous awards such as a Group Effort Medical Award and Valor Awards. On September 11th, after the collapse of the Twin Towers left the site devastated, Charles wasted no time making his way to Ground Zero to help with the rescue, recovery, and clean-up efforts. The prolonged exposure to contaminated air and toxic chemicals eventually took his life on March 29, 2018. When Charles departed this earth, it was the direct result of doing something he loved. Although taken too soon, this fact has been a source of comfort for his family and friends who continue to miss him dearly.

Captain Achong was a devoted husband to Rosemary, his wife of 40 years, a devoted father to his only child, Kristine, and a friend to many. In his spare time, Charles enjoyed golfing, skiing, cooking, and traveling the world. He took great pride in taking care of his family and was always ready and willing to help a friend. He was an active member of the Friendly Sons of the Shillelagh, Elks, VFW, and the Belmar Fishing Club, where you would be sure to find him with a cold one.

Chuck was a rock of stability for his family, and his loving and jovial spirit endures.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Ronnie Cordero

Little Falls Fire Department – New Jersey ★ Volunteer Assistant Chief ★ April 22, 2020 ★ Age 61

Ronnie Cordero was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, on December 26, 1958, to Rafael and Irma Cordero. One of seven siblings, Ronnie was raised with his brothers, Carlos F. Bonilla and Ralph Cordero; twin sisters, Norma and Irma; and sisters, Miriam and Lucy Cordero.

Ronnie began his EMS/fire career the day he retired from the Marine Corps in 1976. He was hired by McCabe Ambulance Company in Jersey City that same day and would tell the story:

The day I left the Marine Corps, I went to McCabe's Ambulance, sat in the chair for an interview, and when I was asked what skills I had, I responded, "Well, I can kill people." And I was hired on the spot.

This charm and wit would continue to be honed over a long and wonderful career in both EMS and firefighting. Ronnie was always the life of every social event he attended and would always greet you with his iconic smile and quick wit.

In 1980, Ronnie joined the Little Falls Fire Department as a member of Enterprise Engine Co. #2. He later transferred to the Eagle Hose Co. #1, where he rose through the ranks, eventually becoming assistant chief of Company #1 and serving in that position from 2007-2019.

Ronnie was a devoted husband to his wife, Jean Esperanza Cordero, and a loving father to his children, Ronnie Cordero Jr., Karla Cordero, and eldest son Ronnie Brandon Cordero. He was a caring stepfather to Marie, Nelizza, and Imee Calbuso. He was also survived by three grandchildren, eleven nephews, and seven nieces, all of whom deeply loved and cared for him.

On September 11, 2001, Ronnie responded with Company #1 to the terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center in New York City. He rode in Ambulance 842 and Rescue 1, responding to calls in the city assisting FDNY and other agencies on that day.

As with many big personalities, Ronnie amassed a wealth of knowledge and experiences in various careers, from private limousine services and toy stores to being in charge of zoning and housing for the township of Little Falls. One of his favorite pastimes was toys and collectable items. Ronnie had an impressive toy and coin collection from various hobbies and countries. Of course, one of his main focuses was fire and EMS toys.

Ronnie left us too soon on April 22, 2020. To the members of Company #1, he will always be remembered as "Chief." But to everyone lucky enough to know him as a friend, he will always be remembered simply as "Ronnie."



Alex K. Moss

Upper Saddle River Fire Department – New Jersey ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ October 30, 2022 ★ Age 54



Alex K. Moss was born in Manhattan, New York, on July 15, 1968. He attended the Upper Saddle River Elementary Schools and graduated from Cavallini Middle School in 1982. He then attended Devonshire College Prep School in Mahwah, New Jersey. After high school, Alex attended Technical Career Institute in Paramus, New Jersey; this training led him to work at Capintec, Inc. for six years. His love of electronics and technology then led him to start working in the cellular industry and eventually owning his own company, Moss Consulting Group, LLC, for 11 years until his passing.

Alex joined the Upper Saddle River Volunteer Ambulance Corps when he was 16. He then joined the Upper Saddle River Fire Department when he turned 18 and graduated from the Bergen County Fire Academy in New Jersey. He was a dedicated firefighter and life member of the Upper Saddle River Fire Department for over 30 years. He also served on the Mahwah Co. 2 Fire Department for three years.

Alex loved live music and had a penchant for the Grateful Dead. He loved their energy and the way it brought his many friends together as one big family. He spent many nights during the last several years going to hear many different Dead cover bands and befriending some of the members. He loved listening to music in his many cars that always had fantastic sound systems that were, of course, installed by him.

Alex's motto was, "Life is too short to drive boring cars." He loved classic cars and owned many himself. He loved being outdoors, four-wheeling with friends in the woods, the beach, boating and jet skiing, and fishing wherever he could find a body of water.

Alex was a loving and devoted husband, father, brother, uncle, and friend to many. He is survived by his wife of 28 years, Kelli Moss; his daughters, Nicole, Allison, and Jessica Moss; his mother, Susan Antonelli; his sister, Carolyn Moss; his stepfather, Edward Antonelli; and his father, Charles Moss.

He had a special relationship with each of his daughters, or his "three little birds," as he referred to them. Nicole, his first, transformed him into a dad by opening his loving heart the moment she arrived. Allison, his second, shared his love of sunny beaches and boating. Jessica, his baby, shared his love of cars.

Alex loved his family, friends and, most importantly, serving and helping others.

Basil J. Pizzuto

Saddle Brook Fire Department – New Jersey ★ Volunteer Captain ★ November 23, 2022 ★ Age 49

Basil J. Pizzuto died on November 23, 2022, after conducting fire department SCBA training. He would have turned 50 the next day.

Born in Hackensack, he was a graduate of Paramus Catholic. He graduated from Montclair State University with a degree in math education and held master's degrees in educational technology and educational leadership.

Basil was a beloved longtime educator who many remember as having been influential and instrumental in their lives. In his 24 years at Ridgewood High School, he served as a mathematics teacher, lead grade administrator, assistant principal, and interim co-principal. He was described by current and former students and colleagues as a mentor and a pillar of the school community. He led educational trips abroad to destinations that included Germany, Italy, Iceland, Greece, and Eastern Europe.

He served with the Saddle Brook Fire Department for more than 30 years, starting as a junior firefighter at age 16. During his tenure with the fire department, he served as engineer, lieutenant, captain, and assistant chaplain.

Basil was an accomplished musician who performed with colleagues and students and was a church organist at St. Philip the Apostle Church in Saddle Brook. His taste in music ranged from classical to classic rock.

He is survived by his wife and two children, his siblings and their families, a large extended family, and many colleagues and friends who all miss him dearly.

He was remembered as a mentor and father figure to many, a true friend and family man, and a passionate advocate for his students and school. He lived his life fully and had a profound and positive impact on many people's lives.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Matthew A. King

Bernalillo County Fire Department – New Mexico ★ Career Lieutenant ★ July 16, 2022 ★ Age 44



Lieutenant Matthew A. King started with the Village of Corrales Fire Department in 2000 as a volunteer firefighter. He worked with Albuquerque Ambulance Service starting in August of 2002 through April of 2009. He was a volunteer firefighter with the Village of Los Ranchos Fire Department starting in 2003 until he was hired there in 2007. Lieutenant King worked for the Village of Los Ranchos until 2009. He worked for a short period of time serving for Sandoval County Fire Department and Rio Rancho Fire and Rescue.

Lieutenant King started with Bernalillo County Fire & Rescue as a firefighter/paramedic on August 15, 2011, and was promoted to lieutenant on January 18, 2020. During his tenure with Bernalillo County Fire & Rescue, Lieutenant King served as a rescue specialist on the Metro Air Support Unit, as an EMS educator and in the training division.

He was the beloved husband of Audrey King and father to Aedden and Kyra.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Owen T. Carlock

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ May 23, 2012 ★ Age 58

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Owen Thomas Carlock lived in Staten Island, New York, before settling in Middletown, New Jersey. Owen was a graduate of the New York City School of Printing and the FDNY Academy. He was last employed by Vornado Realty. Owen's true calling was as a New York City firefighter, where he worked from 1981 through 2004. He was a September 11, 2001, first responder and survivor from Ladder 122 in Brooklyn.

Owen's dedication and bravery during the tragedy earned him the honorary keys to the city from the Town of Dunn, North Carolina. For a period of time, Owen was part of Rescue 5 in Staten Island and was a certified rescue diver. After retirement, Owen volunteered at the Morgan Firehouse in Sayreville, New Jersey. While Owen received many awards and honors, he would be the first to say he was just doing his duty to protect those in harm's way.

Owen passed away of 9/11-related illnesses on May 23, 2012, surrounded by his FDNY brothers. Owen was preceded in death by his parents, Bernard and Catherine Carlock, and his brother, Lt. Neil Carlock, USN. Owen's grandfather, Bernardo F. Carlock, was in the FDNY and died in the line of duty as a department chief, Division 4, in 1930.

Owen was the best husband to his wife, Shirley, and best father to his three children, Emily, Jacquelyn, and Evan. He became a grandfather shortly before his death to Layla Jean, and since his passing has had a grandson, Nicholas Owen. He is missed by all his family and friends, including his brothers, Gil and Brendan, and sister, Moira; their spouses; and many nieces, nephews, and cousins. We take comfort knowing Owen is with his parents, brothers Edmund and Neal, brother-in-law Mark, and fellow firefighters and friends who passed before him and after.

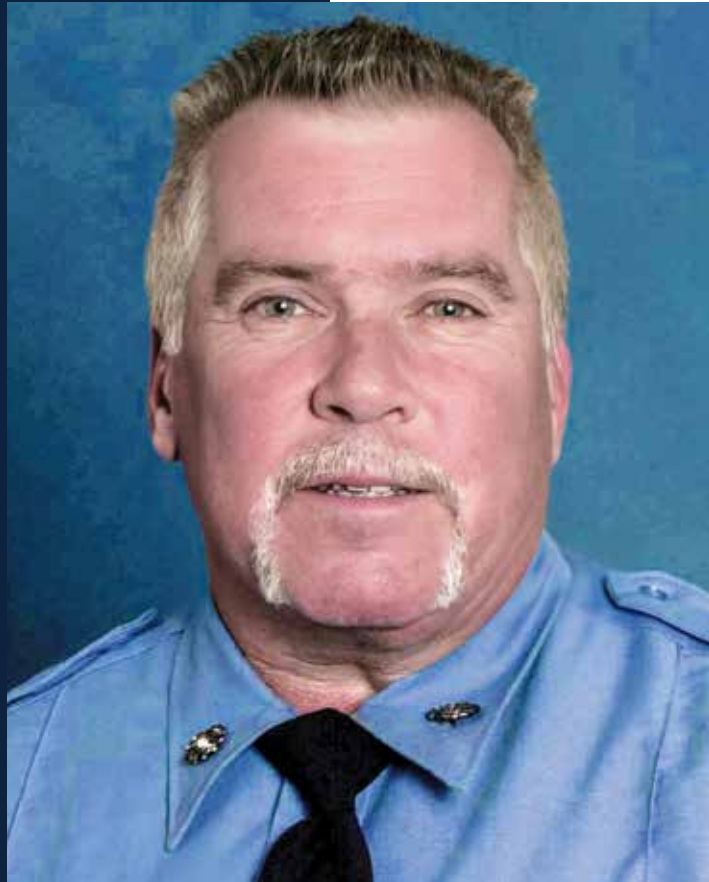
Owen had so many wonderful friends. No matter where he went, he always knew someone, including an NYC firefighter he saw on a cruise to Alaska while docked in Skagway with his family and friends from Ladder 122. He loved the comradery that came along with being in the FDNY. Owen loved collecting shirts from local departments wherever he traveled and would literally give the shirt off his back to those in need.

Our FDNY family, Morgan Fire Co., and local department have been and remain instrumental in keeping Owen's memory alive. His family wants to thank everyone for their continued support and love in the years since Owen's untimely passing. Thank you to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation for also keeping his memory alive. Owen would be so touched and honored.



Joseph K. Daly

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ March 24, 2021 ★ Age 70



Joe was born in Woodside Queens, New York, to the late Eugene and Helen Daly. Joe was the third boy in the family.

Joe comes from a family of firefighters that includes two uncles, his older brother Charlie, his son Thomas, nephew Gene, and his godson Danny. Joe started out his career in 1983. He went to FDNY Engine 288 in Queens, then put in for a transfer to work at a busier firehouse. He ended up at FDNY Engine 218 (Bushwick Bomberos) in Brooklyn. Joe fell in love with the firehouse dog, Wolfie, a stray that the guys took in. Wolfie went on every run with them. He even had his own fire coat. Joe loved being a firefighter! He proudly served with the FDNY for 22 years.

Joe's children, Kim (NYPD detective) and Thomas (FDNY firefighter), were the light of his life. Joe eventually became a grandfather to Ben and Mackenzie. He adored his grandchildren. Joe, Ben, and Mackenzie played for hours dressing up as firefighters.

Joe loved to golf. After retirement, he got a part-time job at a golf course. Joe met so many good friends along his career with the FDNY and working at the golf course. Joe was sick for many years with multiple 9/11-related cancers. Everything that Joe went through, he always had a smile on his face.

We miss you every day! It's not the same without you in our lives.

Always Loved, Never Forgotten, Forever Missed! Until we meet again.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Stephen A. Feron

Hauppauge Volunteer Fire Department – New York ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ June 11, 2022 ★ Age 49

Stephen Augustine Feron was born in Smithtown, New York, to the late Maud and Stephen B. Feron III on September 14, 1972. He grew up in Hauppauge, New York, with his sisters, Sheila and Maureen. He was a Boy Scout and an altar boy at his church, starting his lifelong community service journey. He joined the Hauppauge Fire Department in 1989 and graduated from Hauppauge High School in 1990. He then attended the State University of New York Maritime College at Fort Schuyler, Bronx, New York.

While obtaining his Bachelor of Science in International Transportation Management, he served as president of the fraternity Phi Rho Pi. During summer sea sessions on USTS Empire State VI, he became a member of the Order of the Blue Nose for sailing above the Arctic Circle and a member of the Order of the Rock for traversing the Strait of Gibraltar. Stephen returned to S.U.N.Y Maritime to complete his Master of Science degree in International Logistics and Transportation. His education led to a successful career in the maritime industry that involved vessel planning, marine operations, and marine insurance. Most importantly, during his time he made lifelong friendships and great memories.

Stephen was a volunteer firefighter at the Hauppauge Fire Department for 33 years. During his time there, he rose to captain of truck company, was the technical rescue team leader, Firefighter of the Year in 2007, and he became the first second-generation chief of department in the history of the department. He was instrumental in developing the Technical Rescue Unit and joining the Islip Town Technical Rescue Group. This led Stephen to join the Suffolk County Urban Search and Rescue Team, where he participated as a team leader in many of the exercises and was activated for Super Storm Sandy.

Stephen was operating at a USAR water rescue drill at Smith Point Park, New York, when he suffered a medical emergency. Lifesaving measures were administered, and he was transported to the hospital, where he passed away shortly thereafter.

In 2000, Stephen married his childhood friend, Kelly, with whom he has two children, Anna and Stephen. As a family, they enjoyed vacations and competitive board game nights. He was always there to cheer his children on at their sporting and theater events. Along with his family, sisters Sheila and Maureen, he is also missed by his mother-in-law, Maureen; brothers and sister-in-law, Rob, Michael, and Felicia; and many nephews, nieces, cousins, and friends.

Work, church, home and family, you could always count on Stephen for a kind smile, helping hand, quick wit, and a good laugh.



Daniel Robert Foley

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ February 22, 2020 ★ Age 46



Firefighter Daniel R. Foley was destined to work in Rescue 3. He was born on May 14, 1973, to the late Thomas and Patricia Parchen Foley and grew up in West Nyack, New York. Danny always wanted to be a firefighter and was a volunteer with West Nyack.

He loved playing football for Clarkstown South, Iona College and FDNY. He loved country music, hunting, fishing, and spending time with friends and family. He lived his life to the fullest. He was a teacher and coach while he waited to get on the fire department.

That call came in February of 1999. Danny's goals and dreams were fulfilled, and he was able to work with his brother for the FDNY. They also played football together on the FDNY football team.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, Danny's brother, Tommy, climbed aboard Rescue 3's apparatus. Firefighter Tommy Foley died in the line of duty at the World Trade Center while serving his city and nation. He stood for everything that is good in this world, and FF Danny Foley was determined to follow in his brother's footsteps as a firefighter at Rescue 3.

Danny moved from Engine 68/Ladder 49 to Rescue 3 after 9/11 and spent the remainder of his career there. Danny was cited eleven times in his career for his lifesaving bravery, his last rescue happening on his last tour at Rescue 3.

Tragically, after a yearlong battle with World Trade Center-related pancreatic cancer, Danny died on February 22, 2020. He left behind his wife, Carrie; five children, Erin, Kiera, Brianne, Kendall, and TJ; his sister, Joanne; nieces, nephews, cousins, and countless friends.

He will always be remembered for his spirit, bravery, demand for excellence, and smile.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Jesse Baier Gerhard

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ February 16, 2022 ★ Age 33

Jesse Baier Gerhard was born on October 26, 1988, to Bruce and Lynn Gerhard. He is survived by his parents, his brother, Casey; sister-in-law, Kristi; nephew, Bradley; and niece, Kylie.

Jesse's passion in life was helping others. He always went the extra mile for friends and strangers alike. Despite facing challenges growing up with dyslexia, Jesse persevered and pursued his dream of becoming a firefighter, never having a backup plan.

Jesse had dreamed of being a firefighter since he was two years old, inheriting his grandfather's old leather FDNY captain's helmet, which he wore everywhere. Every Halloween, he would dress up as a firefighter and wear the most current bunker gear that his parents could find. At the age of 20, Jesse joined the Islip Fire Department as a volunteer firefighter and later joined their racing team, the Islip Wolves. The members of the Islip Fire Department and the racing team became a second family to Jesse.

In 2014, Jesse was accepted into and completed the FDNY EMS Academy, taking a significant step towards his dream. He spent three years with the EMS department before taking a promotional test and graduating from the FDNY Fire Academy, FDNY Badge #12023

In 2017, he was stationed at "The Big House" in Far Rockaway, which became his new home. He spent the next five years starting with Engine #264. Jesse's passion and knowledge of tools, which he inherited from his father, led him to move across the floor to Ladder #134. He was always trying to learn new skills to improve his craft. Most recently, he began practicing welding with leftover rebar from job sites. You could always find Jesse at his workstation at the firehouse, building new things for the house or improving on old designs. At Jesse's plaque dedication at "The Big House," we learned of all the changes Jesse was responsible for at the house, which will forever be a part of his legacy there.

Jesse lived by the cliché "Do what you love, and you will never work a day in your life." This was how Jesse had felt about the life he had built himself. Even in death, Jesse continued to help others by being an organ donor, which led to saving the lives of several recipients. Now, through his family's efforts, the Jesse Gerhard Memorial Foundation will continue his mission of helping those in need.



Ronald H. Kemly Sr.

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Battalion Chief ★ November 7, 2021 ★ Age 74



Ronald Holmes Kemly died November 7, 2021, from lung cancer related to his response to the World Trade Center after the September 11th attacks.

He grew up in the Bronx and graduated from Fordham Preparatory School, where he excelled at track and played football. He completed a degree in criminal justice at John Jay College.

Ron served with the FDNY for 39 years, climbing the ranks from firefighter to battalion chief. He played on the inaugural FDNY football team.

He and his wife raised their two children in Eastchester. Ron loved family time at the beach or barbecuing in the backyard. He played on several community football and softball teams and coached in several youth sports leagues. Eventually, he divided time between Naples, Florida, and Stone Harbor, New Jersey.

Ron is survived by his wife of 53 years, children, grandchildren, and his brother, as well as extended family and friends.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Timothy Patrick Klein

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ April 24, 2022 ★ Age 31

Timothy Patrick “TK” Klein was born September 17, 1990, to his proud parents, Patrick and Diane (Dee Dee). He was the oldest of four children; his three sisters, Tara, Bridget, and Erin, absolutely adored him. He has a large extended family—his brother-in-law, Sean, many aunts, uncles, cousins, his Nana, and girlfriend, Courtney—who all love and miss him each day. He grew up in Rockaway Beach, New York and attended St. Francis De Sales Elementary School, Archbishop Molloy High School, and York College of Pennsylvania, where he received his bachelor’s degree in sports management.

Timothy was easy going with a quiet but infectious personality that everyone gravitated to. His love of sports and country music began early and stayed with him throughout his life. He faced many adversities along the way but remained driven and hardworking, never wanting special treatment or attention to the tribulations he faced. That quiet modesty and humility allowed him to become the amazing person he was. He had a strong work ethic and always knew he wanted to become a NYC firefighter, like his grandpa, uncles, cousins, and father proudly did. He achieved his dream, joining the fire department in December 2015.

Tim was loved and respected, earning the firehouse nickname “The Golden Child,” because no one on the job could ever say a bad thing about him. He was always early to shift and eager to learn all he could to improve himself. He loved everything about working in Canarsie, Brooklyn, and was studying to take the lieutenant’s test. He strived to do his best in everything he did. He volunteered with Fight for Firefighters, building ramps for those in need, and assisted the Fire Family Transport organization. He was constantly thinking of ways he could help others.

Timothy was a Rockaway Beach kid through and through. His favorite day was on the beach with family and friends, his cooler of Bud Lights, his boombox blasting country music, playing volleyball and cornhole until dark. He was a polite, charismatic, good-hearted boy who grew up to be a great man who always managed to do the right thing. His love of life was evident in how he lived.

Tim passed away doing what he loved as one of New York’s Bravest, which was his true purpose in life. He was always putting others before himself, making the ultimate sacrifice to save another. He overcame childhood health obstacles and accomplished his dream epitomizing what it means to be a New York City firefighter—humble, kind, selfless, and always there to help. He is missed every day, but his life and legacy live on, which helps us all live each day with a little Timmy in it.



William P. Moon II

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ December 20, 2022 ★ Age 47



William P. “Billy” Moon II, 47, was a friend and mentor to everyone. He was a lifelong dreamer who aspired to be in the FDNY and did not stop until he was. Known for his big personality, huge smile, and passion for the job, Billy was also a devoted husband and father of two.

Billy was preparing for a drill inside his firehouse when he fell about 20 feet and suffered a serious head injury. That fatal fall, which occurred on December 12, 2022, would not be his final act of bravery. Instead, Billy answered his last alarm on December 20, 2022, with the final gift of donating his organs.

He left behind his wife, Kristina, and their two young children, Brianne (10) and Colin (8). He is also survived by his parents, William and Patricia; his sister, Christina VanSteen; and his brother, Robert.

Raised in Islip, New York, Billy was a 21-year member of the FDNY. He was also a 28-year volunteer in the Islip Fire Department who served as chief of the department from 2016-2017. He began his career in L133 in South Jamaica, Queens, where he spent almost 20 years before transferring to Rescue 2 in Brooklyn. Rescue 2 was a big milestone in his career, as he knew the significance and was proud of the accomplishment he spent years working towards.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Thomas G. Oelkers

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ May 16, 2021 ★ Age 46

Thomas G. Oelkers was born August 28, 1974, to Thomas M. and Catherine Oelkers. Tom was the oldest of his siblings, Nancy, Allison, and Michael. Tom attended St. Stanislaus Kostka School for his elementary education, where he was an altar server, a Boy Scout, and loved playing baseball. Tom went on to attend Archbishop Molloy High School.

After graduating Archbishop Molloy in 1992, Tom attended St. John's University. Tom was a member of Pi Lambda Phi Fraternity and held positions on their chapter executive board as KOE and pledge master. It was at St. John's University that Tom met the love of his life, Erika Ryan. They were engaged in 1998 and married on October 8, 2000.

After graduating from St. John's University in 1997 with a Bachelor of Science in criminal justice, Tom became a member of the New York City Police Department. Tom started his career in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, but spent the majority of his career in Midtown North Precinct. Tom responded to the 9/11 rescue and recovery efforts and spent several weeks on the pile before joining the New York City Fire Department in October 2001.

Initially assigned to Ladder 152 in Queens, Tom transferred to Engine 92-Ladder 44 in the South Bronx, where he spent his career. At the firehouse, Tom was the resident chef; his pulled pork and Thai chili shrimp recipes were a firehouse favorite. Tom also ran German Night and the Annual Dinner Dance for the firehouse. Tom enjoyed playing on the firehouse softball team and was an offensive lineman on the FDNY Bravest football team. He played on the team when they won the championship.

Tom loved the NY Yankees and the NY Giants and enjoyed going to games. Tom loved to cook at home, go to concerts, ride bikes, and take vacations with his family.

While Tom loved the FDNY, his pride and joy are his three daughters, Camryn, Juliet, and Scarlett. He loved getting them on and off the bus for school, going on their field trips, and attending career day at school. Tom would spend his weekends on the soccer field and going on bike rides with the girls. He enjoyed taking them to the beach and pool during the summer.

Tom was passionate in his fundraising for RSRT (Rett Syndrome Research Trust), a rare disease that affects his oldest daughter Camryn. He was one of the first families to host their annual NYC Gala, which has raised millions of dollars for research over the past decade.

Tom was diagnosed with 9/11 related cancer in August 2020. He passed away nine months later at the age of 46.



Raymond R. Phillips Jr.

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ January 27, 2018 ★ Age 64



Raymond Reynolds “Gonzo” Phillips Jr. was born in the Bronx, New York on January 30, 1953, to the late Raymond and Florence Phillips. He attended DeWitt Clinton High School, where he played for the football team. As a teenager, he dreamt of being a firefighter. He would “buff” the firehouse on Briggs Avenue, where his son Brian is currently a member.

Ray took both the NYPD and FDNY civil service tests. The police department called first, and he joined in 1974. A year later, he was laid off due to city cutbacks. Luckily, the fire department hired him, and he was sworn in on November 26, 1977. Upon graduating probationary school, he was assigned to Engine 42. Shortly after, he transferred across the floor to Ladder 56. Many years later, he transferred to Ladder 29 and then to Rescue 3 in 1990. Upon moving upstate with his family, Ray joined the South Blooming Grove Volunteer Fire Department in 1991. Ray was detail to Special Operations Command around the time of the World Trade Center attacks. He responded from quarters to assist in the search and rescue operations. Ray retired from the Fire Department of New York in 2003 after serving his city for 28 years.

Ray was not only a dedicated firefighter, he was also involved in many FDNY organizations. He was the vice president for the Holy Name Society and a member of both the Emerald Society and the Bravest football team. Ray’s true passion was playing Santa for over 35 years for the widows and children, which he did from 1982 to 2017.

Ray was a devoted husband and loving father. He is survived by his wife, Maureen, of almost 34 years, and his three children, Raymond, Brian, and Courtney. All three of his children are first responders. Ray is a police officer in

the NYPD, Brian is a firefighter in the FDNY, and Courtney is a burn center nurse at Westchester Medical Center.

As the starting center for the Bravest and standing at almost 6 foot 3, Ray was a big guy. Some would say larger than life. This led to his nickname, “Gonzo,” which was a play on the word “Godzilla” from a fellow firefighter. It immediately stuck. To this day, if his family or friends met a fellow FDNY firefighter, he would say, “Ask them if they knew Gonzo!”

Ray will be missed, but the family and friends he leaves behind carry on the legacy he created—helping people.

William J. “Billy” Steinberg

Forestburgh Fire Company #1 – New York ★ Volunteer Assistant Chief ★ January 15, 2022 ★ Age 37

William J. “Billy” Steinberg was born February 16, 1984. He attended and graduated from Monticello Central School District with perfect attendance in June 2001. While attending school, he was on the wrestling and golf teams. Billy was in the orchestra from fifth grade until graduation. He attended Orange County Community College in Middletown, New York.

He loved his family and his community. Forestburgh has a Veterans Memorial, which he took care of from the age of 14.

Billy always knew he would become a firefighter. He joined in February 2000 as a junior volunteer firefighter. He was fourth generation firefighter with 22 years of dedicated service. Billy was elected president of the company and then worked his way up through the line to assistant chief. On his birthday in February 2022, he was promoted to chief.

On January 15, 2022, after the fire company was called for mutual aid for a structure fire, Billy collapsed on the scene with a heart attack.

Billy was always concerned about the safety of the residents in his community, so for his Eagle Scout project he designed, made, and installed 539 reflective house numbers to ensure the safety of the residents in the fire district.

Billy earned his Eagle Scout Rank, Class of 2000.

Billy had a personality larger than life itself. He would always be there to lend a helping hand and never expected anything in return. He had a heart of gold. He would light up any room when he walked in. In his spare time, he loved taking rides on his motorcycle, and he was an avid hunter and fisherman.

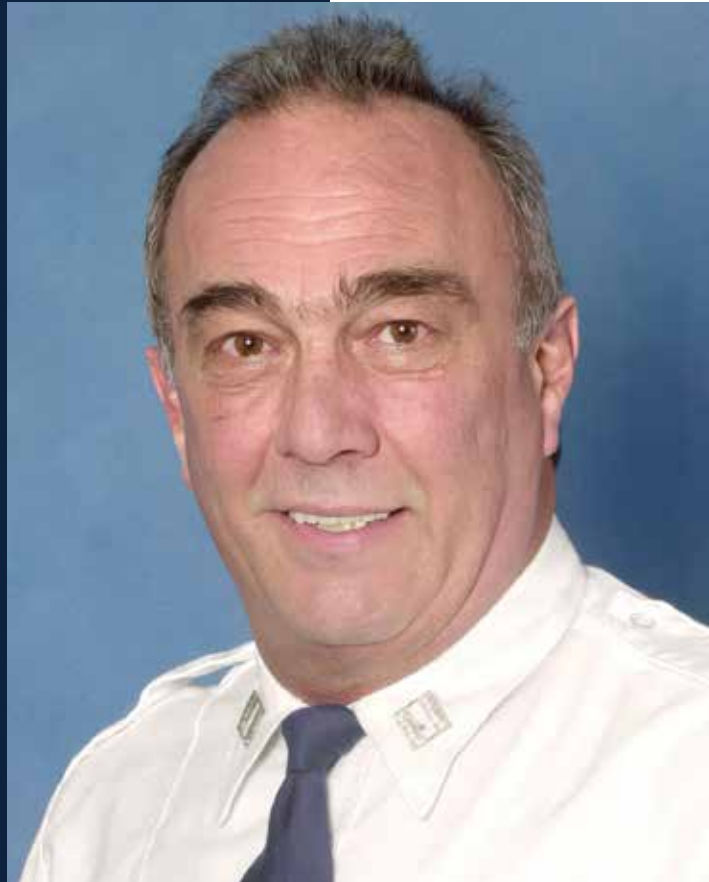
Billy leaves to cherish his memory, his family and many friends that miss him dearly. Life will never be the same without him.

People think of Billy as a hero, but his family and friends know that he is and always will be a legend.



Victor C. Valva

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Captain ★ February 19, 2018 ★ Age 69



Victor Valva died on February 19, 2018, from illness related to his response to the World Trade Center after the September 11th terrorist attacks. He was stationed at Engine Company 167 in Annadale before retiring at the rank of captain.

He was a Vietnam veteran.

He is survived by his wife, daughter, son, brothers, grandchildren, and extended family.

Vic was remembered as a good friend, a brave man who served his country and community, and a fireman's fireman.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Tracy A. Veno

**City of Olean Fire Department – New York ★ Career Firefighter/Code Enforcement Officer
December 10, 2021 ★ Age 63**

In Loving Memory of FF Tracy Veno
9/10/1958 - 12/10/2021

Throughout his 39 years of service, Tracy Veno was a dedicated member of the City of Olean. He took on several roles, serving not only as a firefighter but also as an advanced EMT, fire investigator, police officer, union trustee, code enforcement official, and member of Local 1796.

During his lifetime, Tracy was continually expanding his knowledge in countless areas of interest. He was well versed in an array of areas ranging from the intricacies of code enforcement to carpentry and everything in between. He was the number one call on the list of his family, friends, coworkers, and many others when they needed expert knowledge, skills, or advice.

Above all, Tracy was a family man. He cherished his family and dedicated his life to his loving wife, Victoria Veno, and his three children, Meghan, Nick, and Luke, who were all his greatest accomplishments. He adored his grandchildren and lit up in their presence.

Tracy was a hero not only to his colleagues, but especially to his family and many friends. He encouraged two of his nephews to pursue careers as firefighters. Nathan Veno and Bandon Muniga chose their paths to emulate their “family hero,” Uncle Tracy.

To know Tracy was to love him. He had a special aura about him and a smile that was welcoming and friendly. He always put others before himself and was willing to offer a helping hand to anyone in need. Tracy’s generosity towards his family, friends, and community was at the forefront of his many qualities, which also included hard work and perfectionism. He built his family’s dream home, where there was an abundance of love and countless memories were made. Tracy took pride in his tool collection and could often be found organizing his tools when he wasn’t busy mowing the lawn or remodeling a house.

Tracy Veno was a larger-than-life guy whose footprints will forever be embedded on the hearts of everyone who had the pleasure of knowing him. For that, he will truly be forever missed.

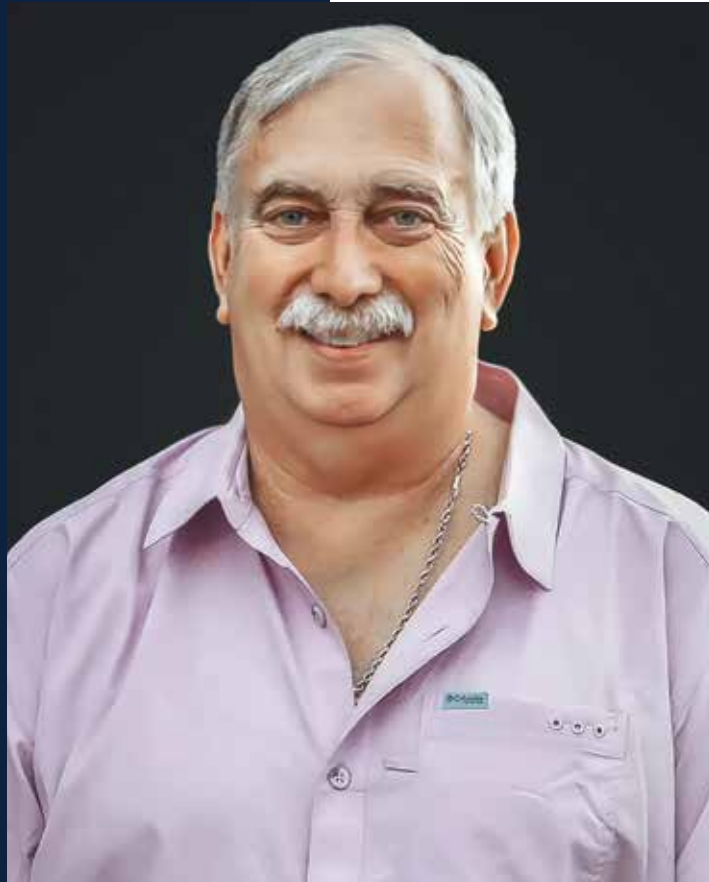
When my final alarm sounds, I shall dwell in the station house of the lord forever.

– The Firefighter’s 23rd Psalm



Kenneth Kelly “Ace” Cameron

Pocket Volunteer Fire Department – North Carolina ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ December 9, 2021 ★ Age 65



Ken was born in Lee County on January 2, 1956. He was a 1974 graduate of Sanford Central High School and went on to attend East Carolina University, where he studied nutrition, dietetics, and food management and was a member of Phi Tau fraternity. He was a diehard Pirate fan and was known for his zany purple and gold outfits.

For 53 years, he worked in the family business, Godfrey Body Shop, becoming the owner in 1997. A member of the Pocket Volunteer Fire Department for 30 years, he served in many positions, including president for the last 20 years.

Ken was a member of the Sanford Elks Lodge for 35 years and a deacon at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church. Most mornings you could find Ken at his local diner of choice, Wenger's, enjoying both food and fellowship.

He was well known for his honesty, generosity, and willingness to help anyone in need. He was a devoted family man who loved his wife and girls more than life itself, and he was loved and respected by all who knew him.

He is survived by his wife, Janet Combs Cameron; his daughters, Whitney Cameron Cope (Christian) of Mechanicsville, Virginia, and Kenleigh Cameron Stafford (Rhett) of Summerville, South Carolina; and special nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Ken was the world's greatest Pop Pop to his four grandchildren, Cameron Belle Cope, Christian Lee Cope, Charles Paxton Stafford, and Kennedy Rose Stafford. He is also survived by his beloved dog, Asa.

Ken passed away on December 9, 2021, from complications of a stroke he suffered while responding to a motor vehicle accident with Pocket Fire Department on July 23, 2021. Ken went into the hospital and never returned home. Heaven gained a kind, generous, and loving angel.

Ken's number, 908, was officially retired. He will never be forgotten.

Jason Dean

Clayton Fire Department – North Carolina ★ Career Deputy Chief ★ September 22, 2020 ★ Age 42

Jason Dean was a lifelong resident of Clayton, North Carolina, and loved his hometown. Jason truly was born with a servant's heart; he began following his calling immediately after high school by enlisting in the United States Army as a cavalry scout. Upon returning home, Jason explored the various areas of emergency services. He worked briefly as a dispatcher with Johnston County Sheriff's Department, then earned his EMT-Intermediate certification and joined Clayton Area Rescue. Jason worked with colleagues to build the department's technical rescue team. Continuing his education, Jason obtained Firefighter I and II certifications and joined Clayton Fire Department, a volunteer department at the time. As he gained more knowledge of firefighting, Jason realized he had found his niche!

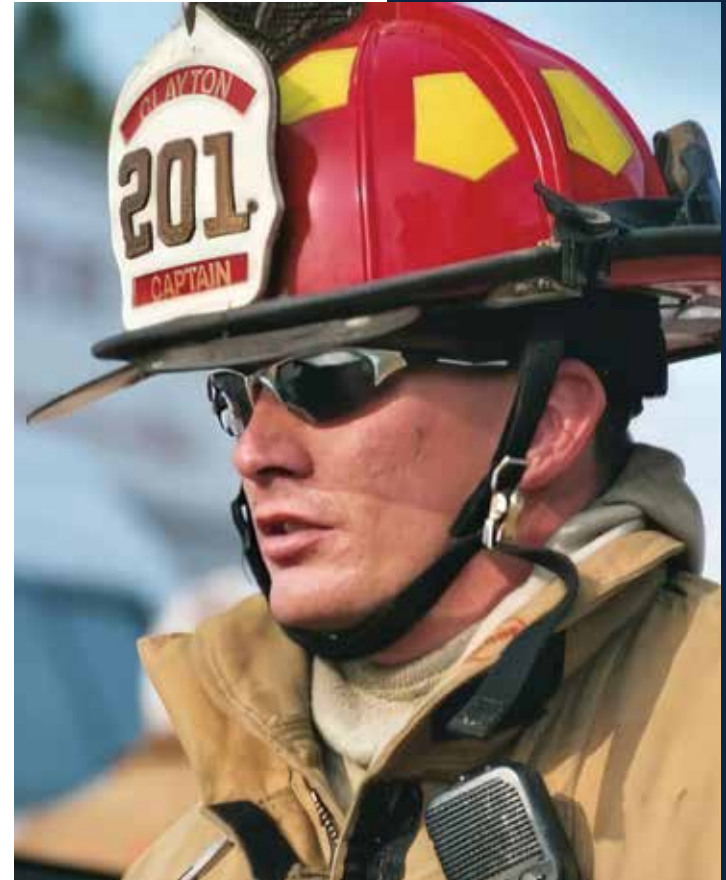
In 2000, Jason fulfilled his childhood dream by becoming a full-time firefighter for the Town of Cary, North Carolina, while continuing to serve part-time with his hometown department. As his career progressed at Cary Fire Department, Jason moved through the ranks of his home department as it evolved into a career department. In January 2007, Jason proudly became a full-time employee of Clayton Fire Department as the training and safety officer, then deputy chief of operations.

During his tenure at Clayton Fire Department, Jason worked to move the department forward by diversifying the types of services it provided as the community grew. Jason took tremendous pride in developing safety and response protocols and continuously taught certification courses for his firefighters so they could be prepared for any type of call the department received. Additionally, Jason's love of teaching led him to numerous departments and community colleges throughout North Carolina.

While the fire service held a large portion of Jason's heart, he held an equal amount of love for his family.

Jason's mother, Becky, always spoke of her son and his career with great pride. In April 2004, Jason married his wife, Kristy. Together, the couple had two daughters, Addison (15) and Harper (9). Jason often invited his daughters to observe his classes so they could see Daddy in action.

His family proudly shared Jason with the Town of Clayton; as such, the entire community was affected by his death. Furthermore, Jason's distinguished reputation in the fire service led to an outpouring of support for his family and department from across the entire state. While he is missed every day, Jason's family and brothers and sisters in the fire service honor his life by continuing to serve those in need.



Harold L. Heglar

Kure Beach Fire Department – North Carolina ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ January 20, 2020 ★ Age 72



Harold Luther Heglar was born in Mooresville, North Carolina, on November 6, 1947, and moved with his family to Kure Beach in 1948.

For 45 years, he proudly served the town of Kure Beach on the fire department, acting as fire chief for 42 of those years. He remained in town for every hurricane the town has experienced since his initial move, including major Hurricanes Hazel, Diana, Fran, Floyd, Florence, and Dorian. As the fire chief, Harold was intimately involved in all aspects of preparation and recovery for these storms. He transitioned the volunteer fire department to its current combination department during his tenure as chief.

His leadership resulted in the department ISO rating of 5, putting the Kure Beach Fire Department in the top 28% in North Carolina during his tenure. Harold remained a working chief until retirement. After formally retiring as the fire chief in December 2017, he continued serving as a volunteer firefighter until shortly before his passing on January 20, 2020. In May of 2020, the department was awarded an ISO rating of 2, putting the Kure Beach Fire Department in the top 2% of fire departments in the country, a testament to his leadership, training, and the legacy he passed on to the entire department.

In addition to his fire department service, Harold was a master electrician, an avid fisherman/hunter, and an excellent tennis player. Harold was a man of service. This was highlighted through his impact, not only upon the various departments of the town of Kure Beach, but also upon the members of the community he personally helped during his life. Harold's impact as a mentor was most acutely felt by the many men and women in the fire and lifeguard services of Kure Beach and New Hanover County. His generosity was felt by many members of the community.

Whether it was an electrical issue he resolved, a broken part he helped to fix, or a word of advice he offered, he was available to help those who meant the most to him. Everyone knew, if you needed something fixed and he couldn't do it, he knew someone who could. They also knew that if they needed an honest opinion, he was the man for the job.

Harold passed away in his home, surrounded by family and friends, holding his beloved wife, Diane, on January 20, 2020. Harold leaves behind his loving wife, Diane; his brother, Jerry (Cathy), KBFD (retired); his sons, KBFD Lt. David (Lisa) and Michael; his late stepdaughter, Amy (Aaron) King; stepson, Timothy Holden; and eight grandchildren, Elise, Erin, Matt, Micah, Weazy, Nay Nay, Eli, and Issac.

Scott William Hinson

Concord Fire Department – North Carolina ★ Career Senior Firefighter ★ June 3, 2021 ★ Age 52

Scott William Hinson was born in Concord, North Carolina, to the late Edward Hinson and Margaret Hinson. Scott was dedicated to the fire service, his friends, family, and community. Scott was a part of the fire service for 27 years. He began his career as a volunteer at Jackson Park Volunteer Fire Department at age 16. He joined the City of Concord in 1989.

Scott was a kind, loyal, gentle family man. He left behind his wife, Beverly; son, Garrett; stepson, Brantley (Devan); and two grandsons, Tucker and McConnor, who were the love of his life. No one could be sure who adored the other more.

McConnor and Tucker would go the Scott's "fire room" and get in the metal pedal fire truck. A call for service would come in, and those two grandboys would pedal the truck and unreel the firehose while Paw Paw narrated the call. There were many fires fought in the living room and kitchen. These are memories the grandbabies will never forget.

Scott made lifelong friends with his brothers in the fire department. Throughout his eight-year battle with cancer, his fire department family was unwavering with their love and support. Kerry Ritchie had Scott's 1974 Camaro refurbished for him, and one of Scott's greatest memories was riding in that car with Tim Crainshaw and Kerry Ritchie during his final days. Tim was always by Scott's side during sickness and health. The night Scott passed, Tim placed his fire department blanket over him. Kerry also arranged a parade of fire trucks, old cars, and emergency vehicles, along with a line of well-wishers, who drove by Scott's home on his final birthday less than a month before his passing.

There were so many people at the fire department that took care of Scott. Jake Williams stood by Scott through his career and his illness. Jake did everything he could to allow Scott to continue his career for as long as possible, and he helped orchestrate a beautiful service honoring Scott, exactly as Scott wanted. Sonya Bost did an amazing job of helping us navigate the paperwork to ensure that Scott got the best care possible so that he could have precious time.

Scott said over and over that he was thankful for his gift of time. He expressed how fortunate and blessed he was to be able to spend so much quality time with his family and his friends. He went places and saw things that he would not have, but for his illness. He commented that he had lived two entire lives in those eight years. If we all lived like we were dying...

Scott left this earth with a feeling of so much love and thankfulness for his family and his fire department family.



David S. Holmes

La Grange Fire Department – North Carolina ★ Volunteer Captain ★ February 28, 2022 ★ Age 51



David Scott Holmes, known to many as “Pumper,” died on February 28, 2022, after becoming ill at the scene of a brush fire a week earlier.

He worked on a farm, in lawn care maintenance, and as a fireworks technician. He could operate and repair all kinds of equipment.

David served with the La Grange Fire Department for more than 20 years, working his way up to chief of the department, a position he held for ten years. When his son joined the department, David came out of retirement so he could help train his son and serve alongside him. He was dedicated to the fire department and went above and beyond to serve.

David also served on the La Grange Town Council for twelve years and was the town’s mayor pro tempore.

He was remembered as a friendly person and a family man who was dedicated to serving his hometown.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Ron McGarvey

Waxhaw Community Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad – North Carolina
Volunteer Captain ★ April 26, 2021 ★ Age 56

Ron McGarvey was born September 28, 1964, in Meadville, Pennsylvania, to W. Richard and Ella K. McGarvey.

Growing up, he enjoyed spending time with his four brothers, camping, and running his paper route. In school he played cello, participated in musical theater, and ran cross-country. Ron graduated from high school in Webster, New York, in 1982 and attended Houghton College to study computer science. While there, he sang in the college choir. In 1983, while working at a Christian summer camp, Ron met Tammy Newton, and they married July 16, 1988.

After graduation, Ron worked for Xerox Corporation until he and Tammy were called into Bible translation with Wycliffe Bible Translators. He served in Wycliffe for 18 years at the JAARS Center in Waxhaw, North Carolina, in various computing roles, until God led them out of the organization in 2014. He was working as a business analyst for Wells Fargo Bank at the time of his death.

Ron loved working outside, camping, hiking, gardening, biking, running, working out, being with his family, smiling, and laughing, but most of all serving others.

Ron was servanthood exemplified. Everywhere he went, he found ways to serve. Serving Tammy and their two children, Lydia and Samuel, was his highest priority. Over the years he served in many roles in various churches, from children, youth and young adult leaders, treasurer, hospitality and medical team leads, and Bible study group leads. When his family moved south to serve at the JAARS Center, he discovered new ways to serve through the local volunteer fire department.

Ron served the Waxhaw community for almost 20 years as a fireman/EMT and in various other roles at the department. From 2005-2006 he served as secretary and, in 2007, served as president of the board of directors. In 2013, he was promoted to lieutenant; and in 2015, was promoted to captain, serving in that capacity for the rest of his career.

Ron had an easygoing, loving personality. One couldn't help but like him. He was super competitive but quick to encourage others to do their best. He didn't know a stranger and was always catching up with those he knew, even if it was at a vehicular accident at two in the morning and everyone else just wanted to get back to their beds once the scene was clear! His smile lit up a room, and many commented how his smile and easygoing manner put them at ease during their emergency.

We all miss that amazing smile and upbeat attitude, but we have to trust that God, in His big story, has a purpose to Ron's death that will ultimately bring God glory and bring more people into His kingdom.



James V. Radford

Polly Watson Volunteer Fire Department – North Carolina ★ Volunteer Chief ★ February 5, 2022 ★ Age 63



My firefighter, James V. Radford, also known as “Monk,” was a loving husband, Daddy, and Papa.

He enjoyed lawn mower pulling, because it involved family and friends being together. He had a golf cart that he enjoyed, with lights, a horn, music, and fire stickers on it. It was like a fire engine golf cart.

He retired from the Fremont Fire Department, where he served as a lieutenant and safety officer. At the time of his death, he was serving as chief of the Polly Watson Volunteer Fire Department.

He enjoyed being on the fire department and learning all he could. He didn't finish school, so learning and getting certificates was an important thing for him.

I have to mention our Khloe, our dog that he loved very much.

Until we meet again, I love you always and forever.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

J Sorrell Thomas

Concord Fire Department – North Carolina ★ Career Senior Firefighter ★ December 8, 2021 ★ Age 67

J Thomas was born September 1, 1954, in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. He spent 15 years as an automotive paint and body technician, leaving that profession only to pursue a lifelong dream of becoming a firefighter. During that time, J was a part of the firefighter reserve program, which was his stepping stone to joining the Concord Fire Department full-time. He spent 20 years serving with the Concord Fire Department, before retiring in 2016 with the rank of senior firefighter. His career involved being on the rescue, collapse, and engine company.

J was proud to be a fireman and enjoyed helping, training, and encouraging the younger firefighters. He was well respected by everyone he worked with. He also enjoyed competing in the Firefighter Combat Challenges all over the state. He would wake up early to run 5-6 miles each day before starting his shift and would encourage others to join. This became a morning routine for J, and he would continue running regularly throughout his career as a firefighter and after retirement.

When he was not at the fire station, you would often find him in the garage continuing his hobby of paint and body work or restoring his 1956 Chevy pickup truck. J loved planning and taking trips to the Great Smoky Mountains of Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, and fishing off the Cherry Grove Pier in North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. As soon as he would get home from one trip, he was already planning the next. He loved using these trips to make memories with his children and grandchildren.

After retiring from the Concord Fire Department, J continued serving the community as a volunteer with Odell Volunteer Fire Department. Because of his continued effort and hard work, he was awarded Firefighter of the Year in 2020. During his time at Odell VFD, J was able to respond to calls alongside his son, Daniel, and daughter, Devan.

J was diagnosed with esophageal cancer in 2019 but continued serving the community and the fire department for as long as he was physically able. On December 8, 2021, after a long and hard-fought battle, J Thomas passed away while surrounded by his loving family. He is survived by his loving wife of 36 years, Sandra Thomas; his children, Tonia Jackson (Kyle), Joshua Thomas (Samantha), Daniel Thomas (Danielle), and Devan Clayton (Brantley); seven grandchildren, Rita, DJ, Landon, Jack, Logan, Tucker, and McConnor; and his sister, Debbie Thomas.



Brent A. Upton

Raleigh Fire Department – North Carolina ★ Career Lieutenant ★ March 17, 2021 ★ Age 38



On March 17, 2021, Brent Allen Upton, loving husband and father, passed away at the age of 38 after a valiant, lengthy battle with occupational cancer. Brent was born on December 15, 1982, in Raleigh, North Carolina, to Bruce and Melanie Upton. He was a proud graduate of North Carolina State University and a true, lifelong Wolfpack fan.

He began his career as a firefighter with Raleigh Fire Department in September 2006 as a member of the 33rd Fire Academy. He was promoted to first class firefighter in March 2010, senior firefighter in March 2013, and lieutenant in December 2015. He also served on the HAZMAT team for a long tenure of his career.

Brent was preparing for his next rank when he was suddenly diagnosed with advanced esophageal cancer in May 2018. Following a medical retirement in January 2019, he returned to the department in a part-time administrative role assisting the HAZMAT team. Despite his shy nature and deep desire to not let cancer define him, he openly shared his story in an effort to bring awareness to the growing issue of cancer in the fire service. Additionally, he assisted in advocacy efforts for legislation in North Carolina to provide enhanced benefits to firefighters diagnosed with cancer. This legislation finally passed in the year following his death.

Those who knew Brent experienced his innate ability to light up every room he entered. He was kind, caring, and compassionate, always putting others first. His incredible wit and infectious laugh could put a smile on anyone's face. And his amazing zest for life and adventure were contagious to those around him.

Brent will be remembered for many things, but being a dedicated father and husband was his greatest accomplishment. He was adored by his wife, Catherine, and daughter, Ella. Anyone who was lucky enough to witness his time with Catherine and Ella could easily see the love he had for them. His family was his top priority.

Brent lived his entire life in Raleigh, North Carolina, and loved the city he chose to proudly serve. He blessed his family as a wonderful father, husband, son, brother, uncle, and cousin. He is deeply loved and missed by all and will forever be our hero.

Wayne B. Bingaman

Ripley Fire Department – Ohio ★ Volunteer Lieutenant ★ August 14, 2022 ★ Age 60

Wayne Bruce Bingaman was born to the late Robert and Opal Bingaman on July 3, 1962. The youngest of four siblings, growing up he played baseball and was active in 4-H. He developed a love for the fire service at a young age and became a cadet at age 14, riding his bicycle to the station in Mt. Orab, Ohio, where he grew up.

His love for the fire service was not the only love he had for serving his community, which was a passion that became more evident throughout his life. Wayne dedicated his life to the fire service, completing 45 years before his passing on August 14, 2022. He was serving as a lieutenant when he passed. Additionally, Wayne was an EMT and ended his EMS career at the Ripley Life Squad.

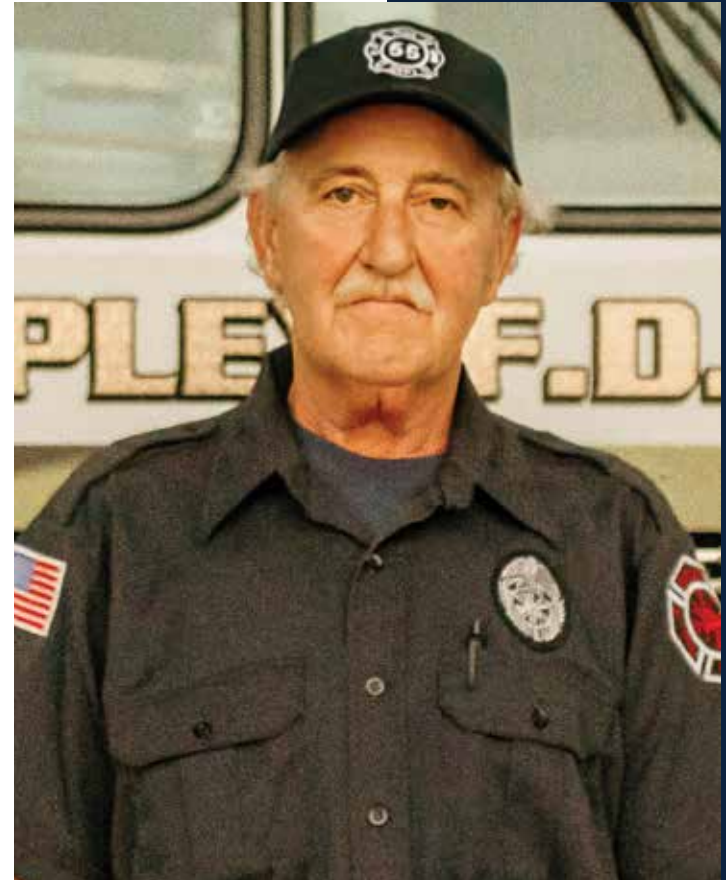
Wayne started his career in law enforcement and retired after 25 years of service. During his law enforcement career, his fire career shined through in his work as an evidence technician. He was certified by the DEA to disassemble meth labs, helping to battle the drug addiction epidemic that was consuming our county.

Wayne was always up for a road trip to the Smokey Mountains. It's been said that he never needed a map; he always knew where he was going, and the first stop at Cracker Barrel was his favorite place to go. Wayne made sure he always had a full cup of coffee and a thermos for refills. Waylon Jennings was the only acceptable music. No stops were allowed until we hit the Tennessee state line.

Wayne was a devoted family man, leaving behind his wife of 24 years, Nowana; four children, Sarah (Nick) Bramlage, Dustin (Ashley) Bingaman, and Baylee and John Bingaman; and five grandchildren. He was preceded in death by a daughter, Amanda. He was also survived by a very special person, Owen Hunter.

Wayne was famous for one-liners and was very rarely left speechless. He was always full of games. He leaves behind a large group of friends who became family and colleagues who feel his loss every day. He was always the go-to for strength and support or just the voice sitting on the porch with his beloved fur babies.

Wayne left this earthly world as a larger-than-life mentor and servant to us all. As he said many times, "The best thing us old firefighters can do is teach these young ones how to become old ones." Never stop learning, take care of your gear, and always be prepared. Keep your pockets full of equipment. Wayne was committed to serving his community day in and day out, never missing a beat when duty called. He was and will always be a true hero to his community and his family.



Tracy L. Leach

Kettering Fire Department – Ohio ★ Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ December 24, 2022 ★ Age 52



Tracy Lynn Leach of Xenia, Ohio, was born on May 5, 1970, and left this world on December 24, 2022, after a courageous, hard-fought battle with cancer.

Tracy's life was one of service and dedication to her passion, caring for others for the last 25 years. This dedication took on many forms. She instructed future firefighters, EMTs, and paramedics at Sinclair Community College, Greene County Career Center, and Clark State Community College. She worked as a registered nurse in the urgent care at Children's Hospital. She obtained numerous degrees, including associate degrees in computer science, fire science, EMS, nursing, and a bachelor's degree in nursing. Her favorite job, however, was working as a career firefighter/paramedic. Tracy's tenure at the Kettering Fire Department took on many forms before her retirement after 19 years of service in 2021. She obtained numerous service awards during that time.

Tracy wholeheartedly committed herself to her craft, whether working as a line firefighter on an engine, a paramedic on the ambulance, dispatching police and fire units part-time for the Communication Center, teaching CPR, ACLS, PALS, or instructing the department's paramedics for continuing education. She was a proud member of Kettering's IAFF Local 2150.

Although she would not brag about this fact, she was proud to be the first full-time female firefighter/paramedic for the City of Kettering. She was an inspiration for countless females she encountered in the profession.

Tracy selflessly gave her all to those she served and to those who served alongside her. Unfortunately, it was her life's passion that led to her untimely death due to occupational cancer.

Though Tracy's different jobs took up a lot of her time, one of her greatest loves was her family and pets. Tracy was an amazing mom to her furry kids. She leaves behind Jasper and Jasmine, her two pups that already miss her dearly. Tracy also loved traveling with her beloved husband, Jay, as much as possible. Tracy was truly one of a kind and will be sorely missed by those who loved her.

Tracy departed this earth way too soon but left a mark on all of us who knew her. Although you're gone, you will never be forgotten!

James M. Pero

Mentor Fire Department – Ohio ★ Career Lieutenant ★ June 13, 2021 ★ Age 63

James M. “Jim” Pero, born on February 2, 1958, grew up in Eastlake, Ohio, and dedicated his life to righteousness and helping people in need. Despite his title being lieutenant or firefighter for over 30 years, he also served in the U.S. Army and always saw it as more than a profession.

He did not do it for the City of Mentor; he did it because it was his calling. Jim Pero is still admired and talked about by family and friends for his sense of humor, compassion towards the underdogs, and his fiery personality to never back down.

The fire lived inside Jim his entire life. From his childhood to today, he was known as a rebel and sometimes a troublemaker, but always in the right way. He would tell stories of growing up and sticking up for the kids who were bullied. Often those stories ended with him saying, “The principal would tell me, we need to pretend that you’re in trouble, but I’m glad you did what you did.”

It’s that passion to do what was right and never back down that made him so good at his job. Whenever someone pushed him to do something against his will, he would push back. If you asked anyone about Jim, the first thing they’d say was, “He’d always let you know where he stood.”

Outside of work, some would say his real passion was to make people laugh, and his little nieces refer to him as their inspiration for practical jokes. If you knew him, you knew when he was up to something. He’d have a quirky smile on his face, take a moment of silence, and strike. If he wasn’t physically helping someone at his job, he would do it by making people laugh. When you meet someone who knew Jim Pero, ask them about a joke he’s played on them and watch their face light up with the memory.

From his love of animals, especially his golden retrievers, to his love of exploration, Jim was never sitting down or in one place for too long. He traveled the world, lived a first-class life sailing the world on Disney Cruises, visited his home country of Italy, and toured London and Liverpool to get a firsthand experience with the history of his favorite band, The Beatles.

Despite putting out fires most of his life, no one could ever put out his. That fire lives on with his son Anthony, his wife Helen, brothers and sister, and everyone who’s taken a page out of his playbook to never back down.



Ronald G. Reinhart

Defiance Fire and Rescue Division – Ohio ★ Career Lieutenant ★ November 28, 2020 ★ Age 63



Ronald Gene “Ron” Reinhart was born in Hicksville, Ohio, to the late James and Rosa Reinhart on July 17, 1957.

Courage does not require an audience! He, no doubt, was dedicated to his profession as a firefighter/EMT. He began his career with the Hicksville Volunteer Fire and Rescue in Hicksville, Ohio, from 1978-1983. While serving in Hicksville, Ron attended fire school in Bowling Green, Ohio, for several years. He was also nominated Firefighter of the Year. He joined the Defiance Fire and Rescue Division in Defiance, Ohio, from 1982-2007. While serving there, he advanced to lieutenant. Ron’s sons, Tyler and Trevor, were auxiliary firefighters on the department for a few years. Ron took great pride in serving with his boys. He retired after 25 years of service with the Defiance Fire and Rescue Division. Ron had a total of 29 years of service with fire and rescue. He never missed an opportunity to share his knowledge and motivate rookies to keep going.

Ron was an avid outdoorsman. When not at work, you would find him hunting, trapping, and fishing. He was a lifetime member of the NRA, OSTA, and NTA. Traveling with his family to the cabin in Minnesota to hunt and fish was where his heart was full.

If you were lucky enough to be a part of Ron’s inner circle, you would know, above all he was a devoted and loving family man, leaving behind his wife of 43 years, Brenda; son, Tyler (Shannon) and (granddaughter) Sommer; son, Trevor (April) and (granddaughter) Jaylyn; daughter, Traci and (granddaughters) Hayden and Brezlyn.

As a result of Ron being exposed to hundreds of different toxic chemicals in the form of gases, vapors, and particulates throughout his career, in January 2020, he was diagnosed with stage 3 occupational cancer. Ron fought with everything he had to battle the cancer, never complaining, so as not to worry his family. After eleven months, he succumbed to the disease.

Ron will forever be greatly missed by his family, friends, and fellow firefighters/EMTs.

Johnny Tetrick

Cleveland Division of Fire – Ohio ★ Career Firefighter ★ November 19, 2022 ★ Age 51

Johnny Tetrick was born August 2, 1971, in Seoul, South Korea, to Kris and Tsuruko Tetrick. At a young age, Johnny learned what it meant to work hard for what you have and want in life. Being the only child, Johnny started working on his father's farm at age five. By age 16, he went on to learn how to build houses and landscape. He bought his first rental property at age 17 after learning these skills from his father. Johnny tried out college at his favorite school, Ohio State University, for a year, to no avail. He wanted to serve others while being part of the action, like his dad.

In 1995, after studying for months on end, Johnny took the Cleveland fire test and beat everyone in his class by one point. Johnny loved being a fireman and traveling during his early years on CFD. He ran with the bulls in Spain on three separate occasions, bungee jumped out of hot air balloons in Amsterdam, and traveled to Ireland, Belize, etc., until he made his final move to Engine Company Number 22. It was at Station 22 that Johnny learned what it was like to have brothers who love and uplift unconditionally and where Johnny would later give his life to Jesus Christ and become a believer. He became a father at age 27, and his entire world changed. Johnny loved his three girls more than anything. He dedicated every spare moment when he wasn't working one of his three jobs to pouring into them.

He instilled into them his servant's heart, his integrity, and his love for Jesus and others. He shared his humility, his strong spirit, and his love for family, travel, and adrenaline. He taught them how to work, starting at a young age, and stressed that nothing worth having in life comes easy. He was a jokester, a best friend, and the guy you could count on to not only show up but show up with an answer. His brothers on the fire department called him "just solid," and he lived that out in every area of his life.

More than anything, Johnny knew and loved Jesus Christ. He went on many mission trips in and out of the country. He showed every person what it meant to be a true believer in words and actions. Of his 27 years and two months on the Cleveland Fire Department, Johnny spent 25 of them at Engine Company 22, where his girls' first phrase would be "double deuce baby," and where he would tragically attend his last alarm surrounded by his brothers. On his helmet that he wore that day, Johnny had freehand painted one of his favorite Bible verses, John 15:13 *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* And that is what he did.



Philip M. Wigal

Town and Country Fire District – Ohio ★ Career Lieutenant ★ April 11, 2022 ★ Age 35



Philip Michael Wigal was born February 26, 1987, in Parkersburg, West Virginia, to Michael and Kathy Wigal. The family moved to West Salem, Ohio when Philip was three years old. Phil attended Northwestern local schools until he graduated in 2006. Growing up, Phil was a country boy at heart with dreams of being Garth Brooks and a bull rider like Lane Frost! Phil was very athletic and loved most sports but focused on football and basketball in high school.

After high school he volunteered on the Town and Country Fire Department in West Salem before he became a full-time firefighter and advanced EMT. He was a member of the Town and Country Fire District for 16 years, where he was an inspector, EMS instructor, and president of the Town and Country Fire Association. Phil also worked part-time on the Lodi and Canaan Fire Departments. He attended church at Wooster Nazarene, where he served on the safety team. Phil loved the Lord and was devoted to being a godly husband and father. He also loved deer hunting.

Phil was a friend to everyone and would light up the room with his smile. He had a big heart and a great passion for helping people in the community. Phil loved being with his family and was a great father to his two sweet girls, Gracelynn and Gwendelynn. Phil was also a wonderful husband. On October 2, 2021, he married Lindsey (Arnold) Wigal, who he loved and cherished very much. Every time he talked about her, he had the biggest smile on his face.

Phil also leaves behind a brother, Matt, his wife, Dana Wigal, and their four girls. He was the best uncle, and his nieces and nephews miss his fun-loving spirit.

Phil was a big fan of country music, whether going to concerts or blaring it in his truck and always singing along! He claimed to be the best car dancer, and when his girls needed a good laugh, he would even pull out the infamous Mickey Mouse hot dog dance! Phil gave the best hugs and would not let a day go by without snuggling those he loved.

Our family will never quite be the same without him, and we look forward to the day when we see him again. Until then, we know he rests in perfect hands.

April L. Partridge

Edgewater Park Volunteer Fire Department – Oklahoma ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ March 20, 2022 ★ Age 55

April Partridge died on March 20, 2022, from burns sustained while fighting a grassfire near Lake Ellsworth in Oklahoma.

April served as a volunteer firefighter for more than 20 years, including a stint as chief of a fire department in New Mexico. She joined the Edgewater Park Volunteer Fire Department after moving back home to Oklahoma.

She is survived by her six children, six grandchildren, and extended family and friends. She was predeceased by her beloved husband, David Bullock.

April was remembered as a kind and giving person who loved helping people.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Jason T. Smith

Balko Fire Department – Oklahoma ★ Volunteer Captain ★ May 8, 2022 ★ Age 43



Jason Timothy Smith was born in McAlester, Oklahoma, on September 18, 1978, to Tim Smith and Denise Wiseman. He grew into a young man with a strong work ethic, an intelligent mind, and a wit that never failed to make people laugh. He possessed a sense of responsibility and a deep love for family and friends. He was a knife and gun-carrying crack shot by the time he was 10. He loved everything mechanical and grew a passion for anything on wheels. The outdoors was his safe place, and hunting and fishing were his passion.

Jason was a devoted and loving husband to his wife, Amy. They realized and built a love and a profound friendship that was evident to everyone. Their daughters, Taylor and Julia, were priority. Jason was the most amazing dad and guided his family by modeling the best of morals. He was excited and proud to be PaPa to Emmett and Jaxon. We can confidently say that Jason would have considered his most successful accomplishments in life to be his family.

He worked as fleet manager and mechanic for Drilling Fluids Technology, was a member of Community Faith Church and the Lions Club, all while being there for his friends and family. He was a humble Titan and gave his admiration and credit to anyone but himself. As a matter of fact, he'd be pretty upset with us right now for fussing over him so much. He was a man of virtue and grace who practiced honor without hypocrisy. He made us feel better with his easy ways and ever-present wit. He selflessly and tirelessly set examples and was a friend to all.

Jason was escorted home by a multitude of first responders. The family is extremely appreciative of this memorable welcome home. Let this stand as witness to the magnitude of Jason's life and the impact he made. Honor his

memory with your actions of love and kindness to loved ones and strangers alike, and shoot lots of bullets through lots of guns...he'd like that, too!

Jason was a captain and devoted member of the Balko Volunteer Fire Department. He spent many hours maintaining vehicles and answering the call when a fire or accident was paged out. Jason was burned when his truck flipped while fighting a wildfire. He succumbed to his injuries five weeks after the accident. We miss him tremendously but take great comfort that he is resting in the loving arms of Jesus.

Austin Garrett Smith

St. Paul Fire District – Oregon ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ February 3, 2022 ★ Age 30

Austin Garrett Smith was a loyal, dedicated, and driven man to his wife, family, friends, and community. He was born and raised in the small town of St. Paul, Oregon, by his parents Dave and Lisa Smith. He was the typical good-hearted small-town man, always willing to lend a hand, help a friend, or volunteer to make the community a better place for generations to come.

Austin was a generational hop farmer on the family farm alongside his dad, brother, uncle, and cousins. He represented the Oregon Hop Commission on their national Best Practices Committee, served as a director on the Hop Growers of America board, was a member of the West Coast Hop Breeding Program, and was in consideration for an officer of the Oregon Hop Growers Association. Austin served as president of both the local St. Paul Jaycees and the St. Paul Fire District. He was in the process of opening a taproom called The Harvester, which by the diligent work of many is now open. He did all this while maintaining relationships with family, friends, and community members and pursuing his hobbies of fishing, hunting, brewing and drinking beer, and spending summer days on the river.

Austin met his wife Ashley in 2015 at the St. Paul Rodeo. In Austin's words: "In the wee hours of July 4th Austin finally met the woman of his dreams after a family friend mentioned earlier in the year this cute blonde nurse who was single. Fast forward to July 2nd, where he was playing fireman at the rodeo. Propped up next to Engine 755 and on the lookout for a woman, there she was, the girl he had creeped on social media for months. Little did Ashley know, this mystery man would contact her cousin the following night and tell her that he just had to meet her! The rest, as you know, is history..."

Austin and Ashley were married in October 2018 and started their life in the family home where he grew up. They wanted to start a family, and Ashley found out days after Austin passed that she was pregnant. Their sweet baby girl, August Grace Smith, was born happy and healthy on October 4, 2022, and came home on October 6, which would have been Austin and Ashley's 4th wedding anniversary. Austin was a great gift giver, and he gave Ashley one last (and the absolute best) gift.

To know Austin was to love him. He had a witty sense of humor, a kind heart, and a dedication to every aspect of his life. He could have a conversation with anyone, and his presence was always known when he walked into a room. He had that light about him. His light will live on through his daughter, wife, family, friends, and everyone whose life he touched.



Logan Harrison Taylor

Sasquatch Reforestation, Inc./Oregon Department of Forestry – Oregon ★ Contract Firefighter
August 18, 2022 ★ Age 25



Logan Taylor was born in Medford, Oregon, on January 11, 1997. He was the proud owner of Sasquatch Reforestation and was a contract firefighter for ODF Southwest Oregon District. This is where he loved to be and where his life unexpectedly ended on August 18, 2022, on the Rum Creek Fire near Gallice, Oregon.

Logan had a captivating smile, which spread to anyone in proximity to him. With his contagious smile and polite demeanor, it was only natural that Logan would make friends wherever he went.

Logan loved and cherished his family and friends. He delighted in bringing people together through food and conversation, which resulted in joy and laughter. Logan had the remarkable ability to make people feel warm, welcome, and included, and because of his qualities people have always been drawn to him. If a guest was a stranger at the beginning of the evening, they left as a friend.

Logan had a great passion for the outdoors and all the Pacific Northwest had to offer. He enjoyed fishing with his father and swimming and camping with friends. His love for nature was only surpassed by his love for his friends and family.

Growing up attending reforestation work with his father and mother from the time he was born, Logan took the opportunity to start his own reforestation business. Following in the footsteps of his great-grandfather, grandfather, and father, Logan became the fourth generation of foresters in the Taylor family. Working in the woods was where he needed to be—climbing, thinning, helping landowners, and fighting wildfires was in his blood. As a young entrepreneur, he started his own business, Sasquatch Reforestation. Through his company, he employed his father and longtime friends, Curtis and Austin.

We will all remember him as the friend, brother, nephew, grandson, cousin, and son who was always ready to help with any task and expected nothing in return. We will forever cherish Logan's kindness, humility, and empathy for all he encountered. While our time with Logan was far too short, he managed to positively affect every person he came across.

Troy M. Dettinger

Union Fire & Hose Company #1 – Pennsylvania ★ Volunteer Chief ★ November 30, 2022 ★ Age 55

Troy Dettinger’s dream was to become a firefighter. When his father fell ill, he witnessed the countless volunteers coming to help his father, giving their free time to someone they didn’t even know. Troy said that the acts of kindness and selflessness, watching people help his father, who the volunteers didn’t even know “lit a fire in him” to want to do the same.

In 1993, Troy went and became a volunteer firefighter. He worked his way up the chain to become a trustee, lieutenant, captain, assistant fire chief, and finally the fire chief, a position he served in for the last eight years. Troy also drove part-time for Reliance Fire Company in West York, Pennsylvania.

He worked full-time at Witmer Public Safety Group in Abbottstown, Pennsylvania, a company that sells equipment for public safety responders and is also known as “The Fire Store.”

Troy was a beloved father, brother, son, boyfriend, friend, and Papaw to his two granddaughters, Brynlee and Isabella. Everyone looked up to him as a leader and enjoyed being in his company.

In his spare time, he enjoyed camping and four-wheeling. If he wasn’t at the firehall, he was at his camper enjoying nature.

Troy was taken way too soon, at the early age of 55. His friends and family will forever miss him and never forget him and the impact he has made on his community.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Marvin L. Gruber

Community Fire Company of New Tripoli – Pennsylvania ★ **Volunteer Firefighter**
December 7, 2022 ★ **Age 59**



Marvin L. Gruber, 59, of New Tripoli, Pennsylvania, passed away on December 7, 2022, at St. Luke's Hospital Miners Campus in Coaldale, Pennsylvania. He was the loving husband of Karen S. (Rauch) Gruber, with whom he celebrated 35 years of marriage on June 20, 2022. Born in Allentown, Pennsylvania, he was a son of the late George and Elsie (Snyder) Gruber.

Marvin was a 1981 graduate of Northwestern Lehigh High School in New Tripoli and later graduated from Lincoln Technical Institute in Allentown. Marvin had numerous other professional certifications in the public safety and EMS arena. Marvin worked for the Northampton Community College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, for the past 22 years.

Marvin grew up on a dairy farm owned and operated by his parents in New Tripoli, a time that likely shaped his unmatched work ethic. He became a fixture in the New Tripoli community starting with his involvement in the fire service in the late 1980s. He served as assistant chief of the former Northwestern Ambulance Corps. Most recently, Marvin served as a deacon for Ebenezer U.C.C. Church in New Tripoli and had been a volunteer firefighter for the Community Fire Company of New Tripoli since 2020.

Most of all, Marvin loved his family. He was a loving Pop-Pop to three grandchildren, an inspiring father to his son and daughter, and a dedicated husband to his high school sweetheart, Karen. His favorite day of the week was Thursday, when his family gathered to enjoy a meal and be together each week. Marvin and Karen loved to vacation at their favorite place, Disney World. Marvin was especially happy to take his grandchildren to Disney for their first visit last year.

Marv could usually be found tinkering in his shed or doing yardwork around the house. He loved to wash his cars and tend to his yard, like any good dad does. He had an infectious laugh and a genuine personality that garnered adoration from many. His warm laughter, clever wit, and reassuring demeanor made him a magnetic force.

The void he leaves behind is immeasurable to his family and friends.

Isaac D. Hassen Sr.

Hope Fire Company of Northern Cambria – Pennsylvania ★ Volunteer Chief ★ April 15, 2022 ★ Age 69

Isaac David Hassen Sr., “Dave” to his friends and family, wore many hats in his lifetime. He was once a coal miner, a paramedic, and was still serving his community as a police officer and, most importantly, a volunteer firefighter. Dave started in the fire service in 1969 at age 16, following in his father’s footsteps as a second-generation firefighter with the Hope Fire Company in Barnesboro, Pennsylvania. Dave spent 53 years in the fire service serving his community. He quickly rose through the ranks, becoming an assistant chief in 1974. He stayed in that role until becoming chief in 2005, a position he held until his untimely passing.

He received several honors and awards during his years of dedicated service. He received a Valor Award in 1994 from the Cambria County Volunteer Firefighter’s Association for rescuing an individual from a burning apartment fire. In 2013, he and another assistant chief were honored with a Valor Award from the Western Pennsylvania Firemen’s Association for rescuing an elderly couple who had become unconscious in their home from carbon monoxide poisoning.

He had a quiet strength. He was loving, compassionate, respectful, honest, and fair. Dave was born to be a leader. He mentored numerous young firefighters during his years, including two of his own sons who became third-generation firefighters with Hope Fire Company. He surely earned the respect of many through his actions and caring demeanor.

Following a busy week of emergency calls, Dave unexpectedly passed away on April 15, 2022, at age 69 from cardiac related issues. He was the son of the late Mike and Betty (Wagner) Hassen. He is survived by his loving wife, Melissa, four children, four grandchildren, two brothers, and a sister.

Dave was and always will be the true meaning of a first responder. He will surely be missed by his family, firefighter family, friends, and the community he so proudly served.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Kurt W. Keilhofer

Mapleton Volunteer Fire Department – Pennsylvania ★ Volunteer Firefighter/Equipment Operator
December 6, 2022 ★ Age 66



Kurt Keilhofer was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to the late Richard and Bernadine Keilhofer, on August 21, 1956. He was born and raised in the city, but his love and passion was the great outdoors. He married his loving wife, Kathy, on September 10, 2017. He recently retired to enjoy living in a small community.

His desire to help others led him to volunteer at the Mapleton Volunteer Fire Department. He loved the camaraderie of the fire department, weekly equipment checks and trainings, and always volunteered to help in the community. By joining the fire department, he acquired an extended family. He would help anybody, no matter who you were. He was always willing to show others so they would learn. He just fit in. He got along with people and made an impact on any situation.

He loved the friendly banter in the firehouse, especially with his locker neighbor. He never had a negative word and spread positivity, encouragement, and kindness wherever he went. He took the opportunity to learn and welcomed input from his fire family. He fit like a glove. "Kurt gets it." His knowledge made him a person that organizations wanted. He loved his community and was dedicated to his small town. He wanted to help his community become all it could for many generations to come.

He tinkered in small engine repair and maintenance with his grandson, who saw him as more of a father figure than Pap. He was the first riding a motorcycle in the spring and the last riding in the fall. He had winter and summer gear, safety gear, tools, gadgets, anything that could be useful. He was never unprepared, and if he found himself in a situation where he did not have the tools, his phone search engine became the tool. He was into his personal hobbies, weather station and HAM radio operations, and never missed an opportunity to play tickle-time, Barbies, or share a candy bar with his granddaughter. He lifted his family every morning with dad jokes.

By career, he was an over-the-road truck driver. He used to say he was seeing the world on someone else's dime and wanted others to see the things he saw. He would say "safety first," and this attitude earned him Driver of the Year in 2011.

He had an excellent work ethic and brought his knowledge to the fire department. He was great for referring others to manuals and may be studying or even writing God's manuals. He truly enjoyed life and thought that people could choose to be miserable or not. He made an impact everywhere he went. We can rest easy knowing he was where he wanted to be, doing what he wanted to do.

Zachary T. A. Paris

**Community Fire Company of New Tripoli – Pennsylvania ★ Volunteer Assistant Chief
December 7, 2022 ★ Age 36**

Zachary Paris was born May 10, 1986, in Reading, Pennsylvania, to Gerald and Carol Paris. He graduated from Fleetwood High School in 2005. He had a great love for the outdoors as a hunter and fisherman, starting at an early age. He especially loved fishing and shared that love with his two daughters by taking them out on the boat and teaching them how to fish. Pleasant afternoons were spent at the lake as Daddy taught the girls how to bait their hooks and to wait patiently for a bite. He also enjoyed working on and restoring classic cars and riding his Harley Davidson Road King. One of his favorite adventures was when he and his dad rode their motorcycles to Florida to visit his grandfather and succeeded in getting him on a motorcycle.

At the age of 15, Zach volunteered as a junior firefighter with Blandon Fire Company. Being too young to drive, Zach tied two baskets on the back of his bicycle for his boots and fire gear to faithfully get to fire calls. He joined the New Tripoli Fire Company in 2010 as a volunteer firefighter and worked his way up to assistant chief. He also trained hard as a member of Recruit Class 32 for Frederick County Division of Fire Rescue Services in Maryland from March to September 2022. He graduated to become a career firefighter and EMT for the Green Valley Fire Station, part of the Frederick County Division of Fire and Rescue Services. Zach drove between Green Valley and New Tripoli, serving at both fire stations since September 2022.

Zach worked in agriculture with his father-in-law on the family farm; he later became a sprayer applicator for Timac in Reading, an agriculture-related company. However, his lifetime dream was to become a career firefighter, and in 2022 his older daughter, Lila, had the honor of pinning him at his graduation.

Zach leaves behind his wife and two daughters, his parents and sister, along with many nieces and nephews. He also left behind his fire company brothers and sisters.

He left this earth doing what he loved, serving his community as a firefighter.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Tod M. “Cleever” Steese

Mifflinburg Hose Company No. 1 – Pennsylvania ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ December 12, 2021 ★ Age 61



Tod M. “Cleever” Steese was born and raised in Mifflinburg, Pennsylvania, to the late Ralph and Belva Steese, on July 5, 1960. Tod was incredibly devoted to serving his community. He spent many years as part of borough council, including time as vice president. He served as assistant coach of the Mifflinburg baseball team, did videography for the Mifflinburg football team, and was a bus driver for athletic events. Tod also spent over 25 years as a PIAA basketball official. Tod was seen regularly throughout the community on his route through town working for Schnure’s Disposal Services.

Tod was a lifetime member of the Mifflinburg Hose Company and spent 30+ years as a volunteer firefighter. His infectious smile and well-known and loved personality helped him shine in public relations for the department. Tod followed in his father’s footsteps and was devoted to assisting with fundraising for the hose company through their annual bingo nights at the fireman’s carnival. Tod was a fantastic engineer for the company. He also was passionate about his role as their tower and driver trainer. Over the years, Tod spent time as ambulance captain, EMT, president, and vice president. He was very proud to be part of the original Mifflinburg Hose Company Honor Guard. Tod had also served as a Union County dispatcher for 911 and as a police officer. He was a volunteer firefighter in Watsonstown, where he held the positions of lieutenant and captain for the West Branch Volunteer Fire Company, now known as the Warrior Run Area Fire Department.

Tod was a God-loving man and a member of Christ Wesleyan Church, Milton. He was always known to greet everyone with a smile and a hug. He loved helping with security and youth ministries at his church.

If there was one thing he loved more than being a firefighter, it was his role as a father and grandfather. Surviving are one daughter and son-in-law, Bethanie and Josh Allen, and one son and daughter-in-law, Kyle and Amanda Steese. His grandsons, Braxton Allen, Beau Allen, and Carter Steese, brought him so much joy in life.

His infectious laugh, larger-than-life personality, big hugs, and love for his family, friends, firefighting, and community will continue to live on as memories embedded in many hearts.

I bet Pop Cleever is driving firetrucks all around heaven and having fun, but the best part is there is no fire there, and he just gets to give the people and the kids rides.

– grandson Braxton, age 7

Stephen Sunday

Scranton Fire Department – Pennsylvania ★ Career Firefighter ★ December 29, 2020 ★ Age 28

Stephen Sunday was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania, to Gregg and Jody Sunday, on March 18, 1992. He was the grandson of the late John and Martha Lawless and the late Edward and Nancy Sunday.

Stephen attended the Scranton School District, where he graduated from West Scranton High School with honors. Stephen was a four-year letterman in the baseball program. He attended SUNY Sullivan County Community College in upstate New York, where he maintained a 4.0 GPA for his two years. In 2012, Stephen was the recipient of the SUNY Chancellor's Scholar/Athletic Award; he was the first SUNY Sullivan student/athlete to earn this distinction. Stephen furthered his academic and baseball career at NCAA Division II St. Thomas Aquinas in Sparkhill, New York. They were the first team to win the East Coast Conference, NCAA Division II East Regional and participated in the NCAA Division II World Series.

Stephen had two passions in life, baseball and firefighting. After his baseball career, Stephen applied to different fire departments. While waiting, he attended Luzerne County Community College, where he became an EMT. On January 21, 2020, Stephen was sworn in as a firefighter with the Scranton Fire Department. He went to the fire academy in Harrisburg, where he helped many fellow candidates by motivating them mentally and physically to not give up during their training. At the pinning ceremony, Stephen was pinned with the chief's badge of his late grandfather, John Lawless, who served as Superintendent of Fire of the Scranton Fire Department.

While his time as a firefighter in the Scranton Fire Department was not as long as he would have liked, Stephen made an impression on his fellow firefighters. He wanted to know all that he could as a firefighter and worked hard at this.

Stephen leaves to cherish his memory, his deeply grieving parents and family, as well as many friends. Life will never be the same without him, his smile and laugh, but we can all take solace in knowing that he was able to accomplish the two passions he had in his short lifetime. Stephen loved family and showed his love. He was our hero and will never be forgotten. Being a firefighter made Stephen happy, and this gave us comfort knowing how happy he was in this profession.

When leaving, Stephen would say one of his favorite movie lines, "I'll see you when I see you." You are missed more than you can know. Rest In Peace.



Sean J. Williamson

Philadelphia Fire Department– Pennsylvania ★ Career Lieutenant ★ June 18, 2022 ★ Age 51



Sean Joseph Williamson was born on November 23, 1970, in Southwest Philadelphia. After graduating from West Catholic High School, Williamson joined the U.S. Marines. He returned to his native city after his service and took a job in construction.

Missing the camaraderie of the military, Williamson joined the Philadelphia Fire Department in 1994. He spent nearly three decades with the Philadelphia Fire Department, serving with the department's specialized units before his last assignments with Ladder 18 in Nicetown-Tioga. Within the department, he was seen as a mentor and guide to many people. He led by example every day and was loved by all.

Sean had many different hobbies that included starting his own boating company, farming snails, and skiing, but one of his favorite hobbies was cooking. Growing up in a big Italian family, Sean was immersed from a young age in food and, more specifically, how to make a variety of meals. Sean saw food and cooking as a way to bring people together. For him, cooking was an art. Like music, he saw cooking as an elaborate way to express himself. He also instilled this in his kids. He believed that cooking with his kids was not just about ingredients and recipes, but about harnessing imagination, empowerment, and creativity. He taught his children how to cook with soul, as if it were an ingredient. He showed his children how to cook with love, so much so that his youngest daughter believed the olive oil he used was actual, physical love he would put into his food.

Sean had a deep love for the outdoors. He always thought that a bad day camping was still better than a good day at work. He spent much of his time teaching his children different aspects of nature and being outside. He would take his family and friends on hikes and would stop and take the time to teach about different rock formations or what poison Ivy looks like. He took his family on road trips all over the country. He inspired traveling and exploration in everyone he met, even if traveling meant going to your local park.

Even though he was a fireman by title, Sean Williamson was a teacher at heart. He spent all his time learning something new and then teaching those skills to someone else. He would go to huge lengths to help and teach new things to anyone. Sean even once set up a ropes course for a fellow fireman in his own home when they were training to become part of a specialized unit in the fire department.

Andrew D. Orphanoudakis

Hardeeville Fire Department – South Carolina ★ Career Captain ★ October 3, 2021 ★ Age 56

Andrew D. “Andy” Orphanoudakis was born in Neptune, New Jersey, to the late George and Joyce Orphanoudakis of Freehold, on May 7, 1965. Andrew was a veteran of the U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard in New Jersey and North Carolina from 1984 thru 1999. He was honorably discharged as an Army medical specialist.

Andrew entered the fire service in 1981 as a junior volunteer with Adelpia Fire Company. After receiving his firefighter certifications at Monmouth County Fire College, he became an active volunteer in several towns in central New Jersey over the years. In 1994, Andrew and his family moved to North Carolina, where he continued to volunteer with Enochville, Atwell, and Rowan County Rescue Departments and accepted an offer to be a paid firefighter with Salisbury Fire Department in 1999.

Seven years later, Andrew joined Mooresville Fire Department and helped establish their HAZMAT trailer stationed at Fire House #3, after NASCAR driver Dale Earnhardt. Andrew also worked part-time for two HAZMAT companies. Andrew was a North Carolina fire instructor, teaching at Rowan-Cabarrus Community College and Davidson-Davie Community College.

In 2009, Andrew and the family moved to Georgia, where he accepted a job with the 165th Airlift Wing, Georgia Air National Guard in Savannah, and continued to volunteer with Rincon and Effingham County Fire Departments. In 2012, after moving to another county, Andrew volunteered with Screven County Fire Department. After four years at the 165th, Andrew missed structural firefighting and accepted an offer with Hilton Head Island Fire Department in South Carolina. Andrew went to Hardeeville Fire Department as an engineer a few years later. Andrew was promoted to lieutenant in 2020 and was preparing to take the captain’s exam before his passing. Andrew was passionate about coaching and mentoring new firefighters, sharing his many stories from past experiences. Over his career, Andrew earned over 150 certifications.

Andrew was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather, leaving behind his wife of 35 years, Tracy Orphanoudakis; children, Rachel Orphanoudakis (Jordan Yarbrough) and Georgia Orphanoudakis; and one grandson. Andrew also leaves behind a brother, Alan Orphanoudakis.

Andrew loved training and completing triathlons, hunting, fishing, going on trips in his Jeep, and cooking his ‘famous’ honey jalapeno pineapple ribs. He enjoyed spending part of his vacations visiting other fire departments. In keeping with his wishes, Andrew is buried on the family’s property in Sylvania, Georgia, next to his deer stand.



Kenneth R. Sott

Summerville Fire and Rescue – South Carolina ★ Volunteer Captain ★ October 17, 2022 ★ Age 65



Kenny was born on February 27, 1957, in Greenville South Carolina. He was a volunteer at Summerville Fire and Rescue with 30 years of service to his community. He started his career on November 3, 1993, and was a very well-respected member of the fire service. His exemplary service included assisting the special operations team and helping with physical training needs and other duties for recruit classes held at the training site.

In 2005, Kenny joined the Firefighter Combat Challenge team and went on to compete and win many competitions across the country, including the coveted Lion's Den. He was also a founding member of the Summerville Fire and Rescue Dive Team.

Captain Sott was the type of firefighter that you could call at a moment's notice to cover a 24-hour shift, and he would graciously respond, "I'll be there in 15 minutes." No matter what, he would happily provide his assistance when asked. He was able to balance a professional career of 34 years as superintendent of right of way management at Santee Cooper, family life, and his volunteer service to Summerville Fire and Rescue, without pause or question.

During his career, Captain Sott was recognized as Volunteer of the Year multiple times for his service and for going above and beyond the call of duty. Additionally, Kenny served as a volunteer member of the Town of Summerville tree committee for ten years. Kenny was a true service leader who willingly volunteered his time to assist his community and provide guidance and mentoring to his brothers and sisters in the fire service.

Kenny was a devoted and loving family man. He leaves behind his wife of 23 years, Stacey, and his son, Patrick. He was very involved in all activities that Patrick was interested in growing up, including scuba diving, fishing, sporting clays, and many others.

Kenny left this earth doing something he loved—being at the training site and serving his community. His family and friends will truly miss him, his smile, and his quick wit.

David W. Pleasant

Memphis Fire Department – Tennessee ★ Career Driver ★ August 10, 2022 ★ Age 59

David Wayne Pleasant, 59, a veteran of the Memphis Fire Department, was killed in the line of duty Wednesday, August 10, 2022, while responding to a house fire call.

David began his career with Germantown Fire Department, later moving to Shelby County Fire Department, and ultimately serving 32 years with Memphis Fire Department.

David is survived by his daughters, Michelle Pleasant, Stephney Martin (Nathan), Annette Pleasant, and Janie Pleasant; brother, Charles Pleasant; granddaughter, Calista Martin; uncle, Robert Pleasant; and nephew, Zackery Pleasant. He was preceded in death by his parents, Annette and Miles Pleasant, and his aunt, Vicki Pleasant.

David was an extremely loving and supportive father and took this role very seriously. In his spare time, he would participate in one of his many hobbies, including being a great cook, restoring antique cars, and cycling. He was always first up to take on a challenge and first to help someone in need. His legacy will remain in our hearts for years to come.

To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die. – Thomas Campbell



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Gerald D. Becker

Plano Fire-Rescue – Texas ★ Career Driver Engineer ★ March 12, 2020 ★ Age 62



Gerald Don Becker was born September 27, 1957, to Gerald B. Becker and Shirley Lynette Lewis in Kaufman, Texas. He grew up in Mesquite and began his career in the fire service in August 1983 when he was hired by Plano Fire-Rescue as a firefighter.

Becker was very passionate about his job and firmly believed in the dedication and brotherhood it stood for. Don was promoted to driver engineer in June 1999 and maintained this position until his passing on March 12, 2020. He was very involved in training his fellow firefighters, especially on the compressed air foam system (CAFS) that he was quite partial to. Don could tell you everything about his engine and would talk endlessly about it with anyone who would listen. At Plano Fire-Rescue, Don, who was lovingly known as Goon, worked at several fire stations, with the last many years spent at Plano's Fire Station 3 on B Shift. In 2016, he was awarded Firefighter of the Year for Plano Fire-Rescue.

Don was a devoted and loving husband, father, PawPaw, brother, and friend. He is survived by his loving wife, Marian; sons, Jason and Taylor; daughters, Kayla and Brittany; brother, Warren; ten grandchildren; and countless nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Don had a big personality and didn't hesitate to speak his mind. If he thought you were wrong, he would certainly let you know. He was a man of facts and loved a good debate. If you didn't agree with him, he would challenge you until you understood his reasoning. He called it standing his ground. His family just called it stubbornness. His favorite saying was "Wrong is wrong and right is difficult."

When he wasn't spending his spare time at the station breaking in the rookies, Don had many hobbies that he enjoyed. He had many talents including welding, architecture, and training horses. Don was a true cowboy and an active member of the rodeo. He participated in events such as roping and steer wrestling but would be perfectly content herding cattle for hours on end. Don received a degree in architecture and built his home from the ground up. He had a very eclectic taste in music, ranging from old country to classical piano to rock. When guests came over, he loved to blast Hotel California by the Eagles on surround sound. He enjoyed cooking and would frequently whip up a pot of extremely hot chili, challenging anyone brave enough to try it.

Don was a strong mountain of a man with an enormously caring heart to match. On the exterior, he was a gruff grizzly bear, but once you saw him for who he was on the inside, he was the kindest soul you would ever be blessed to know.

Curtis Dewayne Brown

**Dalhart Volunteer Fire Department – Texas ★ Volunteer Fire Chief/Career Fire Marshal
October 4, 2022 ★ Age 51**

Curtis Dewayne Brown was born in Dalhart, Texas. When Curtis was young, his family moved to Haven, Kansas, where he grew up and graduated high school. Shortly after the birth of his son, Dustin, he returned to Dalhart. His brother, Billy, a member of the Dalhart Fire Department, recruited Curtis to join. At the Dalhart Fire Department, Curtis found his passion and true calling and served for 27 years. He was quickly recognized as a leader, promoted to captain his first year, and continued rising to the rank of chief. He was adamant about training and safety. His motto was “Let no man’s ghost say his training failed him.” There was something about Curtis that made you willing to follow him anywhere. He was dedicated and did whatever he could to better the fire department and serve the community.

Curtis was chief of the Dalhart Fire Department and achieved the level of master firefighter. As fire marshal for Dalhart, he was the only paid firefighter. He was an instructor at the world’s largest live fire training facility located at Texas A&M and taught at other area fire schools. He was second vice president for the state firemen’s association (SFFMA) and past president for the local firemen’s association (PFFMA). He was president of the local fire-based motorcycle club, Brother’s Keepers Chapter 42. He was active in the local community, serving as a board member for the blood bank, president of Rotary Club, and coach and board member for softball/baseball leagues. Curtis was EMS ECA certified. He saw the need neighboring EMS had, so he joined Hartley Fire and EMS also.

Curtis enjoyed all kinds of music and would loudly sing along to almost any song while traveling down the road. He enjoyed riding 4-wheelers, ATVs, and motorcycles. He was a joy to be around, and if you were upset or having a bad day, it was impossible to stay that way around him. He loved pranks and picking on people; you never knew what he was going to do next. He was truly a kid at heart; perhaps that is why the area kids loved him so much. He enjoyed visiting the schools with his dalmatian, Arlo, and teaching the kids about fire safety.

Curtis leaves a devoted family to cherish his memory and carry on his legacy, including wife, DeNisa; sons, Dustin (Elisa) and Jordan (McKenzie); daughters, Hannah, Janice (Mike), and Amber (Robert); eight grandchildren; brother, Paul; stepmom, Lila; stepfather, Charles; and nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, and many fire brothers and sisters.

Joining him in heaven: dad, Richard; mom, Linda; brother, Billy; sister, Angela; and grandparents.



Hunter Aaron Coco

Maxwell Community Volunteer Fire Department – Texas ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ June 20, 2022 ★ Age 21



Hunter Aaron Paul Coco, 21, was born in Ferriday, Louisiana, on June 30, 2000, to Barry Coco and Michelle Johnston. Hunter grew up in Martindale, Texas, frequently visiting family in Louisiana. Hunter passed away on June 20, 2022, with his brother, Jonathon Coco, in the line of duty as a firefighter for the Maxwell Community Volunteer Fire Department.

Hunter joined the Maxwell Community Volunteer Fire Department in 2020, after being recruited by his brother, Jonathon. He was a valued member of the MCVFD who devoted a lot of his time to serving the community. As a firefighter, he was the kind of person you would want by your side. He was dependable, hardworking, and quick to jump in wherever needed. He never questioned why; he just helped without hesitation. Hunter was extremely selfless and always put others ahead of himself.

Anyone who knew Hunter would describe him as quiet and reserved until you got to know him. He had a happy-go-lucky attitude and was rarely ever seen without a smile on his face. His smile and laugh were truly genuine and indicative of his kind, gentle nature.

Outside of being a firefighter, Hunter worked as an automotive technician for Ford Motor Company. He was an avid outdoorsman who enjoyed hunting and fishing but also had a passion for gaming and working on vehicles. He loved sweet tea, fast cars, and burnouts. But what he loved the most was his family, his fiancée, Allyssa, and his beautiful baby girl, Paisley.

Hunter is survived by his fiancée, Allyssa Ashby; daughter, Paisley Coco; parents, Barry and Jaimee Coco; four siblings, Ashley Sanford and husband Seth, Marcus Hildebrand and wife Katlynn, Kaleb Coco, and Riley Coco; his niece, Avah; nephew, Colson; grandparents, Marlene and Roger Bierstedt, Dorothy Coco, and Diane Johnston; aunts and uncles, Debbie and Nilon Wolter, Donna and Roger King, and Donald Coco; and cousins, Kelton Wolter, Hayden Coco, Kendra Johnson, Hannah McKinney, and Lola Coco.

He was preceded in death by his mother, Michelle Johnston; grandfathers, Otis Coco and Nigel Johnston; and cousin, Owen McKinney. We love and miss you, Hunter Bug!!!

Jonathon Taylor Coco

**Maxwell Community Volunteer Fire Department – Texas ★ Volunteer Assistant Chief
June 20, 2022 ★ Age 25**

Assistant Fire Chief Jonathon Taylor Coco, 25, was born in Ferriday, Louisiana, on June 14, 1997, to Barry Coco and Michelle Johnston. Jonathon grew up in Martindale, Texas, frequently visiting family in Louisiana. Jonathon passed away on June 20, 2022, with his brother, Hunter Coco, in the line of duty as a firefighter for the Maxwell Community Volunteer Fire Department.

Jonathon developed an interest in public service at a young age. This interest intensified after his family's barn caught fire and the Maxwell Fire Department was the first on the scene. Jonathon stated, "I specifically remember the kindness and compassion now Chief David Childress displayed during the incident, and ever since then I wanted to join." He joined in 2016 and worked his way up the ranks to assistant chief. If you ask the members of the fire department, they will tell you that he was dedicated to the department and community. He spent many hours at the station going above and beyond what was asked of him. Among his numerous certifications and accolades, he also handled all the department's IT-related issues, operating on servers, computers, and all network management.

Jonathon was an astounding human being. His personality was bigger than his world. Cooking for others was a passion of his. On many occasions you would catch him making family dinners for the department, his friends outside the department, and his family. His sister, Ashley, said that cooking for others was his love language.

At home, his family would describe him as extremely funny, and you never knew what was gonna come out of his mouth. He was a go-getter and had no problem taking charge and getting things done. He was known for taking in strays, whether K9, feline, or human. He was a full-time animal control officer for the City of Buda Police Department in Buda, Texas, where he was admired by his coworkers for his personable disposition and playful antics.

Jonathon is survived by his parents, Barry and Jaimee Coco; four siblings, Ashley Sanford and husband Seth, Marcus Hildebrand and wife Katlynn, Kaleb Coco, and Riley Coco; two nieces, Avah and Paisley; a nephew, Colson; grandparents, Roger and Marlene Bierstedt, Dorothy Coco, and Diane Johnston; aunts and uncles, Debbie and Nilon Wolter, Donna and Roger King, and Donald Coco; and cousins, Kelton Wolter, Hayden Coco, Kendra Johnson, Hannah McKinney, and Lola Coco. He was preceded in death by his mother, Michelle Johnston; grandfathers, Otis Coco and Nigel Johnston; and cousin, Owen McKinney.

We love and miss you so much, Tater Tot!!!



Charles D. Krampota

Alvin Volunteer Fire Department – Texas ★ Volunteer Captain ★ September 23, 2022 ★ Age 60



Charles Dwayne Krampota, 60, of Alvin, Texas, passed away on Friday, September 23, 2022, shortly after responding to a mobile home fire earlier that morning. He was born April 13, 1962, to Alfred and Edna Zimmermann Krampota in Alvin, Texas.

He was raised and attended school in Alvin. During high school he worked at his dad's filling station. After graduating, he started working for Stanton's Shopping Center and farm in Alvin. While continuing to work for Stanton's farm, he started his 38-year career at Alvin ISD, starting as part of the grounds crew and working his way up to mechanical systems manager. Charles knew everything there was to know about the Alvin ISD; he had the blueprints for every school in his head. After getting off work, he would go to Mullins Auto to repair his racecar and work on customers' vehicles.

Charles was a member of the Alvin Volunteer Fire Department from 1980-1988, then rejoined in 2010. During his 20 years of service, he was captain, secretary, photographer, and a member of the honor guard. He won several awards for his photographs through the department. Charles was awarded Firefighter of the Year in 2013, 2014, and 2022. He was a very hardworking man who would do anything for anyone. Night or day you could call him, and he would be there for you, whether it was emotional support or needing a repair done. He would never ask for anything in return and was just happy to help.

Charles married Melissa Goudeau on January 11, 1986, and nine years later they had their first and only son, Seth Krampota.

Charles was a member of Sandy Point Baptist Church, where he volunteered to participate in the Uplifted Hand bells program.

Charles loved racing his stock car at Texas Thunder Speedway and riding his motorcycle, and he loved helping his son with his racecar and attending his races.

"Dad was the hardest working and most dedicated man I knew. I could ask him for anything, and he would make it happen no matter how much he had going on. I couldn't have asked for a better dad."

He is survived by his son, Seth Krampota, his former wife, Melissa Krampota, and many other relatives and cherished friends of the Krampota family.

Jose A. Negrete

Copperas Cove Fire Department – Texas ★ Career Firefighter II/Paramedic ★ July 28, 2020 ★ Age 30

Jose Alberto “Joe” Negrete was a son, a brother, a husband, and a friend. He was a loved one, remembered as a very exceptional person.

He was the youngest child of Maria and Felipe Negrete and grew up in Copperas Cove, Texas, with two older siblings, his brother Gabe and his sister Natalie. Joe was usually involved in all sorts of totally safe play and activities with his siblings. He was never pushed out of a window or had his face sprayed with Windex.

As a young boy, Joe was a huge troublemaker, giving his family lots of headaches. Growing up, he was part of a soccer team coached by his dad, and by the time he reached high school he was a World of Warcraft playing nerd. His most memorable achievement was when he became a firefighter and then a paramedic. And the best day of his life was when he married his love, Maggie L. Omana.

Sunday football with the family was holy, as all gathered to watch the Houston Texans. Joe also enjoyed playing video games with his coworkers and wife and watching Marvel movies with his friends and wife.

Always considered a good person to those he knew, Jose cultivated several friendships, and it was no different when he started working at Copper Cove Fire Department. He always sought to be a team player, never side-eyeing and smirking at his coworkers or accidentally driving off with an ambulance still plugged in to charge or anything like that.

Joe passed away on July 28, 2020, at age 30, at Seaton Medical Center. He fought against lymphoma, a line-of-duty illness that he developed as a firefighter. Joe was cremated in Temple, Texas.

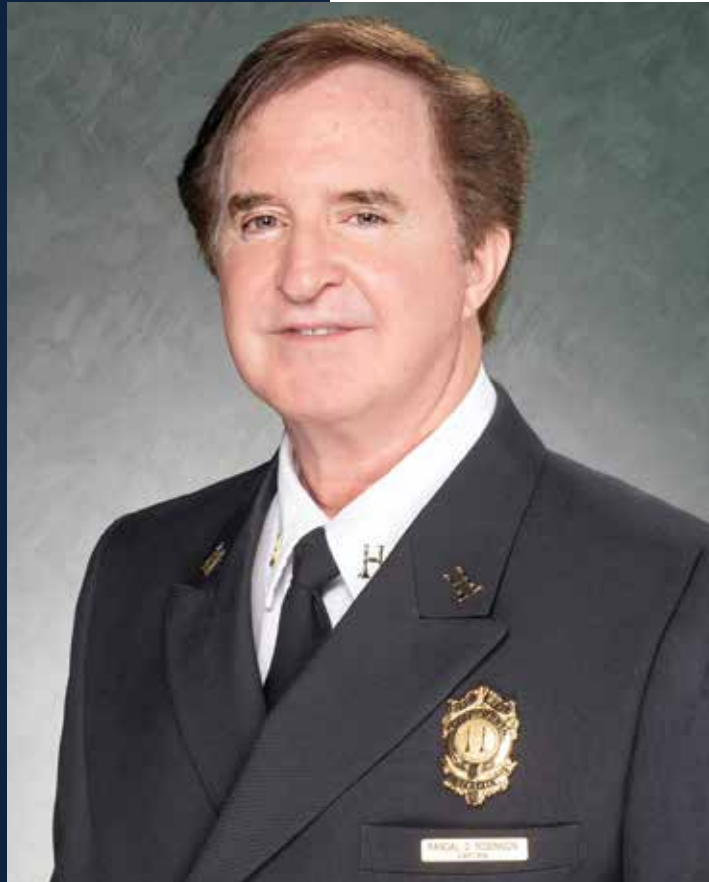
Jose Alberto Negrete leaves behind a legacy of lifelong friendships and many cherished memories. Everyone whose life he touched will always remember him and his goofy smile.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Randal D. Robinson

Fort Worth Fire Department – Texas ★ Career Captain ★ December 17, 2020 ★ Age 64



Randal D. “Randy” Robinson was born in Mineral Wells, Texas, on March 10, 1956. He grew up in Fort Worth, Texas, and graduated from Haltom High School in 1974. Randy was known for his strong work ethic and taking care of others, so it was only natural that he chose to work both as a firefighter and a nurse on the front lines serving his community. In 1981, he joined the Fort Worth Fire Department, where he served for 39 years. He trained and mentored firefighters in the training academy, taught CPR classes, and for the last 20 years served as air crash captain at Station 35 at Alliance Airport. He obtained an associate degree in nursing in 2001 and worked as an endoscopy nurse for 19 years.

Randy lived a life of service to others, always putting others’ needs before his own. He lived a reserved life, quietly serving in love and humility and showing kindness and grace to those around him. He was known for being an excellent listener. He wholeheartedly and genuinely listened to people and often shared words of encouragement and hope. He was a very patient, humble, wise, and peaceable man. Randy was a man of great faith. He lived with great integrity and was always striving to do what was fair and right.

When Randy wasn’t serving his community, he loved traveling and exploring new places. Hawaii was one of his favorite places to go. He enjoyed music and playing guitar, going on hiking trips, watching the Dallas Cowboys play football, and looking forward to one day fixing up his beloved yellow 1967 Chevrolet pickup.

Randy’s life impacted, encouraged, and touched so many lives. He was a leader, mentor, great friend, role model, and a father figure to many. He was a wonderful father, son, brother, uncle, grandfather, a loving partner, and a loyal

friend. His life greatly affected those around him in such a positive way.

Randy is dearly missed and will be lovingly remembered by his daughter and son and their families, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, and many other family and friends. His life was a gift to us all, and he leaves a legacy that will be remembered for generations.

Erik Segura

Laredo Metro Fire Department – Texas ★ Career Captain ★ January 26, 2021 ★ Age 45

Erik was born in Mexico City on November 18, 1975. He moved to the United States in 1986 and settled in Laredo, Texas.

He loved to run, hike, travel, cook, work on small projects, and food, especially steaks and coffee. He was very friendly and loved to talk to anyone he would encounter. Erik welcomed his daughter, Ilse, in 1997 and his son, Erik Abdiel, in 2007 with his former spouse, Niria. Erik loved his children so much; they were the joy of his life. Ilse remembers how, on one occasion, she accompanied him on a ride along with the fire department. They went to two calls, but what she remembers most was seeing him doing what he loved. Erik also loved spending time together with his son. He would take him hiking and to sports events. On their last trip, they ziplined in the Hill Country in Texas.

In February 1996, Erik joined the Laredo Fire Department, where he served for almost 25 years. He served as a paramedic and worked his way up to EMS captain. Erik served as part of the LFD diving team and AARF as well. In 2015, he received his associate degree in nursing from Laredo College, earning him The Mary Alice Lopez Award. Erik worked as a registered nurse in various departments at local hospitals but enjoyed working in the ICU the most.

A prime example of his love for the job was one specific call he attended. Station 5 responded to a call for an older gentleman who was stung by bees. He had been using his weed eater and unintentionally disturbed a bees' nest. The man was treated and did not require any additional treatment. While the crew was treating the gentleman, a woman approached another firefighter saying she noticed a firefighter with a dog who was also attacked by bees down the street. This firefighter saw Erik kneeling next to a chubby brown dog that was not breathing well, and it was obvious that he was in distress. Erik decided to give him oxygen, with no success. Instinctively, he grabbed an epinephrine injection and injected the dog. Miraculously, the dog started breathing on his own and stood up. The fire department crew was later told that the dog survived and was doing well. A fellow firefighter and friend said, "This is the kind of man he was, a superhero who cared for everyone and truly cared for others."

His legacy will forever be alive in the hearts and minds of all whose lives he touched. May his memory forever be a blessing unto all who knew and loved him.



Brendan Luis Torres

Dalhart Volunteer Fire Department – Texas ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ October 4, 2022 ★ Age 19



Brendan Luis Torres was born June 10, 2003. He graduated from Dalhart High School in 2022. He played high school football and was a member of Dalhart FFA, 4-H, and Ag Mechanics. He took college welding in high school so he would be ahead of the game when he started college.

At age three, Brendan wanted to become a firefighter. He had his first firefighter suit and loved it so much he wore it everywhere. When his older brother joined DVFD, Brendan could not wait to join. He filled out his application six months before turning 18 and carried it with him wherever he went. When Chief Curtis Brown told him to bring in the application, Brendan was so excited. He hung out at the fire department to learn everything he could. When he turned 18, he became an official part of the DVFD, fulfilling his dream of being a firefighter.

Brendan was a busy guy. When he was young, he started T and T Mowing with his dad. He showed swine starting at age seven, following in the footsteps of his older sister. Brendan started his first job in eighth grade with Cornerstone Ventures, where he learned to raise and care for show pigs. He worked after school, weekends, holidays, and summers. After high school, he started a job with Wilbur-Ellis, where he stole the hearts of his employer and teammates. He had started back to college to finish his welding degree. Our boy received scholarships and earned a full ride to complete his degree. We could not be prouder of him.

Brendan never met a stranger. If anyone was having a bad day, he was sure to put a smile on their face before he left. He loved life, spending time with friends and family, and helping others. He enjoyed time with his best friend and partner, his horse Apollo. They went on many rides and helped at junior rodeos. Brendan and his brother volunteered for the XIT Rodeo and Reunion for many years.

Brendan Torres left us at the young age of 19. He and his fire chief were struck head-on by a tractor-trailer while returning from a call, and both were pronounced dead at the scene. Brendan was only with the department for 15 months. The magnitude of the support from the first responder community after the accident left us in awe.

Left to carry on his memory and legacy are his parents, Jesse and Shannon; his brother, Devin; his sister, Alex; nephew, Edward Bryce; niece, Hadley Rose; and unborn nephew, Brendan Joe; grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, his horse Apollo, and his DVFD family.

We miss Brendan more than anything. He was always making us laugh and pulling shenanigans. We see and feel him in everything we do. We love you 3,000.

William R. Wimberly Jr.

Yoakum Volunteer Fire Department – Texas ★ Paid-on-Call Firefighter ★ March 16, 2022 ★ Age 71

William Randolph Wimberly Jr., known as Will or Bill, was born February 4, 1951, in Yoakum, Texas. He lived a traditional childhood, working on the farm, raising animals, driving his two older sisters crazy, and learning all he could from his mom and dad. He graduated from Yoakum High School in 1969, was married two years later, then quickly began building his career and family.

In 1983 he started Wimberly Repair Service, where he served as an appliance repair serviceman. Some would say he was a jack of all trades. If you had something broken, Will was there to fix it, and you usually could pay for it in homemade pickles or jelly!

He was a devoted husband and father to his children and later, his grandchildren. He was known for showing up an hour early to birthdays, sporting events, or special recognitions to help where he could. He loved being a dad and especially loved being a grandpa, and gosh was he a good one! He always had a story to share, a lesson to teach, and a really good hug to give. We miss those the most!

In his off time, he enjoyed the theatre, fishing, tending to his farm, and volunteering anywhere he could. One of his favorite things to do was cook, whether breakfast at the county stock show, concessions on Friday night football games through his 20+ years of work with the Yoakum Band Boosters, or a meal for his family and friends. You could always find him barbecuing, grilling fajitas, frying fish, or having breakfast at any one of his favorite local places. His table was open to anyone who wanted to stop and visit. He loved food and friends, and he truly seemed to love providing for anyone and everyone.

Serving was in his blood, so it's no surprise that Will dedicated almost 25 years of his adult life to his work at the Yoakum Fire Department and Volunteer Fire Department. He absolutely loved his purpose and service with the department. He took it very seriously. You couldn't find him without his pager, and he was usually one of the first to run calls. The fire department served as an extended family for him, and he loved his time and service in the line of duty. He was honored as Volunteer Fireman of the Year, served as volunteer chief for several years, and has been honored several times posthumously for his unwavering service to others, his community, and to the uniform.

Will passed away on March 16, 2022, a few hours after responding to a code 3. He leaves behind his wife, Beverly; his five children, Tammy, Cindy, Susie, Billy, and Clay; three sons-in-law, one daughter-in-law, and 14 grandchildren.



J. Chris Cage

Unified Fire Authority – Utah ★ Career Engineer ★ August 29, 2020 ★ Age 63



J. Chris Cage was a man of the people. He lived to help others. He was active in his church, community, family and firefighting. He was a part of the Unified Fire Authority from 1985-2016; in that time he was an engineer, inspector, paramedic and investigator. He also served on the honor guard, as he felt it was part of his duty as a firefighter to show respect to all other fellow firefighters.

He was a rescue specialist with FEMA Utah Task Force One Urban Search & Rescue Team that responded to 9/11, Katrina, Rita, and many other disasters. He worked in his community creating the first CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) team in Utah. He also worked with other poverty-stricken countries to help get them firefighting and medical equipment that they needed. He started the World Firefighters Assistance League to send everything from fire engines to x-ray machines around the world.

In the winter he spent most of his free time skiing at Snowbird, the place that brought him to Utah. He helped start the first volunteer fire department at Snowbird back in the early 80s that eventually became a part of the Unified Fire Authority.

Chris was the guardian of the Cage Family. He was an amazing father, husband, and friend to all that knew him. He will forever be a legend to us.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Robert W. “Bobby” Nelms

Fries Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department – Virginia ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ October 16, 2021 ★ Age 64

Robert W. “Bobby” Nelms was born in Suffolk, Virginia, to Barbara Bradshaw Nelms and the late Robert Langley Nelms on November 20, 1956.

Bobby was a true public servant. As a teenager, he joined Chuckatuck Volunteer Fire Department, where he became a lifetime member. He had a passion for helping others, which led him to also join Nansemond Suffolk Volunteer Rescue Squad, where he was a lifetime member and past chief.

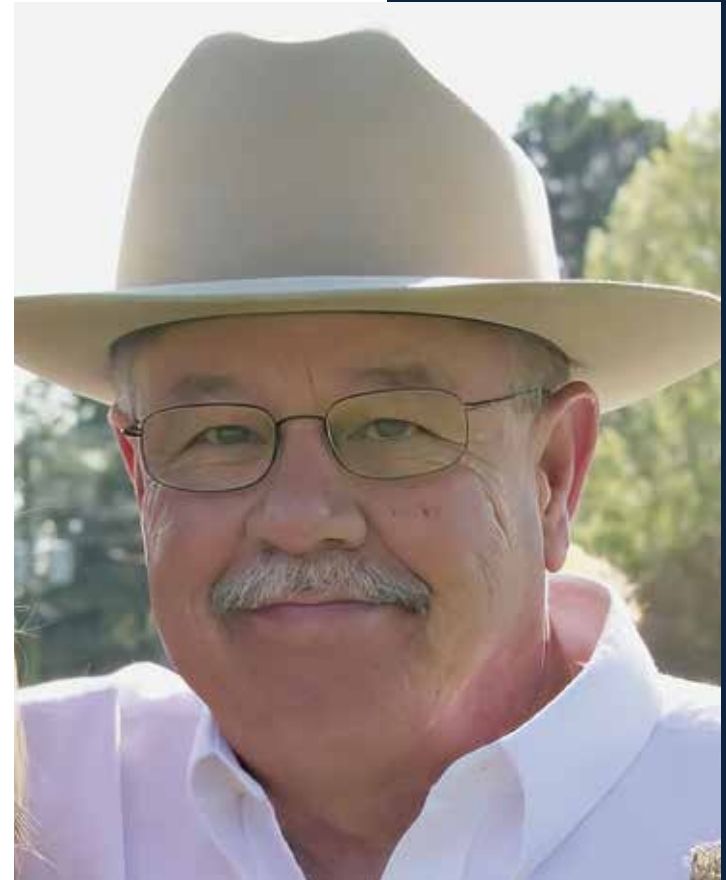
Bobby enjoyed a long career working at Lipton Tea in Suffolk until his retirement, when he chose to pursue a full-time career in EMS. He was the second employee hired at the Isle of Wight Rescue Squad, where he was affectionately known as the “Station Dad.” Bobby found his daily reward in helping others. He was a mentor to many generations of EMS providers in the Suffolk and Isle of Wight area. Bobby was a member of Virginia D-Mat One for several years. He enjoyed working in his spare time in one of the local emergency rooms as an ER technician.

Bobby was a devoted and loving husband, father, Pawpaw, and a true friend to many. He left behind his loving wife of 31 years, Liz, whom he always referred to as his “Bride.” Bobby also left behind his loving children, daughters, Sarah N Brock (EJ) and Ashley G Nelms; sons, JW Hogan (Renee) and Bill Hogan (Teresa); grandchildren, Reese, Alana, Thomas, Riley, Liv, Dylan, and Ezra; and a brother, David B Nelms (Molly).

After Bobby’s retirement from Isle of Wight County in 2019, he and Liz moved to the mountains in Southwest Virginia and built their dream home in Fries, where Bobby continued to volunteer with Fries Volunteer Fire and EMS. Bobby loved riding ATVs and exploring the outdoors. One of his many passions was guns and competitive shooting sports. Bobby loved music. He played air guitar and used whatever was close by as his drums. He couldn’t carry a tune, and we would all giggle at him, with his earbuds in place as he sang to the tunes he listened to so intently.

Bobby left us way too soon, after a very brief, unexpected illness. We are so thankful for the time that we had him with us and miss him every single day. Bobby was able to mentor so many young people in his life, and they thank me for that each time I see them.

He would always say, “I love you from the mountains to the moon and back.” Those words will forever be embedded in our hearts.



Kimberly A. Schoppa

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department – Virginia ★ Career Captain ★ April 26, 2022 ★ Age 49



Kimberly Ann Schoppa, loving wife of Kimberlyn Ann Klaren, entered her heavenly home on Tuesday, April 26, 2022, at the age of 49, after bravely battling ovarian cancer for over a year. Her firm belief in God and devotion to her family and friends carried her through her struggle and ultimately gave her peace. Kim was born on June 6, 1972, in St. Mary's County, Maryland, to Karl and Jan (Abbott) Schoppa. She graduated from Robinson High School, where she started a lacrosse club team that went to the National Championships within two years. She attended Virginia Tech and George Mason University on lacrosse scholarships. Kim worked for Grainger as a branch manager before joining the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department in 2004 as a member of the 111th Recruit School. Her last assignment was captain at the West Springfield Fire and Rescue Station on C-Shift.

Kim was passionate about serving others as a firefighter/EMT as well as in her personal life. She also enjoyed fully living life through activities such as hiking, listening to music and dancing, cross country motorcycle trips, playing rugby, and spending time with her numerous family and friends. She was known for her blue eyes, big smile, high energy level, inner and outer strength, willingness to help others, and a belief that anything is possible.

Kim is survived by her wife, Kimberlyn, who has been by her side for 28 years. She is survived by her parents, Karl and Jan; brother Chris and his partner Paul; brother Brett and his wife Amy, and their three children, Riley and his fiancée Anya, Abigail, and Maura; and aunt, Astid Roberts. She is also survived by her mother-in-law, Shirley; brothers-in-law, Robert and his wife Andrea, and their three children, Robert (Bo), Kody and his wife Emily, Tyler and his wife Brittney, and Matthew and his wife Kay, and their three children, Zach and his wife Elyse, Kacie, and Cole; and sister-in-law Kara Martinisko and her husband Michael. She has two godsons, Sam and Eli. She was preceded in death by her grandmother, Juliette Abbott; uncle, Louis Roberts; and father-in-law, Robert Klaren Sr.

James Allen Sturgill

Pound Volunteer Fire Department – Virginia ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ September 12, 2021 ★ Age 39

James Allen Sturgill was born in Johnson City, Tennessee, on June 11, 1982, to Moe and Lois Sturgill. Born eight weeks early and only weighing around two pounds, James was a fighter from the word go. James attended Wise Primary, LF Addington, and graduated from JJ Kelly High School, Class of 2000.

James met his wife, Susan, on December 15, 2001, and they were married on May 10, 2002. Over the span of their 19-year marriage, they had three boys—Josh, Jordan and Jacob—whom he loved with all his heart.

James wore many hats. He worked in carpentry, drove an off-road coal truck, worked in the coal mines and on drilling rigs.

James's biggest love, outside of his family, was being a volunteer firefighter. James joined Pound Volunteer Fire Department on January 14, 2002, right after he and Susan started dating. James would do anything for anyone who he thought needed help. He was the first one to jump in and lend a hand. James had the biggest heart and never met a stranger.

To know James was to have a friend for life. He had the biggest smile and loved with everything he had.

James left this earth on September 12, 2021.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Michael W. Bieniek

Grays Harbor Fire District #10 - Wishkah Fire Department – Washington ★ Volunteer Firefighter
September 2, 2021 ★ Age 62



Michael Wayne “Mike” Bieniek was born February 19, 1959. He was the third of four children. He attended Wishkah Valley School in Aberdeen for 13 years, Grays Harbor Community College in Aberdeen for two years, and studied forestry at Washington State University in Pullman for four years. He returned home to work in local lumber mills, where he advanced to the lumber grader position.

Mike enjoyed people. He was a member of the Northwest Vanning Club for over 40 years. Throughout each year the club raised money for Toys for Tots for Christmas presents for disadvantaged children. With his gray beard and happy demeanor, Mike was the natural choice to be Santa Claus at the club Christmas party.

At the time of his death, he was self-employed, selling and delivering bagged, crushed ice to several family-owned convenience stores on the north and south beaches of Grays Harbor County. He logged hundreds of miles in his delivery van to deliver ice for the tourist trade. Even though he was not feeling well, he would not let the business owners down. They had become his friends, too.

When Mike graduated high school, he joined the Wishkah Valley Volunteer Fire Department in Aberdeen. He served the department and the area for over 42 years. He was able to assist other fire departments, responding to fire and aid calls. He loved driving the different fire trucks and using the sirens on the two-lane country roads.

Mike leaves behind his family and the community who misses his smiling face, easygoing personality, and positive attitude to lend a helping hand when needed.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Joseph B. Killian

Clark County Fire District 6 – Washington ★ Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ January 8, 2022 ★ Age 56

Joseph B. Killian was born at Memorial Hospital in Vancouver, Washington, to Ferman and Billie Jean on January 13, 1965. He grew up in Amboy, playing in the woods around Cedar Creek and their cabin on Mount Saint Helens. Even though he was an only child, his parents both came from large families, so Joe was raised with many cousins. Family was very important, and there were many gatherings involving music, family, and fun. They took many vacations across the United States and the Hawaiian Islands. They loved to camp on Mount Adams, and many days were spent fishing and searching for Sasquatch.

He graduated from Battle Ground High School in 1983 and had already started his path in public service. He obtained his EMT certification and worked for North Country EMS and volunteered for the Volcano Rescue Team (Mt. St. Helens). This led him to a summer job at Pine Creek as well as an EMT position on the State Route 504 project, rebuilding and creating a tunnel after the mountain blew.

He attended the Paramedic Training Institute of Portland and PSU, studying pre-med while working for American Ambulance.

Joe scored very high on the MCAT test and had aspirations of becoming a doctor. Plans changed when he decided to go into the fire service. He joined Clark County Fire District 6 in 1991 as a firefighter/paramedic and never looked back. He was a dedicated member of the district for over 26 years and also served his brothers and sisters as a shop steward for the International Association of Firefighters, Local 1805.

Away from work, Joe made every outing an adventure—camping, boating, fishing, clamming, picking huckleberries near Trout Lake, Alaska fishing trips, trying to make his Camaro float in Lake Billy Chinook, cooking his famous fried chicken, SCUBA diving, skiing, and winning a hairiest chest award. If there was a wood stove burning or a campfire roaring, Joe was happiest sitting around telling stories and laughing. He had a great big laugh that always put a smile on your face.

Joe was a dedicated friend and son. After his mother passed away, Joe and his dad were inseparable. Joe made sure Ferman was well cared for and took him to his appointments and made a day of doing errands together.

Joe was a great friend, family member, and firefighter/paramedic. He lost his battle with an occupational-related cancer in January 2022 and is dearly missed by many.



Chadwick Jacob Mittleider

Aberdeen Fire Department – Washington ★ Career Engineer/Paramedic ★ December 2, 2021 ★ Age 52



Chadwick Jacob Mittleider went home to be with his Lord on December 2, 2021. He was born June 4, 1969, to Arvid and Eva Mittleider in Ellendale, North Dakota. Growing up on a farm, he was not afraid of hard work; he was only five when he learned to drive a combine. Until 1987, he attended Ellendale schools, where he was captain of his football and basketball teams. Chad visited his sisters every summer and worked the charter boats in Westport, Washington. He eventually relocated to Westport and graduated from Ocosta High School with the Class of 1988.

Chad's journey in the fire service began in 1990, when he joined the Ocosta Fire Department, and then the Westport Fire Department/South Beach Ambulance Service as a volunteer. He later obtained his EMT certification and became one of the first members of the South Beach Ambulance Service's paid staff.

In 1995, Chad met the love of his life, Danielle, and they married December 14, 1996. Chad continued serving the South Beach community. He frequently trained and instructed at the Fire Academy at North Bend, Washington. In 1997, he received his paramedic certification and continued at South Beach Ambulance until he was hired by the Aberdeen Fire Department on August 2, 1999. Two days later, he and his wife welcomed their daughter, Kaydee, into the world. They made their home in Montesano, Washington.

Chad continued serving, both as a firefighter/paramedic and through Mitts Tractor Works, the earth-moving and landscaping business he owned and operated. Through his company, he donated time and equipment for improving athletic fields in the area. If there wasn't a field to play on, he would build it. He loved teaching life skills and mentoring through coaching sports, especially basketball and softball. Chad wished for everyone that wanted to play to have a team and place to play.

He routinely traveled back home to Ellendale to help family and neighbors bring in the fall harvests and to enjoy fishing and hunting. He loved seeing all his North Dakota family and friends.

Promoted to the position of engineer on July 1, 2009, Chad served in this rank until his passing. He dedicated 32 years to the fire service and 22 years with Aberdeen Fire Department, leaving a legacy of selfless service to others. Remembered for his professionalism, compassion, and love for his community, he gave with a servant's heart in everything he did.

Chad loved fishing, farming, and firefighting and was well known for his competitive nature when playing cards or casting a line. Most of all he enjoyed spending time with family. He was only a phone call away and a best friend to all.

Blake A. Nelson

**Naches Fire Department, Yakima County Fire District #3 – Washington ★ Volunteer Firefighter
October 22, 2021 ★ Age 35**

Blake Adams Nelson was born February 6, 1986, to Philip and Ladonna Nelson. He grew up in Cowiche, Washington, and graduated from Highland High School, where he played basketball, football, baseball, and tennis. He attended Washington State University for forest management as well as fire science. Even though he was the youngest of three boys, Blake was always a leader and had an adventurous spirit that craved the outdoors. He spent his childhood roaming his grandparents' apple and pear orchards, hunting snakes and squirrels, and leading his cousins on all their hunts.

In 2007, Blake began his career in public service as a wildland firefighter with the U.S. Forest Service. He fought countless forest fires across the United States on a hand crew and later in his career worked on an engine. After he and his wife, Lindsey, were blessed with three children and expecting their fourth child, he made a career change and began working at Columbia Basin Railroad. His servant's heart led him to volunteer with the Naches Fire Department in 2019. Blake was able to continue doing what he loved, fighting fire and serving his community.

Blake's love for the outdoors didn't stop with firefighting. He had a passion for hunting and didn't discriminate; he hunted large and small game, waterfowl, and upland birds. The seasons in his family's home looked a little different from everyone else. While there were still four, his consisted of duck season, deer/elk season, fire season, and fishing season. Blake was a true and loyal friend to so many in the fire service, along with fishing and hunting buddies.

Blake was unexpectedly taken from us in October 2021. He leaves behind his wife, Lindsey, who was pregnant with their fourth child at the time of his passing; his children, Kennedy, Henry, Charlie, and Molly; his parents, Phil and LaDonna; brothers, Deric and Darin; nephews, Bryce and Branson; niece, Addison; and many aunts, uncles, and cousins. He will forever be deeply missed. His family takes comfort knowing he is home with our Heavenly Father and watching over us all.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Dan W. Patterson

Spokane Valley Fire Department – Washington ★ Career Firefighter/EMT ★ August 4, 2022 ★ Age 53



Danny Wayne “Dan” Patterson was born December 31, 1968, in Downey, California, to Dennis and Sharon Patterson. Most of his childhood was spent in Oregon, alongside his siblings, Cherie and Donny.

Early on, Dan developed a love of the outdoors. He enjoyed rafting the McKenzie River and fishing whenever possible. He’d explore the woods and creek surrounding his childhood home, building tree forts and catching crawdads. He loved to camp and ride his dirt bike.

Dan was a hard worker, saving to buy his first vehicle at 15. As a preteen, he worked for neighbors and eventually got into logging. He was hired by the USFS and fought wildland fires, including the Yellowstone fire in 1988.

His interest in career fire and EMS began as a volunteer for the Nimrod Fire Department. He enrolled in the fire science program at Chemeketa Community College in 1989. Around graduation, the qualifications for a career firefighter changed, making it necessary to be cross trained as a paramedic. By this time, Dan was married and had a daughter. Trying to support a family and go to paramedic school simultaneously proved difficult, so he set aside his goals and put his family’s needs first.

In 1997, Dan and his family moved from Oregon to Spokane, Washington. His love of fire and EMS never wavered. At the core of this love was a desire to help others and make a difference. With the encouragement of family and friends, he applied for firefighter/EMT positions around Spokane. He was hired by Spokane Valley Fire Department on April 1, 2009, and continued to work there until his death.

Dan’s death was sudden and unexpected. He left behind his wife of 32 years, Tonya; his daughter, Courtney, her husband, Tim, and their daughter, Addie; and his son, Keenan. At the time of Dan’s death, Courtney, was pregnant with his first biological grandchild. Sadly, he never got to meet Avonlea Rose, who was born 3 ½ months after his death.

Dan was so proud of his kids. Courtney shared Dan’s love of fire and EMS. She’s currently a paramedic and lead instructor for the paramedic program at Columbia Basin College. Keenan is a talented artist and musician. Dan shared a love of music with Keenan and was his biggest fan, making sure to attend his gigs to watch him play.

If there’s one thing Dan would want people to have learned from him, it’s compassion. Dan had the unique and admirable quality of looking past the exterior of a person into their heart and soul. He wanted each person to know he saw them, they mattered, and that at least one person in this world cared. This was his legacy.

John D. Forbush

Gassaway Volunteer Fire Department – West Virginia ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ May 1, 2022 ★ Age 24

John Dean Forbush died on May 1, 2022, while attempting to save people trapped in a car submerged in the Elk River near Sutton, West Virginia.

He was born in 1998 in Elyria, Ohio, to Dean Forbush and the late Kristina Stewart. He grew up competing in fishing tournaments and turkey shoots with his brother, and they moved to West Virginia to live with their grandparents in 2011.

John learned to build and repair engines starting at a young age with the help of mentors and friends. At age 23, he became the owner/operator of Braxton Auto and Diesel Repair Shop.

He served with the Gassaway Volunteer Fire Department, Station #2, for four years.

With his fiancée, he participated in competitive barrel racing, poles, and Western Pleasure riding. He was president of the West Fork Riding Club.

He was a member of Gassaway Baptist Church.

John is survived by his fiancée and their young daughter, his brother, father, grandparents, best friend, and extended family and friends.

John was remembered as brave and hardworking, with a good sense of humor and a desire to help others.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Brian H. Ritchie

City of Weirton Fire Department – West Virginia ★ Career Lieutenant ★ February 2, 2021 ★ Age 50



Brian was born in Steubenville, Ohio, on June 26, 1970. In 1988, after graduating high school from Steubenville Big Red, Brian enlisted in the United States Air Force and served his country in Iraq during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. After returning in 1992, Brian made Follansbee, West Virginia, his home and began working as a federal prison guard at the FCI Elkton, a federal prison in Columbiana County, Ohio.

When Brian was 14, he joined Brilliant Volunteer Fire Department as a junior firefighter. At age 21 and fresh out of the Air Force, Brian decided to join Hooverson Heights Volunteer Fire Department. He impacted many people's lives, including the citizens he served, his friends and family, and especially his son, Caleb Ritchie. Brian was a teacher and a leader in the fire service and respected throughout the fire community. Brian served with HHVFD for 29 years, wearing many hats throughout the years, including assistant chief.

In 2005, Brian decided to take the firefighter civil service test for the City of Weirton Fire Department. In 2008, Brian was offered the job of full-time career firefighter for the City of Weirton. In 2017, Brian was promoted to lieutenant in the City of Weirton Fire Department, where he took the role of teaching the young guys through his knowledge and experience very seriously. He loved sharing stories and training tips with others, knowing that one day they might be able to share it with new trainees.

In 2014, Brian's wife, Karen, passed away. He was now a single dad with a full-time job who had a 10-year-old boy to raise. Following in his dad's footsteps, Caleb became a firefighter at Hooverson Heights Volunteer Fire Department, where he continues to volunteer while working a part-time job as a 911 dispatcher and attending WVNCC full-time.

In 2014, Brian met Sierra Dunlevy, whom he treasured and was with for seven years before his passing. Sierra quickly became an important role model in Caleb's life as a mother hen, looking out for him and taking care of him as he grew into a young man. In December of 2020, Brian and his crew at WFD found out that they had contracted COVID-19 while they were on duty. As days went by, Brian's health deteriorated, which sent him to the hospital. On February 2, 2021, Lieutenant Brian H. Ritchie lost his life to COVID-19 in the line of duty.

Lt. Ritchie will be forever remembered for his passion to help others, passing down his knowledge, sayings, and love for the fire service and the communities he served.

Brian C. Busch

Mineral Point Fire Department – Wisconsin ★ Volunteer Captain ★ January 6, 2022 ★ Age 43

Brian C. Busch was born to Mark and Elaine Busch and grew up in Mineral Point, Wisconsin, with his siblings and a large extended family close by. He joined the Mineral Point Fire Department when he turned 18. Not long after, Brian met the “new teacher” in town, and they fell in love and were married. They chose to spend their life together, as they raised their three beautiful children, in Mineral Point, the place that brought them together. Brian served the department and community his full adult life, responding to his last call on January 6, 2022, at age 43. The community continues to surround his wife, children, and family and helps to keep his memory and love alive.

During his years at the station, he served in a variety of different positions, from kitchen crew to captain and fire safety officer, along with many in between. Brian believed that each job that needed doing was important and deserved to be done well, down to monthly cleaning crew and kitchen towels, and he happily helped in every way that he could. He loved being a firefighter and working alongside his fellow first responders. As fire safety officer, he led a group of dedicated volunteers in teaching fire safety each year to elementary students.

Brian was always helpful and caring and could be counted on to stop and help if someone was in need. So many stories begin with, “Remember when we were on vacation and Dad...” And it was true. No matter where he was, if someone needed help—alongside a road, in a park or hotel—he was there to offer it and to bring calm to the situation. He made lasting friends and memories when he volunteered to help fight forest and wildland fires.

Brian was an active member of Ss. Mary & Paul Church in Mineral Point, where he taught CCD with his wife, served on the building and grounds committee, and showed his children what quiet, strong faith looked like in action. He was a loving, funny, wonderful husband, father, son, brother, uncle, and friend. Brian’s faith, love of family, and belief in service to others lives on, and we continue to draw comfort in these values as we seek to live them.

Brian’s sense of humor and zest for life was contagious, and he brought humor along with him wherever he went. He was a big fan of practical jokes and pranks and never missed an opportunity to enact one, big or small. His quick wit is sorely missed, though memories of jokes and laughs shared continue to provide us all with comfort and laughter, even amidst our tears and sorrow.

Brian is deeply missed and forever loved.



Riley Daniel Ray Huiras

Grand Rapids Volunteer Fire Department – Wisconsin ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ August 3, 2022 ★ Age 20



Riley Daniel Ray Huiras was born April 26, 2002. He graduated with honors from Lincoln High School in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, in 2020. Riley attended the University of Wisconsin Platteville for one year before transferring to MSTC to pursue a degree in criminal justice with plans to attend the police academy. Riley always knew he wanted to do something with his life that would involve helping others.

As a youth, Riley participated in Boy Scouts and earned the highest rank possible by becoming an Eagle Scout. He loved to go camping and earning his badges with his troop. He also loved mentoring the younger Scouts on their path.

Riley enjoyed hunting and fishing with his dad, online video gaming with his friends, and playing Dungeons and Dragons. He was also very musically talented; he studied the violin for seven years and was self-taught with the piano.

Riley had recently completed the state of Wisconsin Firefighter 1 practical exam and was looking forward to the next step in his firefighting career. Riley's greatest passion was the betterment of others through police work and firefighting. As a member of the Grand Rapids Auxiliary Police Department and the Grand Rapids Volunteer Fire Department he was able to do just that.

Riley was also a huge baseball fan, from playing in high school to working for our local collegiate baseball team each summer. He liked going to work and recording all of the strikes, balls, runs, and walks.

On July 30, 2022, Riley had responded to a fire call that lasted several hours. Upon returning from that call, another call came in, and he jumped from one emergency vehicle into another one. On July 31, 2022, Riley was med flighted to the hospital, and on August 3, 2022, Riley tragically lost his fight.

Because of Riley's generous and caring nature, he was an organ donor. To the amazement of the donation team, Riley was able to donate his lungs, kidneys, heart, and both corneas. Riley lives on in six other individuals.

Riley is greatly missed by his deeply grieving family and all his wonderful friends, coworkers, and everyone who knew him. Our lives will never be the same and are forever changed without him here. He was doing something that he loved and was passionate about.

James M. Ludlum

Mineral Point Fire Department – Wisconsin ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ January 6, 2022 ★ Age 69

James Michael “Jim” Ludlum (Lud) of Mineral Point, Wisconsin, was born on January 29, 1952, the son of Willard and Agnes (Palzkill) Ludlum. He married Sheila (Gilman) Ludlum on June 7, 1985. Jim and Sheila had two sons, and Sheila preceded him in death on February 21, 2008. Jim was reunited with Sheila on January 6, 2022, when he passed away in the line of duty due to an accident between the fire truck he was in responding to a call, and a semi-truck.

Jim enjoyed serving his community in numerous ways, and Mineral Point will always cherish his service and the memories made. Jim was always available when needed and relied upon when duty called, with his calm demeanor, ready to selflessly complete the task at hand. He worked as an ag mechanic at the Farmers Store for over 50 years, working on tractors and just about anything else people stopped in for him to look at. He served 22 dutiful years in the U.S. Army Reserve, where he was affectionately called “Sergeant Lugnuts” by some. He was a dedicated, active member of the Ss. Mary & Paul Catholic Church, where he could always be seen at mass and was a cherished member of the pastry making crew. And, of course, he loyally served the Mineral Point Fire Department, which he joined in October of 1984. He shared his passion for fire service with his son, Troy.

Jim had a passion for fishing and left many great memories of ice fishing adventures for friends and family. He was also passionate about farming, which allowed him to spend time with his grandchildren and cause trouble with Rooster.

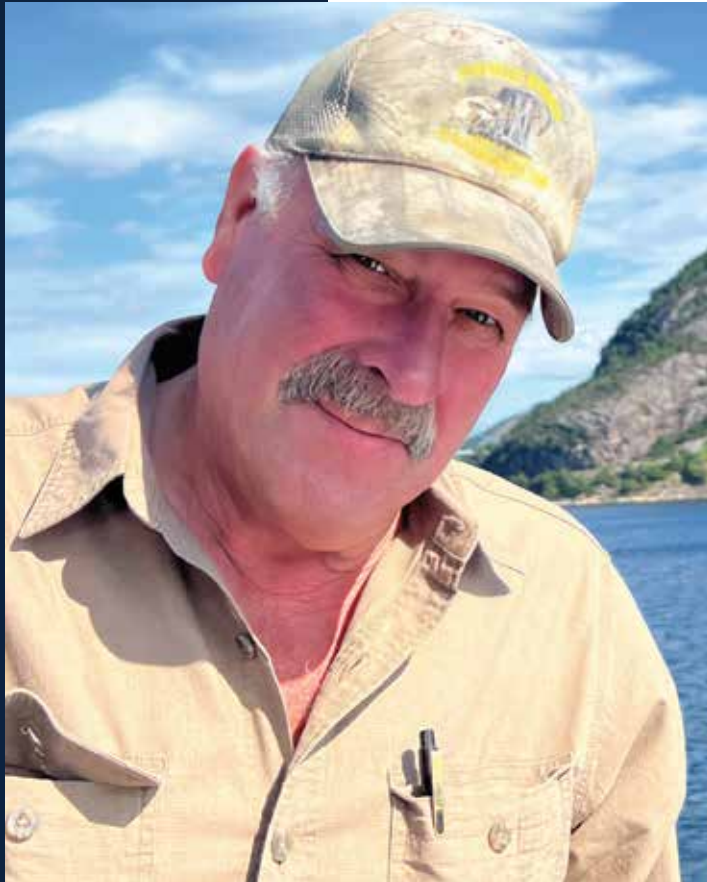
Jim is survived by his sons, Adam Ludlum and Troy (Tiffany) Ludlum of Mineral Point; his grandchildren, Rylee, Erica Rose, Preston, and Austin (Rooster); his siblings, Clarita Scott of Beloit, John (Marilyn) Ludlum of Monroe, Mary Schweitzer of Mineral Point, Robert (Marlene) of Mineral Point, Thomas (Kate) Ludlum of Dodgeville, Charles (Leah) Ludlum of Madison, Terry (James) Gevelinger of Mineral Point, and Kenneth (Susan) Ludlum of Belmont; his sister-in-law, Jackie Ludlum; several brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, nieces, nephews, relatives, and friends.

In addition to his wife, Shelia, Jim was preceded in death by his parents, Willard and Agnes Ludlum; his brother, William Ludlum; and brothers-in-law, Ronald Scott and James Schweitzer.



Bruce Lang

Pine Haven Volunteer Fire Department – Wyoming ★ Volunteer Training Officer
December 15, 2022 ★ Age 68



Bruce Wayne Lang, 68, not to be confused with Batman, died doing what he did best, taking care of everyone else. Bruce was a volunteer firefighter, EMT, husband, father, and mechanic extraordinaire. He never boasted, but as anyone who knew him would say, “If Bruce can’t fix it, no one can.”

Bruce was part of a community of like-minded people who believed strongly in the power of doing what you can to help. He began volunteering in his community when he first moved to Pine Haven after serving in the military. Bruce is remembered for always finding solutions to problems. Like the time he fashioned a makeshift ambulance out of a hearse when his community was in need. The hearse (ambulance) he drove with his wife in the back, providing EMT services for several years before the town could afford a professional ambulance.

He spent over 36 years working for a local coal mine as a mechanic, preferring the hands-on approach over anything in the office. He was a member of the volunteer rescue team at the coal mine. Bruce equipped himself with the skills needed to help others, including the ability to scale large pieces of equipment and buildings and provide emergency medical care in whatever situation occurred. Additionally, he helped to train new volunteers, providing guidance and mentoring along the way. Bruce believed in always doing what you could and not walking by the problem, a philosophy he always encouraged others to embrace.

Outside of Bruce’s volunteering, he stayed busy and pursued lifelong passions such as spending time with his wife, the love of his life, and his only daughter, Becca. Bruce loved being in the mountains and riding horses with his family. As he would tell you, “Don’t let the grass grow under your feet.” Every free weekend

he had would be spent snowmobiling, hunting, riding horses, or fishing with his family and friends. Even though he kept busy, he always had time for those he loved and always time to help when the need arose.

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2022 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb

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From the Desk of Chief Ronald Jon Siarnicki

This National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend is my last as NFFF's executive director. As I prepare to step down from this role later this year, I am immensely grateful for being part of this incredible organization—and especially this hallowed weekend. To our new Fire Hero Family members, please know I am leaving the Foundation in the capable hands and loving hearts of a team of people ready to support you in your grief journey.

The late Hal Bruno, who served as Chair of the Board of Directors from 1999 - 2008, was an extraordinary individual with immense commitment to the NFFF. I will never forget the moment Hal offered me the position of NFFF executive director. I felt overwhelmed with the opportunity to return all the blessings I have had in my life—including a loving family, supportive friends, and a rewarding fire service career. Little did I know then the significant impact the NFFF would have on my life professionally and personally.

I have been able to fulfill my duties as executive director because of the trust and dedication of the people I have worked with and for. I am forever grateful for Denny Compton and Troy Markel's leadership, as well as their friendship and confidence in me to lead the organization. It has been my privilege to work with a dedicated Board of Directors, Advisory Committee, and staff who consistently go the extra mile to support NFFF's mission.

It is hard to express in words my personal and heartfelt gratitude to the thousands of volunteers who have served the Foundation's mission. We are also very fortunate to have many partners and donors contributing time, talent, and resources to support our Fire Hero Families. And to the countless number of people who have helped me along the way, I thank you for contributing to fulfilling the promises we make in our mission statement.

With every door in life that closes, another one opens—and I hope to share those new open-door opportunities with my wife Jan, family, and friends. Even though I am retiring from the NFFF, I intend to stay involved with the organization, which has become an integral part of my life.

As has been said, all good things must eventually end, and my career here at the NFFF is no exception. My only hope is that I have left the Foundation in a better place than when I started. Only our Fire Hero Families know the answer to that. I stand before them today hoping the NFFF community—and I— have made a difference in their lives. My relationships with our inspiring Fire Hero Families will remain a treasured part of my life, and I sincerely hope they know I will always personally honor and remember their fallen firefighters.

I have the utmost faith and confidence that the Foundation will continue to thrive in the years to come. I am excited to see what the new executive officer and the NFFF community will accomplish in the future.

Be safe, and never forget.

RJS



Our mission is to honor America's fallen fire heroes; support their families, colleagues, and organizations; and work to reduce preventable firefighter death and injury.

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