2026

45TH ANNUAL

National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend

May 2-3, 2026 **Emmitsburg, Maryland**

The Fire Hero Family Flag

The iconic Fire Hero Family Flag was established at the request of the National Honor Guard Commanders Association through the United States Congress to honor the families of fallen firefighters who gave their lives in the line of duty. Before it was installed at its permanent home in Emmitsburg, Maryland, the flag traveled across the United States to be raised over important national landmarks.

First flown over the U.S. Capitol on Flag Day in 2014, the flag then traveled to:

- ★ Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia
- ★ The Department of Defense Firefighter Memorial in San Angelo, Texas
- ★ The IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial in Colorado Springs, Colorado
- ★ The Wildland Firefighters Monument in Boise, Idaho.

It returned to Emmitsburg after this four-month journey, where the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Chapel is now its perpetual home.

The Fire Hero Family Flag serves as a never-ending symbol of our nation's gratitude to all firefighters who are honored at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial.

Once the weekend has concluded, the flag returns to the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Chapel, honoring the families of all firefighters who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their communities.

Flag Presentations at Memorial Weekend

During today's ***National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service,*** the family of each firefighter on the Roll of Honor receives an American flag.

The flag presented to you has been flown above the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., and was then transported by Fire Service Honor Guard to Emmitsburg, where it was raised over the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in honor of your firefighter.

Your family's flag serves as a lasting symbol of the United States of America's gratitude to your family and your fallen hero. ***Your firefighter will never be forgotten.***

We are here for you.

May 3, 2026

It is my honor to welcome you to the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service. This weekend, we gather to remember and pay tribute to 204 firefighters whose lives were lost in the line of duty, individuals who answered the call to serve their communities with courage, dedication, and selflessness.

While we reflect on their extraordinary service, we also recognize the families and loved ones who stood beside them. Your strength, love, and sacrifice are inseparable from their story, and today we recognize you for the strength and devotion you have shown in supporting their service.

Within these pages you will find a tribute to your firefighter, along with the stories of others being remembered this year. Each page reflects a life dedicated to protecting others and reminds us of the profound impact these firefighters had on their families, colleagues, and communities. Their legacies live on in the people whose lives they touched.

By being here, you have become part of the Fire Hero Family, a community bound together by shared experience and support. Those who have walked this path before understand the depth of loss and the long road toward healing. When you are ready, this community stands beside you with understanding, connection, and friendship.

Please remember that the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation is here to support you, not only during Memorial Weekend, but throughout the year. We hope you will take advantage of the programs available to Fire Hero Families, including virtual support calls, in-person gatherings, and opportunities to connect with others who share similar experiences.

I also hope you will consider returning in December for the Winter Retreat and Tree Lighting. This special time allows families to reconnect and spend quiet moments at this sacred place of remembrance.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the entire National Fallen Firefighters Foundation family, please know that your firefighter will never be forgotten. Their courage and sacrifice will forever be woven into the legacy of the American fire service, and we remain committed to honoring their memory and standing beside you for as long as you need us.

Sincerely yours,

Troy Markel

Troy A. Markel, CIC, CRM
Chair, Board of Directors
National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

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Alexander G. Trenier

ALABAMA

Career Deputy Chief ★ February 23, 2025 ★ Age 63

Mobile Fire-Rescue Department

Alexander G. Trenier, 63, of Daphne, Alabama, passed away peacefully on Sunday, February 23, 2025. Born in Mobile on January 17, 1962, Alex was known for his integrity, selflessness, and dedication to both family and community.

Raised in the "Down the Bay" neighborhood with six siblings, Alex later moved near Dauphin Island Parkway. His parents owned Trenier and Sons Grocery, where he learned discipline and respect working as a butcher and cashier.

Alex graduated from McGill-Toolen Catholic High School in 1980 and played varsity basketball. Following a 200-year Trenier family tradition, he joined the Mobile Fire and Rescue Department in 1987, rising to driver in 1991, captain in 1994, district chief in 2001 (one of the city's first Black district chiefs), and deputy chief in 2018. He served at Crichton Station's District 3 headquarters for C Shift.

Alex believed fire stations were pillars of the community and fostered inclusivity. He built a strong relationship with the Dumas Wesley Community Center, organizing monthly volunteer outreach for local firemen.

He met his wife, Donna, in 1979, and they married in August 1986. Together, they created a loving home, sharing a passion for boating, hosting gatherings, and family. They welcomed their son, Alexander John Michael, in 1991, and daughter, Jennifer, in 1995.

Alex enjoyed boating on Fowl River, spending weekends making memories with loved ones. He cherished time with his dogs—Keku, Stella, Roscoe (Echo), Oakley, and Archie—and loved music, filling his home with classics including Otis Redding, Al Green, and Earth, Wind & Fire. Above all, he was proud of his children and never missed their milestones. Alex's wisdom and humor—marked by his "goofy smile" and sayings like "I am my brother's keeper"—left a lasting impression.

He is survived by his wife of 38 years, Donna; his children, Alexander John Michael (Jakayla) Trenier and Jennifer (Nicholas) McClendon; siblings, Michelle Herman, Mark (Barbara) Trenier, Erane (Jesse) Allen, Marquita (Joe) Wiley, Medina Trenier; and many nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends. He was preceded in death by his parents, brother John Michael Trenier, brother-in-law Louis Herman, and nephew Raymond Wiley.

May Alex rest in eternal peace, forever sailing on calm waters.

Perry Franklin Lee Wallace

Career Firefighter ★ August 9, 1982 ★ Age 20

ALASKA

Naval Station Adak Fire Department

Some lives are measured not in years, but by the profound impact of their final, most purposeful chapter. For Perry Franklin Lee Wallace, that chapter was written in dedicated service as a U.S. Navy fireman on the unforgiving Alaskan frontier. Just 20 years old, Perry was tragically killed in Adak, Alaska, on August 9, 1982. But his legacy of courage, commitment, and personal transformation lives on.

Born on October 10, 1961, Perry embarked on a journey of self-improvement that culminated in his enlistment in the U.S. Navy on January 13, 1981. He began as an undesignated sailor in the engineering department, focusing on the fireman field. This path led him to the Naval Air Facility in Adak, a remote and strategically important outpost at the western edge of the Aleutian Island chain. The environment was notoriously harsh, with frequent storms, rain, and minimal sunlight. Despite these challenges, Perry embraced his new career with immense dedication and personal growth. As a Navy fireman, he discovered a purpose that resonated deeply, committing his life to the service and protection of others.

On that fateful day, Perry lost his life while responding to an emergency call. He was riding on the tailboard of a fire truck, a common and dangerous practice at the time, when the vehicle was involved in a tragic rollover accident. His line-of-duty death serves as a stark reminder of the inherent risks faced by Navy firefighters, even during routine responses. It also underscores the Navy's critical emphasis on firefighting and damage control training for all sailors.

For over four decades, Perry's ultimate sacrifice went largely unrecorded. But in 2025, a group of his former colleagues from Naval Station Adak launched a special mission to ensure his legacy was not forgotten. Through their relentless perseverance in gathering documentation and witness statements, they successfully secured official recognition for his line-of-duty death. His name is now permanently preserved on both the Department of Defense and National Fallen Firefighter Memorials, a testament to his remarkable transformation and ultimate sacrifice. The dedication of his fellow sailors highlights the profound and lasting impact Perry had on those who served alongside him.

Perry is remembered not only as a fallen hero, but as a loving son, brother, and friend. His journey serves as a powerful testament to the idea that a life defined by courage and service to others is never truly forgotten.

ARIZONA

Mark Keller

Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ May 6, 2025 ★ Age 62

Mesa Fire and Medical Department

Mark was a fun-loving husband to Stacie and a devoted father of seven children. He was also a proud grandfather to eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, whom he loved teaching, playing with, and spending time with.

Before becoming a firefighter, Mark built a career in concrete finishing and owned his own small business. He continued finishing concrete throughout his life, often doing work for his fire brothers and welcoming anyone who wanted to work alongside him.

Mark was hired by the Mesa Fire Department in October of 1990, beginning a lifelong commitment to public safety and emergency response. Driven by a deep desire to help others, he earned his paramedic certification in 1995, providing advanced, life-saving care during emergencies. He continued to expand his expertise, achieving his hazardous materials certification in 2000. In 2005, he became a technical rescue technician, demonstrating exceptional skill, professionalism, and calm under the most demanding conditions. For a time, he also served as a fire investigator.

From 2020 to 2022, Mark proudly served as a recruit training officer, where he made a lasting and positive impact on new firefighters entering the profession. He was passionate about mentoring, teaching, and setting the standard for service, leaving an impact that many carried throughout their careers. In 2013, Mark's leadership was recognized when his crew was awarded Outstanding Crew of the Year.

Throughout his career, Mark exemplified the highest ideals of the fire service—selflessness, integrity, and service above self. His knowledge, leadership, and compassion left a lasting impact on his department, his colleagues, and the community he proudly served.

Mark loved adventure. He enjoyed motorcycles, guns, and golfing with his buddies. He shared a love of sports, scuba diving in the Caribbean, and hiking many trails with his wife, family, and friends.

He deeply loved his fire family. We will all miss his huge bear hugs and "classic" jokes. He was always quick to make those around him laugh and feel loved.

Mark's sacrifice and legacy will never be forgotten.

Brenna Rashel Kulikowski

Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ September 14, 2025 ★ Age 31

ARIZONA

Timber Mesa Fire & Medical District

Brenna Rashel Kulikowski (Moring), 31, of Springerville, Arizona, tragically passed away in the line of duty on September 14, 2025, in a vehicle accident while serving her community as a firefighter.

Born June 4, 1994, in Springerville, Arizona, Brenna was the cherished daughter of Stuart Moring and Sonia Jones. Raised in the heart of the White Mountains, she graduated from Round Valley High School in Eagar, where her love for nature and community began to blossom. On July 7, 2025, Brenna married the love of her life, Todd Kulikowski, in a celebration filled with joy and love.

Brenna was a dedicated and accomplished public servant, holding certifications as Firefighter I and II, Wildland Firefighter, and Paramedic. Her passion for helping others was evident in every call she answered and every life she touched.

Brenna's greatest joy was her family. She was a devoted wife to Todd and a loving mother to her daughter, Livvy Turner. Her world revolved around them, and her love was fierce and unwavering. She found peace and happiness in nature—whether hiking, skiing, camping, or tending to her beloved plants and flowers. She was a creative soul who enjoyed macramé and painting, and she lived her life grounded in a strong Christian faith.

Brenna leaves behind a legacy of love, strength, heroism, and family. She was a fierce woman—small in stature but mighty in spirit. Her dedication to her career was matched only by her devotion to her loved ones. She was growing rapidly in her role as a firefighter and paramedic, always eager to learn and serve. To the world, she was a hero. To those who knew her, she was so much more—selfless, strong, compassionate, kind, and fiercely loyal. She loved with her whole heart and protected those she cared for with unwavering courage and strength.

Though her passing leaves a profound void in the hearts of her loved ones, her legacy leaves a lasting impression that will never be forgotten. We find comfort in knowing she was welcomed into the loving arms of her Heavenly Father.

Brenna is survived by her husband, Todd Kulikowski; her daughter, Livvy Turner; her mother, Sonia Jones (Moring); her father, Stuart Moring; her sister, Meagan Brazel; her brothers, Drew Moring and Cade Moring; her nephews, Jayden and Gaven Crowther and André Guerrero-Moring; and her niece, Aria French.

She was preceded in death by her stepsister, Danielle Paulsen; her grandparents, Charlie Moring and Elizabeth Thompson (Moring), Margaret Crow Dawson, and Calvin Crow; and her aunt, Gwendolyn Moring.

Patrick F. Quinn

ARIZONA

Career Battalion Chief ★ March 2, 2025 ★ Age 64

Tucson Fire Department

Patrick Quinn was born August 2, 1960, into a large Irish Catholic family in Minnesota. He eventually moved to Tucson, Arizona, where he met his wife, Susan, and joined the Tucson Fire Department, becoming a third-generation firefighter.

Patrick Quinn began his career with the Tucson Fire Department in 1985 and served proudly for 37 years. Throughout his career with the department, he worked within the Hazardous Materials Response Team, performed a variety of roles in fire cause investigation and public education, served as the deputy chief in charge of emergency management, and finally served as a battalion chief out on shift. Patrick attended the National Fire Academy numerous times and loved teaching what he learned about fire cause investigation to recruit classes within the department.

Patrick and Susan had two sons, Nicholas and Daniel. Patrick loved spending time with them outdoors camping, hunting, and fishing.

Patrick contracted glioblastoma cancer as a result of his career spent with the department. He courageously fought the cancer for over three months but unfortunately passed away in the early morning of March 2, 2025. Patrick Quinn is survived by his wife, two sons, and grandchildren.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Damon Blaine Thompson

Career Firefighter/EMT ★ September 14, 2025 ★ Age 21

ARIZONA

Damon Thompson was born on Mother's Day (May 9th) in Show Low, Arizona. He was the beloved son of Daniel James Thompson and Shellie Watt Thompson. He left behind six siblings, Daniel, Ashton, Sunnie, Jordana, Jaden, and Adrian; sixteen nieces and nephews who adored him; and a loving fiancee, Brianna, who held a special place in his heart.

Damon was a dedicated firefighter who started his career at the young age of 14 as a junior firefighter with the Concho (Arizona) Fire Department, serving his community with courage, strength, and a deep sense of duty. Protecting others wasn't just his job; it was who he was. He stood ready to help whenever people needed him, facing danger with the same steady determination he carried through every part of his life.

At the age of 20 he joined the Timber Mesa Fire Department in Show Low, Arizona, to further his career. On September 14, 2025, just 15 days short of one year with Timber Mesa, he was tragically killed in a head-on crash alongside his coworker while serving in the line of duty.

Outside of the fire service, Damon felt most at home in the wilderness. The mountains, tall pines, and fresh air were his happy place. He loved being outdoors and was always joking about finding the next tree that "needed to come down"—the live ones included.

Damon lived a life of service, hard work, and laughter. Whether he was responding to a call or standing in the middle of the forest with a chainsaw and a grin, he brought strength, humor, and heart to everything he did. His legacy continues through the people who love him and the lives he touched.

Timber Mesa Fire & Medical District

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

William “Cody” Treatch

ARIZONA

Career Firefighter Recruit ★ August 23, 2024 ★ Age 26

Rural Metro Fire Department

William “Cody” Treatch was a loving husband, a devoted soon-to-be father, and the cherished son of Willie and Jacquie Treatch. He was the fiercely protective little brother to his sister, Lilli—so protective, in fact, that most people assumed he was the older sibling. Cody had a steady presence, a quiet strength, and a heart that always put others first.

Born on February 3, 1998, in Tucson, Arizona, Cody grew up surrounded by family, baseball fields, and a community he cared deeply for. A talented left-handed pitcher, he played at Gateway Community College and later Southwestern College, earning a reputation for his work ethic, his humor, and the loyalty he showed his teammates.

Inspired by his father, Cody felt called to serve as a firefighter. He entered the fire academy with determination and humility, giving everything he had to the work. His instructors and classmates quickly saw what his family already knew—Cody was strong, genuine, and driven by the desire to help others.

Cody’s greatest joy came from his life with his wife, Kylee. Their love was deep, honest, and built on friendship. When he learned they were expecting a baby boy, he was overjoyed. He proudly chose the name William Hunter and lovingly prepared the nursery, making sure every detail was perfect for his son.

On August 13, 2024, Day 2 into academy training, Cody suffered a heat-related injury and rhabdomyolysis. After nine days in the hospital, surrounded by family, he passed away peacefully on August 23, 2024, at just 26 years old. Kylee was 19 weeks pregnant. Though Cody never met Hunter, his love is woven into every part of his son’s story—from the name he chose to the nursery he built with his own hands.

Cody will always be remembered for his kindness, his strength, and the way he made others feel safe. He carried a calm steadiness that grounded the people around him, offering comfort simply by being present. He was a loving husband, a loyal son and brother, and a dedicated friend who showed up for others without hesitation. Though he never had the chance to serve in the field, he would have been a firefighter who led with courage, humility, and an unwavering heart for others.

His legacy lives on through his family, through Hunter—who carries his name, his spirit, and the love Cody poured into preparing for his arrival—and through the countless lives touched by his generosity, his character, and the example he set in the short but powerful time he was here.

With God we will gain the victory, and He will trample down our enemies. Psalm 108:13

Richard Lee Davis

Career Captain ★ October 14, 2023 ★ Age 50

ARKANSAS

On October 14, 2023, Van Buren firefighter, Captain Richard Lee Davis, 50, died after a year-long heroic battle with cancer. Richard was a beloved husband, father, and friend to many.

Captain Richard Lee Davis was born on October 18, 1972, in Fort Smith, Arkansas, to the late Cecilia Humphries Kasprytzki. Richard was the beloved husband to his wife of 30 years, Natalie "Gretchen" Davis, and a loving father to his two sons and daughter. Richard was blessed with many nieces and nephews.

Captain Davis was a graduate of Mountainburg High School and held many certifications, including welding, HAZMAT, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), and Firefighter. Richard began his lifelong career when the late Mountainburg Fire Chief Terry Bassham recruited Captain Davis to volunteer with District 3 Fire Department. Richard was a volunteer for nine years and spent the rest of his life in service with his brothers at the Van Buren Fire Department.

Richard was giving in nature, a loyal friend, and always the first one to offer help when you needed it. Richard enjoyed traveling, cooking, hunting, and fishing and rarely passed on the opportunity for a practical joke. Richard enjoyed the time he was able to spend with his children helping with their football, baseball, FFA, and 4-H projects. Captain Davis was a member of the International Association of Fire Fighters #4078.

Van Buren Fire Department

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Michael Z. Heithaus

ARKANSAS

Volunteer Firefighter ★ March 30, 2025 ★ Age 42

Evansville Volunteer Fire Department

Michael Zane Heithaus was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and friend whose life was defined by service, strength, and selflessness. Known for his skill as a mechanic and his ability to solve any problem, Michael was always the person others could rely on in times of need.

He carried that same dedication into every aspect of his life, especially his family, whom he loved deeply and supported without hesitation. Michael led by example, teaching those around him the value of hard work, perseverance, and kindness.

Remembered for his generosity, sense of humor, and unwavering willingness to help others, Michael leaves behind a legacy of compassion and quiet strength. His impact will continue to be felt by all who knew and loved him.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Larry Dale Mustion Jr.

Volunteer Lieutenant ★ September 19, 2025 ★ Age 44

ARKANSAS

Larry Dale Mustion Jr. was born on May 4, 1981.

He joined the volunteer fire department in Luxora, Arkansas, right out of high school and met some of his best friends there. He enjoyed hanging out with friends, whether it was going to wrestling events, bonfires, or singing karaoke. He had a love for racing and always enjoyed helping his buddies with their racecars.

Larry loved serving his community during fishing rodeos for the kids and Christmas parades. He loved his family and always helped them out when needed. He also enjoyed helping the farmers during harvest season.

His big smile and presence will forever be missed by all who knew and loved him.

A life so beautifully lived, love so deeply shared, and a spirit so deeply missed.

Luxora Volunteer Fire Department

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Rick Addicks

CALIFORNIA

Career Fire Captain ★ April 12, 2024 ★ Age 55

Ross Valley Fire Department

Fire Captain Rick Addicks, a 22-year veteran of the fire service, left a lasting mark on his community. He began his firefighting at the all-volunteer Stinson Beach Fire Department after moving to the remote seaside town. Rick was practicing law at the time. but he realized his true passion was firefighting instead. Choosing a life of service, he joined the Ross Valley Fire Department full time.

Rick worked tirelessly to strengthen and advance the fire service in Marin County. He loved being on the Marin County Urban Search and Rescue Regional Task Force and the OES Water Rescue Team. There he responded to some of the region's most urgent emergencies.

Rick was an executive board member, shop steward, and labor negotiator for L1775 and the Ross Valley Firefighters Association.

One of Rick's proudest contributions was helping to found the Marin Professional Firefighters Behavioral Health Team. He was a trained peer supporter leader and mentor to many. He offered care and guidance to firefighters navigating the toll of their profession. He served as team lead of the North Bay Regional Critical Incident Stress Team and became the face of this project.

Rick continued to practice law while being a firefighter. He had a rare ability to excel in many things while remaining humble and generous with his talents. He was not just accomplished in these two professions. He was an avid surfer, outdoorsman, guitarist, poet, writer, and cook.

At 54, Rick was diagnosed with stage IV esophageal cancer, a battle he met with courage and resilience. For six months, he remained strong and active despite difficult treatments. Even in his final months, when complications set in, he continued to be a source of wisdom and positivity.

Rick's legacy of service continued after his passing when Marin County began offering state-of-the-art testing for esophageal cancer, free of charge, to ALL current and retired firefighters, extending the reach of care beyond his lifetime.

Rick is survived by his wife, Kristen Dowd Addicks; his children, Skye Addicks and Casey Addicks; and his parents, Carla Addicks and Gary Jones. His legacy lives on in the family he loved, the colleagues he served alongside, and the countless lives he touched through his unwavering devotion to service. His loss was so deeply felt throughout the fire service and his community. He was honored with a moving memorial service that reflected the magnitude of his impact.

Robert Berbena Jr.

Career Captain ★ December 29, 2024 ★ Age 63

CALIFORNIA

Robert Berbena Jr. was born in Modesto, California, on September 15, 1961. Robert attended Davis High School, where he had a passion for football and was voted “best all-around” his senior year. After high school, Robert attended Modesto Junior College (MJC) where he played middle linebacker for the MJC Pirates “crazy man football.” This season would go down in Modesto history as the 1980 MJC Pirates went undefeated and won a national championship. Robert then attended Columbia College and earned an associate degree in fire science.

Robert began his career with the California Department of Forestry (CDF), then worked for two years at Tracy Rural Fire District. In 1985, Robert was hired with Modesto Fire Department, where he would retire at the rank of captain in 2014.

Robert lived ten lifetimes in one. He finished multiple marathons, loved to travel, was dangerous on the golf course, and touched the lives of all who were lucky to call him a friend.

On December 29, 2024, Robert passed away from his battle with leukemia. He is survived by his two children, Danielle and Anthony.

Modesto Fire Department

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Aaron Ray Beucus

CALIFORNIA

Career Fire Engine Operator/Engineer ★ February 4, 2023 ★ Age 37

USDA Forest Service, Cleveland National Forest

Aaron Ray "of Sunshine" Beucus was born on March 21, 1985, in California. He loved camping, sports, time at the river, and running barefoot through the hills with his sister and lifelong friends. In high school, he participated in FFA and proudly won Grand Champion Color Bowl at the Del Mar Fair.

After briefly studying ornamental horticulture following high school, Aaron began his fire career at just 19 years old. He served with CAL FIRE and later the United States Forest Service in multiple roles, including hot shot, helitack crewmember/rescue specialist, and fire engine operator. Aaron was known for his compassion. Colleagues often shared that during difficult times, he listened without judgment and helped them see life differently. He made everyone feel welcome and valued, forming genuine friendships that lasted a lifetime.

Though deeply dedicated to firefighting and the communities he served, Aaron always chose family first. In 2009, Aaron began dating Katie, who would later become his wife. They married in 2013 and built a life filled with travel, home renovations, laughter, and love. Together they welcomed their son, Evan; their daughter, Ellie, who was born into heaven; and their daughter, Haddie.

Aaron was an extraordinary father, caring for his children with patience and tenderness. He met them at eye level, hugged them through hard moments, and structured his work schedule to maximize time with them. With Evan, he built Lego worlds, practiced baseball endlessly, and created small traditions like Costco trunk picnics. With Haddie, he played firefighter, learned to do ponytails, humored her with bows and blue toenail polish, and took bike rides through the neighborhood. As a father, Aaron embraced every joyful moment.

Aaron was the steady compass of his family, guiding, supportive, and full of humor. He left handwritten directions filled with jokes and tucked Dr. Seuss quotes around the house to encourage Katie. Even in his final fight, he focused on lifting her up, teaching her to love herself as fully as he loved her.

Aaron lived with childlike wonder, deep kindness, and unmistakable joy. His legacy is simple—love your people well, be compassionate, spend intentional time with your children, value your partner, and never forget to laugh. Aaron was a loyal friend, loving father, devoted son and brother, cherished husband, and dedicated firefighter.

Donald J. Cone

Career Captain ★ November 25, 2023 ★ Age 58

CALIFORNIA

Huntington Beach Fire Department

Donald James Cone was born August 11, 1965, to John and Audrey Cone. Raised in Cypress, California, he was one of five children. He loved to play sports and compete. He excelled in football, baseball, and basketball, playing all three sports at Mater Dei High School. It was at Mater Dei where Don met his wife, Julie. They were married in 1989 and had two daughters, Jayme and Jenna.

Don's background in sports fueled a passion for teamwork, service, and leadership, which channeled him to a career in the fire service. He attended community college, taking all the fire science classes he could while working as an ambulance operator. He was first hired by Brea Fire Department but soon after moved to City of Huntington Beach Fire Department. Beginning his career with HB in 1990 as a firefighter, he also served as paramedic, fire prevention specialist, and retired as captain.

Don and Julie were blessed with two daughters, and Don enjoyed coaching their youth sports team. He coached their teams until each girl left home to compete in NCAA softball. When the family was not on the diamond, they loved going to the lake and river. Don loved to golf, water ski, wakeboard, wake surf and, in his younger days, snow ski. Don had just received his drone pilot license and was planning a new career after his fire service was complete. Don loved his family and worked very hard while raising his daughters. If you had a conversation with Don, you would know a couple of things—he loved being a firefighter, he loved his family, and both of his daughters played Division 1 softball.

Don courageously fought his occupational cancer. He tried all the traditional lines of treatment, and when the lymphoma kept returning, the doctors asked him to participate in clinical trials. He tried a couple at City of Hope in California and, immediately following COVID-19 regulations softening, he traveled monthly to the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland.

Don befriended all the staff at whatever hospital he was in. He was always kind and respectful and genuinely liked the staff. He asked about their vacations, about their ailing parents, etc. Despite all Don's positive vibes and the doctors' best courses of treatment, Don died on November 25, 2023, at Mission Hospital in Mission Viejo, California. He was surrounded by family, and we like to think his parents were there to greet him at the pearly gates of Heaven.

Daniel “Cookie” Cook

CALIFORNIA

Career Fire Apparatus Engineer ★ December 31, 2025 ★ Age 45

CAL FIRE-California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Fire Apparatus Engineer Danny Cook was a devoted husband, father, son, loving papa, brother, and uncle whose life was defined by service to his family, his friends, and his community. Known for his generous heart and unwavering commitment to helping others, Danny leaves behind a legacy of compassion, dedication, and laughter.

Danny was born on November 19, 1980, in Orange County, California, where he spent his early childhood years. At the age of five, his family briefly relocated to Alabama before returning to Southern California, which would remain home for most of his childhood and adult life.

From an early age, Danny embraced an active lifestyle and developed a deep love for the outdoors, particularly mountain biking. At just 16 years old, he completed an ambitious ride from Rosarito, Mexico, to Ensenada, Mexico, a testament to his determination, adventurous spirit, and love of physical challenge that would stay with him throughout his life.

Danny began his fire service career with CAL FIRE in 2006 as a seasonal firefighter in San Diego, where he served until 2008. Driven to further his skills in emergency medicine, he later moved to Indiana to pursue his paramedic license. In 2014, Danny returned to Southern California and rejoined CAL FIRE, continuing his career in the Riverside Unit as a firefighter II/paramedic, where he continued to serve with pride and professionalism.

Beyond the uniform, Danny’s greatest pride and joy was his family. He was deeply dedicated to his wife, Joann, and their six children, Christian (24), Jason (22), Kawika (22), Karen (19), Shane (11), and Erin (9). A truly hands-on father, Danny was involved in every aspect of his children’s lives, from school events and sports to everyday play, always jumping at the chance for snuggles, laughter, and love. Family was the center of Danny’s world. He was a constant provider and giver, going above and beyond to ensure those he loved were cared for and supported. This devotion was also reflected in the close and loving relationship he maintained with his parents, a true testament to his character and the values he carried throughout his life.

Danny will also be remembered for the simple joys that defined him—his love of coffee and energy drinks, his quick wit, and his ability to light up any room with his stories and humor. His warmth, dedication, and selflessness left a lasting impact on all who knew him.

Danny’s life was one of purpose, service, and connection. His impact will continue to be felt by all who had the privilege of knowing and serving alongside him.

David J. Donley

Career Fire Captain ★ March 5, 2024 ★ Age 74

CALIFORNIA

Inspired by the courageous firefighters battling the San Bernardino County wildfires during his summer break from Walla Walla University, Dave discovered his life's purpose. He embarked on a distinguished career in firefighting, starting with the U.S.F.S and then dedicating 44 years of service to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).

Throughout his career, Dave held various roles, including helitack, engine operator, and captain. Dave ultimately found his passion as the RRU GIS specialist and Perris Emergency Command Center captain. Known for his calm demeanor and meticulous attention to detail, Dave ensured the seamless delivery of multifaceted emergency services to the communities of Riverside.

Though his life was tragically cut short by job-related cancer, Dave's legacy of service and dedication lives on through his loving family. He is survived by his wife of 42 years, Marianne; his son, Michael (CAL FIRE battalion chief); his daughter-in-law, Jennifer; and his grandchildren, Elisha, Eden, and John.

CAL FIRE-California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Mark A. Eads

CALIFORNIA

Career Captain ★ February 1, 2025 ★ Age 62

Kings County Fire Department

Kings County Fire Captain Mark Anthony Eads, 62, passed away in the line of duty on February 1, 2025, while responding to a structure fire call in Avenal, California.

Born and raised in Fresno, Mark was the son of a well-known local RV dealership owner and a respected hospital administrator. From an early age, he was taught the value of hard work, kindness, and staying true to his beliefs—values he later passed on to his children alongside the love of his life, Robyn Eads. Mark and Robyn's story began 36 years ago at Fresno City College, where they first met and started a journey built on love, adventure, and unwavering support for one another. They were married in 1991 and welcomed their son, Ryan, in 1992 and later their daughter, Lauren, in 1995.

After becoming empty nesters, they traveled to Italy, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand. An avid horseman, experienced in advanced cattle drives, Mark was the newly installed president of the Cumorah Riding Club, with whom he and his wife, Robyn, often enjoyed equine camping and coordinated rides throughout California.

Mark was a devout Catholic and attended church regularly with his wife at Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Fresno. He could frequently be found playing his Taylor guitar fireside for his wife on date nights at home and at spontaneous family singalongs. He enjoyed time on the water in his boat and camping at Bass Lake. He was never too shy to show his mischievous side with good humor, was the proverbial life of the party, and could command a room's attention with his self-deprecating storytelling.

In 2001, at the age of 39, he fulfilled a lifelong dream of becoming a first responder, graduating from the Fresno Fire Academy and beginning his service as a volunteer firefighter with Fresno Fire before being hired by CAL FIRE at age 40. He later joined the Kings County Fire Department, where he devoted 21 years of service, earning the rank of fire captain in 2021. His dedication to his community, along with his involvement in critical strike team deployments, including wildland fire attacks, made him a respected leader. His final call came with the department on February 1, 2025, marking the bittersweet end of a dedicated career he had planned to conclude with retirement this summer.

Mark's kindness, dedication, and unwavering love for those around him left an indelible mark on all who knew him. His legacy of service, adventure, and devotion to family will live on in the countless lives he touched. He will never be forgotten.

Mark Edria

Career Assistant Chief ★ October 17, 2021 ★ Age 54

CALIFORNIA

CAL FIRE-California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Mark Anthony Edria, a cherished husband, a devoted father, and a true pillar of strength, passed away on October 17, 2021, in Salinas, California, after displaying incredible courage in his battle against an aggressive brain tumor.

Born in Carmel, California, Mark was a loving husband to Tara Edria and a doting father to his children, Jarrett, Cayman, and Maximilian Edria. He also embraced his role as a stepfather to Alexander and Nicholas Bezdjian, treating them with the same warmth and affection as his own.

As a proud alumnus of North Salinas High School, he treasured friendships he made during his school days and maintained strong bonds with many of his classmates.

Mark dedicated 30 illustrious years to a distinguished career with CAL FIRE, rising to the esteemed position of assistant chief before retiring in 2019. His colleagues often described him as a remarkable leader, a firefighter's chief, and a true confidant, embodying kindness, warmth, and approachability. He always found time to lend an ear or share a laugh with his coworkers.

Beyond his professional life, Mark's passion for mentoring and guiding youth was evident through his involvement in coaching various local sports teams, including Hartnell Little League, Spreckels, BV, and Salinas High. He also founded the Swish Basketball travel team, dedicating countless hours to nurturing and inspiring young talents in the gym.

Mark was a man of many wonderful qualities. He was quick-witted, generous, compassionate, loyal, and fiercely competitive. He had a great love for life's simple pleasures, including playing ball with his dog, mastering the art of barbecuing and smoking ribs, and enthusiastically cheering on his favorite sports teams—the Raiders, Warriors, and A's. A proud owner of a 1976 Land Cruiser, Mark reveled in adventures and cherished the memories created on his journeys. Above all, he found immense joy in witnessing his children excel in their respective sports.

His caring nature extended beyond immediate family, as he held a special place in his heart for his wife's family; his children's mother, Candace Kinn, and her family; as well as numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Mark's presence in our lives brought light, laughter, and love to all who knew him. He leaves behind a legacy of strength, compassion, and the importance of cherishing every moment with loved ones. Though he may no longer walk beside us, Mark's spirit will forever inspire us to be resilient and to embrace life's joys with the same passion and love he exemplified throughout his extraordinary journey.

David C. Gonzalez

CALIFORNIA

Career Captain ★ April 14, 2025 ★ Age 61

Los Angeles County Fire Department

David C. Gonzalez passed away on April 14, 2025, after battling sarcoma that metastasized to his lungs. He was born on March 15, 1964, in Los Angeles. He started out as an LA County firefighter, moving through the ranks as engineer and retiring as a captain after 35 years of service.

He mentored young people through the Fire Explorer Program and trained fellow firefighters in the Engineer Program.

Beyond training and service, he was a proud member of the fire department's softball team, The Blaze, and competed in the Firemen's Olympics in Ventura in 2004. He represented the department in a charity boxing event between the LA County Sheriffs and the U.S. Marine Corps, which reflected both his competitive spirit and his generosity. He also found joy in monthly golf tournaments with the coworkers he loved so much.

He coached his daughters' softball travel teams, pouring the same patience, discipline, and encouragement into his daughters and other girls he coached that he gave to every firefighter he trained. He took immense pride in watching his girls compete at the collegiate level—not just for their athletic success, but for the strong, determined women they had become.

He was an avid sports fan who loved football and never missed a Broncos game. Some of his favorite moments were spent with his family at the river, waterskiing, snow skiing, ocean fishing, and camping with friends and family. Those moments reflected who he truly was—present, joyful, and grateful for time together.

He is survived by his wife of 22 years, Tammy Gonzalez; his six children, Aaron, Kristiana, Jared, Dominic, Briana, and Rylee; and his two grandkids, Rowan and Ryker. He also shared a special bond with his two dogs.

He showed his love through traditions created to bring his family together, to create stability, and to build lasting memories. Traditions that mattered to him are now carried on through his children, keeping his spirit alive in the moments that feel familiar and comforting. In that way, his influence continues, not just in memory but in daily life.

He was a God-fearing man whose faith guided the way he lived, loved, and served. It shaped his values, grounded his character, and gave him strength in both the quiet moments and the hardest days. His faith was not something he spoke loudly about but something he lived through humility, integrity, and compassion for others.

In his final days, the love he gave so freely was returned to him in full. His room was never empty, and most importantly he was held by love, family, and the legacy built through a life lived for others.

Howard Hedges

Career Battalion Chief ★ April 23, 2022 ★ Age 66

CALIFORNIA

In November 1978, Howard started his fire career as a volunteer firefighter, before becoming a full-time firefighter and engineer with the Coalinga City Fire Department.

In July 1990, Howard started his career as a Fire Fighter II with CDF/CAL FIRE assigned to the Fresno-Kings Unit, where he continued to work as a fire apparatus engineer (January 9, 1995) and fire captain (July 27, 1998).

On December 12, 2005, Fire Captain Hedges transferred to the training center (academy) as the Emergency Command Center (ECC) Class Coordinator. On December 9, 2009, Howard was promoted to battalion chief, with oversight of specialized training at the training center, until his retirement on October 15, 2011. Howard returned on December 16, 2016, to the training center as a fire captain, retired annuitant. Howard assisted with special projects, including the rewrite of the 4039 Position Development Guides & Task Books, updating the training center policies and procedures. In 2020, he accepted a special assignment as a full-time COVID-19 contact tracer assigned to Santa Barbara County until he was diagnosed with cancer.

While assigned to the training center in Ione, Howard was working towards creating a "trailer park," and he had such a huge smile on his face when he was running the dozer. Though that never came to fruition, that same area, known as Howard Park, will one day be the home of staff housing. The current format of the 4-week ECC Academy exists because of an issue paper and cost savings review Howard completed and submitted for consideration. This change in curriculum moved the ECC Modules from a 900-square-foot modular trailer into the Classroom Complex North Amphitheater. The ECC Lab, still used today, was started and completed due to Howard's efforts to secure grant funding and other support mechanisms.

CAL FIRE-California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

William E. Lenzen

CALIFORNIA

Career Engineer ★ December 28, 2023 ★ Age 63

Los Angeles County Fire Department

William "Bill" Lenzen was born on August 6, 1960, in Southern California to Bill and Sharon Lenzen. The second oldest of six children, his family includes sisters Robin, Marcy, Felicia, and Jill, and his younger brother, Matt. Family meant everything to Bill. He took great pride in his role in the family and was the best son, grandson, brother, uncle, and brother-in-law you could imagine. He was always present, always available, and would not hesitate to give you the shirt off his back. He was built to serve others, and this led him to an esteemed career as a firefighter.

Bill started his career with the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACOFD) on April 23, 1983. He proudly served at many stations across the county as a firefighter and paramedic and was promoted to his dream job of firefighter specialist-engineer in 1994. His LACOFD home for the next 19 years was Fire Station 17, the "Yard House," in Whittier, California. This was his home away from home and the station he was best known for. Bill revered being an engineer. His colleagues have told countless stories about how great an engineer he was and how safe and prepared they felt with Bill behind the wheel in charge of the apparatus. The Lenzen family finds great comfort every time we hear his colleagues say with pride, "Bill was my engineer," as they tell stories about him. He was a mentor to many, and his impact will be felt across the LACOFD community for years to come. After 35 years of dedicated service, Bill retired in 2019.

Bill loved the outdoors and cherished his time at his favorite places on the Colorado River, the Eastern Sierras, and Jackson Hole, Wyoming. He was passionate about boating and fly-fishing and loved sharing these special places with his extended family and friends. Movies could be made and books written about the epic times he spent at these places and many others over the years.

Bill was selfless and humble and always found ways to give back. He cared deeply for people, especially those in need. He put others first and volunteered his time with the Muscular Dystrophy Association and the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation.

Bill was always upbeat, even during his toughest days, and his call to action was to Earn Every Day. Each day is a gift, and he wanted us to maximize each one we have. Bill left us too soon on December 28, 2023. We think of him every day, and his love will be felt forever. We miss his huge smile, his great laugh, and his deep, caring voice. He's in a better place now, reunited with family and friends in heaven, and taking care of us all from above. May God bless William "Bill" Lenzen.

Robert McLaughlin

Career Fire Captain ★ May 14, 2020 ★ Age 55

On May 14, 2020, we lost our brother, Robert McLaughlin, to a job-related illness.

Robert followed in his father's and grandfather's footsteps in the fire service. He received recognition from Congress regarding the Southern CA Electrical Grid failure and his actions while on duty in support of the community.

He loved riding and working on his full-dress Harley-Davidson. He also enjoyed camping and spending time off duty with family, friends, and coworkers.

CALIFORNIA

CAL FIRE-California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

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CALIFORNIA

Mark D. Miller

Career Fire Captain ★ September 24, 2024 ★ Age 64

CAL FIRE-California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13

Mark was born on June 24, 1960, and knew from a very young age that he wanted to be a firefighter. He began as a cadet in Ventura County before applying for CDF at 17 by not stating his actual age. This began his journey as a fireman, spanning nearly four decades and multiple cities and stations. He joined CDF in the San Bernardino Unit as a seasonal firefighter and finished his career as a captain with CAL FIRE at the Oak Glen Conservation Camp. In total, he served as a firefighter for 37 years, until he retired in 2014 at the age of 54.

In one story as a captain, he took a road not normally used and came upon a van of women who were lost and stuck in the middle of the desert. Mark and his crew dug out the van for the ladies, who said, "Captain Miller, we prayed for help. God used you today." This story is one example of many that perfectly encapsulates Mark's nearly 40 years as a public servant.

In addition to being a fireman, he had the deepest love for lending a helping hand to his neighbors and community. He adopted a four-mile span of Wildwood Canyon Road, in addition to Wildwood Park, both in his hometown of Yucaipa, where he trimmed trees and picked up trash. Mark was a dedicated blood donor who was proud to be in the 20 Gallon Club.

For 3½ years, Mark fought non-Hodgkin's/peripheral T-cell lymphoma, a cancer attributed to his career, which he loved so much that he said he would have done it all over again even if he knew he would get cancer.

He had an unparalleled work ethic learned from his Grandpa Dewey and concern for doing well what he deemed worth doing at all. In addition to being a brave firefighter, loving neighbor, friend, brother, husband, and father, he was a pure patriot with a deep love for his country. He was a husband and best friend to Debbie, with whom he shared 40 years, and a proud father of his three children, Bryce, Addie, and Jacob.

Mark's courage, sacrifice, and servant's heart are eternal. During his courageous fight, his faith abided. He remained positive, stayed strong, and always trusted in God. We find joy in the belief that he now walks with a new body, side by side with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "Guess what, Deb. I get to see God before you do."

And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! Job 19:25-27

Dustin Michael Roberto

Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ August 10, 2024 ★ Age 34

CALIFORNIA

Dustin was a remarkable individual whose life was a testament to bravery, selflessness, and an unwavering commitment to serving others. Born and raised in Santa Clarita, California, he embarked on a journey that would lead him to become a dedicated firefighter/paramedic, known for his extraordinary work ethic and his genuine care for those around him.

His career began in Colorado, where he honed his skills and passion for emergency services. Dustin's dream came true when he joined the Los Angeles County Fire Department, where he quickly became a beloved figure. Colleagues admired not just his professional competence, but also his infectious positivity and ability to connect with everyone he met. He was the most likable person, effortlessly making friends and leaving a lasting impression on all.

Dustin's heart was as big as his dedication to his profession. He worked harder than anyone, often going above and beyond to support his team and the community he served. His servant's heart was evident in everything he did, embodying the spirit of a true hero.

In the spring of 2022, Dustin met the love of his life. Their connection was immediate and profound, culminating in a beautiful marriage in June of 2024. Just two months before his cancer diagnosis, Dustin learned that he was going to be a father, a dream he cherished deeply. The excitement of welcoming his first child filled him with joy, and he was determined to be the best father he could be.

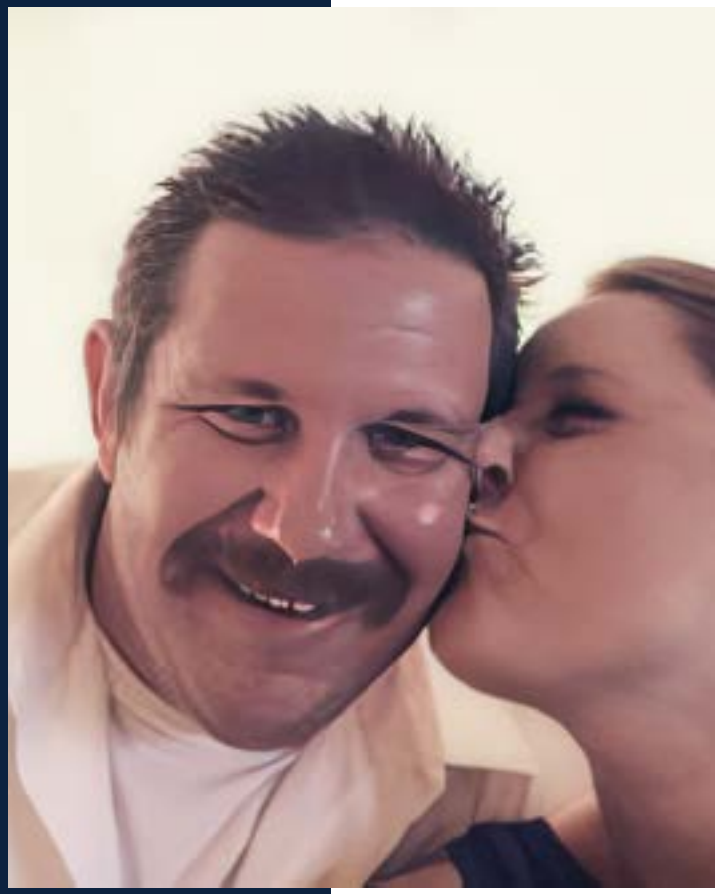
Though his battle with cancer was difficult, Dustin faced it with the same bravery and resilience that defined his life. His legacy of kindness, laughter, and unwavering friendship will forever resonate with those fortunate enough to have known him. Dustin was truly one of a kind, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts of many and reminding us all of the profound impact one person can have.

Los Angeles County Fire Department

Paul Rotondaro

CALIFORNIA

Career Fire Captain ★ October 2, 2019 ★ Age 36



CAL FIRE-California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Fire Captain Paul Vincent Rotondaro, from the CAL FIRE Madera-Mariposa-Merced Unit (MMU), was killed on duty early Wednesday, October 2, 2019, in a head-on collision while driving from Gustine Fire Station to Usona Fire Station.

Paul began his career as a firefighter 1 with CAL FIRE at Ahwahnee Fire station in MMU in 2006. He promoted to firefighter II in Merced Division in MMU in 2011. In 2012 he promoted to lieutenant fire apparatus engineer (FAE) in MMU, then transferred to the Riverside Unit as a permanent FAE in 2015. Paul promoted to lieutenant fire captain in MMU in 2016 and shortly after became a permanent fire captain.

Paul was an avid outdoorsman. He enjoyed camping, off-road everything, boating, sand, sand, and more sand, and many more outdoor activities. He loved to read and shared books with his Granddaddy.

In high school he was active in FFA. For small engines he placed first in the state on his judging team and played high school football as an offensive lineman for the G. V. Cougars. He graduated from Merced JC with an Associate of Science degree in fire science. He was working on his bachelor's degree. He was always motivated to improve his knowledge for himself and for his family.

Working for the fire department, Paul involved himself in many things. Paul was an active part of the Type 1 Hazardous Materials Team in Merced for several years. He was on Cal Fire Incident Management Team 3 in the finance section. He was a member of the Merced County Type 2 Rescue Team. He oversaw radio tech issues for all of Merced County Fire Department, and he had worked as part of the Aircraft Fire Rescue Team at Castle Airport.

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Kevin Matthew Skinner

Career Fire Apparatus Engineer ★ January 5, 2025 ★ Age 56

CALIFORNIA

Orange County Fire Authority

Kevin Skinner served his country, family, and God. He served four years in the U.S. Navy on the USS Ranger CV-61 aircraft carrier stationed at Naval Air Station Naval Base in Coronado, California. He was nicknamed "Skin Dog" and put in charge of fire prevention activities along his work as an operations specialist during Desert Storm. After serving, he managed Costa Mesa's iconic Goat Hill Tavern. He was hired first as a firefighter at the Marine Corps Air Station El Toro. After its closure five years later, Orange County Fire Authority hired him. He served there for 25 years, again known as "Skin Dog," the caring, fun man his military shipmates knew him to be in the toughest moments.

He lived last in rural Fallbrook near Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. Lucia and Kevin fell in love shortly after they turned 19. They remained together 36 years. Her memories include riding motorcycles from San Diego to Malibu, eloping in Santa Barbara, and trips to Baja and Big Bear.

He taught his children to swim, ski, and love music. He participated in Boy Scouts with Zac, an Eagle Scout, and took him to his last concert, Sammy Hagar. When Sierra bought a scooter, he drove three hours to teach her how to ride it. He spent time cruising PCH with Kate, building sets for theatre, and teaching her to fix her car—skills he learned from his father, Bob, who worked as a mechanic in his hometown, Omaha, Nebraska.

Both his father and grandfather were military veterans. His Irish Catholic mother, Kathleen, saw to his love of Jesus Christ and sent her children to Blessed Sacrament before going to the public North High School. She remembers the joy he brought her during his often calls. He was close to his brother, Mark. Kevin liked riding his Harleys. His sister, Meghan, "got" his humor, received a lot of advice from Kevin, and remains by her mom's side since their father passed.

Cherished memories are Kevin leading his family prayers and volunteering at their church, The Crossing, in Costa Mesa. At the time of his passing, his wife and their children were pursuing their education. He wished for them to be happy and bring Jesus with them always.

His faith and love for all made it easy for him to be happy. "Happiness is the only goal worth the good fight", he'd say. His simple, traditional patriotic life was heroic. He died in the arms of his crew while in service to his community on January 5, 2025.

Dominic J. Smith

CALIFORNIA

Career Engineer ★ July 13, 2023 ★ Age 53

Santa Monica Fire Department

Dominic James Smith was a devoted husband to his wife, Alexa, and an adoring father to their daughter, Sydney. Dominic and Alexa built a life rooted in deep love, laughter, and unwavering partnership. He embraced fatherhood wholeheartedly, turning ordinary moments into unforgettable memories.

Born on March 7, 1970, in Lansing, Michigan, to Douglas and Veronica Smith, Dominic grew up with two older brothers, Dalouge and Damian, and later became a loving big brother to seven more siblings.

Dominic knew at a young age that he would enter the fire service. In college, he studied fire sciences and emergency medicine and, in 1993, served as a volunteer firefighter for the Poway Fire Department. In 1994, Dominic joined the Oceanside Fire Department, where he worked for seven years as a paramedic/firefighter. He then moved to the Santa Monica Fire Department, promoting to fire engineer in 2005. Dominic quickly distinguished himself as a solid firefighter who served with compassion and heart. To no one's surprise, Dominic was voted the department's Firefighter of the Year in 2007. After 22 years of dedicated service, Dominic's illness forced him to retire in March 2023.

Outside of the firehouse, Dominic found joy working on his Toyota Land Cruisers and was a lifelong fan of many sports, particularly the San Diego Padres.

A beloved brother firefighter, his sense of humor and love for his colleagues were evident in his creation of the department's Surfline Magazine. Dominic also played a key role in the design of Santa Monica Fire Department's new HQ/Station 1. One feature of the station that exists because of Dominic's passion is the SMFD museum. He was also the driving force behind the re-acquisition and restoration of their 1952 Mack fire engine, prompted by his love of SMFD history and his passion for restoring old vehicles.

On July 13, 2023, Dominic lost his courageous battle with occupational brain cancer, surrounded by the unwavering love of family and friends. He faced his illness the same way he lived his life—with strength, resilience, humor, and deep concern for those around him.

Dominic had a rare gift for making people feel seen and valued, whether a new acquaintance or an old friend. His deep love of life, contagious smile, and playful spirit left a lasting imprint on everyone around him. Dominic will be remembered as a loving husband, father, son, brother, nephew, uncle, cousin, and friend. His legacy lives on in the family he cherished and the community he faithfully served.

We love you, Dom.

Curtiss W. Tate Jr.

Career Fire Captain ★ January 26, 2023 ★ Age 61

CALIFORNIA

Curtiss was a longtime Riverside County paramedic for Goodhew Ambulance in Riverside County before he discovered the fire service and CAL FIRE. The fire service was Curtiss's calling. It suited his selfless personality and was much more than a job; it answered a deep passion to help and protect others.

Curtiss was hired by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection in 2001 and graduated from the CDF Fire Academy in 2001. He served as a firefighter II/paramedic in the City of Temecula and was assigned to Station 73 and Station 12. He was promoted to fire apparatus engineer and served in Coachella Valley, Corona Valley, and Temecula until 2016, when he was promoted to fire captain B in the San Diego Unit before retiring in October of 2017.

Curtiss served as a paramedic preceptor and field training officer. He mentored many fellow firefighters and paramedics and taught them how to provide care to the highest standards and treat all their patients as family. He also served as a type 1 hand crew captain in the final years of his career and responded to multiple historic wildfires. Curtiss loved being a firefighter and working for CAL FIRE. He often told his friends and family how it was one of the greatest honors in his life.

On his days off, Curtiss had a real passion for shooting; he loved adventurous road trips in his RV with his family and was a die-hard fan of everything USC. His pride and joy were his two little pugs, Kevin and Gianna, and Fluffy the Maltese.

CAL FIRE-California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

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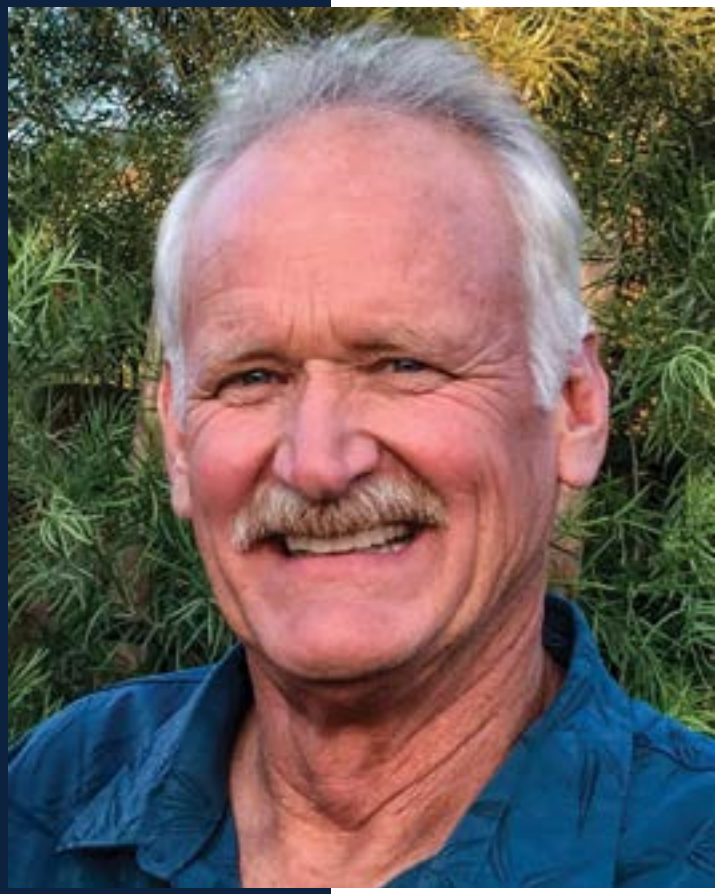
Carrol Paul Thomas Jr.

CALIFORNIA

Career Fire Apparatus Engineer ★ August 12, 2022 ★ Age 66



CAL FIRE-California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Carrol Paul Thomas Jr. was born on July 27, 1956, in Oakland, California, to Carrol Paul and Phyllis Elaine (May) Thomas. He was fortunate to grow up with two younger brothers, Ned and Todd. Paul lived in Concord and Fresno during his early years and moved to Merced when he turned 13. After graduating from Merced High School in 1974, he began working in the grocery business while attending Merced Junior College. He had the opportunity to explore fire classes during his time there, which is where he found his true calling. He graduated from the firefighter academy and quickly got hired by the Merced County Fire Department.

Following the 1988 contract between the Merced County Fire Department and CAL FIRE, Paul transitioned to CAL FIRE, where he proudly served as a fire apparatus engineer. In 1991, he was honored as the Merced County Firefighter of the Year. Throughout his career, Paul worked tirelessly across Merced County, battling countless fires and serving his community with dedication. After 30 years of committed service, he retired from CAL FIRE as a fire apparatus engineer. Paul took immense pride in his work and deeply valued the lifelong friendships he formed along the way.

As much as Paul loved his career as a firefighter, he deeply valued his family and friends. Paul enjoyed many wonderful years with his two children, Sean and Kelsey, and their mother, Laurie. Later in life, he enjoyed spending time with his significant other, Cathie. Paul truly loved his grandchildren, Callen, Quinn, and Emilia, and his spirit lives on within them all. Paul had a true passion for motorcycles, traveling, and nature. He took his family on numerous outdoor adventures and enjoyed many trips to Baja with his friends. He also loved working in his yard, spending time with his dogs, and caring for his bonsais.

Paul will be remembered as a respected firefighter, devoted father, and loyal friend. His adventurous spirit lives on in the hearts of those he loved, and his family continues to draw strength from the warmth and sincerity he shared with everyone he met.

Brian A. Tracy

Career Captain ★ April 27, 2023 ★ Age 43

CALIFORNIA

Santa Cruz Fire Department

Captain Brian Tracy was a 17-year veteran to the Santa Cruz City Fire Department when he was diagnosed with an advanced glioblastoma brain cancer. He was hardworking, determined, admired, and funny. People at the fire house wanted to be around him, wanted to work for him, wanted to learn from him. During his time with the department, Brian was a leading force through numerous critical calls for service, always leaving a mark on the people he helped. There was hardly a place in Santa Cruz that he could go without someone knowing who he was, saying "Hi" and "Thank you." That was the energy Brian carried; everyone wanted to be close to him. He was effervescent, lively, and joyful. They called him "Guido" around the firehouse, as never before was a person so proud of their Italian heritage.

Beyond being a fire captain, Brian was a devoted husband, loving father, loyal friend, and dedicated serviceman to his community. Brian loved to be in the sun and the ocean, enjoying all that Santa Cruz had to offer. He also spent a lot of time in his leather workshop, creating belts and harnesses for his fellow firemen. Brian was a classic green thumb and loved to be out in his yard, tinkering with the pond and growing organic fruits and vegetables to share with friends and family. He also loved to be in the kitchen, cooking delicious Italian meals using every dish he could find. His favorite way to spend an afternoon was to get on his bike and ride down to the beach, doing a "cliff cruise" all along the east side of the city. If it was sunny, Brian was outside. That was him. Warm as sunshine.

Brian leaves behind a family that misses him desperately. He was the life of the party, the glue that kept everyone together, the vibrancy in the room. His laugh was contagious and bigger than life. He was the kind of person that looked you in the eyes when you were having a conversation, completely engaged. He would do absolutely anything and give absolutely everything to the people that he loved, without question. And that huge heart of his extended far beyond the walls of his home, which was why the fire service was so defining for him. It was another outlet for all the love that he had to give.

We miss his hugs. We miss his heart. We miss him from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet. He was one in seven billion, and he will never be replaced or forgotten.

CALIFORNIA

Stephen A. Wilson

Career Fire Apparatus Engineer ★ April 6, 2014 ★ Age 53

Stephen A. Wilson began his firefighting career in 1987 as a seasonal Firefighter I with CAL FIRE's Madera-Mariposa-Merced Unit. In 1990, he accepted an assignment as a limited-term fire apparatus engineer in the Tehama-Glenn Unit, continuing to grow in skill and leadership. In 2003, he advanced to Firefighter II in the Riverside Unit, and by 2006, he earned a permanent position as a fire apparatus engineer. In 2011, he returned to the Madera-Mariposa-Merced Unit, where he proudly served until his passing.

Stephen was known as a dedicated and reliable firefighter who loved his job. His professionalism, commitment, and steady presence set an example for those who served alongside him. He devoted his career to protecting California's people, communities, and natural resources with honor and pride.

Away from duty, Stephen enjoyed rodeos, sports, and traveling. He especially loved time with his grandchildren, who brought him great joy. He is remembered as a devoted husband, colleague, and friend whose life touched many.

On April 6, 2014, Stephen Wilson died of a job-related heart attack at the age of 53. He is survived by his wife, Annette, and his beloved family. His service and sacrifice will always be honored and remembered.

CAL FIRE-California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

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Benjamin Charles Sapper

Career Forestry Technician ★ August 4, 2023 ★ Age 21

COLORADO

USDA Forest Service - Gold Beach Ranger District

Benjamin Charles Sapper was a bright, thoughtful young man at the beginning of his adult life. He was about to enter graduate school to pursue his doctorate but took a summer job for the United States Forest Service as a hand crew member in Oregon. He tragically died on August 4, 2023, in an on-duty vehicle accident.

Benjamin was born in August 2001 and lived most of his life with his parents and sister in Boulder, Colorado. He played baseball from age eight through college, and this sport became one of the passions of his life. Ben excelled because of his intelligence and speed and later added a devotion to weightlifting. He was a team player who strove for self-improvement and camaraderie, not glory. Good team chemistry made a season special to him, something he also found with his USFS crew in Gold Beach.

Benjamin was an outstanding student, graduating from Boulder High School in 2019 with a 4.7 GPA and *summa cum laude* from the University of Colorado in 2022. He worked with a research group at the University of Colorado on mathematical methods for environmental modeling. His research paper, *Positive matrix factorization of large real-time atmospheric mass spectrometry datasets using error-weighted randomized hierarchical alternating least squares*, was published in 2025 in the journal Geoscientific Model Development. Benjamin was set to start a PhD program in the fall of 2023 in earth science at the University of British Columbia.

In addition to mathematics and baseball, Benjamin was passionate about chess, philosophy, skiing, cards, and anything relating to the field of statistics. He loved having long, deep conversations on a wide range of topics and was always one to listen to the other side and consider any point. He also brought his sometimes edgy sense of humor to almost every situation. Benjamin left behind notes for a stand-up comedy routine with some pretty good material.

In the spring of 2023, Benjamin decided to apply for a summer job at the U.S. Forest Service. He had a desire to serve the community and do something useful for his country. Ben was impressed by the work ethic of his coworkers. He eagerly absorbed the training and felt proud when he received his first chainsaw certification. His crew was working the Flat Fire in Oregon in 2023, but he loved returning to Gold Beach for the amazing sunsets on the Oregon coast. It brings his family great comfort that he was surrounded by such a good team at the end, and that he had a beautiful sunset on his last evening.

Todd G. Gagnon

CONNECTICUT

Career Fire Marshal ★ May 22, 2020 ★ Age 58

Cromwell Fire Department

Fire Marshal Todd G. Gagnon of the Cromwell Fire District, Local 4662, died on May 22, 2020, at Saint Francis Hospital after a brave battle with occupational esophageal cancer.

Todd was born on August 1, 1961, in New Britain, Connecticut, to Donald and Dorothy Gagnon. His family moved to Plainville, Connecticut, where Todd graduated from high school and in 1986 moved to Cromwell, Connecticut. In 1989, while attending trade school, Todd joined the Cromwell Volunteer Fire Department as a firefighter and EMT. After completing trade school as a master electrician, Todd's 26-year career as the Cromwell fire marshal began in 1994. Todd ceaselessly educated himself throughout his adult life, acquiring his Assistant Building Inspector certification in 2007.

Todd was an adventurer who traveled throughout North America as a member of several BMW motorcycle clubs. He loved to spend time at his Vermont home. Todd also raised and trained some amazing dogs.

Most of all, Todd loved God and his family. He is survived by his beloved wife, Margit; his children, Krystal, Nathaniel, Nichole, Ethan, and Tyler; stepchildren, Theresia and Johnathan; and his eight grandchildren, Giuliana, Nicholas, Owen, Sonny, Isla, Dylan, Gavin, and Kailee.

Todd will be remembered as a loving husband, father, friend, and fire department professional. We thank God and are blessed to have had the privilege of Todd in our lives. We are all better for having known him. He will always be deeply missed.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
2 Timothy 2:7

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Raymond A. Moreau

Volunteer Firefighter ★ July 27, 2025 ★ Age 60

CONNECTICUT

Plainville Fire Department

Firefighter Raymond “Ray” Moreau devoted more than 35 years to the Plainville Fire Department, faithfully serving the community that was both his hometown and his heart. A lifelong resident of Plainville, Ray embodied the quiet strength, humility, and dedication that define the fire service. He served not for recognition but because helping others was simply who he was.

After graduating from E C Goodwin Technical High School in New Britain, Ray began a long career with United Cable, which later became Comcast. Throughout years of change, he remained a steady and trusted employee, known for his dependability, skill, and subtle sense of humor. Colleagues describe him as the person who could be counted on to do things right, without complaint and without seeking the spotlight.

Ray joined the Plainville Fire Department in July 1990 and became one of its most respected and reliable members. Over the course of his service, he responded to thousands of calls, each approached with calm professionalism, compassion, and teamwork. His dedication to the department and to the people of Plainville was constant. Fellow firefighters recall his steady presence, his quiet leadership, and the way he made those around him better simply by example.

Ray’s commitment to Plainville extended far beyond his time in uniform. He was deeply involved in the rhythms of the town he loved, bowling at Lessard Lanes, enjoying Friday mac and cheese at Saint’s, and transforming his Timber Hill home into a Halloween favorite where neighbors were greeted with laughter and full-size candy bars. He understood that community is built through consistency, kindness, and joy in everyday moments.

Ray shared 36 years of marriage with his beloved wife, Chris. Together, they built a life grounded in love, humor, and the kind of partnership that drew others close. He was a devoted husband, a loyal friend, and the “funcle” who brought fun and laughter to every family gathering. To those who knew him best, Ray was steady, good-humored, and deeply loyal. He had a gift for making people feel at ease and for finding lightness even in difficult times.

Firefighter Moreau’s life was one of quiet heroism and enduring service. He exemplified what it means to give of oneself completely, without expectation, without hesitation, and always with heart. His legacy lives on in the Plainville Fire Department, in the community he helped protect, and in the countless lives touched by his care and devotion.

M. Dean Peoples

DELAWARE

Volunteer Firefighter ★ September 22, 2021 ★ Age 51

Roxana Fire Company

M. “Dean” Peoples lived a life defined by service, strength, and quiet devotion to those he loved. Known affectionately as “Daffy” to family and friends, Dean carried humor and heart into every room he entered. Inspired by his grandfather, James Thomas Barnes, of Henderson, North Carolina (†1994), Dean proudly continued a family legacy of firefighting. His grandfather was his hero, shaping Dean’s deep respect for duty and sacrifice.

Dean served nearly 13 years with the Roxana and Millville Fire Companies. He answered every call with humility and resolve. Fire service was not about recognition; it was about showing up. Even on the most exhausting nights at home, when the siren sounded, Dean went.

Outside the firehouse, Dean built a 30-year career in trucking and transportation, including 19 years with Mountaire Farms. In 2015, he was honored as Delaware Driver of the Year, reflecting his professionalism, reliability, and unwavering work ethic.

Dean’s greatest pride was his family. He was married to Tracy Lynn Peoples for 25 years. Together they built a home grounded in faith, resilience, and unconditional love. Dean was a devoted father who provided steadiness, protection, and patience through every season of life. He was especially proud to witness one of his children graduate in 2021, a milestone he cherished deeply. He also stood as a pillar for his mother after she lost her husband in 2017, carrying responsibility with quiet strength.

He is lovingly remembered by his children, Tricia, Joseph, Brittany, Thomas, Jacob, Hayden, Haylee, and Braxton, and by his mother, Pamela, all of whom carry forward his strength, values, and love. When Dean passed, he was laid to rest wearing his grandfather’s dress firefighter hat, honoring the generations of service he proudly continued. As his wife, Dean was my steady place for 25 years. He carried more than most ever saw, and he did it without complaint. I will always be grateful for the life we built together and the love he poured into our family. To the world he was a firefighter. To us, he was home.

His son, Braxton, wrote, “My dad was a firefighter. He was very brave and helped many people. He taught me that fire can be dangerous, but we can learn how to stay safe. He showed me how to check smoke alarms and said we should test them every month. He taught me to have a plan to get out of the house and where to meet outside. He told me to be careful every day, like turning off the stove and not leaving heaters on. Even though my dad isn’t here now, I want to make him proud. Fire prevention is important because it saves lives, and that’s what my dad did every day.”

Robert John Heaney

Career Lieutenant ★ January 22, 2025 ★ Age 49

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

District of Columbia Fire & EMS Department

Rob was born on September 24, 1975, in Parlin, New Jersey, to Robert and Sally Heaney. He spent his teens in Derwood, Maryland, and moved to Frederick, Maryland, to pursue family life.

Lt. Heaney served with distinction in the District of Columbia Fire Department, leaving a lasting impact on both his peers and the department. Starting his career as a member of Recruit Class 326 on 10/10/2000, he was appointed to Engine Company 14 upon graduation. After probation, he transferred to Engine Company 10, where he quickly earned a reputation for his skill and work ethic. He was later selected to go to Rescue Squad 2, where his passion for special operations took root. He served there, becoming an informal leader on the backstep, all the while working to improve his own skills and abilities.

In 2015, he was promoted to sergeant, serving at Truck 10, the Fireboat, and Rescue Squad 2. In 2020, Rob was promoted to lieutenant at Engine Company 21, but it was only a few months before he again returned to Special Operations, coming home once again to Rescue Squad 2. He would remain there for the rest of his career on Platoon #2. Lt Heaney's commitment to excellence was clear at every step of his fire department journey. Known for his calm under pressure, his booming voice was a reassuring sound during high-stress situations, providing clear direction when it was needed most.

Rob was a mentor and role model to those around him. His dedication to teaching, training, and physical fitness set a standard for others to follow. He was one of the strongest men on the job, physically and mentally, and his passion for innovation in special operations made him a driving force in the department.

His leadership, professionalism, and ability to stay cool in any emergency earned him the respect of his fellow firefighters. He pushed others to be better, always looking for ways to improve tactics and safety. A dedicated DCFD firefighter for 24 years, Lt. Heaney's legacy lives on through the many firefighters he mentored, the standard he set for excellence, and the consistent leadership he displayed on every run. His contributions to the DCFD will not be forgotten.

When Rob was not doting on his beloved wife, Beth, or their two children, Molly and Finn, he was known for his love of the outdoors, which included mountain biking, coaching softball, and skiing. An expert landscaper and an exceptional cook, he was always eager to share a meal with family and friends.

Rob's legacy of service, love, and dedication will forever be remembered by his family, friends, and the community he so selflessly served.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Stephen W. Shipp Jr.

Career Technician ★ April 15, 2025 ★ Age 47

District of Columbia Fire & EMS Department

Stephen William Shipp Jr. was born May 14, 1977, in Cheverly, Maryland, and lived a life defined by courage, compassion, humor, and unwavering service to others. A devoted son, brother, husband, father, grandfather, and friend, Stephen was known for his fierce loyalty and generous heart.

After high school, he honorably served four years in the United States Coast Guard, a commitment that shaped his lifelong dedication to public service. On April 19, 2004, he joined the District of Columbia Fire and EMS Department as part of Recruit Class 336. Stephen proudly served with Engine Company 33 before transferring to Engine 18 and Truck 7 on Capitol Hill, Platoon 4. In October 2020, he was promoted to technician/truck driver of Truck 7 #4, a role that reflected his leadership, technical skill, and work ethic.

Affectionately known as the firehouse "Chief Morale Officer" and the department's "Idea Guy," Stephen was celebrated for his sharp wit, sarcastic humor, and commitment to brotherhood. Whether through late-night conversations, elaborate pranks, or relentless dedication on the job, he embodied the spirit of the fire service.

Stephen became a Christian in 2013 and was baptized in 2023. He was a devoted husband to the love of his life, Sonia, and a proud, loving father to Brenten (Emily), Kasey, and Kameron. His greatest joy was being "Pop" to his beloved granddaughters, Harper and Hadley. He is also survived by his mother, Lynn Briggs (Terry); father, retired DCFD Captain Stephen Shipp Sr. (Joni); brother, Brandon Frere (Kelly); niece, Charlie; sister, Amber (Andy); and stepfather, Larry Frere.

In 2023, Stephen was diagnosed with Stage IV appendiceal carcinoma. He faced his illness with strength and determination, while advocating for firefighter cancer recognition. Medically retired in May 2024, his death was later recognized as a line-of-duty death.

On April 15, 2025, Stephen answered his final call just as his beloved Truck 7, Platoon 4 began their shift. The timing was a poignant reflection of a life devoted to service, brotherhood, and the DCFD. His legacy of service, resilience, faith, and love continues to inspire the fire service and all who knew him.

Ian M. Church

Career Engineer ★ August 20, 2024 ★ Age 41

FLORIDA

Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department

Ian McPherson Church was born in 1982 in Carmel, New York, to Cathleen and Paul Church. He grew up surrounded by the woods and hills of upstate New York, where he spent his childhood hunting, hiking, and shooting—simple joys that shaped his love of the outdoors and his steady, grounded nature. He cherished every chance to visit what he fondly called "his city," New York City, especially for live punk and metal shows.

With a father who served in Vietnam and a grandfather who served in World War II, Ian grew up with a deep respect for service. He knew early on that he wanted to follow in their footsteps. His first day of Marine Corps boot camp was September 10, 2001, one day before the moment that would change the nation and reaffirm his calling. Ian went on to serve with the U.S. Marine Corps Fleet Antiterrorism Security Teams (FAST) Company, completing four years of honorable service.

After leaving the military, Ian worked as a train conductor for Metro-North Railroad for five years before using his GI Bill to attend the University of North Florida. He earned his bachelor's degree in political science and dreamed of making a difference through public service and debate, two passions he carried proudly.

A cousin eventually convinced him to try fire school, and there Ian rediscovered what he had been missing since the Marines—brotherhood, purpose, and service to others. He joined Clay County Fire Rescue in 2019, quickly rising to engineer. In 2020, he transferred to Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department, where he continued to excel. He earned his engineer promotion in 2024, just months before his passing. His dedication, leadership, and heart for the job left a lasting mark on everyone who served beside him.

Ian met his wife, Brittany, in 2017 at Miller's Ale House while watching football. He later told her that the moment he saw her, he knew he wanted to marry her and have tall "Viking children" with her. They married in 2020 at the Little White Chapel in Las Vegas and welcomed their daughter, Charlotte Belle, later that year. Twins, Declan and Cora, followed in 2022. Despite the chaos of three children under two, Ian embraced fatherhood with joy. He never missed bathtime, bedtime stories, or family dinners. His children were his greatest pride.

Ian lived a life defined by service, loyalty, humor, and love. Though he is gone far too soon, having his name etched into this memorial ensures that his children, his family, and his brothers and sisters in the fire service will always have a place to honor the hero he was, both in uniform and at home.

Daniel E. Corcoran IV

FLORIDA

Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ March 3, 2025 ★ Age 54

South Walton Fire District

Firefighter/Paramedic Daniel E. Corcoran IV was born April 8, 1970, in Killeen, Texas. Dan grew up in Germany at three different Army installations, and his family traveled through Europe on their vacations. Dan cherished his childhood memories of he and his father traveling to the England "car boot sales" where they bought/sold/traded Matchbox cars, collecting over 5000 in the process.

Dan loved to watch and play sports. In Germany he played football, baseball, basketball, and ice hockey (his favorite). He was a lifetime fan of the Dallas Cowboys, Atlanta Braves, and Auburn Tigers football.

Music was a big part of Dan's life, with Metallica, Boston, and KISS being some of his favorites. He went to concerts every chance he got and learned to play the guitar.

Dan's happy place was the Great Smoky Mountains, where he went often. He loved being in nature—hunting, fishing, or just walking through the trees.

Dan knew he wanted to be a fireman at age three, when he sat on his uncle's lap in the back of a tiller truck in Boston. He began making that dream a reality in 1989 when he volunteered with the Niceville Fire Department, where he became a career firefighter known as Lieutenant Dan to all his fellow firefighters.

In 2005, Dan became a part-time police officer for the City of Niceville, which he did on his firefighter off days. He also worked NASCAR races at Talladega, first on pit road and then in a crash truck on Turn 4 through spring of 2018. In 2007, Dan went to South Walton Fire District, where he served for 18 years in total, first as a FF/medic. After his stage 4 cancer diagnosis in 2020, he worked as a dispatcher and then became a fire inspector, a position he held until his death.

Dan served two terms as vice president of IAFF Local 3516, where he advocated for the firefighter cancer bill, walking the halls with his brothers and collecting signatures at the capitol in Tallahassee.

Dan had many nicknames—Lt. Dan, Danno, Shug, Bull—but the title he cherished most was becoming "Papa" to his grandson Jaxon in 2011. Jaxon gave him the courage and determination to keep fighting.

Dan is survived by his wife and best friend, Vickie; his mother, Velma; stepmother, Kate; daughter, Stephanie (Josh), and grandson, Jaxon; son, Steve (Amanda) Carney; godson, Ethan Evans; and his beloved dog, Jade. He is also survived by his brotherhood at SWFD who helped him fulfill much of his Bucket List. He was preceded in death by his father, Daniel Corcoran Jr.

Dan passed away March 3, 2025, after an almost five-year battle with cancer. His legacy lives on.

Luke Kimmig

Career Battalion Chief ★ October 17, 2024 ★ Age 38

FLORIDA

Sanford Fire Department

Battalion Chief Luke Kimmig of the Sanford Fire Department died on October 17, 2024, from complications of occupational cancer.

Luke was born into a loving and hardworking family, the fifth of ten children, born four minutes after his beloved twin sister, in Casselberry, Florida. Luke's family moved to Sanford when he was four years old. Growing up he was involved in youth and Seminole High School baseball, and his attachment to the community made his beloved City of Sanford the easy choice as to where he would serve in his fire career.

On September 11, 2006, at age 19, Luke joined the Sanford Fire Department. For 18 years he faithfully served as firefighter, paramedic, apparatus operator, lieutenant, and battalion chief. He ran more than 20,000 emergency calls and served as a key member of specialized teams such as dive, bike, light technical rescue, training, and special operations. He was a Seminole County Sheriff's Aviation rescue swimmer.

Luke was a driven man who recognized that the more he knew, the better he could serve. He earned his EMT and Fire Standards licensure at Seminole Community College. He went on to earn his Paramedic licensure and associate degrees in emergency medical services, fire science, and general education from Seminole State College. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Public Safety Administration from St. Petersburg College and a Master of Science in Fire and Emergency Services from the University of Florida. He passed on his passion for learning to his cadets as a fire standards instructor at Seminole State College.

In March 2007, Luke married his sweetheart, Lois True. They were blessed with five children and made Central Church in Sanford their home for fellowship and spiritual growth. From childhood, Luke developed a love for God, and his faith was evident in the way he served his family and community. He enjoyed baseball, as well as camping and canoeing in the mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina. His love of country was influenced by his father and grandfathers, who served in the military. He coached his children in youth baseball and taught them to respect our country.

He is survived by his beloved wife, Lois Kimmig; five dear children, Haven, Judah, Titus, Maddox, and Miles; parents, Chuck and Rose Kimmig; his grandmother, siblings, and many other loving family members.

He was brave, kind, and caring. He left behind a large family who loved him dearly. They will hold close all the memories made and will be privileged to share the many stories of him with his children.

Jason C. Woodruff

FLORIDA

Career Engineer ★ November 12, 2024 ★ Age 53

Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department

Jason C. Woodruff, a Navy vet, served as an engineer with the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department from 2013 until his death in 2024. He was proudly assigned to Station 19, "The Night Train," in Arlington, one of the city's busiest firehouses and the place he called home for his entire career. His presence defined the station and those who worked beside him.

Jason died at home from glioblastoma, an aggressive brain cancer linked to prolonged occupational exposure. His death was the result of years of exposure to toxic PFAS chemicals found in smoke, flames, off-gassing, firefighting gear, and uniforms, as well as environmental hazards such as mold that was in his firehouse for years. Jason paid the ultimate price tragically for a job he loved and a call he answered without hesitation.

Jason will be remembered as a man of faith, unwavering integrity, sharp intellect, disarming wit, Jeopardy-winning facts, and $20 words. He possessed a rare balance of compassion and controlled aggression, qualities that made him a trusted mentor, a steady presence, and a firefighter others wanted beside them on their hardest days. Jason didn't just listen; he showed up. He offered not only an ear, but a shoulder to friends, coworkers, and patients alike. He cared deeply about character and the content of one's heart, nothing more and nothing less.

To many, "Uncle Woody" was a legend, a fireman's fireman, respected not for volume but for substance, not for ego but for example. If you were fortunate enough to call Jason a friend, you were blessed, because his loyalty ran deep and his kindness was genuine.

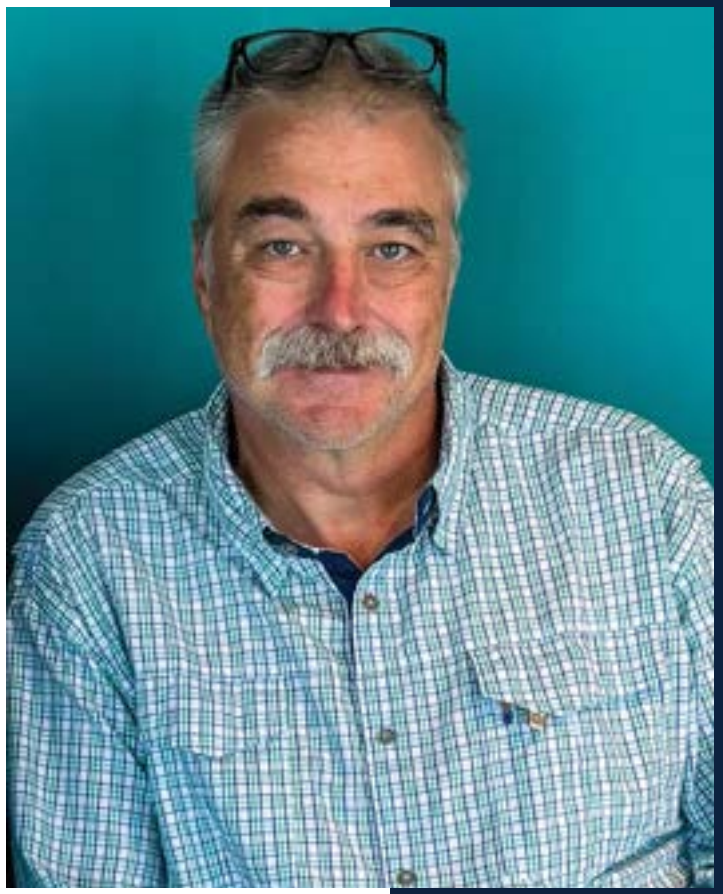
Above all else, Jason was an extraordinary husband and father. His greatest pride and purpose was his family—his wife of 22 years, Jennifer, and their sons, Jacob, Lukas, and Noah Lea. They were his treasure, the center of every decision he made, and the only thing he ever truly wanted to protect and provide for. Jason adored his boys and was deeply intentional in raising them to become honorable men of integrity, courage, and compassion. Whether camping under the stars, surfing the waves, or sitting side by side video gaming, moments filled with laughter and connection. Jason found joy in the simple, sacred moments of being present with his family. He delighted in who his sons were becoming and looked forward with excitement to the men they would grow into.

The deepest heartbreak of his passing is not only that his life was cut short, but that he was robbed of watching that future unfold, a future he had poured his whole heart into shaping.

Bart Cauthen

Career Battalion Chief ★ January 19, 2025 ★ Age 54

GEORGIA



Coweta County Fire & Rescue Department

Bart Cauthen was a husband, father, son, and brother. He and his wife, Nickie, raised two children, Bailey and Eli.

Bart was born in Newnan, Georgia, to Mary Ann and Stanley Cauthen. Bart grew up with three siblings and enjoyed working with animals on his family's farm and playing sports. This love of animals led him to earn a bachelor's degree in animal science from Berry College, and after graduating, he worked in agriculture. Upon returning to his hometown, he joined Coweta County Fire Rescue in 2000.

Bart started as a rookie firefighter and later became an EMT and paramedic. He was captain for several years before being promoted to battalion chief, a role in which he served for nine years.

Bart was the guy everyone wanted to work with, embodying loyalty, servant leadership, and family. He was also a man of deep faith and was the one who would pray over fire station meals and his people at the start of a shift. He had an incredible way of knowing exactly what you needed in the moment, whether it was encouragement or a quiet challenge. His steady presence spoke louder than words ever could.

Bart defined what it meant to be a true leader who motivated, influenced, and guided others simply by who he was. His leadership didn't just direct people; it developed them. His work ethic, presence, and commitment to doing the job right set the tone not only for those who worked directly for him, but for the entire department.

Outside of work, he was the epitome of a hardworking husband, father, and son. He believed in investing in and spending quality time with his family. These hours taught life lessons, everyday skills, and built happy memories, whether he was teaching his children to fish or sitting down for dinner as a family. He also enjoyed weekend family gatherings with his siblings and parents. Bart was very close with his parents, dropping in to visit or help out when the need arose.

Bart was also extremely resourceful, using what he had on hand to get the job done. He could fix or build anything. He always had a project going to maintain or improve the life he had built for his family.

Bart Cauthen leaves behind more than memories. He leaves behind a standard—a way of leading, a way of serving, and a way of living that we can all strive to carry forward. His legacy lives on in the culture he helped shape, in the firefighters he mentored, and in the families he influenced. We are better because we knew him. And we will honor him best by living the example he set every day.

Preston Lee Fant

GEORGIA

Career Master Firefighter ★ September 8, 2025 ★ Age 53

DeKalb County Fire Rescue Department

Master Firefighter Preston Lee Fant, Dekalb County Fire Rescue, Station 24, died Monday, September 8, 2025, after becoming trapped in a warehouse fire while attempting to rescue fellow firefighters.

Preston faithfully served DeKalb County Fire Rescue for 21 years at Station 24, where he was known as a calm, steady, highly skilled rescuer. He was trained in all aspects of technical rescue, credentials that reflected not only his expertise but also his unwavering dedication to protecting others. To his company, he embodied what it meant to be a firefighter—brave, selfless, humble, eager to share his knowledge, and always the first to step up when the work was hardest. Those who served alongside him say his strength and presence on scene brought confidence to everyone around him. Fighting fire wasn't Preston's job; it was his passion. He loved the work and took joy in sharing the stories that came with it. His company was his family, bound not just by duty but by brotherhood and love.

As much as he loved his career, his greatest joy was his family. He was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather who loved spending time with his family. He was married to Leigh for 27 years. They shared a life raising Nicole, Ginger, Timothy, Amber, and Nathan. He welcomed his son-in-law, Percy, granddaughter Harper, and future son-in-law Chandler into their growing family. Whether he was hunting or fishing, watching the Atlanta Braves, working on cars or building projects, attending sporting events, gathering for bonfires, or just hanging out, Preston brought laughter, love, and a sense of ease everywhere he went. He never met a stranger and loved time with friends. He loved telling stories and making friends and family laugh. His quick smile and willingness to help anyone made him a cornerstone of both his family and community.

Preston was a man of faith, giving his life to Jesus Christ in high school. He had a servant's heart, always willing to help others. His faith, family, and service shaped every aspect of his life, and those who knew him say he lived out his values daily with kindness, honesty, and unwavering integrity.

He will be remembered as a devoted husband, father, and grandfather, a hero and protector, a man of faith, and a steady source of strength to everyone who knew him. Preston's life touched countless people, and his legacy lives on in the fire service he loved, in his family, and in the many lives shaped by both his service and his generous heart.

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13

John Clay Gaddy

Career Deputy Fire Marshal ★ September 2, 2021 ★ Age 48

GEORGIA

John Clay Gaddy, 48, Forest Park Fire Department, died in the line of duty of COVID-19 on September 2, 2021.

A 12-year veteran of Forest Park Fire Department, Station 3, Clay's life of service began in EMS and the fire service in Union City, Georgia, where he doubled over into law enforcement. His favorite sector of law enforcement was narcotics detection with his canine, "Seven." His closest brothers referred to him as "Smoked Sausage" and always loved to tell people about his nickname.

He served in multiple roles, including on-shift investigator for the fire marshal's office and adjunct instructor at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center (GPSTC), where he taught recruit classes and was a certified arson investigator. He was working toward becoming a full-time member of the fire marshal's office and was posthumously promoted to deputy fire marshal.

Remembered for his goofy sense of humor, he made people laugh and was always the most supportive person. Known as someone who could be counted on for a listening ear and honest advice, Clay would always make sure to let you know how much he loved you.

Clay enjoyed hunting, camping, and kayaking with his family and friends. Described as the most respectful, kind, gentle-hearted member of the crew, his passion was serving and mentoring others.

Clay loved his family and was an amazing husband, father, and grandfather.

Forest Park Fire and Emergency Services

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Timothy Shawn Watson

GEORGIA

Career Firefighter ★ August 15, 2021 ★ Age 48

Barrow County Emergency Services

Timothy Shawn Watson, age 48, passed away on August 15, 2021. Mr. Watson was the son of Thomas Dale and Melanie Marie Mikle Watson.

He was a fireman for the Barrow County Fire Department and was a U.S. Army veteran.

He was survived by his wife, Kimberly Watson; children, Shawn and Jacob Watson; brother, T.J. Watson; and sisters, Sonya Mondy and Tara Smith.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Jeffrey L. Fiala

Career Firefighter 1 ★ January 6, 2025 ★ Age 25

HAWAII

Jeffrey "Jeff" Fiala was born January 13, 1999, to Michael and Kristine Fiala, alongside his twin brother, Andrew, and their older brother, Matthew. Jeff lost his life in the line of duty on January 6, 2025.

As a military family, the Fialas lived all over the world before ultimately settling in Hawai'i, which was the first place Jeff truly felt at home. A 2017 graduate of Radford High School, he continued his education at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM), where he earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in 2021. UHM is also where he met his wife, Fiona, on move-in day of freshman year. They married on their sixth anniversary in November 2023.

Jeff decided to pursue a career with the Honolulu Fire Department (HFD) in 2022. He took courses in the Fire & Environmental Emergency Response program at Honolulu Community College until he was accepted into HFD's 115th Recruit Class in July 2023. Jeff graduated in March 2024 and subsequently entered the field. He was first assigned to Station 38 (Waiau) until he was relocated to Station 9 (Kaka'ako) in May 2024, which became his second home for the remainder of his service. Jeff was known for his enthusiasm and positive attitude.

Aside from his service with HFD, Jeff is remembered for his many hobbies—fishing, skateboarding, diving, surfing, fishing, hiking, backpacking, photography, fishing, and anything else that gave him a reason to be outside—and his adventure-ready attitude, sense of humor, and fierce devotion to his family and friends.

Jeff was a one-of-a-kind person who left an indelible mark on all who knew him. He is deeply loved and missed.

"Gone Fishin."

Honolulu Fire Department

Frank J. Harwood

IDAHO

Career Battalion Chief ★ June 29, 2025 ★ Age 42

Kootenai County Fire & Rescue

Frank Joseph Harwood, 42, was tragically taken from us on June 29, 2025. A beloved husband, devoted father, decorated veteran, and proud public servant, Frank's life was marked by leadership, service, and love.

Born and raised in Wisconsin and a proud Packers fan, Frank is loved by his wonderful mother and brother and was preceded in death by his proud father.

Frank joined the Idaho Army National Guard in 2001 and honorably completed his service in 2008 as a combat engineer. Frank served in Operation Iraqi Freedom for 18 months as an acting truck commander during security missions in northeast Iraq. During his time in the National Guard, he met his wife, as they served together creating an irrevocable and intense bond. Frank had the foresight to place his name onto the Fox Valley Technical College Fire Protection Technician Program and was accepted upon return from his deployment. Frank graduated on May 20, 2007.

Knowing his love for and dedication to the state of Idaho, Frank tested for Kootenai County Fire & Rescue and made the top of that list. He accepted his firefighter position in October 2007. Frank quickly became a respected leader in the fire service across the region and was widely regarded as one of the best tacticians in the area. Frank moved into the rank of battalion chief, where he served his crew with humility and a strong commitment to training. He helped shape the careers of hundreds of firefighters. Whether on the fireground or in the classroom, he led with purpose, precision, and a desire to make everyone around him better. Frank said, "Build a culture that will bring the best out of all who serve under them." He truly embodied what it meant to be a mentor.

Frank was a decorated servant, achieving the following awards: six-time Training Excellence Award recipient, Letter of Commendation, Dedication & Devotion, American Legion Firefighter of the Year, North Idaho Fire Chiefs Firefighter of the Year, EMS Life Saving Ribbon, and Meritorious Unit Citation Ribbon.

While the fire service was incredibly important to Frank, his most important role was husband and father. He was an amazing father to his two daughters and the most incredible, protective, loving, and caring husband a wife could have ever asked for. By far, Frank's greatest joy in life was the time spent with his girls and his wife, cheering them on from the sidelines at sporting events, exploring the outdoors, finding humor in all things, and always accepting them for exactly who they are.

We are blessed to have the memories and, most importantly, we are dedicated to preserving Frank J. Harwood's legacy.

J. “Hank” Hester

Contract Firefighter/Equipment Operator ★ September 8, 2025 ★ Age 70

IDAHO

BFC Limited LLC, Contracted by the Southwest Area Incident Management Team

Hank was a dedicated and loving husband of 50 years to Janet. He was a beloved father to Jamie, Kaleb, and Nathan, a treasured grandpa of nine, a great-grandpa of five, and a beloved son and brother.

Born in Crawfordsville, Indiana, on September 24, 1954, to Helen and Harold Hester, Hank was the third of six children. His family moved to Athol, Idaho, when he was three, and later to various locations throughout northern Idaho. For years, logging was the main career in the Idaho panhandle. Winters were hard and money sparse, but Harold managed to buy an old pickup and chainsaw to cut poles to sell to local pole yards. Hank and his four brothers helped in the woods as early as age seven and on up into their teens. In the summer, Hank worked on local farms driving tractors and bucking bales. He grew up strong of mind and body with a strong work ethic.

When Hank was 14, his family’s home burned, so he roomed with local friends and worked for two summers at the town gas station. Years later, it was common for Hank to get a handshake and “thank you” from customers who he helped get back on the road after work hours. In 1971, at age 18, Hank hired on to contractors who had state or USFS trail building or tree planting jobs, and as a firefighter. Around this time, he met Janet and they became inseparable. At 19, Hank worked at a local mill, purchased five acres, and started building a home in Hoodoo Valley, Idaho, while Janet got a nursing degree.

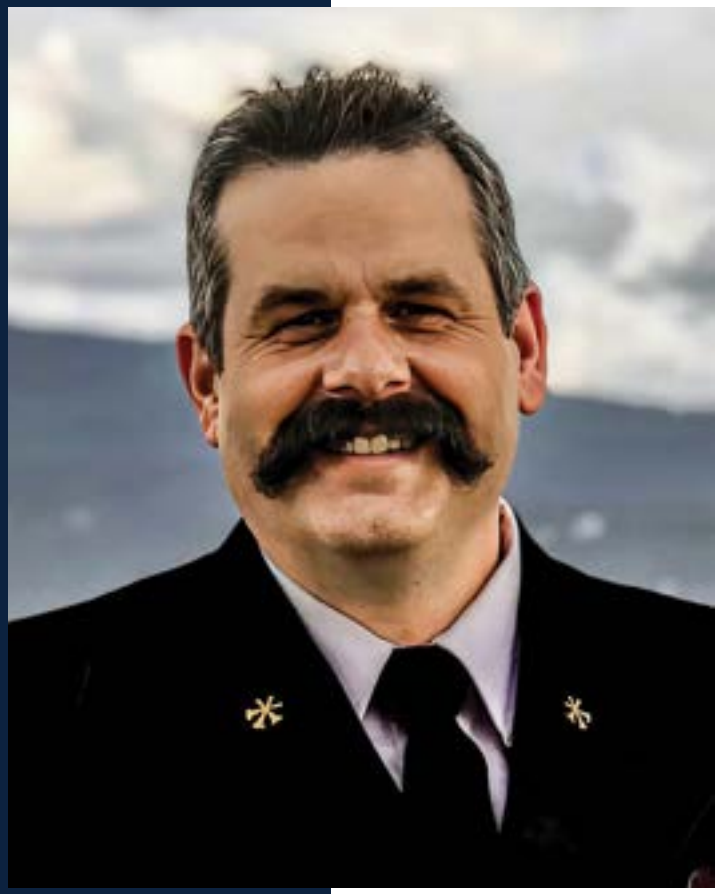
On October 26, 1975, Hank and Janet married. The next year they headed on an adventure to Arizona, packing in with horses and mules, camping, and building wilderness trails. He soon bid his own jobs and worked in Idaho, Montana, Arkansas, Texas, South Carolina, and Florida. Three kids were born during this time, and when they were school age, Hank and Janet settled down in their home in Idaho. Hank started Hester Logging, Well Drilling, and N. ID Land Sales, selling homes built on his private land. He owned Meridian Fishing in Alaska with one boat, hiring a contractor to run the business. When land sales slowed, he went to North Dakota and New Mexico to haul oil during the oil boom with his sons, Kaleb and Nathan. He was a master at all he did.

When oil slowed, Hank, Janet, and their sons settled back in Idaho. Hank plowed snow and charged nothing for those in need. He constantly gave fresh fish, eggs, and vegetables to friends and neighbors. He became a beloved grandpa to neighborhood children. He was heroically brave, kind, and generous. You were in the best of hands when with him. Our hearts ache immensely at his loss.

John G. Morrison

IDAHO

Career Battalion Chief ★ June 29, 2025 ★ Age 52



Coeur d'Alene Fire Department

Battalion Chief John Morrison was best known as a devoted husband and father, a loyal friend, and a hot hand at the craps table. Born and raised in Spokane, Washington, John attended Gonzaga University, where he earned a degree in business administration. During those college years, he discovered both the love of his life, Jill, and his passion for firefighting and emergency medicine. John joined The Coeur d'Alene Fire Department in 1997 and spent the next 28 years serving the CDA community.

Chief Morrison was an innovator at heart. While steadfast in honoring the traditions of the fire service, he sought every opportunity to improve how firefighters operate. Over his career, he held numerous leadership roles, including program director for volunteer firefighters and public information officer, while also developing pioneering programs. He established one of the region's first Rescue Task Force groups for active-shooter incidents, secured multiple state and federal grants, and designed scheduling and accountability software now used by fire departments across the U.S. and Canada.

Beyond his professional achievements, Chief Morrison will be remembered for his humor, intellect, and presence. He was a large man, standing six foot five. Commanding complex incidents with ease, he was the quintessential incident commander. But any time spent with John revealed a brilliant, even-tempered, and charming man. He was highly capable, and confident, whether one on one or speaking to a crowd. His charisma and clever wordsmithing drew people to him, and he spent much of his later career teaching and mentoring younger members. Whether in the station, on scene, or out in the Coeur d'Alene community, John brought a quiet confidence, laughter, and a deep commitment to service wherever he went.

While John was dedicated to his department and community, his greatest love was for his family, his wife, Jill, and their son, Joe. Together, they explored the Pacific Northwest in search of adventure, live music, and Seattle Mariners baseball games. John enjoyed hunting, fishing, golf, drums, tennis, guitar, drawing/painting, and began writing his first novel. Quality time and sharing laughter were John's hallmarks, and his joy for life was contagious.

Chief John Morrison's legacy is one of laughter, loyalty, and love for his family, his colleagues, and his community. His life's work embodied service, innovation, and compassion. Those who had the honor to know him are better for it, and his spirit will continue to guide and inspire all who serve after him.

Isabella Grace Oscarson

Career Wildland Firefighter ★ September 26, 2025 ★ Age 26

IDAHO

Idaho Department of Lands

Born January 24, 1999, to Kelvin and Kathleen Oscarson, Bella grew up closely connected to her siblings, Rosa, Jake, and Sophia, and a big extended family. She graduated from Watertown (MN) High School, earned her associate degree, and joined the MN Conservation Corps, where she found a passion for service. She later served as crew leader, then joined the MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as a fire resource lead in Grand Rapids.

Bella's life reflected her warmth and vitality. She loved adventure, cooking, books, gardening, and crafting. With her big heart and quiet faith, Bella cherished time with family and friends, sharing her joy, playful sense of humor, and funky dance moves. She found meaning in service, faith in action, and joy in community.

While working for the DNR and living in Floodwood with her partner, Matt Becker, Bella doted on her dogs, joined the volunteer ambulance service, and earned an online emergency management degree from ASU, graduating with honors. She deployed on interagency wildfire assignments in Texas, Missouri, California, and Canada, and eagerly took on helitack assignments whenever possible. In 2025, fulfilling their dream, Bella and Matt moved to Idaho, where she became a crew module leader for the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL).

Bella brought boundless energy, compassion, and a deep commitment to service to both wildland firefighting and community volunteering.

She thrived on the challenge and responsibility of fighting wildfires, embracing the training, teaching, and leadership opportunities with the MN DNR and the IDL. Her crew members meant the world to her, and she deeply valued supervisors and others who served as mentors. Bella was especially honored to be part of the annual Wildfire Academy and brought technical skill and a teacher's heart to the field, mentoring others with patience, humor, and genuine care.

Colleagues remember Bella as an inspiring and generous leader—hardworking, knowledgeable, and quick to share her experience. She had a gift for making a crew feel like family, celebrating small victories, and believing every challenge held a lesson worth sharing.

Despite extraordinary efforts by the Maggie Creek and Moose Creek units and many others, Bella died during a prescribed burn in the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest.

At just 26, Bella left an extraordinary mark—as a firefighter, mentor, partner, daughter, sister, and friend. She lived with courage, generosity, purpose, and heart. Her legacy endures in the lives she touched and the knowledge she shared, and we thank God for the gift of her life.

Brad Trosky-Johnson

IDAHO

Career Deputy Chief ★ June 25, 2022 ★ Age 55

Caldwell Fire Department

Deputy Chief Brad Trosky-Johnson dedicated his life to public service. In addition to more than three decades in the fire service, Brad enlisted in the Navy right out of high school and served for almost a decade, including during Operation Desert Storm, with multiple deployments to the Persian Gulf where he was honored with several combat awards and commendations.

Brad began his fire service career in the Navy as a GSE. In 1992, Brad was hired by the Boise Fire Department and worked his way up to the position of training captain. By the mid-90s, he was also appointed fire chief for the Middleton Rural Fire District. Brad grew the Middleton Rural Fire Department from a small volunteer department to a highly successful model for combination departments, eventually serving many years as full-time fire chief. During his years of professional growth, he developed his career by working as deputy chief of operations for the Caldwell Fire Department, later returning to Caldwell Fire as their deputy chief of training when he passed away unexpectedly.

Brad shared his love for the fire service with his wife, Karine, also a fire service professional, and passed it on to his sons, Cody and Cory. Brad traveled the state teaching classes and evaluating candidates for IFSAC certification. He was instrumental in developing advancements in the fire industry throughout Idaho, collaborating to develop many of the state's fire service training curricula and validation of Idaho's IFSAC testing materials. Brad served many years as the Idaho Fire Chiefs Association's representative to the Western Fire Chiefs Association. His exceptional knowledge and character made him a great teacher, an amazing formal and informal leader, and mentor to so many of Idaho's fire service members in helping them to achieve their aspirations.

In addition to the fire service, Brad and Karine shared a love for the mountains, enjoying hunting, camping, "hobby logging," gold mining and, above all else, epic motorcycle trips. Brad and Karine also shared a love for metal working and opened Liberty Machine & Custom Fabrication to be, when they were ready, their "retirement gig." There they combined their knowledge and skills, working together to design, engineer, and bring ideas to life. Life with Brad was always an adventure!

Brad will always be remembered as a loving husband to Karine, a devoted father to his children Cody, Kaylyne, and Cory, and "Papa" to many grandchildren, as well as a loyal friend and fire service icon in the state of Idaho.

David J. Meyer

Career Captain ★ April 23, 2025 ★ Age 54

ILLINOIS

Chicago Fire Department

Captain David J. Meyer of the Chicago Fire Department, who served with Truck 29 and Engine 96, died Wednesday, April 23, 2025, after sustaining injuries while responding to a structure fire in Chicago's Austin neighborhood. He left behind a legacy of courage, dedication, and unwavering service over his 28 years as a firefighter. Born and raised in Chicago, David graduated from Lane Tech High School before attending trade school to become a journeyman carpenter. His exceptional construction skills, strength, and familiarity with building construction later became invaluable throughout his fire service career, especially his remarkable balance and ease while working on roofs.

Captain Meyer joined the Chicago Fire Department in October 1996, rising through the ranks from fireman to captain. He began his career on Truck 47 as a proud Hollywood Ridge Runner. In 2007, he transferred to Engine 117/Tower Ladder 14, spending the next eight years on the West Side doing what he loved—working hard, having fun, and learning from some of the best in the job. Promoted to lieutenant in June 2015, David continued serving the West Side with Truck 35 and, in February 2020, he rose to the rank of captain assigned to Truck 13. Though he expected to finish his career there, the pull of the West Side called once again. After careful consideration, he accepted an opening at Truck 29, making his final move in March 2025.

Passing down knowledge was one of Captain Meyer's greatest joys. He taught with the wisdom of a seasoned firefighter and the hands-on ability of a master carpenter, taking pride in sharing what he had learned from decades on the job and years in his trade.

Captain Meyer's life was defined not only by his bravery on the job, but also by his love for family, friends, and the outdoors. He enjoyed snowmobiling, boating, fishing, and was an exceptional cook. Known for his sense of humor, he was also a prankster, always keeping the mood light and bringing laughter to those around him, even in the firehouse.

Captain Meyer shared his life with his beloved wife, Kristen, whom he had been with for more than 38 years. He was a loving father to four children—Michael, Haley, Alyssa, and Kaitlyn—and a proud Papa to Emerson. He cherished his family above all else, always showing up and giving everything to support them. Captain Meyer will be remembered for his courage, his heart, his humor, his pranks, and his dedication to both the fire department and his family. Though he is deeply missed, his legacy of service, love, and commitment will continue to inspire all who knew him.

Scotty Lee Adams

INDIANA

Volunteer Firefighter/AEMT ★ April 25, 2025 ★ Age 46

Milton-Washington Township Volunteer Fire Department

Scotty Adams was born in Richmond, Indiana, on February 21, 1979. He was one of four boys. He grew up a hard worker, milking cows and baling hay before school, with his payment being a drink and a Moon Pie. He enjoyed messing around with cars, trucks and was part of local car clubs in his free time.

Scotty had two children, Mallory and Zachary, and three stepsons, Easton, Myles, and Bryce. He also had six grandsons, Westin, Kanon, Crew, Jaxon, Lennox, and Hendrix.

He was a truck driver and a firefighter for nearly 20 years. Dedicating as much time to volunteer firefighting as he did to work, he received as many certifications as possible to master his skills at being the best first responder.

He loved playing tricks on his family and friends and living life to the fullest. There was never a dull moment with him around. He didn't know a stranger and always became quick friends with anyone he met.

Later in life, Scott went back to school to get his diploma so he could enroll in classes to become an EMT. He didn't just get his EMT but became an AEMT and enjoyed assisting in classes at Redline Rescue Academy, helping other students reach their goals in the little free time he had.

He was selfless and caring and would give the shirt off his back to anyone in need. He always served any community he was part of with the utmost respect. He will always be remembered for his big heart, sideways smirk, and silly little harmless pranks.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Donald Hev Caylor

Volunteer Assistant Chief ★ March 9, 2025 ★ Age 66

INDIANA

In Loving Memory of Assistant Fire Chief Donald Eugene “Hev” Caylor

Ridgeville feels quieter as we remember a man whose steady strength shaped our community for forty years. Hev served with calm resolve, answering every alarm with the same reliability he carried into every part of his life. Whether holding a hose, offering a reassuring word, or stepping into danger without hesitation, he embodied the quiet courage that defines true service.

Hev’s life began in the fields he knew as a boy. Farming taught him patience, grit, and the kind of responsibility that becomes a person’s foundation. Later, the open road called, and he became a long-haul trucker. Mile after mile, sunrise after sunrise, he carried stories home—tales of long highways, friendly strangers, and small moments that reminded him how wide and beautiful the world could be.

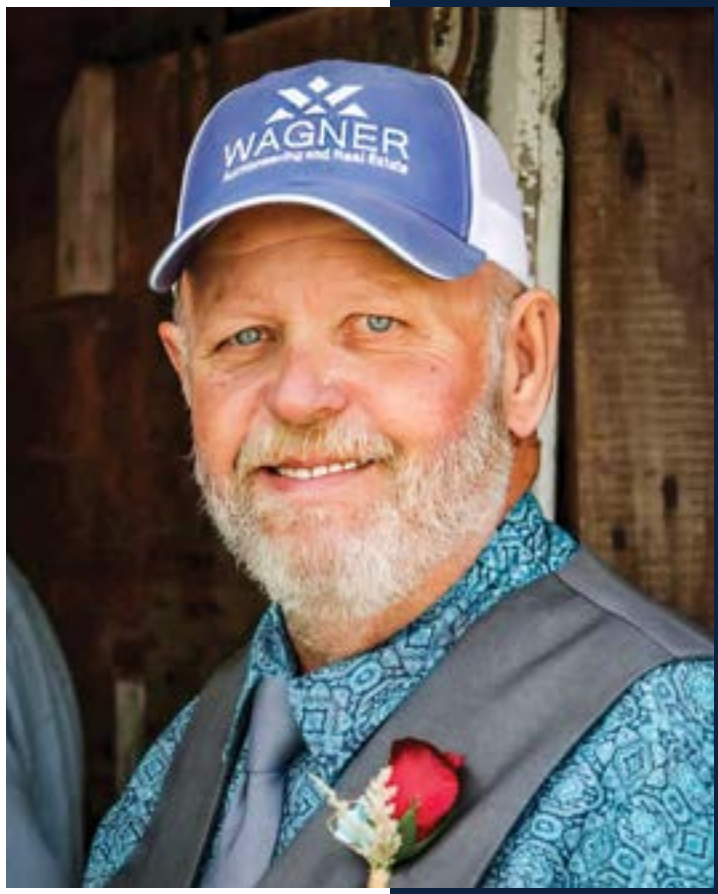
He loved horses and the kids who learned from him. With gentle guidance, he helped young 4-H exhibitors gain confidence, turning nervous hands into sure ones. To many, he was a mentor who made challenges feel possible.

Hev cherished simple joys—card games filled with laughter, friendly teasing, warm coffee, and rounds of golf that offered peace and open skies. In every gathering, he brought the steady presence of someone who valued people more than winning.

Above all, Hev loved his family. He showed that love through action—meals grilled to perfection, fences fixed before anyone asked, and hugs given when words were hard to find. His pride in his loved ones was quiet but unwavering.

Ridgeville will miss his dedication, his stories, his humor, and his heart. But the lessons he lived—service, kindness, and devotion—remain with us.

Rest easy, Chief. We’ll carry on the watch.



Ridgeville Fire and Rescue

Lucas Gehlhausen

INDIANA

Volunteer Firefighter ★ September 7, 2025 ★ Age 41

Celestine Volunteer Fire Department

I met Luke long before I imagined he would become my husband. From the very beginning, he had a gentleness about him that was impossible to miss. He was kind in a quiet, steady way, the kind of man who didn't need attention or praise to do the right thing.

Luke was a graduate of Northeast Dubois High School, Class of 2002, and earned a degree in automotive and mechanical studies from Oakland City University. He had a natural talent for working with his hands and could fix almost anything.

Farming wasn't just something Luke did; it was part of who he was. He found peace in the land, pride in honest labor, and joy in providing for his family. He also worked in the engines division at Jasper Engines and Transmissions, where his dedication and work ethic reflected the man he was.

Luke's heart belonged to service. For 17 years, he served as a devoted member of the Celestine Volunteer Fire Department, answering calls without hesitation and putting others before himself every single time. He was also proud to be part of the Indiana Volunteer Firefighters Association, the Celestine Community Club, and St. Isidore Parish at Celestine Catholic Church. Serving his community wasn't an obligation to Luke; it was an honor.

On May 25, 2022, I became his wife, and from that moment on I saw even more clearly the depth of his love and devotion. He was a patient father, a constant protector, and a steady source of love for Bryce, Hayden, and Lenore. No matter how tired he was, he always made time for them, always showed up, always loved with his whole heart.

Luke was the kind of man who would stop whatever he was doing to help someone else, often with a smile and never expecting anything in return. Friends, neighbors, coworkers, and fellow firefighters knew they could count on him. He was gentle, humble, and genuine, and he left an impression on everyone who had the privilege of knowing him.

On the evening of September 7, 2025, Luke tragically lost his life while responding to a structure fire in his personal vehicle. He died doing what he had always done, answering the call and putting his community before himself. Though our hearts are broken, we are forever proud of his courage and sacrifice.

Luke was and always will be deeply loved. He was the kindest and sweetest man, one whose presence made the world better simply by being in it. We lost a good one, but his legacy lives on in the lives he touched, the family he cherished, and the community he served so faithfully. Forever loved. Forever missed. Forever our hero #214.

Tracy L. Hayden

Career Lieutenant ★ November 9, 2019 ★ Age 38

INDIANA

Decatur Township Fire Department

Tracy passed away on November 9, 2019, at the age of 38, following a brave seven-month battle with leukemia—a cancer linked to his selfless service during a prolonged toxic fire investigation later designated as an EPA "super site."

Tracy was a 17-year veteran of the Decatur Township Fire Department in Indianapolis, Indiana. His dedication to the craft saw him ascend through the ranks as a private, chauffeur, lieutenant (2011), and ultimately division chief of fire and life safety (2014). A dedicated fire marshal and arson investigator, Tracy's commitment to public safety was absolute.

Beyond his rank, he was a mentor who believed that if you were willing to learn, he was willing to teach. He was a fixture in community outreach, believing that a firefighter's job was not just to respond to calls, but to be a visible, kind presence in the lives of the citizens he protected. Tracy was a lifelong learner with an insatiable curiosity. He could talk at length about anything from Viking history and dirt track racing to the best cheap blackjack tables in Vegas. If you walked into a restaurant with him, you were likely to get an impromptu lesson on fire code violations—not because he was critical, but because he was deeply passionate about protecting people.

Whether he was riding sirens to a medic run or cleaning the bay, Tracy didn't care about the color of your helmet or the patch on your sleeve; he cared about the shared mission to serve. He was a "professional prankster" who believed that while one match could burn a thousand trees, he would never let one negative thought burn the positivity in him. To talk to Tracy was to be "main stage"—he was your biggest fan, 100% present, and always hunting for the good stuff.

He leaves behind a legacy of camaraderie that transcended department lines. He will be remembered not just for his achievements, but for his optimistic disposition, his legendary humor, and his unwavering belief that life is better when you meet it with a great attitude.

While he took great pride in his work, Tracy's favorite titles were always dad to Oliver and Wyatt and husband to Tammy, his wife of 12 years. He was a loyal son, a devoted brother, and a best friend to so many.

We often wonder if we will make an impression on this world, and for some, leaving a mark is a lifelong goal. Tracy did it unknowingly just by being himself. His smile, his laughter, and his unmistakable presence left a mark that can never be erased.

Adam “Pugsley” Kuspa

INDIANA

Career Captain ★ January 6, 2025 ★ Age 41

Elkhart Fire Department

Adam’s love for firefighting began as early as age three, from chasing firetrucks down the street to playing fireman with his big brother in the backyard. He always wanted to be a firefighter.

His career began at the young age of 15 when he became an explorer for the Portage Township Fire Department. From there, his passion grew as he worked part-time at Warren Township, Clay Fire Territory, and the University of Notre Dame. In 2006, he made his dream a reality and became a firefighter with the City of Elkhart.

Over the years, Adam dedicated himself to the fire service and earned several promotions, most recently being promoted to captain. Adam wasn’t just a firefighter; he was THE firefighter. He lived and breathed the fire service. He inspired everyone around him with his hard work, dedication, and unwavering commitment.

Beyond his career, Adam’s laughter could fill a room, lifting spirits and reassuring everyone that things would be okay. He was a true friend to all, always ready with a helping hand, a joke, or simply the comfort of his presence or his big teddy bear hugs.

His love for his parents was extraordinary. He cherished his morning calls with his mom, a daily ritual that reflected their special bond. He was always offering encouraging words to his father. Adam also had a deep relationship with his brother, Jason, and often acted as his inner voice, offering wisdom, guidance, and encouragement when Jason needed it most. Their bond was unshakable, built on shared experiences, teasing, and their cherished “bro trips.” Adam was more than just a big brother to Stephanie; he was her rock. He was the person she always called for medical advice or anything else she needed, no matter the time or situation. Adam was her protector and confidant, always there to support her with love and reassurance. And as uncles do, he loved to tease his nephew, Ryder.

In his later years, Adam found happiness with Michelle. She brought him a sense of peace and joy that was unmatched. Her love made him smile in a way that lit up his entire face. Adam embraced her three children, Milo, Mia, and Mason, as his own. He cherished being called “Dadam.”

Adam enjoyed drawing, fishing trips, hunting, and cheering on his bonus children and godchildren at their sporting events. Adam was more than a firefighter or a man of hard work; he was the glue that held people together, a source of joy, strength, and unwavering love. His legacy will live on in the laughter, memories, and the love he shared with everyone fortunate enough to know him.

Mark W. Rapp

Career Battalion Chief ★ March 4, 2022 ★ Age 66

INDIANA

Indianapolis Fire Department

Mark or "Bum," as his fellow firefighters knew him, passed away on March 4, 2022, at the age of 66 after a courageous battle with lung cancer.

Mark had an exemplary career as a firefighter that lasted over 40 years. He started as a volunteer firefighter in the City of Lawrence Fire Department with his brother Dave and became a career firefighter in 1979 with the Indianapolis Fire Department. Mark was promoted to lieutenant in 1987, then captain in 2005. Mark finished his career as the battalion chief of training, retiring in 2017.

Mark received numerous awards during his career, including the American Red Cross Heroism Award and Operations Firefighter of the Year. Mark also received the Medal of Bravery for rescuing a small child from an apartment fire in 1993. One of his most cherished accolades was the Peer Leadership Award, which is awarded for being an outstanding role model and exemplifying dependability, loyalty, attitude, responsibility, and initiative. While these honors and awards were very special to him, they did not compare to how proud he was of the firefighters his sons became. He had the opportunity to fight fires with both Mark and Greg, and he was so proud to see them in action and honored to work alongside them.

Teaching others how to do something the "right way" was very important to him. He always spoke about the importance of "having options" and tried to incorporate that mindset into his trainings. Mark spent ten years as an FDIC Hands-on Training (H.O.T.) instructor and performed training for many townships throughout his career. Mark even created a custom forcible entry prop to assist with training. Later in his career, Mark continued his advocacy for safe firefighting practices by explaining to new recruits the importance of using SCBAs and decontaminating after fires.

Mark was a founding member of Indiana Task Force 1 (IN-TF1) in 1995 and was a member until 2017. As the task force leader, Mark was activated by FEMA and deployed to New York City during the 9/11 attacks at the World Trade Center. Upon arrival, Mark was in charge of the IN-TF1 Search & Rescue Team, specifically assigned to the night operations during the ten-day deployment. He was also deployed to help with numerous natural disasters during his time on IN-TF1.

Whenever he had a chance to get away, Mark enjoyed spending time on the ocean and beach with his wife, Nancy.

Mark never once complained about having cancer, and if you asked him if he would have done anything different in his career, he would say, "Not a thing. I love what I do."

John G. Robinson

INDIANA

Career Sergeant ★ April 14, 2025 ★ Age 53

Lafayette Fire Department

John G. Robinson, 53, of Lafayette Indiana, passed away on Monday, April 14, 2025, while on duty at Lafayette Fire Department Station 9.

Born on July 21, 1971, in Lafayette, John was the youngest of five children of the late Robert G. and Betty E. (Shearer) Robinson. He grew up on the family farm in White County and graduated from Frontier High School. He went on to study aviation technology at Vincennes University, where his interest in mechanics and precision took flight.

In 1995, John joined the Lafayette Fire Department, answering a lifelong calling to serve. Over the course of almost 30 years, he rose through the ranks, ultimately achieving the position of sergeant. John was respected by his fellow firefighters not only for his steady leadership and skill, but also for his friendship, mentorship of younger recruits, and unwavering reliability in high-stress moments. During his career, he completed EMT training and served on both the dive team and the tactical rescue team. He took great joy in sharing the fire truck with children and with adults who were young at heart. He was always eager to spark curiosity and a smile.

On October 2, 1999, John married Melissa McDill, the love of his life and his steadfast partner through every chapter. Together, they built a home grounded in laughter, dedication, and deep love, especially for their two daughters, Ava and Reese. John's world centered around his family. He was fully present for both of his girls, always supporting, and always proud.

Beyond his professional accomplishments and devotion to family, John was a passionate supporter of the Purdue Boilermakers, as well as a dedicated fan of the Chicago Cubs and Bears. He found peace in his garden and took great pride in the landscaping surrounding his home, a reflection of his quiet attention to detail and love of making things grow.

He is survived by his wife of 25 years, Melissa; daughters, Ava and Reese; his brother, Quentin Robinson; his sisters, Shari Zimpelman, Mary Dawson, and Jacki Stockment; and 14 nieces and nephews.

John leaves behind a legacy of love, courage, and unwavering dedication. As a devoted husband, father, friend, and respected firefighter, he touched countless lives with his kindness and strength. His absence will be deeply felt, but his memory will forever inspire those who had the privilege of knowing him. We are grateful for the joy he brought into our lives and will always cherish the warmth of his smile.

Roy A. Smith

Volunteer Firefighter/EMT ★ April 5, 2025 ★ Age 60

INDIANA

Posey Township Clay County Volunteer Fire Department

Roy A. Smith, 60, of Center Point, Indiana, died April 5, 2025, after being involved in a single-vehicle accident while he was responding to a 911 call in Posey Township.

Roy was born on October 7, 1964, in Terre Haute, Indiana, to Jack and Etta Kaye Smith. He graduated from Terre Haute South High School and attended Rose-Hulman and Indiana State University. He worked at Riley Chemical, Sony DADC, and briefly at Phoenix Closures, before retiring.

Roy loved his community and devoted himself to serving others. While his community expanded farther than Center Point, Roy served as a member of the Center Point Town Board for more than 20 years, as well as the town's water department, cemetery association, and town marshal. He joined the Centerpoint Volunteer Fire Department in 1991 as a firefighter and later became the treasurer and assistant chief. He earned his EMT certification in 2015. Beyond his official titles, Roy quickly became the go-to for many townspeople to help with anything from medical assistance to electrical work. He was passionate about caring for others and truly believed his service was his purpose in life.

Roy was a dedicated first responder as an official member of Jackson Township and Posey Volunteer Fire Departments. Although Roy was not a member of every Clay County department, he responded to help calls anywhere, anytime, for his beloved ambulance Star Crews. In 2017, Roy extended his passion for others when he joined the Clay County Coroner's Office, where he continued to serve as deputy coroner.

Beyond his community, Roy loved his wife and family more than anything. Roy married Annette in 1990, and they have two sons, Zephaniah (wife Haylie) and Cooper (wife Natalie). Roy loved his boys passionately and raised them to selflessly care for others, as they joined and serve with several volunteer fire departments like their father. Roy's honorary son, Bram Sanders, came into his life in 2005, adding his wife, Katie, and children, Lane, Maelin, and Sylas.

Roy was a humble servant, frequently directing the spotlight on others. Although he would have appreciated the previously mentioned accolades, he would likely have told us, "Love one another. Give graciously. Lift up and support anyone that you are able. Love abundantly. Live fully. Give generously. Be kind. Be safe. Be humble."

KENTUCKY

Roger Askin Jr.

Career Lieutenant ★ February 12, 2023 ★ Age 58

Covington Fire Department

Roger Randolph "Randy" Askin Jr. was born on May 10, 1964. He joined the Air Force after high school and was stationed at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls, Montana, serving for eight years and achieving the rank of sergeant. This is where his love of hunting deer, skiing in Big Sky Country, and fishing began.

He joined the Covington Fire Department in Kentucky in 1990, starting as an EMT before being promoted to engineer and then lieutenant. He retired in 2008.

In 2009, he was inducted into the Ludlow High School Hall of Fame for cross country.

After retiring from the fire department, he taught first aid and CPR for five years at Gateway Community and Technical College.

He died of cancer on February 12, 2023. He leaves behind two children, Blake Askin and Emily Heckman, and two grandchildren.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Richard Lee Givan

Volunteer Sergeant ★ April 8, 2024 ★ Age 48

KENTUCKY

Ekron Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department

Richard was a special and unique person who epitomized the firefighter's oath. However, he is remembered by those that had the honor of knowing him for far more than the uniform he wore. Richard was a father, a son, a Scout troop leader, a volunteer, a friend, and a stalwart member of his community. Richard never met a stranger, and he would help anyone. It wasn't uncommon to find him helping someone stopped on the side of the road and having a new lifelong friend by the end of it!

Richard's service as a firefighter spans nearly 28 years. He began his service with East Grayson and ended in Ekron, where he was a valued member of the department as a sergeant. To Richard, being a firefighter wasn't a job, it was a calling. Richard was often found at the firehouse doing various tasks, no matter the size or importance, simply because they needed to be done. He was selfless in that way; his time and effort was his gift to us all. While he was a firefighter, he was bestowed many awards and accolades, including the Meritus Lifesaving Award and Firefighter of The Year.

When Richard wasn't busy being a hero, he was known by another name, "Mr. Richard." He was a beloved Boy Scout assistant Scoutmaster. Richard's impact on the community's youth is truly immeasurable. He was known for more than teaching knots or being the Totin' Chip Master. He was a mentor. To this day, many young people tell stories of Mr. Richard giving advice, being a shoulder to lean on, or simply cheering them up with his infectious personality. One of his old Scouts recently reminisced that "there were always good vibes when Mr. Richard was around." Richard's proudest moment came when his son Ryan became an Eagle Scout.

Richard was a man with two great loves, his family and the great outdoors. When Richard wasn't at the department or being a Boy Scout leader, you could find him with a pole in his hand! He was an avid hunter, fisher, and all-around outdoorsman. Like all things in his life, Richard was a wonderful father. He and his son, Ryan, did everything together, and I know he set an example for other fathers in our community to emulate. He showed what raising a phenomenal young man looks like. He and his mother were very close, and she is so proud of him and all the joy he brought, not only to their family but to every life he touched.

If he were here today, he would like us to offer this on his behalf. "Be selfless. Do something for someone who needs it and expect nothing in return other than knowing you are the type of person that cares."

Brian Jay Hatt

KENTUCKY

Volunteer Lieutenant ★ August 25, 2025 ★ Age 51

Raywick Fire Department

Lieutenant Brian Hatt of the Raywick Fire Department died Monday, August 25, 2025, at the University of Louisville Hospital after his tanker overturned while responding to a mutual aid fire run. Brian was born on June 25, 1974. He served his Raywick community for 12 years and achieved the title of lieutenant shortly after he started the fire department in 2013.

Lieutenant Hatt worked as a human resource assistant for the U.S. Army Recruiting Division. He served his country in the United States Army for 12 years, was deployed three times, and fought for our country in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Lieutenant Hatt shared his love for the fire service with Tonya, his wife of 23 years. Brian was a loving father of three (Austin, Autumn, and Alayna) and a grandfather of two (Evelyn and Jaycee). Brian and Tonya's relationship started as friends, and they never left each other's side. Together, their most enjoyable times were when the entire family was gathered at their home.

Brian served his community up until his last day. He always took pride in his job as a firefighter and always was one of the first to respond. Whether you knew Brian for years or you had just met him, you knew he would always be a helping hand. You also knew he loved his wife unconditionally, his children without hesitation, and his grandchildren were the light of his life.

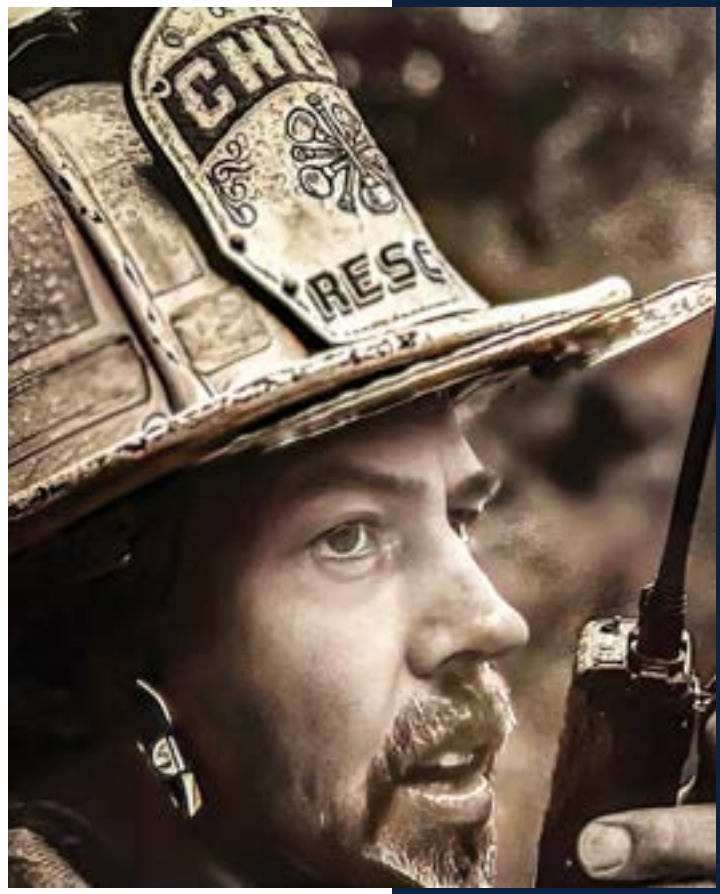
Brian will always be remembered as a loving husband, father, friend, and a respected firefighting professional. His dedication to the service touched so many people, and he will be deeply missed. We are all better for knowing and loving him, and we are blessed to have seen his smile.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Charles W. Shaw

Volunteer Firefighter ★ April 20, 2025 ★ Age 78

KENTUCKY



Taylor County Fire Department

Retired Chief Charles (Charlie) Shaw, age 78, of Campbellsville, Kentucky, passed away on Sunday, April 20, 2025, as a result of a line-of-duty injury.

Charles was instrumental in creating many innovative programs within the fire service, both in the state of Kentucky and throughout the nation. He taught and served numerous years as adjunct faculty at the National Fire Academy. Charles found great joy in serving in various civic organizations, and he gave an incredible amount of his time and heart to the absolute success of those projects.

After his 45-year career with the Kentucky Department of Education, teaching and training emergency service personnel, he retired as the training coordinator for Area 14 Kentucky State Fire Rescue Training. He was blessed to have developed a program that was second to none and a model to other states. In that capacity, he made a profound impact on the fire rescue training community, helping to shape the education and preparedness of emergency responders across that region, the state of Kentucky, and nationwide. Through a relentless demand for excellence and attention to detail, he made sure that firefighters could receive high quality training in their communities to better serve and save lives.

Charles also served as the chief of Campbellsville-Taylor County Rescue, where he dedicated 30 years to saving lives and serving his community. He volunteered with the Campbellsville and Taylor County Fire Departments and was the special events coordinator for the Kentucky Fire Commission. He took the most pride in the development of leaders, always leaning on his motto, “Quality is never an accident. It is the result of intelligent effort.” Charles was relentless in his pursuit of excellence and unwavering in his standards. His commitment to the highest level of performance in every aspect of his life earned him deep respect from colleagues and friends. As a result, he was inducted into the Kentucky Firefighters Association Hall of Fame. He also coordinated funerals for KFA for fallen emergency service members, handling those sacred moments with the utmost care, dignity, and respect. His work during those times provided comfort to grieving families and honored the sacrifices of those who served.

Charles is survived by his beloved wife, Suellen Coker Shaw, and his children, Scott Shaw, Billy Hubbard, and Molly Hubbard Pepper. Charles will be remembered for his steady presence, unwavering loyalty, and the love he gave so freely to all. His legacy lives on in the hearts of all who knew and loved him.

Jonathan A. Ashworth

LOUISIANA

Volunteer Firefighter/Operator ★ July 15, 2025 ★ Age 23

Beauregard Parish Fire District 4

Firefighter-Operator Jonathan “Jon/Jace” Ashworth was selfless to all who he met, including his loving wife, Tabitha Ashworth. Jon served his community through Beauregard Parish Fire District 4 from November 2018 until his passing on July 15, 2025. FF/OP Ashworth was responding to a call for help when he was involved in a vehicle accident.

Jonathan was the light in the room. He was goofy, playful, and positive and always had a smile on his face. He found a way to make everyone’s day better, even in the hardest times. If Jon wasn’t at the fire department, you could find him hosting a get-together at his residence, spending time with family, or at the local BBQ restaurant.

Jon was a devout Christian in the Mennonite community. He worshiped the lord faithfully. Jon had a servant heart and would never pass up an opportunity to help someone in need.

Jon’s greatest accomplishment on earth was marrying Tabitha on June 9, 2024. Jon was certified to the hazardous materials awareness level and was on his way to completing a Fire Apparatus Driver Operator course at the time of the accident.

All who knew Jon loved to be with him and could not be apart for too long. Jon was always reaching out to others, whether it was for birthdays, holidays, the loss of a loved one, or just checking in to make sure they were doing OK. Jon was an inspiration to all he met and continues to make others strive for better things. Jon will never be forgotten.

EOW 07/15/25

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

John M. Blackwell II

Career Captain ★ February 24, 2025 ★ Age 53

LOUISIANA

New Orleans Fire Department

Captain John M. Blackwell II, a 27-year veteran of the New Orleans Fire Department, passed away at the age of 53 on February 24, 2025, just twelve days after being diagnosed with cancer.

Captain Blackwell, whose life was defined by courage, leadership, and an unwavering commitment to serving others, joined the NOFD in 1998. He responded to countless fires, medicals, rescues, and other incidents over his 27 years of service. Some notable incidents included Hurricane Katrina, the Hard Rock Hotel collapse, for which he was awarded a Medal of Commendation, the seven-alarm fire at a historic mansion on St. Charles Avenue, the five-alarm fire at the Hubig's Pie facility, and countless more. He held over 50 certifications in firefighting, HAZMAT, response to terrorism and CBRNE incidents, passenger train emergency response/railroad incidents, structural collapse, and other rescue certifications including extrications, rope, confined space, and water rescue. He also served on the Louisiana USAR Team LA-Task Force 1, and the NOFD's Special Event Tactical Team.

Before joining the NOFD, he served in the Army National Guard and spent some time as a commercial diver. He was also respected in the Louisiana bodybuilding community. Bodybuilding was a reflection of his discipline, his relentless drive, and his commitment to being the best version of himself.

At the center of everything was his family. He was a deeply devoted husband, father, and grandfather. His wife, Denise, was more than just a life companion to him; she was his best friend and favorite person to spend time with. He was intensely proud of his sons, Garrett and John, and poured out affection on his grandchildren, Levi, Lucy, and Enola.

Captain Blackwell was a brother to his colleagues and a living legend in the fire service. He fearlessly went into the buildings that others hesitated to enter. His passion for the job was fueled by an unshakable sense of duty, confidence, and grit, and a deep love for the craft of firefighting. He had a unique ability to instill confidence and skill in everyone he encountered, shaping them to be not just better firefighters but better people.

His legacy lives on in his family, in the people he mentored, in the firefighters who had the privilege of serving with him, and in every life that he touched along the way.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" Isaiah 6:8

LOUISIANA

Lester J. Guidry Jr.

Career Operator ★ October 17, 2024 ★ Age 70

David Crockett Steam Fire Company No. 1

Lester Joseph Guidry Jr., operator/firefighter with David Crockett Steam Fire Company No. 1, passed away on Thursday, October 17, 2024, after a courageous five-year battle with occupational lung cancer.

Lester was a devoted and loving husband to Annemarie Guidry for 50 years. He was a proud father to Michelle L. Guidry, Lester J. Guidry III, and Ryan M. Guidry, and he cherished his role as a grandfather and great-grandfather. His family was everything to him.

Lester dedicated 44 years of his life to the fire service. He began as a volunteer firefighter in 1973 and, in 1974, became a full-time operator/firefighter with the Marrero–Ragusa Fire Department in Marrero, Louisiana. Throughout his long and distinguished career, he also served with the Marrero–Estelle, Lafitte, Terrytown, Gould, and David Crockett Fire Departments.

In addition to his work as an operator/firefighter, Lester was an instructor at the Jefferson Parish Fire Training Center in Westwego, Louisiana. After completing his shifts at the fire station, he spent his days off training and mentoring future firefighters. Lester was especially proud to be among the first EMTs in the state of Louisiana.

Lester loved people and helping others in any way he could. He received numerous awards and accolades throughout his career, but to him the true reward was serving others. He never considered himself a hero, though to many he was. He gave freely of himself without hesitation or expectation.

The day before Hurricane Katrina, Lester and a fellow firefighter went door to door urging residents to evacuate. One elderly man refused to leave, insisting he had never evacuated for a storm and would not do so. Three days after the hurricane, the two firefighters returned to check on him and found that he had passed away after a tree limb fell through his roof. Despite a lifetime of service and sacrifice, Lester carried the weight of that loss with him for the rest of his life. That was the kind of man he was—deeply compassionate, selfless, and always concerned for others.

Lester Joseph Guidry Jr.'s legacy lives on through the many lives he touched, the firefighters he trained, and the family he loved so dearly.

James Earl “Jimmy” Schexnayder III

Career District Chief ★ May 27, 2023 ★ Age 52

Jefferson Parish East Bank Consolidated Fire Department

Fire District Chief James E. “Jimmy” Schexnayder III of the East Bank Consolidated Special Service Fire Protection District of Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, died May 27, 2023, after a courageous battle with occupational non-Hodgkins NK/T cell nasal lymphoma.

Chief Schexnayder’s career with the Jefferson Parish Fire Department started on August 27, 1990. He started as a firefighter and worked his way through the ranks to achieve the honorable position of district fire chief “140” of “C” Platoon. He was a technical rescue specialist, member of the Urban Search and Rescue Team, and a swift water rescue specialist. Chief Schexnayder was also a senior instructor for the LSU Fire and Emergency Training Institute. Chief Schexnayder dedicated 33 years of his life to the fire service.

In 2022, Chief Schexnayder was awarded the Americanism Award recognizing his professionalism, instrumental planning, and implementation of search, rescue, and street clearing for Hurricane Ida.

As much as Chief Schexnayder loved his career as a firefighter, his most beloved role was being a husband and father. His wife of 21 years, Charlotte, and their children, Dawson, Bayleigh, Chloe, and Luke Schexnayder, were his greatest love. He coached each of his children in baseball, softball, and basketball. He was a homeschool teacher to his children, a protector, and a spiritual leader to his family.

Chief Schexnayder was known as a career firefighter, but those who knew him best understood that his greatest calling was not only to fight fires and be a husband and father; it was to lead others to the Lord. He openly spoke about his faith and eagerly shared what the Lord had done in his life. He reminded his firemen and his family that courage didn’t come from training; it came from trusting God. He showed us all that faith wasn’t something practiced during the good times, but something lived every day. His life left a lasting mark in the department he served and in the lives of all who heard him testify about the Lord.

Chief Schexnayder spent his life serving others, loving his family, and faithfully pointing people to Christ. We thank God for the privilege of having him in our lives. We are all better for being loved by him.

2 Timothy 2:7 *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

Michael T. Windsay Sr.

LOUISIANA

Career Acting Chief ★ March 3, 2025 ★ Age 51

New Orleans Fire Department

On March 3, 2025, the New Orleans Fire Department lost a beloved member to cardiac arrest while on duty, and we mourn the passing of District Chief Michael T. Windsay Sr.

Born on June 23, 1973, he was a graduate of Marion Abramson Senior High School in New Orleans.

Michael was a seasoned veteran of the fire service, dedicating over three decades to the community and a career he loved. His intelligence and life skills enabled him to serve his community as a firefighter, apparatus operator and captain before eventually ascending to the rank of district chief. Michael flourished in his role as district chief, most notably when it came to professionally nurturing and guiding those under his command.

His natural leadership qualities proved ideal in his dual role as an instructor at Delgado Community College Fire Training School. He mentored many of the young firefighters currently serving the NOFD.

Personally, Mike was a fun-loving individual who enjoyed joking and spending quality time with his family and friends. Whenever anyone needed help, Mike was always willing to go out of his way to assist.

He was also a lifetime member of the Institute of Divine Metaphysical Research, which allowed him to be closer to his faith.

Michael is survived by his partner, two sons, a grandchild, a brother, a sister, and a host of adoring family members. He was an impactful servant leader to those around him and the people who respected him, and he is greatly missed.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Robert Dorr Jr.

Career Deputy Chief ★ May 5, 2021 ★ Age 43

MAINE

Robert "Bobby" Dorr Jr., 43, died at his home in Ellsworth, Maine, on May 5, 2021, ending a 16-month-long battle with occupational colon cancer. He was the devoted son of Robert Dorr Sr. and the late Stanya Dorr, proud father of Aubrey and Allison, loving husband to his wife, Heather, caring stepfather to Benton and Braelynn, and a friend and brother to all who knew him.

Bobby answered a lifelong calling to serve his community by joining the Ellsworth Fire Department in 2009 as a paid-on-call member and a full-time career firefighter in 2010. He quickly rose through the ranks, eventually achieving the position of deputy chief. In addition to his fire department duties, he was a lead instructor at the Hancock County Fire Academy for five years.

Deputy Chief Dorr's career was marked by an unwavering commitment to professionalism and a profound sense of duty. He was the only Ellsworth firefighter to be named Firefighter of the Year three times, receiving the distinction in 2012, 2016, and 2017. He received a Certificate of Commendation for a successful rescue in 2013, was honored with the Patriot Award in 2019, and in 2021 received the Captain Joel Barnes Award for his outstanding service.

Shortly after Bobby received his cancer diagnosis, he started raising funds to purchase particulate flash hoods with the goal of equipping every firefighter in Hancock County, and his childhood hometown of Steuben, with this cancer-preventing personal protective equipment. Deputy Chief Dorr lived a life of purpose, living up to his creed, "For those I love, I will sacrifice." His family continues his mission, giving each Hancock County Fire Academy graduate a particulate flash hood in Bobby's memory.

Ellsworth Fire Department

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Mark Ray Dranbauer Jr.

MARYLAND

Career Lieutenant ★ May 17, 2025 ★ Age 44

Baltimore City Fire Department

Mark Ray Dranbauer Jr. was born on May 7, 1981, to parents Mark Sr. and Robin and raised in Baltimore City. His family moved to Baltimore County, where he graduated from Eastern Technical High School in 1999 with a focus in diesel mechanics. Mark attended college in Texas to pursue that passion but was immediately distracted by his desire and love of firefighting.

Mark grew up in a family of first responders. His parents were both members of the Rosedale Volunteer Fire Company in Baltimore County. Mark began his fire service as a volunteer at age 16, serving with the same company as his parents. He served as a volunteer at a company in Houston, Texas, while attending diesel school, then with Essex Volunteer Fire Company in Baltimore County.

In 2001, Mark was hired with the Baltimore City Fire Department FPA program. He successfully completed the program, earning his ALS certification. He spent several years riding the medic and was eventually promoted to firefighter and lieutenant. He was a dedicated firefighter and officer to many who looked to him for guidance and mentorship. He was very proud to wear the Baltimore City Fire Department uniform. At the time of his passing, he had served for 23 years.

His favorite pastime was being a father to his son, James, spending time with the many people he loved, and riding his motorcycle. He rode with best friend Mike to many sites throughout the United States and Canada. He was a devoted member of the Punishers Motorcycle Club in Essex, Maryland. He also loved to be Santa Claus. When COVID happened, he donated his time, morphing into Santa Claus and riding his motorcycle to many houses so young children wouldn't miss that Christmas tradition. Since then, he continued as Santa each year for many events. He loved fishing, cooking for his family and his friends at work, and listening to Jimmy Buffett.

Mark loved being with his family and friends. He was larger than life and wise beyond his years. He was dedicated and caring. He did not hesitate to drop what he was doing to assist whenever there was a need. Mark's last selfless act continued to show his commitment to community and saving lives by donating his organs and tissues.

He is truly missed by his parents; his son; his sister, who was his best friend; his niece, nephew, many aunts, uncles, and cousins, and the many friends who he cherished and loved.

Lawrence H. Goldberg

Career Battalion Chief ★ July 11, 2019 ★ Age 50

MARYLAND

Baltimore City Fire Department

On July 11, 2019, Battalion Chief Lawrence Goldberg of Baltimore, Maryland, lost his long and courageous battle to occupational colorectal cancer at age 50.

Born in Baltimore in 1969, Larry graduated from high school and went on to attend Wheeling Jesuit College before deciding his passion lay in fire and emergency services. Larry began his fire service career in August 1988 with the Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company. Through leadership, dedication, and unwavering commitment to helping others, he rose through the ranks to become the highest-ranking officer of the Pikesville VFC. In 1991, he joined the Baltimore City Fire Department as a paramedic in his first paid position. Through hard work and determination, he wore many helmets during his 30-year career in both career and volunteer fire service, advancing to the role of battalion chief for the Baltimore City Fire Department in 2011.

Our son, Zachary, followed in his dad's footsteps to join both the Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company and the Baltimore City Fire Department. His dad was so proud of him for becoming a FF/EMT before graduating high school.

In addition to his work in the field, Chief Goldberg devoted more than 25 years to teaching with the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute, where he trained and mentored generations of firefighters and emergency responders. Teaching was truly his first love, and he took great pride in sharing his knowledge, experience, and deep passion for the fire service with others. Larry cherished every aspect of his career—the camaraderie of the firehouse, the challenge of fighting fires, the responsibility of saving lives, and the opportunity to help people during the most difficult moments of their lives.

Throughout his distinguished career he received numerous awards and recognitions, including the Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company Firefighter of the Year Award, the Jack C. Zoppo Award of Valor, and the J. Donald Mooney Training Award in recognition of his many contributions to firefighter training and instruction. In honor of his extraordinary service and lasting impact on the fire service community, Baltimore County officially proclaimed July 2 as "Lawrence Goldberg Day."

Larry was a devoted husband of 22 years to Deborah, adoring father to two beautiful children, Micaela and Zachary, a son, brother, and friend. He will be remembered for his generosity, leadership, and unwavering commitment to the fire service. His legacy of service, mentorship, and compassion will live on in the many lives he touched throughout his career and far beyond.

May his smile and laugh never be forgotten.

Christopher J. Higgins

MARYLAND

Career Lieutenant ★ January 11, 2025 ★ Age 46

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service

Lieutenant Chris Higgins died in the line of duty on January 11, 2025, while on scene at a house fire in Laurel, Maryland. Chris was a 23-year veteran of Montgomery County Fire & Rescue, receiving numerous lifesaving awards throughout his career for acts of bravery and commitment to his job. At age 16, before starting his career, he began volunteering at Earleigh Heights VFC in Anne Arundel County as a live in. As a life member of 30 years, he received numerous awards, including Firefighter of the Year, served on the board of directors, and headed various committees. It is where he met and fell in love with his wife, Lisa; what started as a friendship developed into a deep, once in a lifetime love.

Chris was hired as a professional firefighter in 2002, where he served with pride and compassion. He held himself to the highest standards while working at some of the busiest stations in the county, including Takoma Park, Glenmont, and Burtonsville, where he was assigned after his first competitive promotion to master firefighter. He served as primary driver of the truck and rescue squad, performing his job flawlessly. Chris's shift relied on him for his vast knowledge and expertise, training the rookies, and finding fun. He was loved and respected by all that knew him, a true fireman's fireman.

Born to Tony and Linda, he was raised in Anne Arundel County with his sister. At age five, he learned to play ice hockey. He continued his love of hockey, playing for 41 years on various teams including the Montgomery Police/Fire team and Montgomery's fire team, the Hooligans. He was an avid Capitals, Ravens, and Orioles fan; he also enjoyed fishing. His greatest joy was traveling with his wife (and later kids), as far as Australia, New Zealand, and Tahiti.

Chris loved his job, but above all else, he was a devoted and loving family man. His heart belonged to his doting wife, Lisa, and his beautiful children, Kate and Jack, and he showed that love in countless quiet, steady ways every single day. He was his wife's biggest fan and her greatest supporter, always believing in her, standing beside her, and cheering her on through every joy and challenge during their 18 years together. As a father, he led with warmth, patience, and unwavering dedication, creating a home filled with love, laughter, and security. His legacy lives on in the strength and closeness he nurtured with his wife and children; they are devastated by a constant void felt with every passing moment.

Jesse Wade McCullough

Career Fire Technician ★ October 9, 2018 ★ Age 41

MARYLAND

Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department

Jesse Wade McCullough began his firefighting career with the Baltimore City Fire Department as a member of Class 10-02. Once out of the academy, Jesse was assigned to Squad 40 in the Liberty Heights neighborhood.

Jesse left Baltimore City in 2013 when he was hired by Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department as a member of Career Recruit School #47. Upon graduation, Jesse was assigned to Company 830 - Landover Hills on B Shift.

Jesse quickly earned the respect of his peers and officers because of his knowledge and passion for firefighting. Jesse was the primary driver for his shift, where he could often be found helping someone learn a new skill or understand a complex concept. Jesse's attention to detail, passion, and knowledge were a great asset to all who worked alongside him.

Outside of work, Jesse was an accomplished artist. Jesse attended the Corcoran School of Arts & Design, where he earned a BA in fine art with his primary focus on sculptures and ceramics. Jesse also enjoyed gardening, cooking, and building projects.

Jesse's greatest joy and source of strength was his family. Jesse and Susie were married in 2013 and welcomed two daughters, Maggie and Alice.

Jesse's battle began in January 2017, when he was diagnosed with aggressive Stage IV occupation-related metastatic colorectal cancer. Jesse fought a valiant and courageous battle for 21 months, continuing to work for a period of time.

During his final days, Jesse continued to care for his family. While coworkers were tearing out an old concrete patio at their new house, Jesse was able to convince them to allow him to use a jackhammer so that he could contribute to the work.

On October 9, 2018, Jesse passed away peacefully at home. Jesse was 41 years old and had served the citizens of Baltimore City and Prince George's County for over ten years. Jesse was posthumously promoted to the rank of fire technician.

Even after his passing, Jesse continued to make a difference for many Maryland firefighters. The Jesse McCullough Cancer Protection Law was signed on April 30, 2019. Jesse's law changed language that, going forward would allow career firefighters in Maryland to combine their years of service across multiple departments regarding Maryland's presumptive cancer laws.

Charles E. Mudra

MARYLAND

Career Emergency Vehicle Driver ★ May 16, 2025 ★ Age 52

Baltimore City Fire Department

Charles Elpidio Mudra, lovingly known as Charlie, passed away on May 16, 2025, in Baltimore, Maryland, at the age of 52.

Born on November 3, 1972, in New Hyde Park, New York, Charlie was raised by his mother and grandmother. He cared for his dearly cherished mother, Mildred, until her passing. Charlie attended St. Hedwig's School through eighth grade and graduated from Sewanhaka High School in 1990. He played varsity football, number 66, in his senior year.

Charlie's father, Charles F. Mudra, passed away when Charlie was an infant. His mother never remarried, and Charlie remained an only child. At the time of his death, he had no living biological relatives, yet his life was rich in love and connection. For a little over three years, Charlie shared a deep, unwavering bond with his beloved partner, Elizabeth. From the beginning, they were inseparable. He embraced Elizabeth's children, Casper and James, as his own, with all the joy, frustration, and fierce love that comes with raising teenagers.

From childhood, Charlie dreamed of becoming a firefighter. He joined the New Hyde Park Volunteer Fire Company shortly after high school. He served proudly on Rescue 174 and Ladder 175 and earned his EMT certification in 1996. In 1998, he joined the New York City Fire Department as an EMT, where he served for a decade, promoting to EMS lieutenant. In 2008, Charlie continued his career in service with the Baltimore City Fire Department, promoting to emergency vehicle driver and faithfully serving for 17 years until his death on the job.

Charlie had a lifelong passion for Star Wars, a love that began with the original film and never faded. He was an avid comic book enthusiast—especially devoted to Daredevil—and treasured watching the shows with his family. A history buff, Charlie was particularly fascinated by U.S. military history, and he and Elizabeth made a point of visiting historic ships during their travels.

Those who knew Charlie remember him as the kind of person who would give you the shirt off his back—and if it didn't fit, he'd find one that did. He was generous with his time and energy, always ready to lend a helping hand to friends, strangers, and animals alike. He was open, approachable, and honest, never afraid to admit when he didn't know something and always willing to share what he did.

Charlie lived a life of service, courage, and unwavering compassion. He leaves behind a legacy of love, loyalty, and the countless lives he touched with his steady hands, loving heart, and beautiful smile.

He will be incredibly missed.

Neil Allen Payne

Volunteer Fire Chief ★ October 16, 2022 ★ Age 59

MARYLAND

Stockton Volunteer Fire Company

Neil Allen Payne, 59, of Stockton, was born on March 19, 1963, in Salisbury, Maryland, and passed away on October 16, 2022.

He graduated from Snow Hill High School, Class of 1981. Neil began his career as an electrician's apprentice for Gus Foltz while still enrolled in high school, earning his own electrical license in 1984. He took a job working for Holly Farms/Tyson of Snow Hill, Maryland, for a few years. He decided to enter into business for himself as sole proprietor of Payne's Electric in 1989.

Neil was very active in his community, serving in the Stockton Volunteer Fire Company for 36 years. He held the position of fire chief for 30 years and worked as a cardiac rescue technician from 1989 until 1993 in conjunction with his electrical business. Neil was the longest-running fire chief in Worcester County at the time of his passing. He was also Stockton Fire Company's longest serving chief since its founding in 1924.

Neil enjoyed spending time with his family and friends. Anyone who knew Neil knew that he lived life to the fullest. He would befriend anyone he met and had many hobbies that he enjoyed, always eager to share his interests with others. Those who knew Neil also knew that his list of hobbies and expertise was without end. Neil was a dedicated father, volunteering to coach sports teams, participating in scouts with his son, and traveling to attend many dance competitions with his daughter. He also loved being a grandfather, introducing his love of hobbies to his grandchildren. He and his wife enjoyed taking weekend trips to Williamsburg and Pennsylvania.

Neil passed away on the morning of October 16, 2022, while on duty in the command vehicle. He was able to make a radio call for assistance and attempted to render self-aid. Upon arrival, crews found Chief Payne semi-conscious, and shortly thereafter he went into cardiac arrest. The valiant efforts of all units involved were not enough to save Chief Payne. He was pronounced dead at TidalHealth Peninsula Regional, the same hospital in which he was born.

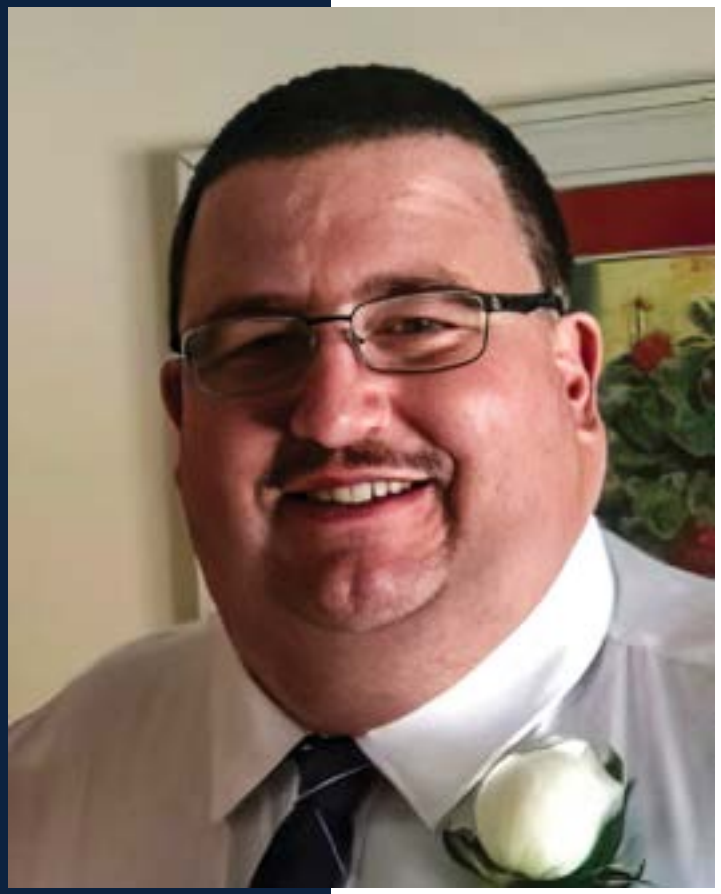
Most importantly, Neil was a loving husband to Dawn, his wife of 38 years, a loving father to his children, Shelby and Brock, and a loving grandfather to his grandchildren, Wesley and Kinsley.

Neil was a respected and valued member of the Worcester County community and is remembered by all for his devotion, integrity, and sense of humor.

Keith A. Phillips

MARYLAND

Volunteer Captain ★ May 2, 2021 ★ Age 48



Winfield Community Volunteer Fire Department

Captain Keith Phillips touched countless lives across the fire service during his 33 years of active duty. Driven by a lifelong desire to serve, he began his journey at just 15 as a junior firefighter with New Midway Volunteer Fire Company in Frederick County, Maryland. His path of service took him to Carroll County, Maryland, where he continued to volunteer with Union Bridge Fire Department in 1992, Taneytown Fire Department in 2001, and finally to Winfield Community Volunteer Fire Department in 2012. Throughout these years, he served in numerous line officer positions, served on the executive board, and was a dedicated member of the Carroll County Haz-Mat Team. Even those who didn't know him personally likely knew his voice; since 2000, he served the community as an emergency communications specialist for the Department of Public Safety.

Keith was a fixture in Carroll County—truly a man who was no stranger to any firehouse. He possessed a larger-than-life presence and a personality to match, fueled by a sincere passion for providing fire and EMS services wherever his feet landed. Keith didn't just follow; he led by example, always the first to jump in and assist with the toughest jobs. He was a devoted mentor to younger firefighters, and his leadership earned him the Shock Trauma Hero Award in 2016.

Beyond the sirens and training sessions, Keith's favorite moments were spent at the heart of the community. Whether he was at the microphone calling Bingo or riding through the neighborhoods for Santa detail, Keith brought joy and a sense of family to everyone he met. At home, he was happiest spending time with his loved ones, attending sporting events and, of course, following his beloved wrestling.

On May 2, 2021, after a courageous three-year battle with glioblastoma, Keith passed away peacefully. He left this world surrounded by the love of his wife, Laurie, his children, and family, as well as his fire department family.

THAT IS ALL.

Jeffrey William Albanese

Career Firefighter/Acting Lieutenant ★ December 21, 2024 ★ Age 49

MASSACHUSETTS

Jeffrey W. Albanese died on December 21, 2024, at Beth Israel Hospital. He suffered a cardiac arrest on December 9, 2024, while responding to an incident. After fighting very hard with his family and friends by his side, he succumbed to his injuries.

Jeff was the loving husband for 20 years to Michele L. (Mackedon) Albanese. He was the son of Karen (Doyle) Potter and the son of William Albanese and his wife Kathleen.

Raised in Brockton, he was a graduate of Brockton High School and received an associate degree from Massasoit Community College. At the time of his passing, Jeff had been a Brockton firefighter for 24 years. He was a member of Firefighters Local 144 and a member of the Honor Guard.

His larger-than-life personality brought so much joy and fun to everyone's life. You will never meet a funnier, more carefree, kinder man. He was the first one there to help. He loved his family and his dog Violet so much. He loved to go camping with his family, fishing, hanging with friends, having a fire, playing some music, cornhole, and hanging out at his beloved tiki bar that he built himself.

In addition to his wife, Michele, he is survived by his children, Jayson and Jillian Albanese. He is also survived by his sister, Carrie Lavigne, and her husband, Fred; and his brothers, Michael Smith, and his wife, Stacie; Patrick Smith and his companion, Stacey; and Matthew Albanese and his wife, Katelyn. Jeff was an amazing uncle and is survived by many nieces and nephews.

City of Brockton Fire Department

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Matthew T. Callahan

MASSACHUSETTS

Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ August 20, 2025 ★ Age 38

Watertown Fire Department

Firefighter Matthew Callahan, age 38, of the Watertown Fire Department, passed away on August 20, 2025, due to occupational cancer. Born and raised in Reading, Massachusetts, Matt dedicated his life to serving others with courage, compassion, and professionalism.

Matt began his career in emergency services as an EMT and paramedic with Cataldo and Atlantic Ambulance Company, later serving as a trainer and educator at Cataldo's Paramedic/EMT Education Center, where he mentored future first responders. In 2017, he was hired by the Watertown Fire Department and graduated from the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy in 2018.

Throughout his career, Matt's bravery and selflessness were formally recognized. He received a Special Citizen Citation from the Salem Police Department in 2017 and company citation awards in 2021 and 2023 for acts of great distinction and heroism in saving human lives. He is remembered as a skilled firefighter and medic, devoted son and brother, and a kindhearted soul whose service and sacrifice will never be forgotten.

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Jeffrey Deschenes

Career Firefighter ★ May 29, 2025 ★ Age 54

MASSACHUSETTS

North Andover Fire Department

Born on February 5, 1971, in Lawrence, Massachusetts, Jeffrey "Jeff" Deschenes dedicated his life to serving the community that raised him. From the time he was just three years old, Jeff knew he wanted to be a firefighter, and he made that dream a reality.

Jeff began his firefighting career in 2000 with the Lawrence Fire Department. A few years later, he married Kathy, and together, over the years, they built a beautiful family with their daughter Emily, son Ryan, and their dog, Mystic.

His passion for helping others extended far beyond the firehouse. Jeff was constantly learning, growing, and sharing his knowledge. He became an EMT instructor, known for his high standards and passion—qualities that made him a mentor to so many. In 2012, he joined the North Andover Fire Department, where he served as EMS coordinator and was instrumental in improving emergency care for the community.

In 2006, he was recognized by both the Massachusetts House of Representatives and the Massachusetts Senate as Lawrence Firefighter of the Year. Later, in 2015, Jeff received the Recognition of Outstanding Contribution to EMS Region III. In 2018, he was honored with the Gift of Caring Award from the Trauma Intervention Program of Merrimack Valley (TIP). In 2019, he was named Firefighter of the Year by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for his service and dedication. In 2023, Jeff was presented with the Director's Award on behalf of the NorthEast EMS Executive Director of Region III. Most recently, in 2024, he received the EMS Lifesaving Medal from NorthEast EMS Region III, a testament to his lifelong commitment to protecting and saving lives.

Jeff also worked at Lawrence General Hospital, guiding young EMTs and continuing his mission of service.

Sadly, Jeff passed away on May 29, 2025, from a sudden medical emergency. His loss leaves a tremendous void, not only in his family, but in the lives of the countless people he helped, taught, and inspired.

Jeff's legacy is one of dedication, love, and service.

Mark J. Giannini

MASSACHUSETTS

Career Lieutenant ★ October 20, 2022 ★ Age 54

Springfield Fire Department

Lieutenant Mark J. Giannini was born on December 16, 1967. He dedicated 20 years of his life serving the people of Springfield, Massachusetts, a city he grew up in, working from the age of 15 as a busboy and cook. Not only did he serve and protect his city, but he served his country as well. At 24 years old, Mark enlisted with the U.S. Navy on April 30, 1991, attending the recruit academy in San Diego, California and eventually serving on the USS Kalamazoo AOR-6. Mark served his full enlistment and was honorably discharged as E-4 on May 10, 1993.

After the Navy, Mark went on to study law enforcement at Springfield Technical Community College. Fast forward to April 28, 1997, Mark was selected as a firefighter recruit for the City of Springfield. After nine years working on Engine Co. No. 9, Mark Giannini made his way up to lieutenant. During his career, Mark showed that he was not only capable of fighting fires but also capable of cooking with fire! In 1999, he and his wife started a catering business that lasted for 13 years and opened a restaurant called Friends, both of which served American, Italian, and Hispanic cuisine. Mark's food always brought people together, whether it was his brothers in the firehouse or his family at home.

When Mark wasn't cooking or running through burning buildings, he was either working part-time security at the Springfield Museums or helping his local baseball community. He coached all the way from Little League up to the high school level. From repairing dugouts to hosting the snack shack, Mark always found ways to support his team. In 2022, he was awarded the East Longmeadow Baseball Association Albert "Baba" Tranghese Commitment to Excellence Award for his dedication to the town's baseball program.

With multiple smoke inhalation exposures on the job, Mark had no choice but to retire on May 8, 2017. Mark stopped battling fires and was now fighting for his life with cancer. Yet again, Mark turned to food during his retirement. He graduated from the MGM culinary school at HCC in 2019. He started a fit meal business from home during the height of COVID, allowing people to stay healthy during troubling times.

On October 20, 2022, Mark sadly passed away, leaving behind a loving family, his wife (Abby), his two sons (Kenny and Joseph), and his sister (Grace).

To this day, Mark's impact on the community continues to show, as every year two students attending the MGM Culinary Institute at HCC are awarded the Mark Giannini '19 Good Character Scholarship, which is awarded to those who show a passion for cooking like Mark.

William G. Noke

Career Captain ★ October 28, 2023 ★ Age 67

MASSACHUSETTS

Concord Fire Department

"If you love your job, you never work a day in your life." This quote was Bill's truth.

In the early 80s, Bill began working part-time shifts at Patriot Ambulance while working his primary job in auto body. In 1986, Bill began as a call firefighter with the Concord Fire Department. Simultaneously, he worked per-diem shifts at Boxborough Fire for thirteen years. In 1989, he became a full-time firefighter on Concord Fire, rose to the rank of lieutenant in 2002, captain in 2011, and retired in January of 2021. Bill adored his career with the CFD.

Being a firefighter and EMT were perfect roles for Bill. He was a most selfless man who constantly looked out for others, doing anything he could to help improve their lives. This held true for each member of his family, his CFD and Patriot families, friends, patients, neighbors, and strangers. Although he was someone whose voice could often be heard from a distance, he cared for others in a quiet way. He never sought attention; rather, any recognition would have made him uncomfortable. In each role he lived, he was a mentor. Bill genuinely wanted the best for others. He was humble, kind, truly happy, and an elaborate storyteller. He was seldom seen without a smile, and his laughter filled a room.

Bill was also a valued member of the Massachusetts District 3 Hazardous Material Response Team. For a short time, he worked with the National Park Service training to fight wildland fires. He remained an EMT and dispatcher at Patriot and was voted 2023 EMT of the Year by his Patriot Family. He held career positions at CFD and Patriot for over thirty-five years, and these roles truly filled his life with joy and the dearest of friends. Just prior to his cancer metastasizing, Bill became a traffic officer with the Concord Police Department. Much to his disappointment, he was unable to report for his first shift.

As he shared with his group on his last tour, "Remember to look out for one another." This legacy is one he taught us by his loving example.

Within weeks of retiring, Bill began his battle with esophageal cancer. Until his last day, he fought with strength, grace, positivity, and gratitude for life's blessings.

Most significantly, Bill was an exceptional husband and best friend to Rebecca for twenty-six years, adored father of Walter, William, Samantha, Theodore, Gary, and their spouses, and loving grandfather to their children. Visits to the stations, ballet recitals, hockey games, rides to school, breakfasts out, trips to Maine, and hours of fun at the lake were just a few memories gifted to his family.

Never forgotten...forever loved.

Edward F. Suarez

MASSACHUSETTS

Career Lieutenant ★ August 9, 2020 ★ Age 47

Fitchburg Fire Department

Edward "Eddie" Suarez passed away at his home, surrounded by his loving family, after a courageous battle with occupational brain cancer. He is survived by his wife, Angela, and his daughters, Isabella and Mia.

Eddie was born on May 14, 1973, in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. He was a 1992 graduate of Montachusett Regional Vocational High School, where he played soccer all four years. He later went on to play soccer at Mount Wachusett Community College and Fitchburg State University. He received his associate degree in fire science from Columbia Southern University.

Eddie was a proud and dedicated member of the Fitchburg Fire Department for 23 years. He was appointed to the department on June 17, 1997, and was promoted to the position of lieutenant on April 11, 2016. He was last assigned to Engine 2, Group 2. Eddie was well respected among his peers and was elected president of Local 3128, a role in which he served for over ten years. He actively and passionately pursued better compensation, health insurance benefits, and working conditions on behalf of the department.

Eddie's passion for sports began in his early childhood years and followed him into adulthood. He was an avid Boston sports enthusiast and enjoyed fishing and playing soccer, dek hockey, and bocce. He took great pride and enjoyment in coaching his daughters' soccer teams.

Eddie lived life to its fullest. He worked hard but played harder. He always had a smile on his face, and his laughter was contagious. A friend once said, "If Eddie was involved in the shenanigans, then you knew it would be an epic adventure!" Nothing was more important to Eddie than his family and friends. Taken from us too soon, he will always be remembered as a loving husband, father, brother, son, and a true friend to all.

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Kevin C. Welz

Career Private ★ October 17, 2019 ★ Age 64

MASSACHUSETTS

Springfield Fire Department

Kevin Welz, born December 15, 1954, dedicated 32 years to serve as a firefighter for the city of Springfield before retiring in 2017 and passing away on October 17, 2019.

Kevin was the youngest of eight who grew up in the Forest Park area of Springfield, Massachusetts, spending most of his time in the park itself. He attended Classical High School in the Class of 1973. He worked with his father for Uniroyal Tire in Chicopee, Massachusetts, before following his oldest brother Bernard into the fire service. This was only the beginning of his career. He joined the Springfield Fire Department in 1985 and selflessly served the city up until his retirement.

Aside from his passion for helping others, Kevin enjoyed traveling and seeing places he had never been. He was known for his love of the beach, camping, and skiing. He drove a tour bus for many years and would happily talk to anyone about any of these experiences. His passion for these things was always a huge part of who he was as a person, and anyone who knew him would agree.

As much as Kevin loved being a firefighter, his favorite role was being a husband, father, and grandfather. He was happily married to Anne Welz and was a wonderful father to Caity and Brendon Welz and his stepdaughter, Elizabeth Slater. He was "Poppi" to his granddaughters, Olivia Graves and Lily Slater, whom he adored. As a family, the thing he loved most was taking everyone on adventures and surprises, which were some of the best memories they made together.

One thing about Kevin Welz is that no matter who you were to him—family, friend, colleague, or even a stranger he had never met before—his presence made everyone feel as though they had known him for years. His funny personality and gift for making you feel seen and loved were undeniable.

Kevin will always be remembered as a loving and respected person. He changed so many lives and will forever be missed. Those who knew him were lucky enough to see his warm smile and know him as the funny and lively person he was.

John Edward Allison

MICHIGAN

Paid-On-Call Chief ★ October 14, 2013 ★ Age 51

Custer Fire Department, Mason County, Michigan Rural Fire Authority

Chief John E. Allison, of Custer, Michigan, responded to his last call on Monday, October 14, 2013. Born on June 3, 1962, to James E. and Joan Marie (Quick) Allison, he devoted his life to helping others and serving his community. John loved working on a farm, first alongside his father and brother raising a beef herd, then starting his own dairy farm. Between being a member of the fire department and the farming community, John was known and trusted throughout Mason County.

Remembered for his unwavering willingness to help someone in need, John was the first call for many in times of need. Always ready to respond, he took his role of fire chief very seriously, looking for ways to improve the fire department's preparedness for whatever emergencies arose. In addition to his leadership as fire chief, he served as the assistant chief for the Mason County Rural Fire Authority, which placed in the county's Emergency Operations Center during countywide disasters. His career was noted with many saves and honors, but as a quiet and humble man, he didn't let that define him or become the focus of his service.

Even though John loved firefighting and farming, it couldn't compare to how much he loved his family. In 2008, he married his love, Tammy (Abbott) Orcutt, and gladly took on the role of father figure to Chelsea and Bethany. Even though the farm and fire department consumed many hours of John's day, his family time never suffered. Every spare minute of time was filled with family camping trips, kayaking local waterways, and even the occasional successful hunting trip. John's steady and loving support of his family and friends was demonstrated through endless action. Whether attending school basketball games, helping organize fundraisers, serving on committees, or supporting other businesses, John was always a constant supporter and friend.

The years John spent demonstrating his love of community and service lives on in his daughters, who both joined the fire service alongside their dad. His gift of life, through blood donations and ultimately tissue and organ donations was the final capstone of his service to others. He will be fondly remembered as the calm and considerate friend, the steadfast supporter, and a dedicated dad, husband, and man. John would have loved knowing his life made such an impact on his community; he would have been even more ecstatic to be called "Papa John" by his five granddaughters that have come to know his legacy of love and service since his death.

Dan L. Deyo

Volunteer Chief ★ November 6, 2021 ★ Age 73

MICHIGAN

Morley Area Fire Department

Danny L "Dan" Deyo, age 73, a lifelong resident of Morley, Michigan, was born March 14, 1948, the son of Frank and Alice (Smith) Deyo. After graduating from Morley Stanwood High School in 1966, Dan began his career as a second-generation firefighter, a calling that would span nearly 54 years with Morley Area Fire and Rescue. Dan served with distinction as chief for over 25 of those years.

Dan began working for his father's business, Frank's Sporting Goods, while attending Ferris State College (University) for his Bachelor of Science. He and his first wife of 28 years, Debra, would eventually take ownership of the store, overseeing operations for several years while raising their three children.

Dan would ultimately pursue a career as a paramedic, serving his community for over 25 years with Mecosta County EMS. He maintained that license from 1982 and trained countless first responders as an EMS instructor coordinator and fire instructor for the State of Michigan.

A true pioneer, in 1973 he helped found Morley Rescue, Mecosta County's first rescue unit, providing prehospital EMS care to the citizens of his community. Dan was a member of the Mecosta County Fire Training Association, Fire Chiefs Association, Medical First Responder Board, 911 Tech Advisory Board, and Hover Craft Team. He also spent many years assisting at powerboat races with Tri-State Water Rescue Team ("River Rats") around the Midwest and Canada.

A man of many passions, Dan was an avid sportsman and found great joy in fishing, shooting guns, and hunting. His love for hockey was undeniable, and he remained a loyal fan of both the Detroit Red Wings and Ferris State Bulldogs. In his younger days, he raced dirt bikes with friends, later savoring the open road on his motorcycle. His love of travel and camping created a legacy of cherished family vacations and enduring memories.

Dan was the cornerstone of his family, a truly devoted and loving presence. To his three children, Emilie, Ashley, and Eric, he was not only a father, but an exemplar of heroism, the family patriarch. He was deeply committed to his wife of 14 years, Melanie, and his love extended to his grandchildren, brother, sister-in-law, and sons-in-law.

Dan was a beloved friend, mentor, and pillar in his community. He showed profound dedication to everyone around him and was admired for his wisdom, humor, and unwavering resolve. His eminence continues to affect countless lives, and his absence leaves an irreplaceable void that can never be filled. He will be terribly and forever missed by all whose lives he touched.

David Haverdink

MICHIGAN

Paid-On-Call Chief ★ December 25, 2025 ★ Age 74

Hamilton Fire Department

Hamilton Fire Chief David Haverdink died on Christmas Day 2025 from injuries sustained while serving in the line of duty.

The second child and oldest son of Harvey and Harriet Haverdink, David's early life on the Haverdink farm was one of adventure, fun, and healthy mischief. Harv founded Hamilton Distributing Company, and in his teens, David delivered grain bins and equipment for his dad. When Harv retired, he sold the business to David and his son-in-law. David was president and co-owner until 1992.

David served for 51 years with the Hamilton Fire Department. His love for helping others began at age 16, when he drove an ambulance for a local funeral home. In 1982, Hamilton Fire Chief Richard Boeve, a close friend, died while serving in the line of duty. A few years later, David was appointed fire chief, a position he held for the rest of his life.

David was dedicated to his fellow firefighters and respected for his leadership with the Allegan County Fire Chiefs Association and other organizations. In the late 1990s, he was instrumental in the construction of a new fire station. More recently, he was proud to collaborate with several departments in the development of a live fire training facility for area firefighters.

In 1980, David became a reserve deputy sheriff for Allegan County. In 1990, he was elected to a term on the Allegan County Board of Commissioners, where he helped implement new safety initiatives. In 1992, David was elected Allegan County Sheriff and served in this position for eight years. It was common on nights and weekends to hear Sheriff Haverdink check in over the radio, often arriving on scene to assist his deputies in incidents from routine traffic stops to major crimes.

David's most significant role was as husband, dad, and grandpa. After graduating from Holland Christian Schools and completing an associate degree at Davenport University, David and Judy were married in 1972. They built a home, traveled, and became parents to two sons. Together, through nearly 54 years of marriage, they raised a family built on love, commitment, adventure, tradition, and faith. At every gathering of family and friends, David was at the center. He added humor, wit, stories, and mischief and found ways to let people know they were special to him.

David's faith in Jesus Christ was secure and provided the underpinning of his lifetime of service to others. He is irreplaceable to his family and will be deeply missed forever. David is cherished in memory by his wife, his sons and their wives, four dear grandchildren, extended family members, countless friends, and his second family, members of the Hamilton Fire Department.

James Ward Swindlehurst

Paid-On-Call Firefighter ★ December 24, 2021 ★ Age 33

MICHIGAN

James Ward Swindlehurst of Dewitt Township Fire Department and Mercy Ambulance Service died on December 24, 2021, after contracting COVID while working on the ambulance. He was a paramedic for twelve years and a firefighter for five, two of his greatest and proudest accomplishments. He took great pride in his jobs and enjoyed teaching others after becoming an IC.

James had a true passion for emergency medicine, working not only on the ambulance but also at a Level 1 trauma center. He loved helping people and enjoyed learning. He had a strong desire to learn everything about topics that interested him—advanced life support, firefighting, hazmat, water rescue, building things, working on cars, and even brewing his own beer.

He shared his love for fire/EMS with his wife, Kayla. They were married for just two short years and had one son together, named Gatlin, who was born six months after James's passing.

James was an only child to his parents, Wayne and Maryann. They enjoyed spending their time up north whenever they could, taking the boat out, cooking, and working on various projects. They were best friends with a bond that was unmatched.

James's smile, quick wit, hard work, and ability to help others are missed every day—by his family, friends, and the community he loved to serve.

DeWitt Charter Township Fire Department

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Terry Wayne Dykes

MISSISSIPPI

Volunteer Firefighter ★ March 3, 2025 ★ Age 58

Pinedale Volunteer Fire Department

Terry Wayne Dykes, 58, passed away on Monday, March 3, 2025.

He was a member of the Pleasant Dale Baptist Church, where he oversaw the brotherhood, served on the building committee, and was the groundskeeper.

He served with the Pinedale Volunteer Fire Department as a volunteer firefighter and an EMR. Terry was also a well-known bounty hunter.

He enjoyed spending time with the love of his life, Debbie Dykes, and they shared 41 lovely years together.

Terry also enjoyed hunting, fishing, working on the fire trucks, and spending time with his kids and grandchildren. Terry never met a stranger and was always ready to lend a hand to help anyone.

He is survived by his wife, Deborah Dykes; his daughter, Kayla Harrison; his son, Cedric Linzy; his brothers, Jerry Keith and Robert Dykes (Anette); his sister, Stephanie Chandler (James); and his grandchildren, Luke and Caleb Harrison.

He was preceded in death by his parents, James Taylor and Lillie Mae Dykes; his son, Robert Taylor Dykes; his brother, Jimmy Dykes; his sister, Sharon Dykes; and his sisters-in-law, Geraldine Richter and Kathy Jones.

Terry passed away doing what he loved to do, which was serving his community. He always lived life to the fullest and put a smile on everyone's face that he met.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Joseph F. Pennell Jr.

Volunteer Chief ★ November 23, 2023 ★ Age 69

MISSISSIPPI

Central Oktibbeha Fire Department

Joseph F. Pennell Jr. went home to be with the Lord on November 23, 2023.

His life started in Starkville as the second child and only son born to Fontaine and Mary Pennell in August of 1954. He was raised to work hard and play hard, starting the day hauling hay and ending the day fishing as the sun set.

After high school, Joe focused his work ethic toward a degree in business at Mississippi State University while working part time at MSU Police Department. After graduating from college, he took a job with the Starkville Police Department. Looking for a safer career to support the family they hoped to grow, Joe left the police department and started a career at Gulf States Manufacturing, Inc. that would last 37 years.

He never lost his love for the farm he grew up on and continued to work hard every summer to cut, rake, and bale hay. The bales often left the farm to go to those who needed it but were not able to afford it, with the assurance that they would pay when they could. Joe would conveniently forget to collect those debts when he saw it was necessary.

Joe was a "see a need, fill a need" kind of man, and in 1988 he joined with other like-minded servants and founded the Volunteer Fire Service in Oktibbeha County. Through hard work and dedication, they grew from one department into seven fully equipped departments to cover the county. In 2013, he rose to the rank of chief of Central Oktibbeha Fire Department. His love and dedication to the department and the work they did was only surpassed by his love and dedication to his Lord and Savior.

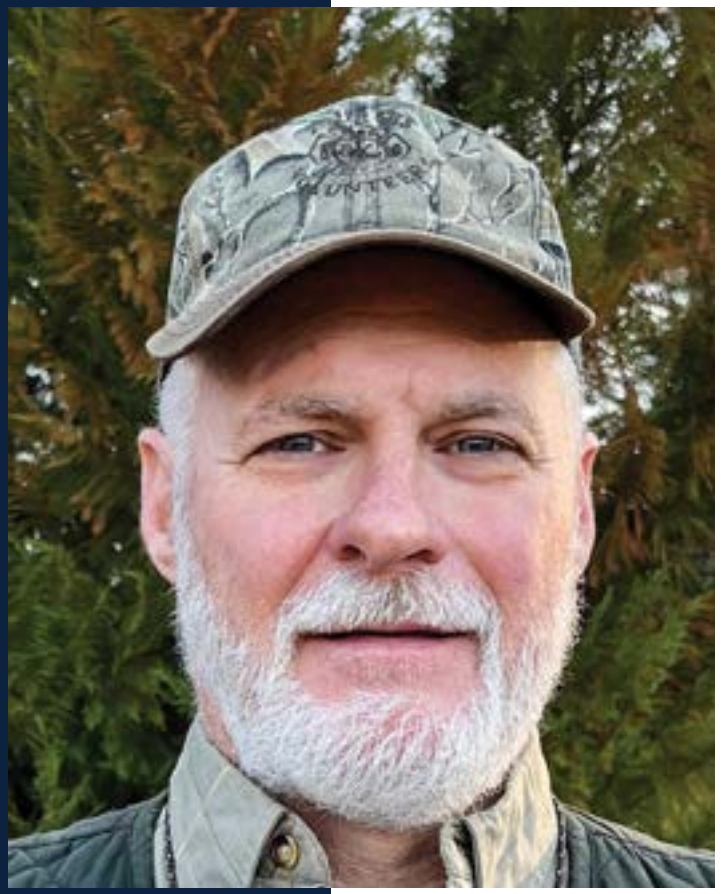
Joe was a servant in the truest sense. Throughout his life, he always sought to serve others, whether on the board of local charities, the water association board, or as a member of the safety team at First Baptist Church, where he dutifully served and protected the congregation and staff during Sunday services.

He leaves behind his loving wife of 45 years, Merry; three children, Katie Ruth (Dale), Ben, and Sam (Delisa); two granddaughters, Lindsey Claire Ruth and Gracee Edwards (Seth); one great-granddaughter, Anderson Edwards; his sister, Janice Guice; two nieces; several great-nieces and nephews; sister-in-law, Leanna Lindsey Hollis; and nephew, Ryan Hollis.

Greg Jackson Wall

MISSISSIPPI

Volunteer Chief ★ December 19, 2023 ★ Age 57



Sturgis Volunteer Fire Department

Greg Jackson Wall was born on March 15, 1966, in Cusseta, Georgia, to Dr. and Mrs. Preston J. Wall. Greg was the oldest of three. He was raised with his brother, Eric Wall, and his late sister, Emma Chambers, in Lawrenceville, Georgia. After graduating from Central Gwinnett High School, he went on to Abraham Baldwin College and the University of Georgia, earning a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture.

Greg and Susie, his wife of 32 years, called Sturgis, Mississippi, home. Greg and Susie had two sons, Clint (wife Bailey Cook, children Charley and Birdie Boone) and Colin.

Greg worked for Helena Agri for 32 years. He was a salesman in the Specialty Division. Greg was known for being honest, fair, and knowledgeable. He was respected by his colleagues and customers. He had a vast knowledge of plants and chemicals. He never grew tired of learning more. He was open to new ideas but saw the value in old, reliable methods as well. He strived to be a good steward of the land.

Greg was an avid outdoorsman. He loved hunting, and he particularly loved hunting shed antlers. A crisp, sunny morning created the perfect environment for Greg to walk, scout, and ponder his thoughts. He made many memories with Clint and Colin over the years, sitting in the deer stand, following the sound of a turkey gobbling, walking in the woods, or sitting on the creek bank.

Greg was very active in his community. He served as alderman for the town of Sturgis, which opened the door for joining the Sturgis Volunteer Fire Department. He became chief (401) and held that position for 25 years. Greg loved being a volunteer firefighter. This provided another outlet for him to help others.

Greg was an active member of Morgan Chapel Baptist Church. He served in many capacities, including Sunday school teacher, deacon, choir member, and Bible study leader.

Greg will be remembered as a servant. He was a servant to his community, his family, but most importantly to God. He always put others before himself. He was gentle, humble, kind, and so much more. He loved Jesus more than he loved anyone else. He was open to sharing his faith with others, and his deeds backed up what he believed. We are thankful for having him in our lives. We are better because of him.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ that you are serving.
Colossians 3:23-24

Christopher Mykel Clevenger

Volunteer Captain ★ January 26, 2025 ★ Age 33

MISSOURI

West Central Missouri Fire Protection District

Christopher Mykel Clevenger was born on February 27, 1991, in Joplin, Missouri, and passed away unexpectedly on January 26, 2025. He was a beloved husband, father, and community servant, leaving behind a legacy of dedication, love, and selflessness.

Chris was the cherished husband of Jessica for 12 years and an incredible, present father to their children, Brantley and Raegan. His family was the center of his world, and he took immense pride in being an active and supportive father, coaching his children's recreational t-ball, baseball, basketball, and football teams.

Born to Billie and Michael Clevenger, Chris grew up in the Concordia and Sweet Springs, Missouri area. He was the oldest of five siblings, with one sister, Cierra, and three younger brothers, Brodie, Dalton, and Mason. Chris graduated from Sweet Springs High School in 2010, where he developed a passion for service, sports, and community.

From the age of 18, Chris selflessly served his community as a volunteer fire captain and emergency medical responder for the West Central Missouri Fire Protection District in Sweet Springs. His role in the district became an integral part of his identity, and he made countless contributions to the safety and well-being of those around him.

After high school, Chris pursued a career in law enforcement, enrolling at State Fair Community College to study criminal justice. His dedication to service led him to the Mizzou Law Enforcement Training Institute in Columbia, Missouri, where he graduated in 2012. He went on to work as a Saline County Sheriff's Deputy in Marshall, Missouri, before transitioning to a new career with the Ford Motor Company manufacturing facility in Claycomo, Missouri, in 2017.

Outside of work, Chris had a deep love for the outdoors, particularly hunting. He enjoyed spending time with his son, Brantley, and his brother-in-law, David, hunting together in the Missouri woods, a pastime that brought him great joy and fulfillment. Chris also enjoyed spending time with his nieces, Rosaleigh, Lilliana, and Elliotte, daughters of Cierra and David.

Chris's sudden passing on January 26, 2025, following a fatal heart attack after responding to a medical call, was a shock to all who knew him. He leaves behind a community that will forever be grateful for his unwavering commitment to service, his loving family, and his vibrant spirit.

Chris's life was a testament to hard work, resilience, and love for his family and community. His memory will live on in the hearts of those who were touched by his kindness, strength, and dedication.

Vernon K. Collett

MISSOURI

Volunteer Captain ★ March 8, 2025 ★ Age 60

Johnson County Fire Protection District

Vernon K. Collett was born on June 3, 1964, in Warrensburg, Missouri, the son of Melvin and Joan (Kenney) Collett.

Vernon proudly graduated from Knob Noster High School in 1982. He dedicated his full-time career to the Johnson County Road and Bridge Department, where he worked diligently to serve the community. In 1995, he joined the Johnson County Fire Protection District as a firefighter, beginning a long and honorable commitment to emergency response. Throughout his years of service, he pursued extensive training, completing Fire Investigation courses in 2014, Grain Bin Rescue in 2015, and Fire Officer Training in March 2018. His expertise extended to ice rescue, trench rescue, and vehicle extrication, for which he trained in 2010.

Vernon's leadership and dedication were recognized through his promotions, achieving the rank of lieutenant in 1997 and later being promoted to captain in 2011. His dedication to his career left a lasting impact on his colleagues and the community he proudly served.

As much as Vernon loved and dedicated his life to his career, he was also a proud uncle to his two nephews, Jesse and Terral McKinney. He spent many hours at his farm with his nephews working on trucks, his beloved tractors, and anything else he felt needed to be fixed. He always had his beloved father, Melvin, by his side making sure they were getting work done. His love for his farm and the work he put into it made his nephews want to continue making him proud by finishing things he could not finish and keeping things in pristine shape for their uncle!

He will always be remembered as a loving uncle, son, colleague, friend, and firefighter. He is deeply missed by many and will always have a place in our hearts for the impact he made.

Larry Roland Duncan

Volunteer Heavy Rigging Specialist ★ January 15, 2025 ★ Age 64

Larry Roland Duncan, age 64, of Franklin, Missouri, passed away at his home surrounded by family and friends on January 15, 2025, after his courageous battle with esophageal cancer.

He was a IUOE Local #513 St. Louis heavy equipment operator for over 40 years. Larry served the Boone's Lick area as a firefighter for many years. He served with the Cooper County Fire Protection District from 1984-2003, the Boone County Fire Protection District from 1990-1992, and the Howard County Fire Protection District Station #4 from 2021 until his death. Larry served with the Missouri Task Force One from 1998-2003 as a heavy equipment rigging specialist. As a member of the Missouri Task Force One he was deployed to serve after the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City. His service there eventually resulted in his final illness and death.

Larry also served his community as a Shriner and member of the Bunceton Masonic Lodge. He loved the outdoors, especially going hunting, camping, fishing, and spending time at the Lake of the Ozarks. Larry also enjoyed following racing and dirt bikes and motorcycles and had an eclectic taste in music. He was outspoken, a good friend and colleague, and had a gregarious personality, not knowing a stranger. He was an expert at telling tall tales.

Larry is lovingly remembered by his wife, Angelyn Duncan; his daughter, Joella Duncan (Whitney Segars); a brother, Lonnie Duncan (Heather); nieces and nephews and many friends, especially his firefighting colleagues. Also missing Larry is his furry best friend and right-hand dog, Elvis.

Missouri Task Force 1

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Larry E. Harlan

MISSOURI

Volunteer Firefighter ★ August 26, 2021 ★ Age 66

Jonesburg-High Hill Fire Protection District

Larry E. Harlan was with the Jonesburg-High Hill Fire Protection District for 41 years. He was always proud to be a firefighter and to be able to help others in need. Larry's passion for firefighting started in 1979 when his home burned to the ground. After this tragic event, he and his family moved to Jonesburg. At this point he vowed he would do whatever he could so this didn't happen to someone else's family.

Larry was proud of the awards and certificates he earned through his many years in the department, but what meant the most to him was being there for people in their hardest moments. Larry especially loved working with the new volunteers, showing them the ropes and teaching them how to run the truck.

He was very loving and devoted to his family and would go to all ends to make sure they were safe, protected, loved. He was married to his wife, Donna, for 46 years until the time of his death and has two children, Jennifer (Stewart) Bredell and William (Mandy) Harlan. Larry had a very soft spot for his five grandchildren, Dalten, Gracie, Nadine, Molly, and Charlie, as well as many honorary grandchildren.

In addition to his public service, Larry was a longtime over-the-road owner/operator truck driver. Many of his friends, family, and fellow drivers called him Grizzly. When he wasn't working, he made time to help at the local ballpark or whatever community events needed a hand, especially at a local food pantry. Larry was a behind the scenes guy. He loved to help but was never looking for recognition.

Larry's true passion was being outdoors. He was an avid fisherman, hunter, camper—all things outdoors. He enjoyed sharing these experiences with family, friends, and even strangers he met along the way.

Larry passed away on August 26, 2021, surrounded by family who were grateful for the endless good in his heart. Larry's impact will continue to live on in the lives he touched and the example he set.

Graham J. Hoffman

Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ April 27, 2025 ★ Age 29

MISSOURI

Graham Hoffman was a lifelong resident of Parkville, Missouri. From an early age, his dream was to become a firefighter. He loved the outdoors—fishing, camping, and snowboarding.

At Park Hill South High he played on the golf and rugby teams. He attended Northwest Missouri State College, earning a bachelor's degree in geographical information science, and was granted an internship abroad in Dublin, Ireland, which sparked his love of travel. He later traveled to Germany, France, Amsterdam, Croatia, Mexico, and numerous U.S. cities and national parks.

Graham graduated from the fire academy in 2019 and joined the Belton Fire Department, later transitioning to the Kansas City (Missouri) Fire Department. He furthered his career, becoming a certified paramedic in 2023.

Graham participated multiple times in the 911 Memorial Stair Climb. Graham purchased his home in October 2024, with a large backyard for his dog, Al.

Graham's captain described him as a strong leader. Graham's many friends knew him as adventurous, brave, kind, and loyal. HE LOVED LIFE! Graham lived each day to the fullest, whether exploring new cities, attending a Chiefs game, or enjoying a bonfire in his own backyard. He always had a smile on his face.

Graham is survived by his father, Michael; his mother, Rhonda; his brother, Nolan; and his sister, Brittani.

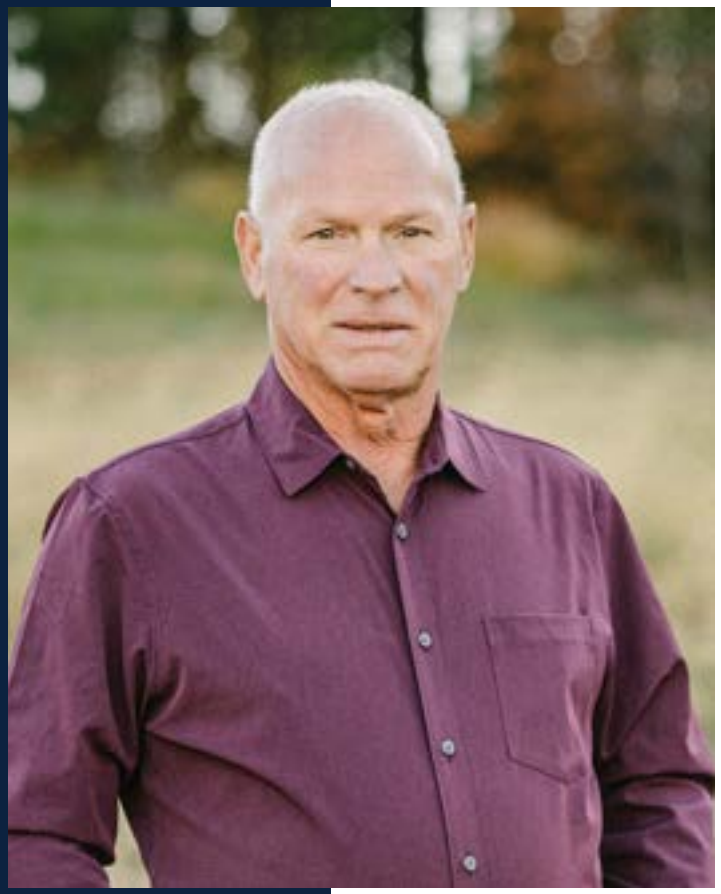
Kansas City (MO) Fire Department

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Donald R. Kammerich

MISSOURI

Volunteer Deputy Chief ★ March 10, 2025 ★ Age 64



Pilot Grove Area Fire Protection District

Deputy Chief Donald Raymond Kammerich, age 64, of the Pilot Grove Area Fire Protection District died Monday, March 10, 2025. Don was a lifelong resident of Pilot Grove, Missouri.

Don served with the Pilot Grove Area Fire Protection District for 35 years, following in his father's footsteps. His father and one of his sons also served on the fire department. Don joined the department as a member and was promoted to assistant chief and later to deputy chief. Don's knowledge of the Pilot Grove area, his mechanical skills and hazardous materials training, and his quiet strength were great assets to the department. Don realized the importance of a local fire department to the community for firefighting, but also the importance of a familiar face to a member of the community during a stressful time such as a fire, vehicle accident, or medical emergency.

Don worked for 45 years at the Pilot Grove Coop, which later merged with Prairieland FS, helping local farmers. Don was the outside manager, maintenance manager, and also sprayed local farms. Local farmers valued Don's vast wealth of knowledge and would often contact him for advice.

Don enjoyed side by side rides, float trips, and working on their 23 acres. In his younger years, Don enjoyed riding his motorcycle, playing slow pitch and baseball. Later in life, Don enjoyed watching his sons play baseball in high school and watching them play slow pitch in recent years. His newest joy was spending time with his grandson, Ridge.

Even though Don loved his job and being a firefighter, his greatest love was his family. Don is survived by his wife of 39½ years, Diane. He also leaves behind two sons, Drew (Alisha) and Darrin (Isabella), and one grandson, Ridge. Survivors also include Don's brothers, Randy and Kevin Kammerich, and sisters, Rachel and Peggy Kammerich. Don was preceded in death by his parents, C.R. and Joan Kammerich, and his sister, Nancy Waller. Don's brother-in-law, Carl Lee Waller, passed on February 26, 2026.

Don will be remembered as a loving husband, great dad and brother, fellow firefighter, an extremely hard worker at Prairieland, and a friend to many in the Pilot Grove area. His quiet strength and ornery smile will forever be remembered by those honored to know him. We miss you, Don.

Lee Michael Kraus

Career Firefighter ★ July 1, 2025 ★ Age 52

MISSOURI

St. Louis Fire Department

Lee Michael Kraus dedicated thirty-one years of his life to serving others. He served twenty-seven years as a firefighter and four years as a paramedic with the St. Louis Fire Department. For Lee, this was more than a career. It was a calling.

Throughout nearly three decades of service, Lee earned the respect of his fellow firefighters for his steady presence, sharp instincts, and unwavering loyalty to his crew. He stood on scenes most people will never see and carried responsibilities most will never fully understand. Whether assigned to an engine company or working in the back of an ambulance, he approached every call with competence, humility, and a deep respect for the uniform he wore.

Lee trained, worked, and built lifelong friendships within the department. He understood the weight of the job and the importance of taking care of the people beside him. He was known as someone you wanted on your crew—calm when it mattered most, focused, dependable.

While he was deeply committed to his profession, Lee's greatest pride was being a father. His child, Kamryn, was the center of his world. He loved Kamryn fiercely and spoke with pride about them every chance he got. Every long shift, every missed holiday, and every sacrifice that came with the job was made with Kamryn in mind. Kamryn was his reason and his greatest accomplishment.

Outside of the fire service, Lee embraced life fully. He loved the outdoors and could often be found fishing, hiking, kayaking, or camping. He traveled to several countries over the years, always chasing new experiences and stories. He had a bold personality, a strong sense of humor, and a curiosity about the world that never faded. He enjoyed grilling for friends, trying the spiciest food on the menu, decorating his home with extravagant outdoor pirate themes, and proudly supporting Mizzou.

Service was part of Lee's legacy. He was preceded in death by his father, Firefighter Woody Kraus, and carried that family tradition forward every time he put on his uniform. He understood the honor and responsibility that came with the name.

Lee's life was defined by dedication, courage, loyalty, and love for his family. His example and his impact will endure in the hearts of those who knew him and in the department he faithfully served.

Marcus E. Maggard

MISSOURI

Volunteer Captain ★ January 6, 2022 ★ Age 50

Jadwin Volunteer Fire Department

Marcus was born September 17, 1971, in St. Louis, Missouri. He was raised on the Current River in the Ozarks. His family owned and operated Akers Ferry Canoe Rental, and Marcus was involved from the time he could hold a paddle. He never met a stranger and loved to talk to anyone and everyone. Growing up, Marcus loved airplanes, and this love followed him throughout his life. He had his private pilot's license by the time he was 17. He attended college at CMSU for two years. He got married and joined the Army in 1991 and served for two years at Ft. Bragg in the only non-droppable unit, MLRS. Upon returning home, he went back to the family business and continued working.

In 1995, it was decided that Jadwin needed a fire department, and Marcus was in on the plan from the start. They got up and running as a volunteer department in 1996. Marcus loved everything about it—the training, the trucks, but most of all helping his community. Marcus ended up taking a break after a few years while he and his kids participated in Taekwondo tournaments and did a lot of traveling. When the kids got into sports and band in school, he rejoined the fire department. He also went back to college at Columbia College and graduated with a dual degree.

Marcus was the favorite band dad; all the kids just loved him. His sense of humor and strong, steady support, whether they did well or not, made him a pillar of that community. He helped keep the band directors organized, too. He pulled band trailers to four states and all around Missouri for the competitions. He also attended most football and basketball games.

You always had to plan extra time for everything because, no matter where he went, there was someone he just needed to talk to for "just a minute." Thirty or forty-five minutes later, he was still talking. He was truly someone that would give you the shirt off his back while asking what else you needed. If it was in his power, he wanted to help.

He leaves behind his wife and five children, plus many more "adopted" kids, but his legacy carries on with one son being part of the same volunteer department his dad helped start.

He will always be our hero.

William Nix

Volunteer Firefighter ★ January 16, 2025 ★ Age 72

MISSOURI

Thomasville Volunteer Fire Department

Bill Nix was born on November 5, 1952, in Troy, Alabama. When he was seven years old, his family moved to Wabasso, Florida. On June 21, 1971, he married his wife, Deanna, in Vero Beach, Florida. A few years later, they were blessed with their son, Jeremy.

In 1977, Bill moved his young family to Thomasville, Missouri. They acquired land on the Middle Fork River and built a home.

Bill became an EMT and worked for the Oregon County Ambulance for a few years. Following that, he worked for seven years as EMT Medical Director for West Plains Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Center. Eventually, Bill changed course and went to truck driving school for a year. He worked for several different trucking companies before settling in with CFI out of Joplin, Missouri. He drove a semi-truck for over 28 years, logging over three million miles incident free. His CB handle was Wild Turkey, reflecting his love of turkey hunting.

Bill retired from trucking in 2019. He soon joined the Thomasville Volunteer Fire Department, where he served alongside his son, Assistant Fire Chief Jeremy Nix. The department had recently acquired a large military tanker, and Bill had the experience necessary to drive it. He also served the department by doing much-needed maintenance on the firetrucks and the fire station. In 2022, he was selected as Firefighter of the Year for the department.

While responding to a fire call on the evening of January 16, 2025, Bill was a passenger in a pumper truck that was involved in a single vehicle rollover accident. Despite the heroic efforts of his son and other first responders, Bill succumbed to his injuries and died on scene.

Bill is survived by his wife of 53 years, Deanna; his son, Jeremy; daughter-in-law, Mary; his grandson, Ethan; and six siblings. He was of the Christian faith.

Bill was an all-around outdoorsman. He loved fishing, hunting, camping, riding side-by-sides, canoeing, and scuba diving. His greatest joy in life came from spending time with family, especially his son and grandson. Bill is deeply missed by his family and community.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

Matthew D. Shafer

MISSOURI

Part-Time Career Firefighter/EMT ★ June 4, 2021 ★ Age 21

Lawson Fire & Rescue Protection District

Matthew D. Shafer, 21, dedicated his life to serving others as a firefighter and EMT. Born with a spirit of compassion and courage, Matthew discovered his calling early, becoming a firefighter cadet at just 15 years old. From that moment, he poured himself into the work he loved, earning his Firefighter I, Firefighter II, Wildland Firefighter, HAZMAT and EMT certifications. He proudly served with the Lawson Fire and Rescue Protection District in Lawson, Missouri, and Madison Fire and Rescue Protection District in Madison County, Idaho, protecting communities with bravery and heart.

Matthew's love for his family was the center of his life, especially his younger brother and sister, whom he cherished deeply. He found joy in the outdoors, whether hunting, fishing, or simply spending time in nature. In high school, he was a dedicated athlete, competing in baseball, cross country, and track. His determination and teamwork carried into every part of his life.

Faith was also an important part of who Matthew was. He served a mission for his church in central Mexico, where he shared his kindness, service, and love with others. His commitment to helping those in need was not just a career choice, but a reflection of the person he was.

Matthew's legacy is one of service, love, and devotion—to his family, his faith, and his community. Though his life was tragically cut short, his impact will continue to live on in the lives he touched and the example he set. Matthew is missed dearly by his family, friends, and coworkers.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Christopher E. Brown

Career Captain ★ August 19, 2025 ★ Age 42

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Northwood Fire-Rescue

Christopher Brown was born June 14, 1983, in New Hampshire, to Chuck and Sharolyn Brown. Chris began his fire service career in 1997 as a junior explorer with the Northwood Fire Depar tment. What started as a young man's curiosity and wanting to follow in his father's footsteps became a lifelong commitment to serving others. He worked his way through the ranks with pride and determination, earning the role of lieutenant in 2013 and captain in March 2025. In July 2025, he received his Emergency Medical Responder certification.

Chris's dedication went beyond the fire department. He served as the public works director for the Town of Northwood, working to help keep the community running. He owned D&C Roofing/General Construction with his wife, Desiree, building a life together grounded in hard work and partnership. He remained closely connected to his family's business, Chuck's Alignment and Towing, willing to lend a hand where it was needed.

Serving his community was never just a duty; it was who he was. He was known for being the first on scene. In his earlier years, he traveled to Canada and Idaho and out west to fight forest fires for the NH Department of Forestry and Lands. Those experiences challenged, shaped, and strengthened his commitment to protecting people and the land. He was an animal trapper with NH Wildlife Fish and Game and a fire warden for the Town of Northwood.

Above all, he was a beloved husband and father. His wife, Desiree, was his partner in every sense of the word, and the 11 years they shared together meant everything to him. Their children, Griffin, Lauren, and Maci, were his greatest pride and deepest joy. Every long day, every late-night call was worth it to come home to them. As a family, they enjoyed hunting, fishing, hiking, beach days, concerts, coaching his kids' baseball/softball games. Chris enjoyed duck hunting and fishing the most. He played softball in adult co-ed leagues, as he had enjoyed playing ball for his elementary and high school teams.

Most refer to him as the local hero, but he never saw himself that way. He simply answered the call every time, because that's what needed to be done. He believed in showing up, helping others, and standing strong when it mattered most. Chris was a loving husband, father, son, brother, uncle, nephew, cousin, and respected firefighting professional. His life touched so many, and he is deeply missed. We were blessed to have seen that big smile of his. Though his watch has ended, his story lives on in his family, his brothers and sisters in the fire service, and the community he was proud to serve.

Parke D. Gramm

NEW JERSEY

Career Firefighter ★ March 9, 2006 ★ Age 50

Irvington Fire Department

Firefighter Parke D. Gramm was born on March 8, 1956, in Summit, New Jersey. He grew up in Irvington, New Jersey, and was raised by loving parents, Audrey and Nicholas. Parke and his wife, Carla, had two wonderful daughters, Chelsea and Margot, who continue to love and miss him dearly.

He joined the Irvington Fire Department in July 1983 (second generation) and was a member of FMBA Local 10.

He was an artist, woodworker and, like most firemen, a consummate do-it-yourself handyman, continuing to learn about plumbing, carpentry, and electrical work. He also enjoyed plants and landscaping.

Parke quickly became a popular member of the station crew due to his quick-witted sense of humor, artistic talent, and willingness to pitch in when anyone needed help. His cooking skills earned him the designation "Station Cook." In a letter to the family following Parke's death, Fire Chief Donald Huber shared, Parke gave us all so much more than we could ever return to him. His incredible inner strength, poise, and sense of humor remain as a fitting tribute to his memory and a lasting source of inspiration and encouragement for all of us who knew and loved him.

In 1994, the department required all personnel to receive a series of vaccinations. Parke developed an autoimmune response which ultimately resulted in him becoming quadriplegic; he was later placed on a ventilator. He was retired from the IFD in February 1999. Due to the direct efforts of Chief Huber, the Public Safety Officers Benefits (PSOB) Program certified that Parke's death was the direct result of an on-duty accident.

During his active-duty years, Parke used his artistic abilities to enhance the station house. Following his demise, his artwork was taken down, restored, and now hangs in the hallways of the station as an enduring memory of him. He was also commissioned by the IFD to design the department's uniform patch. Despite his severe physical limitations, he developed the ability to paint by holding the brush between his teeth. To his credit, he retained the personality traits that endeared him to the fire station crew, and he was an encouragement to his fellow patients at Kensington Manor Nursing Facility. Parke's story was featured on the ABC program 20/20 in 1999, and his artistic skills were the subject of local newspaper stories.

Parke died on March 9, 2006, one day after his 50th birthday.

Parke trusted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior (Romans 3:23-24) and, as a result, he is indeed in a better place. (Revelation 21:4)

Lewis H. Haskell

Career Firefighter ★ January 22, 1983 ★ Age 47

Lewis H. Haskell passed away on Saturday, January 22, 1983. He was survived by his devoted wife, MaryAnn, and their two children, Lewis, who was 15 years old, and Debra, aged 13, at the time of his passing.

Lew began his commitment to serving his countrymen in 1953. He served in Korea as an ordnance supply sergeant and successfully completed non-commissioned officer training. His military service continued until his honorable discharge in 1961.

In 1960, Lew began his career with the Linden Fire Department. Over the course of 22 years, he faithfully served the City of Linden as a dedicated firefighter. He was also an active member of the New Jersey Firefighters Mutual Benevolent Association. Lew was a beloved and respected member of his community.

Outside of his professional responsibilities, Lew was deeply devoted to his family. He had a passion for cars and motorcycles. He was a business owner, operating two laundromats—one located in Elizabeth, New Jersey and the other in Linden, New Jersey. Lew cherished time spent at the Jersey Shore, where the family often enjoyed vacations together.

NEW JERSEY

Linden Fire Department

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Brian J. Letrent

NEW JERSEY

Volunteer Firefighter ★ June 21, 2023 ★ Age 34

Bayville Volunteer Fire Company #1

Brian J. Letrent was born in Toms River and raised in Bayville, New Jersey, in Berkeley Township. Brian was a 2007 graduate of Central Regional High School in Bayville. Brian had true values of service to his country and community.

During his senior year in high school, he began his boot camp training. Immediately after graduating, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and was deployed to serve in Iraq for six months. He was honorably discharged from Fort Drum in New York.

Brian's desire to help others was established with his service to his country and did not end there.

Upon his return to his hometown, he started volunteering with Pinewald Pioneer Fire Company and was a certified HAZMAT technician in the Berkeley Emergency Response Team in Berkeley Township before settling into Bayville Volunteer Fire Company #1, where he served honorably at Station #17 in Ocean County until his untimely passing.

Brian brought to Bayville Volunteer Fire Company his experience and willingness to do anything he was asked to do. He continually rose above the norm to excel as a firefighter and brother to everyone who knew him. His commitment to the fire service was second to none.

During Brian's tenure at Bayville Volunteer Fire Company, he was involved in all aspects of firefighting. He was recognized annually for being a top responder and, in 2022, was awarded the Medal of Gallantry for his outstanding efforts during a water rescue in town. Brian was an apparatus engineer and was made an exempt firefighter in the New Jersey State Firemen's Association.

With Brian's hometown roots and being an active outdoorsman, he loved quadding, camping, NASCAR racing, and kayaking. He was an active hunter, which he shared with many firefighters and friends in his community, Brian was employed with Berkeley Township as a mechanic for the Berkeley Sewerage Department along with several town firefighters. His camaraderie of community service and employment combined with his desire to serve his town was a testament to his commitment in life.

The Bayville Volunteer Fire Company motto, "The desire to serve, the courage to act, the ability to perform," was the embodiment of Firefighter Brian J. Letrent, and he will be sorely missed by Bayville Volunteer Fire Company and Berkeley Township.

Brian will be remembered as a loving son, brother, nephew, and cousin. We are all better for knowing him, and he will be deeply missed.

Henry Sardina III

Volunteer Captain ★ November 24, 2024 ★ Age 46

On November 24, 2024, Henry Sardina III was training at the fire house when he was rushed to St. Clare's Hospital in Denville, New Jersey, where he unexpectedly passed away. He was born on December 18, 1977, at the same hospital and lived in Hopatcong his entire life.

He was a successful business owner of L&H Sales and Service. Prior to that he owned a pool company. He was captain of Hopatcong Defiance Engine Company #3 and past captain and member of Hopatcong Ambulance Squad.

Henry was larger than life and touched the hearts of everyone he knew. He had a heart of gold. He was passionate about being a firefighter and helping the community. He enjoyed boating, fly fishing, and so much more. He loved life and living it to the fullest. He will be missed by many.

Hopatcong Fire Department

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Julius A. Snyder

NEW JERSEY

Career Firefighter ★ October 27, 2025 ★ Age 55

Camden Fire Department

Firefighter Julius A. Snyder, affectionately known as "Jai," proudly served the City of Camden, New Jersey, dedicating more than two decades of his life to protecting others.

Throughout his career, he exemplified courage, professionalism, and an unwavering commitment to the community he loved. To his fellow firefighters, he was more than a colleague—he was a brother.

Born and raised in Camden, New Jersey, Jai was the youngest and only son among four sisters. Surrounded by the strength and guidance of his family, he developed the compassion, resilience, and sense of responsibility that would define his life. After graduating from Camden High School in 1988, Jai eventually found his true calling in the fire service, where he embraced the honor and brotherhood of the Camden Fire Department.

Known for his warmth, laughter, and generous spirit, Jai brought energy and positivity wherever he went. He enjoyed cooking, spending time with family and friends, and creating moments filled with joy and connection. His presence brought comfort and camaraderie to every firehouse and every home he entered.

In February 2020, Jai faced a sudden and life-altering medical emergency that began a long and difficult battle. With extraordinary strength and dignity, he fought through years of medical challenges, supported every step of the way by the unwavering love of his family.

Before his illness, Jai was a vibrant presence whose kindness, humor, and willingness to help others left a lasting impact on everyone around him. His dedication to service and love for his family defined who he was.

Though his passing leaves an immeasurable void, Julius "Jai" Snyder's legacy of courage, brotherhood, and devotion will forever live on in the Camden Fire Department, in the community he served, and in the hearts of all who knew and loved him.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

Patrick D. Brady

Career Firefighter ★ November 8, 2025 ★ Age 42

NEW YORK

Patrick came from a tight-knit Irish Catholic family in a beach community in New York. He spent his summers as a lifeguard and enjoyed playing rugby at Xavier High School and for his local rugby team. He was a leader during his college years at Belmont Abbey, North Carolina.

In 2012, Hurricane Sandy caused havoc on his hometown. Patrick, in shorts and flipflops, immediately joined his friends and family members to help fight the wind driven fires at his neighbors' homes. Since his brothers, cousins, and uncles were all firefighters, it was no surprise that he joined the FDNY in 2014. He eventually settled into Ladder 120/Engine 231 Watkins Street, where his larger-than-life personality and his kind, gentle nature quickly filled the firehouse kitchen with laughter.

At Christmas time he would lead Christmas carols on a Saturday in McSorley's in New York City. St. Patrick's Day found him carrying a flag in honor of the 9/11 firefighters in the parade. Every summer on his bicycle with an American flag, he led a charitable bike outing in his community. And any time of the year he could be found tending bar and was everybody's favorite fun time.

In true Patrick fashion, he surprised his family and friends by turning his surprise 40th birthday celebration into a surprise wedding to his longtime love, Kara, on April Fool's Day.

Patrick was a hero in life, living every day to the fullest. We give thanks for the gift of Patrick in our lives. Although our time was short, he filled every moment with his love, laughter, and light. He was a devoted son, husband, brother, uncle, cousin, nephew, and everybody's best friend. His footprints will remain on our Rockaway beaches and in our hearts forever.

Fire Department
City of New York

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Russell E. Brooks II

NEW YORK

Career Fire Chief ★ June 2, 2024 ★ Age 75

Utica Fire Department

Chief Brooks served the City of Utica for 43 years, like his father and uncle before him. During his time with the fire department, Chief Brooks held every rank in the department before being named its chief. Under his guidance as chief, the City of Utica ambulance service was started, the Utica Fire Academy was opened, the Rental Occupancy Program was implemented, and the city obtained a #2 ISO rating, a scale that determines how well a local fire department can protect its community and their homes.

During his time in the department, Chief Brooks received proclamations from the United States Congress and New York State Legislature and was honored by numerous organizations. He was named "Man of the Year" by St. Peter's School for his support of Catholic schools, "Firefighter of the Year" by American Legion Post 229, a "Living Legend" by the Boys & Girls Club of the Mohawk Valley, and was recognized by the Red Cross, Cornhill Senior Center, and the Salvation Army. Most recently, Senator Joe Griffo presented Chief Brooks with a proclamation from the New York State Senate.

In 2001, Chief Brooks responded to Ground Zero with eleven other firefighters to assist the NYFD with search and rescue operations. They were later featured in the book Twelve Valiant Men: Utica Firefighters at Ground Zero.

A lifelong Utica resident, Chief Brooks lived with his wife, Marianne Brooks, in North Utica. He is also survived by his children.

When his time with the department ended, Chief Brooks continued to serve his community as president of the building committee for the Irish Cultural Center, president of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, president of the Utica Food Pantry, and executive board member of the Great American Irish Festival.

On November 1, 2023, in appreciation for his service, the Common Council of the City of Utica renamed the Central Fire Station the "Chief Russell E. Brooks II Central Fire Station."

Dennis J. Collopy

Career Battalion Chief ★ January 30, 2025 ★ Age 84

NEW YORK

Fire Department City of New York

Dennis was born on September 28, 1940, in the Bronx, New York. He was the second of four children born to William and Theresa Collopy of McGraw Avenue. Shortly after high school, Dennis answered his country's call and enlisted in the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division. Those years of service instilled in him the discipline and leadership that would mark every phase of his life.

In 1964, Dennis married the love of his life, Kathleen, and they built a life together in what became their home in Rockland County. Over the next 60 years, their bond stood as a testament to devotion, respect, and partnership. Family was everything to Dennis—a loving husband, devoted father to daughters Julia and Lisa, and proud grandfather to his four grandsons, who were his world.

In 1967, Dennis joined the New York City Fire Department and served for 36 years, ultimately retiring as battalion chief of Battalion 11 on January 27, 2003. He found his second family in the fire department, first at Ladder 2/Engine 8, "Snoopy Truck," then at Ladder 17/Engine 60, "the Green Berets," and later at Ladder 26/Engine 58, known fondly as "The Fire Factory." While in the fire department he received many awards, including Meritorious Awards, Service Rating A and B, and he was involved in two unit citations. He ended his career in Battalion 11 on 100th Street at Ladder 22/Engine 76, a firehouse known as "Monumental Pride." This was a perfect place for Dennis to end his career, as it sums up how he felt about the FDNY. Dennis was an effective leader—steady under pressure, fair in his expectations, and always leading by example, earning the respect and loyalty of every firefighter who served beside him.

Dennis's service extended beyond the call of duty. In the years after the attack on the World Trade Center, he was among the dedicated citizens whose work there left an enduring legacy and whose health would later reflect the sacrifice. On January 30, 2025, Dennis lost his battle with a World Trade Center-related cancer; he left this world peacefully yet bravely, after a courageous battle.

Dennis was more than a firefighter and soldier. He was a man whose deep love for his family, lifelong pride in friendships spanning over eight decades, and unwavering readiness to answer the call defined every chapter of his life.

Christopher R. Dand

NEW YORK

Volunteer Firefighter ★ March 13, 2024 ★ Age 45

Franklin Square & Munson Fire Department

Firefighter Christopher R. Dand, a dedicated member of Hook and Ladder Company 713, Franklin Square and Munson Volunteer Fire Department, succumbed to an illness sustained in the line of duty at the age of 45.

Christopher was a kind, humble, and unassuming man who never said no to the challenges of helping others. He carried himself with quiet strength, never seeking attention or recognition.

He exemplified the highest ideals of citizenship throughout his life, beginning in high school. As a member of the Boy Scouts of America, he earned the rank of Eagle Scout at the age of 17. He went on to serve his community as a volunteer firefighter for 25 years.

During his time with the Franklin Square and Munson Volunteer Fire Department, Christopher and his fellow members responded in the days following the September 11 attacks, assisting in the search and recovery efforts at the World Trade Center.

Seventeen years later, he was diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia caused by exposure to toxins at Ground Zero. Christopher fought a long and courageous battle for five and a half years before succumbing to his illness on March 13, 2024.

Christopher deeply enjoyed his work as a volunteer firefighter, especially the camaraderie among his fellow firefighters.

By trade, he was an ironworker and a proud member of Architectural & Ornamental Iron Workers Local 580. He loved working in New York City, energized by the hustle and bustle of the city. Skilled and dedicated in his trade, Christopher took great pride in his work, leaving his mark on every structure he helped build.

Christopher was a devoted and loving husband to his wife, Dorine, whom he married in 2009. In 2010, they welcomed their first child, Tristan, followed by their daughter, Megan, in 2011. Together, they built a life centered on family, love, and unwavering dedication to their children's well-being. Even in his final days, Christopher's greatest wish was to be at home, surrounded by his wife and children, the family he cherished above all else.

Michael A. DeBenedetto

Career Firefighter ★ January 3, 2025 ★ Age 70

NEW YORK

Firefighter Michael A. DeBenedetto, age 70, of the Fire Department City of New York died on January 3, 2025, from illness related to response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

Fire Department City of New York

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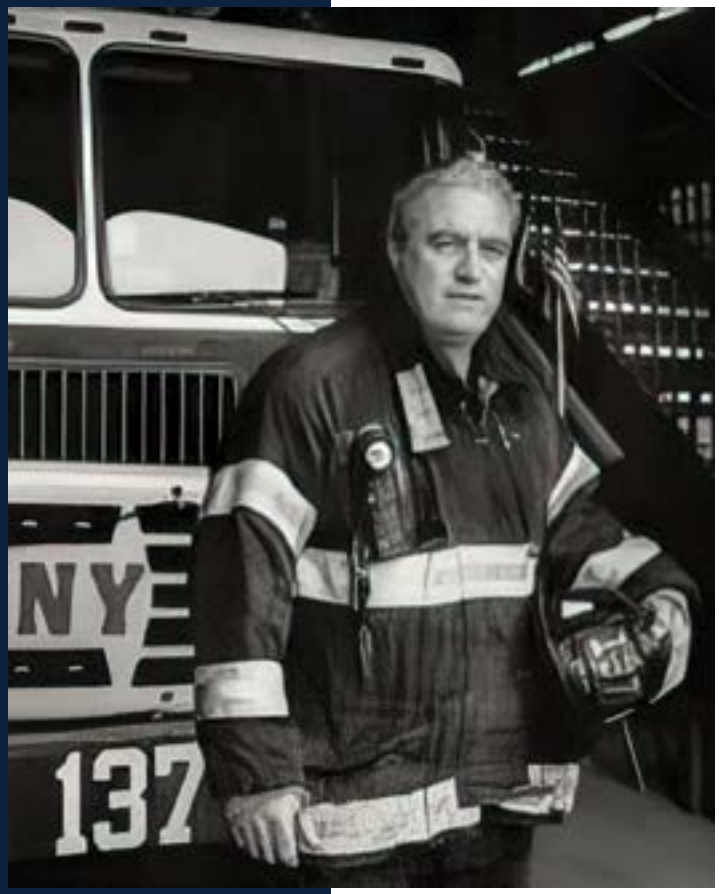
Brian T. Fitzgerald

NEW YORK

Career Firefighter ★ March 9, 2025 ★ Age 71



Fire Department
City of New York

Brian T. Fitzgerald, 71, of Bonita Springs, Florida, passed away on Sunday, March 9, 2025, surrounded by his loving family. A former resident of Belle Harbor, New York, he had been a resident of Bonita Springs since 2018. Born on July 11, 1953, in Brooklyn, he was the son of the late Hugh and Mary (McCormick) Fitzgerald.

Brian attended Franklin Pierce University in Rindge before embarking on a distinguished career as a firefighter with the New York City Fire Department. He proudly served as a first responder at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, where he played a vital role in the search and recovery efforts. Brian owned Belle Harbor Pest Control and worked as a lifeguard at Rockaway Beach. He was a proud member of the Emerald Society and was an avid fan of the New York Giants. Brian enjoyed playing golf and traveling, but above all, he cherished the time spent with his family and friends.

Brian is survived by his beloved wife of 46 years, Patricia (Byrnes) Fitzgerald; his loving children, Kaitlyn Fitzgerald, Kevin T. (Lauren) Fitzgerald, and Brendan (Kayla) Fitzgerald; his brothers, Keith (Beth) Hartmann and Paul Hartmann; and his cherished grandchildren, Juliette, Saoirse, and Ciaran.

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John “JR” Gaudet

Career Firefighter ★ February 12, 2025 ★ Age 40

NEW YORK

John “JR” Gaudet, a career firefighter in Binghamton, New York, gave his life in the line of duty on February 12, 2025, when a wall collapsed at a building fire. John was a loving husband and an amazing father to three young children. Born on May 19, 1984, at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Binghamton, he spent the rest of his life dedicated to the community he was raised in.

John “JR” Gaudet attended Binghamton High School, graduating in 2002. He went on to Binghamton University, where he played Division I lacrosse in the 2003–2004 seasons before transferring to SUNY Cortland to play lacrosse in the 2007 and 2008 seasons. JR was a left-handed attackman, known for his faceoff skill and relentlessness on the field. The Red Dragons finished as Division III national runners-up in both of Gaudet’s seasons with the program.

John’s work ethic and compassion were shown in all aspects of his life. He was committed to making a better community for our kids. He coached many local youth sports teams, including Binghamton, Seton, and Windsor School District lacrosse teams. He also poured his heart into coaching his eldest son Charlie’s sports teams, including Binghamton youth football, basketball, and lacrosse.

All John ever wanted was to be a great husband, father, and firefighter. The Binghamton Fire Department stated it perfectly—“JR embodied what it means to be a firefighter—fearless, dedicated, and always putting others before himself. His infectious smile, unwavering positivity, and relentless work ethic made him a brother to all who had the honor of serving alongside him. He was the kind of firefighter you could always count on, the one who would have your back no matter the situation.”

John “JR” Gaudet leaves behind a great legacy and touched every life he encountered. May we all strive to be a little more like JR every day.

Binghamton Fire Department

Neil G. Gimpel

NEW YORK

Career Firefighter ★ December 30, 2024 ★ Age 66

Fire Department
City of New York

Neil Gimpel died on December 30, 2024, from illness related to response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. He was appointed on February 17, 1987, and served with the department until his retirement on May 30, 2009.

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IN OUR HEARTS®

Robert M. Kelly

Career Firefighter ★ March 31, 2024 ★ Age 62

Firefighter Robert M. Kelly, age 62, of the Fire Department City of New York died on March 31, 2024, from illness related to response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

NEW YORK

Fire Department City of New York

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Kamran A. Khan

NEW YORK

Career Firefighter ★ February 24, 2024 ★ Age 40

Fire Department
City of New York

Kamran Khan was born and raised in Brooklyn, a place that shaped his character and remained close to his heart throughout his life. The child of first-generation immigrants, Kamran grew up with a deep appreciation for sacrifice, resilience, and the value of hard work—qualities he carried with pride into every chapter of his life. A proud Jammu-Kashmiri and one of the first from his community to serve in the FDNY, he answered the call to become a firefighter with a strong sense of purpose and a desire to serve others. At Engine 219, where he spent his 10-year career, Kamran applied that same hardworking spirit, earning the respect and brotherhood of those who stood beside him, who became like family.

Beyond the firehouse, Kamran lived fully and joyfully, embracing the things that brought him happiness. He was an avid sports player who loved handball, and he had a well-known sweet tooth that matched his warm and easygoing nature. Music was always part of his world; whether it was Whitney Houston or Biggie Smalls, there was never a quiet moment when Kamran was around. He had a passion for fashion, with a shoe collection that could fill most people's homes, each pair a reflection of his style and personality. Kamran also loved cars, pouring time and pride into custom performance builds that earned him recognition and multiple competition wins, a testament to both his creativity and attention to detail. Raised in a large, loving Muslim family, Kamran was deeply cherished, and his absence is felt profoundly. His memory endures in the laughter, strength, and love he gave so freely to everyone around him.

Kamran is survived by his loving wife, Yasmine, and his beautiful daughter, Niyah. Niyah carries her father's bright smile and joyful spirit, a constant reminder of the happiness Kamran brought into the lives of those around him. In her, his light continues to shine, offering comfort and pride to all who knew and loved him.

Keith Bowditch Kostuk

Volunteer Firefighter ★ September 21, 2025 ★ Age 65

NEW YORK

Eastport Fire Department

Keith was born in Eastport, New York, on May 5, 1960, the last of four children born to Victor and Lorraine Kostuk. He graduated from Eastport High School in 1978, then attended Alfred State University for two years before earning a bachelor's degree in political science from Geneseo College. From 1983 to 1993, he managed his family's Duck Farm. After the farm closed, he opened and operated Kostuk Hardware until 2003. For the last 12 years, he worked at Kurt Weiss Greenhouses.

Keith was married to Teri for 36 years. Together, they had two children, a daughter, Kelley (Benjamin) Wigham, and grandchildren Harper Marie and Keith Charles, and a son, Jason (Katie) Kostuk, and grandson Warren Bowditch, with another granddaughter expected in May. Keith and Teri loved spending time with their children and grandchildren and appreciated family gatherings, traveling, boating, and summers at the beach with loved ones.

In 1984, Keith began his volunteer service with the Eastport Fire Department and dedicated 41 years to the organization. He advanced through various ranks, serving as both lieutenant and captain, and was elected chief of the department from 1993 to 1995. Throughout his tenure, he fulfilled numerous roles, including fire district commissioner, district secretary, department treasurer, and president of the benevolent organization. Keith was known for his unwavering support of department members, often assisting those in need with diligence and discretion.

A gentle, humble, and kind man, he was known for helping veteran firefighters and their families, and assisting others within his department, at work, and in the community. He was an officer of the Eastport Cemetery Association and a member of the Hunters Garden Association. In his earlier years he was active in the Long Island Farm Bureau, and as a young man, he was president of the New York State Society Children of the American Revolution (CAR). Keith will be remembered as a loving husband, devoted father, grandfather, sibling, and friend. His life touched so many people, and he will be deeply missed.

Joseph John Mazza Sr.

NEW YORK

Volunteer Firefighter/EMT ★ August 23, 2025 ★ Age 47

Pocatello Mount Hope Fire Company

Joseph John Mazza Sr., of the Pocatello Mount Hope Fire Company, departed this world on August 23, 2025. Born on October 8, 1977, in Brooklyn, New York, Joseph lived a life marked by dedication, service, and unwavering commitment to his family and community.

Growing up as the cherished son of Helen Huffe Mazza and Thomas F. Mazza Sr., Joseph learned the values of hard work and community spirit. He carried these lessons with him throughout his life, shaping the man he would become. After graduating from Middletown High School, Joseph became known for his tireless work ethic, serving as a senior groundman at SUNY Orange. His love for his hometown was evident in his service as commissioner and past chief of the Pocatello Fire Department.

Joe's passion for helping others didn't stop there; he was a dedicated firefighter, a HAZMAT tech with the Orange County Hazardous Materials/WMD Response Team, and an emergency medical technician. His bravery and expertise helped safeguard the community he so deeply loved.

Joseph was a loving husband to his wife, Kristina Porter, and a devoted father to his children, Krislyn, Joseph Jr., and Khloe. His family was his heart, his pride, and his joy. He was a loving brother to Margaret Ann Lauricella and Dawn Marie Gregan, and he held a special place in his heart for his late brother, Thomas F. Mazza Jr. Joseph's nieces and nephews, Richard, Ava, Payton, Thomas, Lilyanna, and Jaxon, knew him as the fun-loving "umple" who could light up any room.

His interests were as diverse as his talents. Whether he was spending precious moments with family and friends, helping his community, fishing, playing Pokémon GO, or stopping at Stewart's for a cup of coffee, Joe embraced life with joy.

As a motivational force, Joseph inspired those around him to live fully and love deeply. Joseph embodied the sentiment expressed in a powerful quote by Mahatma Gandhi—*The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others*. He always placed the needs of others above his own. His legacy is not merely in the acts of service he performed, but in the countless lives he touched and the community he helped build and strengthen.

Joseph's story is a continuing narrative of hope, courage, and love that will forever be written in the hearts of those he leaves behind. Let us carry forward the light of his spirit, for in doing so, Joseph John Mazza Sr. will live on, guiding us towards a future as bright as the legacy he leaves.

Jason T. McGlone

Volunteer Assistant Chief ★ July 17, 2025 ★ Age 51

NEW YORK

East Branch Fire Department

Assistant Chief Jason T. McGlone will forever be larger than life. He was a devoted family man, father of Addie and Mikey, and loving husband of 21 years to Carole Ann. He was also a brother, an uncle, a son, and a friend to many.

Originally from Huntington New York, Jason moved to East Branch in 2003. He quickly gained the love and acceptance of his community by joining the East Branch Fire Department. Jason was instantly hooked by the rush and the adrenaline of firefighting, and he was eager to learn. He spent many hours training and traveling to fire classes across the county whenever they were given. Jason jumped at the chance to participate in any training, to volunteer at fundraisers, or to help out with neighboring departments whenever he could. He loved teaching what he learned to the younger generations, especially his children, who followed in his footsteps to become volunteer firefighters. Jason even enjoyed driving kids to classes and participating in them when he could.

Jason worked in many trades. He was employed by several bluestone companies in the East Branch area as well as operating heavy equipment and working with masonry. After years of working outside, Jason took a job as a kitchen aide in a school for underprivileged and troubled youth. He quickly climbed the ladder, becoming the head cook within three years, and followed a personal passion to conquer the art of barbecue. Jason was loved by the kids at the school for learning the foods of their cultures and making them feel at home.

Jason was steadfast and committed to the East Branch Fire Department. Whether he was cooking or firefighting, hunting or hanging with the kids, Jason was widely known for helping people. He always went out of his way to help a neighbor, visit with a friend, and do for others. He loved all children and is fondly remembered for showing up at a school bus accident in his pajama pants because he was too worried about the kids to change his clothes.

Jason T. McGlone, “East Branch 4,” devoted himself to the East Branch Fire Department and community for over 20 years. He answered his last fire call on July 17, 2025, responding to an MVA. A car had crashed into a utility pole on a local road after dark. Jason responded with his son and several others to the scene, unknowingly getting the rescue truck hung up in low hanging wires. Jason lost his life that night by electrocution, giving everything for those he loved. He led with his heart, and there will forever be an enormous void in our community and department where Jason should still be.

Vincent C. McMahon Jr.

NEW YORK

Career Lieutenant ★ April 12, 2025 ★ Age 61

Fire Department
City of New York

Vincent C. McMahon Jr. was born in Manhattan on January 22, 1964, to Vincent and Patricia (McCullagh) McMahon. He was the fourth of nine siblings.

Vincent was raised in the Our Lady of Refuge Parish of the Bronx until 1975, when his family relocated to be near other family members in New City, New York.

Vincent was a graduate of Clarkstown North High School, Class of 1982. He joined the United States Army in January 1984, Class 9-85, and became an honored member of the 2nd Battalion-75 Ranger Regiment out of Fort Lewis, Washington, until his service ended in January of 1988.

After returning home from the Army, Vincent attended Iona College.

On July 17, 1994, Vincent became a member of the FDNY. He retired on April 25, 2019, as a lieutenant from 44 Truck in the Bronx, one of three houses he worked in during his distinguished 25-year career. He also spent time at Rescue 1 in Manhattan. He made many treasured lifelong friends during his time at the FDNY.

Vincent was a 32-year member of the Pearl River Elks 2401, a member of the American Legion Post 329 in Pearl River, as well as the Knights of Columbus 5343 in Blauvelt, New York.

Vincent was survived by his loving wife of 26 years, Haley Schrek; his mother-in-law, Harlene Schrek; three sisters, Eileen (Glenn) Rose, Patricia (Ruben) Velez, and Kathleen McMahon; four brothers, Kevin (Wendy) McMahon, Brian McMahon, Michael (Martha) McMahon, and Stephen (Amanda) McMahon; sister-in-law, Adrian (David) Schrek; his uncle, Joseph (Cheryl) McMahon; his aunts, Barbara McCullagh and Flavia McMahon; 21 nieces and nephews, eight grand-nieces and grand-nephews, and many loving cousins.

Arill Nyquist

Career Firefighter ★ January 6, 2024 ★ Age 54

NEW YORK

Firefighter Arill Nyquist, age 54, of the Fire Department City of New York died on January 6, 2024, from illness related to response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

Arill met Ernestina, the love of his life, at Tuscarora and six months later asked her to marry him. They married in 1995, bought a house, and made a home for themselves and their two beautiful daughters on Staten Island. They were married for 28 years. Family was everything to Arill.

He was an EMT for three years and a firefighter for 17 years, stationed in Engine 243 in Brooklyn. He retired from FDNY after 20 years of faithful service.

Arill enjoyed sports, favoring the Pittsburgh Steelers, but his favorite team was his daughters' swim team; he was so proud. His support and dedication, traveling and attending their meets, was beyond admirable.

Arill was a man of God and blessed with many talents. He was a master carpenter, a musician, an artist, and a photographer who captured many of life's precious moments.

Arill is survived by his wife, Ernestina; daughters, Hannah and Hailey; mother, Marit; father, Birger; sisters, Maybritt and Sonja; nieces and nephews; and his extended family in Norway.

Fire Department City of New York

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Robert S. Okorn

NEW YORK

Career Firefighter ★ April 20, 2025 ★ Age 52

Fire Department
City of New York

Firefighter Robert S. Okorn, age 52, of the Fire Department City of New York died on April 20, 2025, from illness related to response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

Appointed to the FDNY on May 6, 2001, he spent his entire 18-year firefighting career with Ladder 158 in Queens. He retired on June 17, 2019.

He was survived by his wife and children.

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Laurence “Larry” Pude

Volunteer Fire Police Captain ★ April 4, 2025 ★ Age 83

NEW YORK

On April 4, 2025, with profound sadness and heavy hearts, we announced the passing of Laurence “Larry” Pude. Larry suffered a medical emergency after responding to a call earlier in the day.

Larry served in the U.S. Army from January 25, 1960, to January 24, 1963, attaining the rank of sergeant.

Larry served the community diligently for 53 years in the Cambria Volunteer Fire Company. With unwavering courage, selflessness, and a deep commitment to protecting others, his bravery and compassion touched countless lives, and his sacrifice will never be forgotten. Larry was a very active member, holding the position of fire police captain. When Larry had the traffic, we knew he had our back when it was turned.

Larry was an outdoorsman who loved fishing, hunting, and just being outdoors.

He was a devoted and loving husband, father, and grandfather. Larry was kind and generous, gentle and fun. He always had a joke to go around. He was loving and honorable, a man who loved life fully and will be missed by many.

If you were fortunate enough to know Larry, hopefully you can still hear his contagious laugh or recall a precious memory.

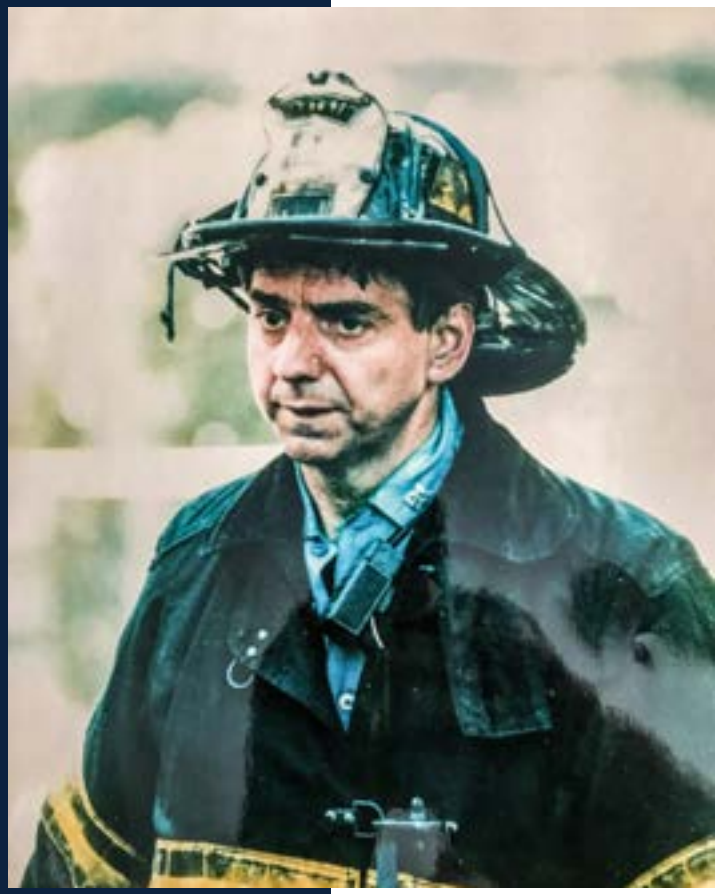
Cambria Volunteer Fire Company

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Richard Raus

NEW YORK

Career Captain ★ October 3, 1994 ★ Age 49



Mount Vernon Fire Department

Richard Raus was born on January 1, 1945, in the Bronx, New York. He was a loving husband to Barbara and father to Christine and Karen. He was fiercely devoted to his family and a man of deep faith.

Richie joined the Mount Vernon Fire Department in 1971 and was former president of the United Fire Fighters Association Local 107.

Richie lived by an unshakable code of character, honor, and integrity. These were more than just values to him; they were defining aspects of who he was. He spoke with honesty, listened deeply, and treated everyone with a respect that inspired trust and admiration. Above all, he was committed to doing what was right, choosing principle over convenience and showing that character and humility are forged in even the smallest moments.

Richie had a gift for mentorship. He believed that knowledge and wisdom were meant to be shared with others. He was an exceptional teacher and took the time to guide and motivate, inspiring others to reach their full potential. He was a natural leader, and people were drawn to him because of his authenticity. Not only was he a mentor to his fellow firefighters, but he was also a role model to his family, inspiring us to believe we could do anything. He was our biggest advocate.

Richie was known for his work ethic, dedication, and loyalty. Excellence was his standard, never settling for mediocrity and always striving to be better. He was a deep thinker, constantly planning, organizing, and delivering with the goal of making life easier for others. This stemmed from his unassuming intelligence, coupled with his selfless nature.

In his short 49 years, he taught more lessons, loved more deeply, and had moral clarity far greater than those who live much longer. Those who knew him are the beneficiaries of his gifts. We honor his legacy by carrying all these values forward.

Our continued mission is to make him proud, and we know he is cheering all of us on from heaven.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7

Remember what I have commanded you. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for I, the Lord your God, am with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9

Christopher Joseph Revere

Career Firefighter ★ March 26, 2025 ★ Age 66

NEW YORK

Fire Department
City of New York

Christopher Revere was born in Canarsie, Brooklyn, during a snowstorm in 1958. His mother is known to tell the story of how the sun finally came out at the moment Christopher was born, exactly one week before Christmas. The family moved to Kings Park, Long Island, when Chris was five years old. He was the oldest of five children born to Dolores and Joseph Revere Sr., who was also a career firefighter with FDNY.

Growing up, Chris loved to play baseball and was considered a superstar. After all, his number was always #1. He played on many leagues, including the FDNY traveling team. Chris began his career with the city of New York as a police officer. He held that position from 1983 until 1987, when he transferred over to the FDNY. He began his career in Engine 319 and eventually landed in Corona, Queens, as a proud Corona Tiger in Engine 289. Chris loved the fire department and has been quoted as saying that since he joined, he never worked a day in his life. He loved it so. It wasn't work for him; it was a family. He loved what he did, and it was a sad day when he had to leave the job in January of 2003. Many FDNY members were leaving at that time due to the aftermath of 9/11.

After retirement, Chris became a personal trainer. He was in great physical shape and was an inspiration for many. He loved helping people and seeing them achieve their goals.

Chris was married for 41 years to his wife, Kimberly. Together they raised four children, Christopher, Dylan, Gabrielle, and Monica. Chris passed away three months before meeting his first grandchild, Dylan.

Chris was a member of the Suffolk County Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association and a proud member of the VFW Auxiliary to Nissequogue Post 5796 in Kings Park. He was cubmaster to his son's pack. Chris loved music and spent a lot of time with Kim going to concerts and attending Broadway shows. Among his favorite recording artists were Bob Dylan, Neil Young, and the Grateful Dead. Chris had an offbeat sense of humor that would keep people amused for hours during social events. He was always good for a laugh and to plant a smile on a face. For Chris, there was no reason to be sad, never. He was loved by so many and has left a hole in the lives of everyone who knew him.

Michael J. Ryan

NEW YORK

Volunteer Firefighter/Fire Commissioner ★ December 13, 2025 ★ Age 61

Phoenicia Fire District

Michael's journey of service began soon after he graduated from Onteora High School. He enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1983, embarking on a distinguished military career that spanned decades. As a chief master sergeant, Michael served with honor and distinction, including deployments to Afghanistan in response to the World Trade Center attacks, to Pakistan in 2003, and to Camp Buqa, Iraq, in 2005. His commitment to his country was recognized through numerous accolades, including the Iraq Medal, Air Force Expeditionary Medal, and Global War on Terrorism Medal. After his active-duty service ended, Michael continued to serve in the New York Air National Guard at Stewart AFB.

Michael's dedication to public service extended beyond his military career. For 25 years, he was a distinguished member of the Kingston Police Department, where he was known for upholding the highest professional standards. His leadership and commitment to excellence were evident in his work with the KPD Honor Guard and as a member of the Ulster County Law Enforcement Training Group. Michael also served the Town of Ulster Police Department, where his expertise and mentorship were invaluable.

After his so-called "retirement" in 2021, Michael's passion for service remained undiminished. He continued to instruct recruits at the police academy, sharing his knowledge and experience with the next generation of law enforcement officers. His dedication to community safety was exemplified by his role as fire commissioner with the M.F. Whitney Hose Company.

On December 13, 2025, Michael's life of service reached its zenith when he passed away in the line of duty as an active-duty firefighter. While rescuing an injured hiker in the woods, Michael made the ultimate sacrifice, a fitting tribute to a man who always put the lives of others before his own. His legacy of heroism and selflessness will live on. As his nephew poignantly remarked, "There's a lot of people alive because of him."

Michael's life was not only marked by service but also by love and family. Together for 38 years, he was a devoted husband to Debra Jo for 25 years. They shared a passion for travel, often exploring the towns of New York State on Michael's motorcycle. He is survived by his beloved wife, Debra Jo Ryan; his mother, Finola Ryan; his brothers, William (Chris), Thomas (Jon Baird), John (Cindy), Kevin (Christy), and Joseph; his sisters-in-law, Amy Goodrich (Chuck) and Michelle Nace (Kevin), and brother-in-law, Jay (Gail) Canosa; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Joseph J. Scaramuzzino

Career Firefighter ★ May 11, 2024 ★ Age 61

NEW YORK

Firefighter Joseph J. Scaramuzzino, age 61, of the Fire Department City of New York died on May 11, 2024, from illness related to response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

Firefighter Scaramuzzino was stationed at Ladder 113 in Brooklyn and retired in 2006. After his retirement, he volunteered as a peer counselor in the FDNY Counseling Service Unit (CSU), where he mentored young firefighters and offered advice from his experiences in life and on the job.

Fire Department City of New York

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Randall Shampoe Jr.

NEW YORK

Volunteer Firefighter ★ December 8, 2020 ★ Age 46

Clymer Volunteer Fire Department

Randall Shampoe Jr. was a dedicated community servant who served twenty-six years with the Clymer Volunteer Fire Department in Clymer, New York, as a firefighter and assistant chief. In addition to being a consistent and reliable first responder, Randy spent many hours helping with paperwork, grant writing, and equipment maintenance for the department. He enjoyed furthering his fire service education by completing many courses at the New York State Academy of Fire Science in Montour Falls, and he also volunteered with the Chautauqua County Fire Advisory Board and the Chautauqua Area Search Team.

Randy was a caretaker not only of his community, but also of his family. He took great joy in being a stay-at-home dad and caring for his children as they grew. Randy attended every one of his children's games, concerts, awards ceremonies, and plays. He especially enjoyed working with his grandfather in construction and carpentry and boiling maple syrup with him every year. Randy also spent many years organizing the Clymer Food Pantry and was a member of the Clymer Historical Society and the Abbe Reformed Church. He was always ready and willing to lend a hand.

Randy was born in February of 1974 and died in December of 2020 due to complications from COVID. Surviving are his wife of twenty-three years, Carrie; his children, Sydney, Michael, and Trent; his mother, Sonya; and his brother, Nick.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

James G. Sitek

Volunteer Chief ★ July 4, 2025 ★ Age 68

NEW YORK

West Colesville Fire Company

James Gerard Sitek, born October 17, 1956, in Dearborn, Michigan, passed away in the line of duty on July 4, 2025, in Conklin, New York.

Raised in Michigan, Jim graduated from Our Lady of Mount Carmel High School in Wyandotte in 1974. Jim was an accomplished rower, having won three national "schoolboy" championships while in high school. He represented the United States twice in Europe at the World Junior Rowing Championships after winning the U.S National Junior title. Jim was also an avid runner, having run numerous marathons including the Boston Marathon.

Jim was a respected software development engineer at IBM, recognized for his expertise and lasting contributions to the computer software industry. He held degrees from Marietta College, Michigan State University, and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, including a bachelor's in mathematics and dual master's degrees in statistics and computer science.

Jim met his beloved wife, Suzanne ("Susie") Sitek, when both were relocated for work to Halfmoon, New York, where they discovered they lived in the same apartment building. That chance meeting led to a lifetime of love and partnership. They were married on November 11, 1989, in Burlington, Vermont, and went on to have four children, Sarah, Rachel, Matthew, and Julia.

Jim was known for his quick wit and warm humor, often brightening gatherings with his well-timed jokes. He had a passion for woodworking and was always ready to share his craftsmanship with family and friends. A loyal fan of Michigan State football and basketball, Jim rarely missed watching a game. Above all, he loved spending time with his family, making memories filled with laughter, joy, and togetherness.

Jim's legacy extends far beyond his professional achievements. He dedicated over 40 years to the volunteer fire service, beginning with the Halfmoon Fire Department, then Oak Hill Durham Fire Company and continuing with the West Colesville Fire Company, where he served since 1990. Rising through the ranks to become chief, Jim was admired for his humility, tireless work ethic, and deep commitment to the fire service. He was a mentor, leader, and brother to hundreds of firefighters across New York State. The members of West Colesville became more than colleagues; they became his extended family.

On July 4, 2025, Jim made the ultimate sacrifice while responding to a house fire in Conklin, New York. Though the loss is profound, his family finds comfort in knowing he died doing what he loved, serving and protecting his community.

Ronald J. Smeller Jr.

NEW YORK

Volunteer Firefighter ★ March 10, 2020 ★ Age 57

Ellicott Creek Volunteer Fire Company

Ronald J. Smeller Jr. was made to be a paramedic and spent 28 years making it his career. He was steady as a rock and rarely let the stress and chaos of being a first responder show. When the pressure was highest, his demeanor was calm, professional, and efficient. He spent his spare time looking for opportunities to help others—his siblings first, then family and friends. All who know him would say the same.

At work, he was often the one to take the holiday shifts so his coworkers could spend those special days with their kids. At Ellicott Creek, his volunteer fire company, he was one of the guys that you could count on to show up. Between 1982 and 2020 he held many firematic and administrative titles, won several awards, and especially enjoyed being a member of the dive team. With family, Uncle Ronnie was always there to cheer you on and buy you a snack. As a stepfather, he was often giving rides or throwing $20 your way (but don't tell your mom).

He loved Jesus; his wife, Patrice; his brother, Donnie, and sister, Susie; his nephews, Chris, Josh, and Ben; and his stepkids, Crystal, Brittany, and Dean. Fellow first responders were his brothers and sisters whom he also loved dearly. They worked and played and partied together. They were family. He had lots of family, some by blood, some through work, some through fire service, some through church, some through marriage.

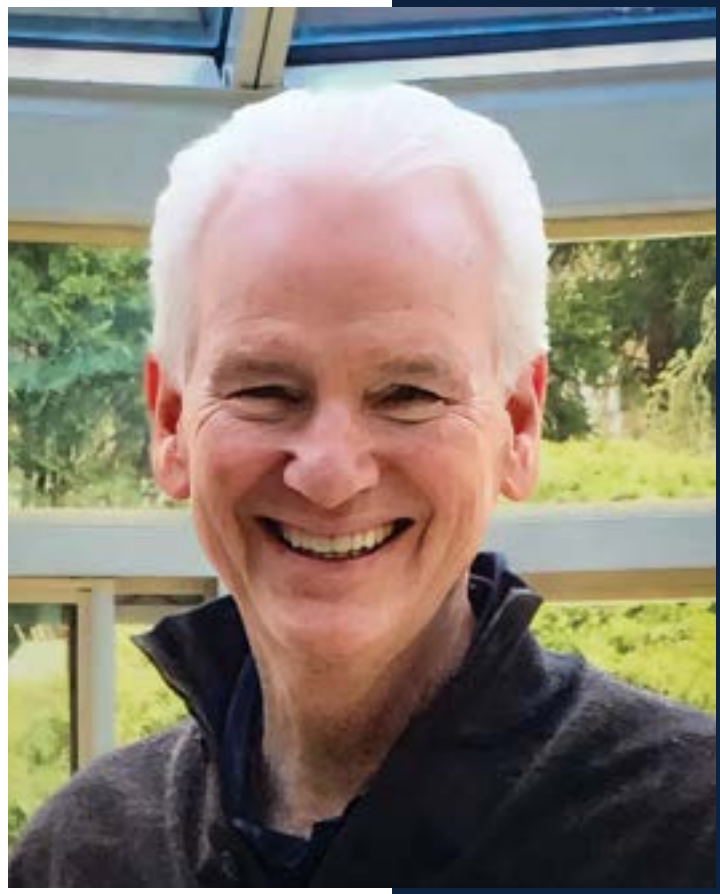
When he couldn't continue as a paramedic, his best buddies were his brothers-in-law, Brian, Dave, and Mike. Many road trips became extended adventures as Ron shared the ride. He loved people and was so generous, even to give the shirt off his back and his last dollar if he believed it would help you. He was proud to be a flight paramedic with Mercy Flight. He was proud to assist at Ground Zero with the New York State Mutual Aid Plan in late September 2001. He was proud to start an RV rental business and enjoyed crunching numbers to make it successful for seven seasons.

He and Patrice were so proud and happy on their wedding day. But he was most proud to be a child of God. In his final days, he boldly testified that he wasn't afraid to die because he knew where he was going. Ron made a point to tell others how they needed to know God, too. His only request in the end was for all his family and friends to gather together at his church for Sunday services.

James T. Sweeney

Career Lieutenant ★ March 5, 2025 ★ Age 72

NEW YORK



Fire Department City of New York

James Thomas Sweeney was born May 11, 1952. He fell asleep in death on March 5, 2025, at the young age of 72. Jimmy died from injuries he received from Manhattan Box 5-5-8087 during the rescue and recovery efforts on 9/11/2001.

Jimmy was appointed to the FDNY on September 5, 1981, and retired on May 11, 2002. He was a firefighter in Ladder 120, Ladder 84, and Ladder 127 and retired as an officer from Ladder 151. Jimmy loved being a firefighter.

The beloved son of Mary and Michael Sweeney, Jimmy was the second of four children that included his brother George (deceased), his brother Michael, and his sister Barbara. He is survived by Denise, his wife of 45 years, nephews and nieces, and a sister-in-law and brother-in-law.

Jimmy was born in New York and grew up in the Frederick Douglass Projects on Columbus Avenue on the outskirts of Harlem. Jimmy had fond memories of growing up there, surrounded by extended family. The family moved to Queens Village in the early 1960s, and Jimmy attended PS34 until there was room at St. Pascal's.

He met Denise when she was a freshman at St. Pascal's and he was a senior. Their first date was on Ladies Day at Shea Stadium. From that day on, they were together. Jimmy and Denise were married on August 25, 1979. Their first apartment was in Jamaica, Queens. He loved raising and training his dogs, Holly, Dolly, Lucy, Spike, Kelly, Chase, and Chance. Besides playing basketball as a younger man, Jimmy played the guitar, piano, tennis, went jogging, and played pickleball.

At 18, Jimmy and his cousin John became Sandhogs—urban miners and underground construction workers. Jimmy was the youngest foreman in the tunnels, a job that he and his cousin excelled at, being young. Several years later he joined the FDNY when he was laid off from the Sandhogs. He excelled in both careers.

Jimmy became interested in studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses in the early part of the 1990s and was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses on October 24, 1992. He spent a lot of his time preaching and teaching, something he loved to do with Denise by his side.

Jimmy would want you to know that, despite life's challenges and the problems we all face in this world, if you build a relationship with God through Bible truths, then you will have the hope and build the faith that he had. The Jehovah God through his son Christ Jesus will resurrect him, and he will have the opportunity to live again in a world where there will be no more pain, crying, or dying.

Lawrence J. Thompson

NEW YORK

Volunteer Firefighter ★ July 11, 2023 ★ Age 63

New York Regional Response Team 1

Lawrence J. Thompson, known to most as Larry, truly embraced life. He was always generous, teaching his children and grandchildren the importance of empathy and compassion, believing that life's value lay not in material possessions but in the connections, we share with family and friends.

Larry was born on November 26, 1959, in Rochester, New York. He overcame many challenges he faced in young adulthood and pursued a career as an arborist. In 1985, his career brought him to Ballston Spa, New York, where he started his family. Following the birth of his first daughter, Larry recognized the need for significant change in his life. In 1990, he made the decision to get sober. Shortly after, Larry and his family began attending church, where he became a trustee. After his second daughter was born in 1993, Larry joined the Eagle Matt Lee Volunteer Fire Department and quickly developed a passion for firefighting.

It was clear that Larry was not only passionate about firefighting but also highly skilled at it. He enjoyed attending drills, emergency calls, and training sessions. Beyond that, he took great pleasure in cooking pancake breakfasts and chicken BBQs, as well as shopping for families that the fire department supported during Christmas. His dedication earned him several awards over the years, including the President's Award and the Captain's Award.

After several years, Larry decided to seek additional training. On September 18, 1997, he became a member of the Capital District Urban Search and Rescue Team in Albany, New York (NYRRT-1). On September 11, 2001, Larry received a life-changing call. Without hesitation, he packed his bag and was deployed from Albany with his team that very day. For the following two weeks, he dedicated himself to search and rescue work at Ground Zero, working tirelessly in rotating shifts.

Although he tried to resume his local volunteer work after returning home, he was only able to continue for a year or two. The PTSD from his time at Ground Zero proved too overwhelming for him.

Once his children were grown, he set out on his motorcycle to travel the coast and enjoy a simpler life. Regrettably, his consistent exposure to toxins at Ground Zero ultimately led to his death on July 11, 2023. He spent the final months of his life in his daughter's home, surrounded by his children, Emily (Eric) and Jodi (Joshua); grandchildren, Lucas, Madeline, and Colton; friends, family, and his beloved dog, Lilly, experiencing the comfort of those he cherished most.

Donald E. Trzepacz Sr.

Volunteer Fire Police Captain ★ September 2, 2020 ★ Age 67

NEW YORK

Spring Brook Fire District #1

Chief Donald Trzepacz Sr. devoted 50 years of his life to the service and protection of the residents of Erie County, New York. A lifelong resident of Elma, New York, and a 1971 graduate of Iroquois Central High School, he joined the Spring Brook Fire Company that same year, beginning a distinguished career as a firefighter and EMT defined by leadership, service, and unwavering commitment to others.

Throughout his tenure with Spring Brook Fire District #1, Chief Trzepacz served in numerous leadership roles, including chief of the department, chairman of the board of fire commissioners, and president of the fire company. At the time of his passing, he remained actively engaged as captain of the fire police squad and 1st vice president of the fire company. His dedication to public safety extended beyond the fire service. After graduating from the Erie County Sheriff's Office Basic Police Course in 1978, he served for more than two decades as a K9 deputy and captain of the K9 reserve unit.

Chief Trzepacz was also a fire instructor, former emergency services coordinator for Erie County, Town of Elma disaster coordinator, chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals, and a long-serving Republican committeeman. He held leadership and membership roles in numerous local, regional, and state fire service organizations, including the Erie County and Western New York Volunteer Firemen's Associations, the Firemen's Association of the State of New York, and multiple fire chiefs and fire police associations. He was also a former operations-level technician with the Erie County Hazardous Materials Response Team.

On September 2, 2020, while attending a mandatory department meeting in support of firefighter recruitment, Chief Trzepacz became ill and later suffered a fatal heart attack. His death was officially classified as a line-of-duty death by the U.S. Fire Administration and the U.S. Department of Justice.

Over his nearly 50 years of service, Chief Trzepacz responded to tens of thousands of emergency calls and received numerous honors, including Fireman of the Year and multiple lifesaving citations. His legacy was evident in the extraordinary outpouring of respect at his passing, marked by hundreds of emergency responders, a multi-agency procession, and full fire service honors.

Chief Donald Trzepacz Sr. is remembered as a mentor, leader, and servant of his community whose legacy of dedication, sacrifice, and integrity continues to inspire the fire service today.

NORTH CAROLINA

Andrew D. Bley

Volunteer Firefighter ★ February 9, 2021 ★ Age 29

Atwell Township Volunteer Fire Department

Andrew D. Bley was born March 3, 1991, in Vernon, Connecticut, to Cindy Champagne Bregoli and Kevin R. Bley. In 2005, the family moved to North Carolina. Andrew passed away in North Carolina on February 9, 2021, after a month-long fight with COVID pneumonia that was contracted on an emergency call.

Andrew was born into the emergency services, with his dad being a firefighter/paramedic, mom being an EMT, and his bonus dad being a firefighter/EMT.

Andrew started his career in Stafford Springs, Connecticut, as an MRT with Stafford Ambulance. When he moved to North Carolina, he wanted to join Mount Mourne Fire Department. Andrew had his grandfather take him up to join without asking his parents first. That's when it all began. He was a firefighter/EMT with the Atwell Township Fire Department in China Grove, North Carolina, when he passed.

In his younger years, with his passion for the fire service, he knew every fire station and piece of apparatus in the area. When he was a young boy, Andrew would sit in front of the TV and watch episodes of Emergency like they were training videos. He studied how they did rescues and tactical detail. He didn't just watch; he learned as well. Being a firefighter wasn't just a job Andrew wanted to do some day. It was a life he was already part of. Andrew would attend training classes with his dad, who was a CPR instructor, and help with the class. He wouldn't hesitate to jump in and help, whether it was setting up for training, helping others, or being a patient at a practical exam. He was there to help.

Andrew obtained many certifications as a firefighter, starting with 2008 Junior Firefighter of the Year with Mount Mourne Fire Department, his Firefighter 1 and 2 certifications, then moving on to his EMT. He also completed HAZMAT operations, TR basic training, vehicle rescue, and agriculture rescue.

Andrew was passionate about the Junior Firefighter program and took new members under his wing to help train and mold the next generation of firefighters. He was the first to welcome them and let them know he was there to help them through the process.

Andrew loved his family and his fire department family and would give you the shirt off his back. He was very shy. He would be honored to know that he is being added to the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial, but on the other hand, he would hate that he was the center of attention.

Andrew was a quiet, simple man and lived a life of service. He will always be remembered as that person.

Jake W. Bridges

Career Firefighter ★ June 5, 2025 ★ Age 20

NORTH CAROLINA

Jake Wayne Bridges, 20, of Shelby, North Carolina, died of a medical emergency on June 5, 2025. He was on shift and had just returned to his fire station from fighting a house fire.

Jake was born on July 1, 2004. At 17, after a car crash that resulted in the death of his father, he realized that he wanted to pursue a career in the fire service. While in high school, he joined his local volunteer fire department in Fallston, North Carolina. The summer after eleventh grade, he enrolled in Gaston College Fire Academy and finished right before his senior year of high school. He graduated high school early in December of 2023 and completed the Gaston College Breathing Equipment course. Then, he went to Cleveland Community College and took the Emergency Medical Technician course.

Jake enjoyed time with his friends, girlfriend, and family. He had many hobbies over the years. He raced RC cars and played baseball. He had an absolute love for the Atlanta Braves and visited the new stadium several times. He enjoyed going to many concerts with friends. He had just found his renewed love for golfing.

Jake was hired by Hickory Fire Department in June 2023 as an emergency medical technician and level II firefighter. In 2024, he attended the Fire Department Instructors Conference (FDIC) in Indianapolis. He had a lively personality and larger than life smile that everyone came to know and love. The impact Jake made on the Hickory Fire Department and its members are ones that will last for years to come.

Since his death, his family and friends have shown their love for him by starting the Firefighter Jake Bridges Scholarship Foundation. This scholarship is designed to help give aid to students who enter the Catawba Valley Community College Fire Academy.

Hickory Fire Department

NORTH CAROLINA

Violet Ray Caramella

Part-time Firefighter/AEMT ★ June 14, 2025 ★ Age 35

Riceville Volunteer Fire Department

Violet Ray Caramella, 35, of Fairview, North Carolina, passed away on June 14, 2025, in Montreat, North Carolina, during a firefighter UTV training accident while proudly serving her community.

Born on March 15, 1990, Violet lived a life rooted in compassion, courage, and creativity. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Cellular Biology from the University of North Carolina at Asheville.

She went on to work as an advanced EMT and was training to become a firefighter, dedicating herself fully to helping others.

Violet was most at peace in the outdoors. She came alive in the forest, snorkeling at the beach, or searching for stones in a creek. She had a deep love for animals and spent her childhood surrounded by ducklings, goats, chickens, and more. Her creativity showed in everything she did, whether through her art, her green thumb, or her eclectic taste in music that spanned from bluegrass to Sleep Token.

She had a quick wit and a sarcastic sense of humor that could light up any room. Her presence was bold, funny, and unforgettable. Above all, Violet was a devoted and loving mother to her two children, the heart of her world.

She is survived by her husband, Juan Caramella; her daughter, Ava Ray Caramella (11); her son, Samuel Caramella (8); her sister, Glory Silwedel; her mother, Terri Lu Bencar; and her father, Darryl Silwedel.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Johnny A. Goines

Volunteer Firefighter ★ November 23, 2024 ★ Age 69

NORTH CAROLINA

Verona Volunteer Fire Department

Johnny A. Goines was born on July 18, 1955, and spent his life serving others through his work, his community involvement, and his dedication to the fire service. A proud native of eastern North Carolina, Johnny graduated from Dixon High School in Holly Ridge, North Carolina, as part of the Class of 1974. From an early age, Johnny was known for his strong work ethic, his willingness to help others, and his ability to connect with people from all walks of life.

Johnny built a lifelong career as an auto mechanic, a trade that allowed him to combine his technical skill with his natural ability to solve problems. He later dedicated 25 years of service to UPS, where he became a respected employee and leader among his coworkers. During his time there, he served as a union shop steward for his Teamsters shop, a role that reflected Johnny's lifelong commitment to standing up for others. He was never afraid to speak his mind, especially when it meant defending those who needed a voice.

Johnny and his beloved wife, Deborah, built a strong and loving family together. They raised two children and were proud grandparents to four grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Family meant everything to Johnny, and he took great pride in being present for the people he loved.

Deeply connected to his community, Johnny spent most of his life in the small community of Verona, just south of Jacksonville, North Carolina. He invested in the area not only through relationships but also through entrepreneurship, owning several small businesses including rental properties and a landscaping company.

Perhaps Johnny's most meaningful service came through his decades of volunteering with the Verona Volunteer Fire Department. Beginning in his twenties, he answered the call to protect his neighbors and friends whenever they needed help. His commitment reflected his deep love for his community and his belief in helping others without hesitation.

Johnny never met a stranger. Whether in the firehouse, at work, or around town, he was always ready to strike up a conversation and make someone feel welcome. His life was defined by service, hard work, and loyalty—to his family, his coworkers, and the community he loved.

Johnny A. Goines leaves behind a legacy of dedication, courage, and compassion that will be remembered by all who knew him.

NORTH CAROLINA

Joshua Nelson McLamb

Volunteer Lieutenant ★ June 7, 2022 ★ Age 31

Salemburg Volunteer Fire Department

Joshua McLamb, aka "Josh Mac," was born June 20, 1990, in Clinton, North Carolina, and departed from this earth on June 7, 2022, after a heroic battle with cancer. Joshua was a loving, dedicated, generous man of God and a friend to all! Above all, Josh loved his family. He was a loving husband to his best friend, Brittany, and an amazing father to his daughters, Alanna and Rilynn. His pride and joy were his girls. Where you saw one, you saw them all.

From a young age, Josh always wanted to be a firefighter and follow in his father's footsteps. It was no surprise that at age 16 he did just that, joining the Salemburg Volunteer Fire Department as a junior firefighter and proudly serving for 16 years. As time passed, his love for the fire service only grew stronger. Josh completed training and moved through the ranks, serving as a lieutenant, board member, fire safety educator, and one of the first paid staff members of the department.

Josh's love and dedication to his community didn't stop with being a firefighter but spread throughout Sampson County while serving as telecommunications shift supervisor for Sampson County 911. "The Unseen Heroes," as he would call them.

Besides being a fireman and 911 supervisor, Josh took pleasure in hunting, fishing, going to the beach, and taking trips with his girls. Although his family misses him immensely, they know his memory still lives on. He will always be remembered for his easygoing nature, his infectious laughter, his heart of gold, and being the best friend, husband, and dad ever.

In the words of those who knew him:

One of the best men I've ever known. He was a true friend that would give you the shirt off of his back, even if it was his last one! This world needs more people like Josh. – Kevin Pearson

What a fighter he was—a hero, as I called him. We loved him, we love his family. – Troublefield Family

In a world of hate and anger, be a Josh Mac.– Erick Herring

His lasting gestures and memories will allow us to keep his legacy alive. He had a heart of gold and compassion for the citizens of Sampson County. Josh Mac is victorious and will always be remembered. We'll continue to represent the thin gold line and send our best when they call with their worst. Forever & A Day - We love you! 911 Communications – TC Edwards

Josh Mac, Truly Heaven's gain, brother!! Not many as humble, caring, and giving with a true servant's heart!!! Sampson County lost a good man that served so many in so many ways. – Cory Alderman

Christopher Edward Rothmeyer

Volunteer Firefighter/EMT ★ March 5, 2025 ★ Age 27

New London Volunteer Fire Department

Christopher Edward Rothmeyer was a loving and dedicated son born to Dustin and Sharon Rothmeyer. He was also a caring, loving, and devoted big brother to Emma and Zoey and had an inherent passion for helping others even as a child.

Christopher's love for helping others took on a deeper level as he joined the EMS Explorer Program. His passion for helping others grew as he made the decision to begin EMT classes while still attending high school. After graduating high school and completing his EMT classes, he began his career.

Christopher began his career with American Transmed. He worked on the ambulance side of this company and loved helping the community. He expanded his community service passion by becoming a member of the Bethany Volunteer Fire Department. Eventually, Christopher was presented with the opportunity to work for Stanly County EMS, an opportunity that meant a great deal to him, and he made lifelong friends along this journey. Christopher then joined the Davidson County EMS and advanced his career. While there, he also became a member of the New London Volunteer Fire Department. Eventually, he accepted a position at Providence Transport. Along his career path, Christopher was honored with the local Home Town Hero Award.

As much as Christopher loved being a son and brother, his main love and passion was his career as an EMT. This was a lifelong dream of his, and he fulfilled his dream and passion. He loved helping others.

Christopher was a family man. He loved spending time with his family at cookouts, as well as fishing and camping. Christopher had the biggest heart and loved helping his community and neighbors. Whether it was volunteering at the fire department BBQ fundraisers or stopping to help during an accident or responding to calls in the middle of the night, this was his passion and what he loved to do.

Christopher overcame many obstacles in life and felt very fortunate to be living his dream. He will be remembered for his loving and caring nature. The community describes him as a gentle giant known for big teddy bear hugs and his unwavering love and compassion for others. The lives he touched in his short life are amazing. God gave us the privilege to have him in our lives for 27 years. We are all better for knowing and loving him, and we are blessed to have seen his smile and be a part of his life. He will forever live in our hearts and memories.

NORTH CAROLINA

Michael L. Scott

Career Chief ★ April 20, 2025 ★ Age 51

Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point Fire and Emergency Services

Chief Michael Scott of Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point Fire & Emergency Services died on Sunday, April 20, 2025, at his home, surrounded by his family, after a courageous nine-month battle with occupational gallbladder cancer from his 28 years as a firefighter.

Chief Scott started his career as an Army firefighter in 1997. After completing his training, he was stationed at Ft. Greely, Alaska. During his four-and-half years in the Army, he deployed to Kosovo as a part of Operation Joint Guardian. After discharge, he worked as a civilian firefighter for the Air Force before becoming a contractor abroad. In 2004, he joined Fort McPherson/Fort Gillem Fire and Emergency Services (F&ES). He quickly rose through the ranks and became the chief in 2010.

During his time in the Atlanta area he met his wife, Alicia. Married in 2007, they welcomed their only son, Jackson, into their family, and Michael embraced his role as a loving husband and father. That love continued to grow, with Michael shepherding Jackson on the path which earned him the rank of Eagle Scout. It remained one of Michael's proudest moments. He was a steadfast family man.

In 2011, Chief Scott and family were reassigned to the Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU) in Southport, North Carolina. Chief Scott was welcomed to the team. His leadership and guidance set the department on a path for success and accolades. His knowledge was sought after not only by those in the Army, but across the Department of Defense. He was immersed in the critical mission that MOTSU was charged with and provided counsel to more than one senior leader.

Known to all and no matter the day, if asked how he was doing the answer was always the same: "I am thriving!" He ensured that the department was trained, equipped, and prepared to carry out their mission. His knowledge led to new equipment and increased manpower authorizations. He ended every meeting with the same loud and thunderous "Terminal of Excellence," the MOTSU motto.

He remained positive and steadfast in his resolve after his diagnosis, frequently checking to see how his department was and how his personnel were holding up. He was able to spend time with Alicia and Jackson—day trips as his health would allow, always present and reassuring. Everyone was greeted with a smile as they came to visit, followed by uplifting words.

Michael Scott will be remembered by all that knew him. A loving husband, father, son, friend, mentor, coach, and fire chief, he left an indelible mark on the lives of so many.

Michael Branden Anderson

Volunteer Captain ★ June 14, 2024 ★ Age 41

OHIO

Michael Branden Anderson, “Branden” to the locals, was born on July 9, 1982, and raised in the village of Laurelville, where he served 23 years as an active member of the Laurelville Volunteer Fire Department. He was acting as captain at the end of his service.

Branden was a friend to all. He was always there to help, whether it was getting new recruits through classes, giving guidance, maintaining trucks in service, volunteering within the community, or just being that shoulder to lean on in a time of need. He responded to an average of over 50% of his company runs, and when he wasn’t responding, you could find him at the firehouse or close by.

Branden leaves behind his wife, five children, grandchildren, his parents, sister, nieces and nephews, grandmother, and a community.

There’s not a day that he isn’t remembered for his selfless acts of service.

Captain Anderson 632 leaves a legacy that’s irreplaceable and will always be remembered.

Laurelville Fire Department

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Troy J. Bernhard

OHIO

Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ September 27, 2024 ★ Age 49

Perrysburg Township Fire & EMS

Troy was born on January 2, 1975, in Monclova, Ohio. He was a 1993 Anthony Wayne High School graduate. Troy always had an intense desire to help others, and he started as a firefighter for Monclova Township Fire Department in 1991. Right after high school, Troy and his friend, Miguel, worked the entire summer for the Cedar Point Fire Department. After working at Cedar Point for the summer of 1995, Troy continued his work at the Monclova Fire Department. He then began working for the Waterville Fire Department before being hired full-time in 1996 with Perrysburg Township Fire Department.

Throughout his career, Troy was hired to recertify Davis Besse's fire brigade, which he loved to do every year. He also enjoyed his time working as a paramedic in both the Wood County Hospital ER and then in the ER at the Mercy Hospital in Perrysburg.

Troy relished making his children and wife a focal point. He made birthday cakes every year for them, each unique and special. Troy loved cooking. He was the renowned chef of the neighborhood, family events, and the fire department. Even when his cancer stopped him from eating, still Troy persisted in cooking and feeding the multitudes of people that he loved. He thrived in the joy of entertaining; he was the perfect host!

In 2021, during a routine physical, tragically he was diagnosed with bladder cancer. Throughout this long and arduous cancer journey, there were several highs and many lows as Troy attempted to remain cancer free and fight this enemy. Talented doctors, regimes, pharmaceutical cocktails, and countless prayers, and especially his loving family and friends made certain that this amazing man was never alone on this journey. Many people would have given up; Troy never, ever surrendered.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Alfred Brown Jr.

Career Captain ★ November 16, 2021 ★ Age 57

OHIO

Alfred Brown was born August 11, 1964, in Ohio, the first of four kids born to Alfred Sr. and Frances Brown.

Alfred was a loving husband to Carmen Quinones for 12 years. He was also a loving father to his kids, Niki, Anita, Alfred, Charity, Hope, Faith, and his bonus son, Reynaldo.

Alfred grew up and attended school in the Cleveland, Ohio, area. After graduation from high school in 1982, Afred joined the military. After his time in the Army, Alfred attended Akron University.

Alfred joined the Warren Fire Department on September 25, 1990. He became a lieutenant on September 7, 2001, and a captain on April 1, 2015. Alfred was also an instructor at TCTC in Howland, Ohio.

If you knew Alfred, you loved Alfred. He was always willing and able to teach and assist anyone that asked for his help. He always had a positive attitude, whether he knew you for years or just met you.

City of Warren Fire Department

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Mark Richard Greatorex

OHIO

Career Chief ★ December 5, 2024 ★ Age 56

Wayne Township Fire and Rescue

Mark Richard Greatorex was born on April 2, 1968, in Cincinnati, Ohio, to Richard and Janet Greatorex. He grew up in Loveland, Ohio. Friends and family knew him as Bubba.

Mark was a loving father to Megan and Matt. He shared his love for the fire service with his son. Mark was an avid collector of train and fire memorabilia.

Mark started his fire career as a cadet with the Loveland Volunteer Fire Department. He worked for multiple fire departments in the Cincinnati area, including Maineville Community Volunteer, Springdale, Mason-Deerfield Joint, Deerfield Township, Goshen Township, Hamilton Township, and Salem-Morrow Fire Departments.

He continued his career as a firefighter/paramedic with the Hamilton Township Fire Department. He became fire chief for the department and helped them grow into a two-station department. He left Hamilton Township to work at Wayne Township Fire Department and ended his career as fire and EMS chief of Wayne Township.

Mark held many certifications, including Paramedic, Fire Fighter 2, Fire, Live Fire and EMS Instructor, and Fire Safety Inspector.

Mark passed away on December 5, 2024, after a battle with occupational lung cancer from his 42 years in the fire service. Mark dedicated his life to the fire service. He will be missed by all.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Roderick W. Longpre

Career Firefighter ★ October 14, 2020 ★ Age 60

OHIO

Dayton Fire Department

Roderick William Longpre, age 60, of Dayton, Ohio, passed away after a courageous battle with cancer on October 14, 2020. Rod was born on March 4, 1960, in Dayton. He was the son of Don and Eunice (Millard) Longpre.

Rod proudly served his country by enlisting in the United States Army. After receiving an Honorable Discharge for his service to his country, Rod began his working career, again serving his community, by becoming a member of the Dayton Fire Department. During this time, he made many lifelong friends and made many contributions to the department. He was instrumental in the co-founding of the Miami Valley Firefighter/EMS Memorial Association and founder of the Dayton Firefighters Local 136 Honor Guard, which were crowning achievements of his service to the community.

Spirituality and his faith played a major role in Rod's life and in the decisions he made. He was an active member of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church.

Rod was a self-taught musician. He had a musical gift and artfully played lead and bass guitar, flute, saxophone, keyboard, violin, and bagpipes, as well as performing as lead vocalist in several local bands like Axis, Random Brothers Band, and Windfall. All his friends referred to him as "Rockin Rod!"

His smile, humor, and talents will be missed by so many. He touched so many lives with his selfless service to others, and the world will not be the same without him.

Rod leaves behind his loving mother, Eunice Bishop; sons, Joe Fourman (wife, Tami, and grandchildren, Maddox, Gavin, and Avery) and Jeff Fourman (grandchildren, Damon, Jackson, Tristan, and Levi); great-grandsons, August and Sterling Fourman; and brothers, Rene (niece Courtney) and Rich (niece Michelle). He was preceded in death by his father and his niece, Gabriella.

Paul C. Mickolick

OHIO

Career Lieutenant ★ April 19, 2025 ★ Age 43

Town & Country Fire District

Lieutenant Paul Mickolick, age 43, dedicated his life to serving others as a firefighter and paramedic. He made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty while serving with the Town & Country Fire District on April 19, 2025.

Paul devoted more than twenty years to emergency services, including sixteen years as a flight paramedic with the Cleveland Clinic Critical Care Transport (CCT) team. He earned his Flight Paramedic Certification (FPC), was EVOC I certified, served as a trusted preceptor, and was an active member of the CCT Safety Committee. In the most critical moments, Paul was known for his steady presence, exceptional clinical skill, and unwavering commitment to patient care.

In the fire service, Paul rose to the rank of lieutenant and held certifications as Firefighter II, Paramedic, Instructor II, and Fire Safety Inspector. He was also certified in ACLS, BLS, PALS, and NRP, reflecting his commitment to the highest standards of emergency medicine. In 2024, he received the Chief's Award from the Town & Country Fire District for responding to more calls than any other member of the department, volunteering his time in addition to serving full-time during the week. His willingness to answer every call exemplified the depth of his dedication to his community.

Above all else, Paul was a devoted family man. He was a loving husband to his wife, Rachel; a proud and devoted father to Connor and Elise; a cherished son, brother, and uncle; and the steady center of strength and love for his entire family. He treasured time together—skiing, cheering for the Cleveland Browns, and creating lasting memories on trips to Disney and the Smoky Mountains. His greatest joy was simply being present for the people he loved.

Lieutenant Mickolick's legacy endures in the lives he saved, the firefighters and paramedics he mentored, and the family who carries forward his strength, character, and unwavering love. His life stands as a testament to service, sacrifice, and the enduring honor of the fire service.

John M. Saunders

Volunteer Firefighter ★ April 17, 2025 ★ Age 41

OHIO

Tri Community Joint Fire District

John Saunders, 41, of Willard, Ohio, was born April 17, 1984, in Oberlin, Ohio. He passed away in the line of duty on April 17, 2025, bravely battling a house fire in Greenwich, Ohio. A devoted father, dedicated firefighter, skilled mechanic, and loyal friend, John lived a life defined by service, hard work, and heart.

John was the proud father of two children—his daughter, Kila, and his son, Kaden—along with his loyal dog, Duramax. He was a beloved son to Lisa, a big brother to Brad, and a cherished grandson to Charlie and Betty. He was also a fun-loving uncle to his nieces and nephews and a friend to all who knew him.

For 15 years, John served as a volunteer firefighter with the Tri-Community Fire Department in Greenwich, Ohio. He was deeply committed to the fire service, completing every available training opportunity and always striving to improve himself for the sake of his team and community. His dedication, courage, and willingness to help others defined his service and ultimately his sacrifice.

John worked at R&L Carriers in Norwalk, Ohio, for 20 years. He began his career in the tire shop, later becoming a trailer mechanic, and ultimately rose to the position of shop supervisor. He held a CDL and was respected for his knowledge, leadership, and unwavering work ethic. Outside of his full-time job, he ran his own shop, Saunders Auto and Diesel, where he spent countless hours doing mechanic work for family, friends, and community members.

A true gearhead at heart, John loved truck pulling. Recently, he had purchased a new truck specifically for pulling competitions, doing most of the mechanical work himself. He was a proud member of the Central Ohio Truck Pulling Circuit (COTPC) and enjoyed every moment of the sport, from the competition to the camaraderie.

John was known for his sense of humor, sarcasm, and larger-than-life personality. He loved to joke around, have fun, and bring laughter to every room he entered. He was the life of the party, the one people turned to when they needed help, and the one they could always count on to speak his mind with honesty and conviction.

Above all, John was a man who served his family, friends, his community, and his fellow firefighters. His bravery, generosity, and spirit will never be forgotten. His legacy lives on in the lives he touched, the people he protected, and the example he set.

John Saunders is honored here for his sacrifice, his service, and the hero he was every day of his life.

Jeffery Glenn Skaggs

OHIO

Volunteer Captain ★ November 25, 2023 ★ Age 62

Concord-Greene Township Volunteer Fire Department

Jeff lived a life defined by service, steadiness, and deep devotion, qualities first nurtured by his parents, Harold and Bertha Skaggs. He served as a United States Army Ranger and military police sergeant, attaining the rank of E-5. Stationed at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas, he was also deployed to Honduras. The discipline and courage he carried never left him.

That commitment continued through his service with the Concord-Greene Fire Department. A volunteer firefighter, appointed captain in 2016, Jeff was often among the first on scene. He led quietly, steadily under pressure, always willing to go first.

For more than twenty years, he brought his community together by presenting the "Fire in the Sky" Fourth of July fireworks celebration. He believed protecting a community mattered, but so did giving families something meaningful to gather around.

On the farm, it was common to see him walking from place to place with dogs or cats trailing behind, earning him the affectionate nickname "Pied Piper." He loved animals, country life, and helping anyone in need. If he passed someone stranded along the road, he stopped. He was a loyal and dependable friend, the kind of man who showed up when you needed him.

At home, he was the quiet anchor. He was a devoted husband whose bond with his wife, Cindy, was built on steadfastness, humor, and deep love. Those closest to him knew there was a tender, emotional side to Jeff that not everyone saw.

He was a proud father to Jonathan (Rebecca), Brian (Megan), Karen, Brooke (Aaron), and Brandon (Sarah), sharing his skills and wisdom freely. He often said he wanted to be the "fun Pap," and he was. Full of bad jokes and hands-on lessons, he let his grandchildren—Wyatt, Janta, Lucy, Audrey, Noah, Eli, and Lola—do things with him, teaching as they went and helping them grow confident and capable.

On November 25, 2023, his time here changed, but the impact of his life did not. His name now stands among the honored, and his legacy lives on in the family and community he loved so completely.

Ralph Stegbauer

Volunteer Fire Chief ★ November 25, 2023 ★ Age 71

OHIO

Ralph Stegbauer, of Fayette County, Ohio, passed away at the age of 71 while on duty as chief of the Concord Greene Fire Department. He joined the volunteer fire department in 1976 and held several positions throughout the years, beginning as a firefighter, moving up as lieutenant, captain, training officer, and battalion chief. In April of 2007, he was appointed chief of the department.

Members of the CGFD described Ralph as an excellent leader and stated that they were happy to follow him and his example of hard work and dedication. While on the department, he was instrumental in applying for and receiving many grants that helped the department obtain jaws of life, safety equipment, vehicles, and communication equipment.

Having been born and raised on a farm, the agriculture community was very important to Ralph. Not only did he help secure grain bin safety equipment for his department, he also played an essential role in creating and developing an annual training that fosters understanding and builds relationships between farmers and first responders throughout Fayette County.

In addition to being a fire chief, Ralph was a dedicated and loving husband to his wife of 49 years, Nancy, and dad to his children, Eric and Kim. He was also the proudest Pappa to five grandchildren, Madylyn, Emma, Joel, Charlee, and Olivia. He made sure to brag on each one of them whenever he could.

Retirement from his full-time job in 2017 allowed to him to put his focus into what he loved most—family, church, the community, and the fire department—where he always made sure to let the light of the Lord shine through him. Ralph and his wife attended the Crossroads Christian Church in Washington Court House, where he enjoyed being a greeter on Sunday mornings.

One of his favorite Bible verses was John 15:13 *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.* On November 25, 2023, he did just that!

Concord-Greene Township Volunteer Fire Department

Steven Weber

OHIO

Career Lieutenant ★ July 9, 2024 ★ Age 55

South Richland Fire Department

Steve Weber, a beloved husband, father, Pappy, and dedicated public servant, passed away on July 9, 2024, in his hometown of Defiance, Ohio. He was born on November 29, 1968, to loving parents who instilled in him the values of hard work and compassion.

Steve's legacy is marked by selflessness and unwavering dedication to others. For over two decades, he served as a firefighter and paramedic with South Richland Fire Department, Defiance Fire Department, Ayersville Fire Department, and Noble Fire Department with courage and commitment that earned him the respect and admiration of all who knew him. His bravery knew no bounds as he fearlessly rushed into danger to save lives without hesitation or reservation. Steve worked for Burk Excavating hauling asphalt, which he loved.

Beyond his professional life, Steve found solace in nature while pursuing his passion for bass fishing. He fished with Williams County Anglers for many years, then helped lead a new club, Old School Bass Anglers, with his lifelong friend. The tranquility of the water brought him peace amidst life's chaos, even though he had a habit of "snagging" more trees than bass. Additionally, he reveled in the freedom of riding his Harley-Davidson motorcycle through winding roads under open skies, feeling alive with every twist of the throttle.

However, Steve's greatest joy came from being surrounded by family. He cherished every moment spent with his wife, Jessie Weber; their love was an example for all who witnessed it. As a bonus dad to Alyssa (Daniel) McClure from Loudonville, Ohio, and Brittney Kelm from Defiance, Steve embraced them as if they were his own flesh and blood. His heart swelled with pride at the arrival of grandbabies Max and Drexel McClure; they were truly the light of his life.

In addition to these personal details about Steve's passions are numerous anecdotes shared by friends recounting how deeply loved he was within their community. He was ready with a smile or helping hand whenever needed.

The loss felt at Steve's passing is immeasurable, but so too is the impact he had on those around him during his time here on Earth.

His memory will live on through those whose lives he touched so profoundly. He will be forever remembered for embodying strength tempered by kindness, courage softened by compassion, and duty balanced with love.

May we find comfort knowing that although gone from our sight, he will never be absent from our hearts. Your legacy endures eternally.

Symeon Sylvester Williams Sr.

Career Cadet ★ May 16, 2025 ★ Age 39

OHIO

Cleveland Division of Fire

Symeon Sylvester Williams Sr., affectionately known as Pee Wee, was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on March 1, 1986, to Joyce and Sylvester Williams III. He was the youngest of seven children.

Symeon was the proud father of Symeon Jr. (15) and Syme (2). They were his motivation, purpose, and source of happiness. He loved his sons wholeheartedly and enjoyed spending time with them. One of his favorite pastimes was taking them to the lake to watch the sunset.

After the passing of his older brother, Sylvester Williams IV, Symeon became a father figure to his niece, Alexis. He was also a father figure to his two nephews, Sylvonte Williams and Sylvon Robinson, who preceded him in death.

Symeon's faith in Jehovah God and worship were a priority. He enjoyed having meaningful discussions informing others of bible truths that provided hope and encouragement.

Symeon served in various capacities as a fifteeen year City of Cleveland employee, including three years as a certified Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). He also held a Class A Commercial Drivers License (CDL) and was a proud small business owner while still maintaining his EMT certification. His time as an EMT revealed his purpose, to respond when others were in need, to be a steady hand in moments of crisis, and to serve the community he cherished with everything he had.

Symeon loved life and thrived on helping others. Since the age of 16 he was an avid workout buff and was always eager to lend his muscles, especially when it came to helping his parents and older sisters. Symeon had a passion for working out, exploring new destinations, and motorcycles. He adored his family and friends. He was a handsome, muscular, well dressed, articulate man with an infectious smile.

Symeon was more than a man with a dream. He was a man of honor, action, principle, and heart. His bravery, compassion, and unwavering commitment to public service earned him the respect, admiration, and gratitude of countless residents.

Symeon had an emergency crisis during firefighter training and passed away unexpectedly on May 16, 2025. His journey reminds us that legacy isn't measured by titles or ceremonies; it's measured by the lives we touch, the love we give, and the principles we stand for.

We honor Symeon for who he was. A protector. A servant. Our hero.

Don Goforth II

OKLAHOMA

Paid-On-Call Captain ★ August 11, 2019 ★ Age 37

Poteau Fire Department

Don Milas Goforth II was born July 30, 1982, in Poteau, Oklahoma.

He joined the Poteau Fire Department in December 2008 and rose to the rank of captain of Station 1 in 2014. Throughout his ten-year career, Don was the definition of "always on call," responding to 1,744 calls, including 191 structure fires.

But numbers don't capture the man. They don't capture the Jack-of-all-trades who could fix a computer as easily as he could vent a roof. They don't capture the captain who commanded respect not through a title, but through his actions. And they don't capture the father who loved his children, Kaddon and Kylie, or the husband he was to Cassie.

Don was a larger-than-life character. His matter-of-fact personality and raw honesty provided him with a command presence that left you without questions. He was the guy you wanted on the line with you and the friend you wanted to be around when the work was done. His commitment to integrity, teamwork, and excellence continues to guide the fire department he loved. Don, thank you for your service, your leadership, and your friendship. You stood the watch with honor. We'll take it from here.

Don was an avid reader and fly fisherman. He wanted this quote on his tombstone, so we felt it was fitting to include it here.

Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of those rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs. I am haunted by waters. –Norman Maclean

Nicholas A. Berg

Volunteer Division Chief ★ June 6, 2024 ★ Age 78

OREGON

Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Protection District

On a beautiful June morning after a joint drill with his two favorite fire districts, Mist-Birkenfeld and Clatskanie, Nick died. He had spent the night before working on establishing a dry hydrant system and helping with a water tender drill. It was a great evening for him, spent with good friends and topped off by an impromptu photo that captured him in a very happy moment.

Nicholas Berg was born in 1946, the fourth child of Robert and Isabelle Anderson Berg. He spent his childhood on the farm in Birkenfeld, Oregon. After graduation, he was drafted into the 9th Infantry and sent to Viet Nam, where he spent time with the Brown Water Navy in the Mekong Delta. He earned a Purple Heart and other combat medals. He was proud of his service and carried many lessons from the battlefield throughout his life.

On his return home, he married Ann and raised four very satisfactory children. He also began a life in the logging industry and was a member of Associated Oregon Loggers from the organization's early years.

In the late 1970s, he joined with other community members to form an ambulance service, the Mist-Birkenfeld Quick Response Unit, which ultimately joined with the Mist-Birkenfeld Fire group to form Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD. At that time, he shifted his focus and began to use the tracking skills learned in hunting and the military to serve the needs of the Wildland Search and Rescue Division for Mist-Birkenfeld Fire. From there he turned his attention to using many of those observation skills in fire investigation, which became his first love in the fire service. Nick was very pleased with his 47 years as a volunteer for Mist-Birkenfeld and fully intended to finish out three more for an even 50.

He enjoyed being part of the fire service brotherhood and was committed to responding day or night to assist agencies in both Clatsop and Columbia Counties. His rewards for that were many. He formed deep friendships across both counties and took great pleasure in knowing that when he arrived on scene, he could contribute in whatever role was assigned. In later years, he became a mentor and father figure on scene and off to younger people as they worked their way into fire and EMS careers.

Larry Damon Dean

OREGON

Career Captain ★ September 13, 2024 ★ Age 64

City of Salem Fire Department

Larry Damon Dean, 64, passed peacefully on September 13, 2024, in Salem, Oregon, after a gallant battle with occupational cancer.

Larry was born to Wanda and Willard Dean on July 10, 1960, in Phoenix, Arizona. When he turned six, his family moved to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where he and his brothers and sister enjoyed the next three years exploring the sprawling forest that was their backyard. Here he developed his love for independence and being outdoors. Later, the family moved to California, where he enjoyed going to the beaches, mountains, and deserts with friends and family or alone when he wanted solitude. After graduating from Norco High School in 1978, he moved to Oregon to begin his career and establish his life.

Fire Captain Larry Dean dedicated over three decades to protecting the citizens of Salem. When he first arrived at Salem Fire Station 2, he found his calling. He spent seven years on Medic 1, where he formed lasting bonds with colleagues, had some great times, and fought a lot of big fires. Throughout his 31-year career with Salem Fire, he served in virtually every capacity the department has to offer. He was part of the SWAT Team, Technical Rescue Team, State USAR Task Force, Water Rescue Team, a rescue boat operator, and an aircraft rescue firefighter. He took on roles as acting battalion chief, wildland engine boss, and task force leader.

His dedication extended beyond Salem's borders. He deployed to Mississippi during Hurricane Katrina and fought fires across multiple states, including two deployments to California. He was a mentor to countless firefighters, training probationary employees both as a medic evaluator and as a fire captain. The advice that guided his leadership came from Fire Captain Willis Owen, who told him simply, "Take care of your people."

After retiring in December 2018, he moved to Wyoming, where he continued to enjoy his passion for the great outdoors.

Despite Larry's professional achievements, he excelled even more as a son, brother, husband, father, grandfather, and friend. His zest for life and adventure was contagious, and he delighted in sharing that passion with everyone around him. His diverse interests included camping, hunting, fishing, scuba diving, and hiking. Larry's talents were unlimited, whether it was baking biscuits and scones in the morning, assisting a friend in the afternoon, or crafting baby cradles or a new bow in the evening.

Larry is survived by his wife, Kaare Dean, his three children, two grandchildren, his mother, sister, and two brothers. He was our best friend, son, brother, father, and grandfather. We miss him greatly.

Herbert M. Berger Jr.

Career Battalion Chief ★ December 3, 2019 ★ Age 65

PENNSYLVANIA

Harrisburg Bureau of Fire

Herbert M. Berger Jr. was born February 8, 1954, in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, the third of three children born to Herbert and Miriam Berger. He grew up in Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania.

After graduation from high school in 1972, Herb worked in the local clothing factories as a knitting machine operator and, in his spare time, volunteered at the Liberty Fire Company #4 in Schuylkill Haven. He decided he wanted to make a career out of the fire service. He moved to Monroeville, Pennsylvania, and lived at Monroeville Fire Station #4 while taking fire science classes at Allegheny Community College.

Herb married his high school sweetheart, Susan Godfrey, in 1977. They moved to New Carrollton, Maryland, in 1979, and Herb attended the University of Maryland and ran with the West Lanham Hills Fire Company #28. In his last year of college, he was hired by the Harrisburg Bureau of Fire in Pennsylvania on March 4, 1981, and proudly wore Badge No. 45.

He and his wife purchased an old farmhouse in 1982 and did a total refurbishment of the house and grounds. He ran a coal delivery business on his days off from the fire department. In 1986, their daughter, Kathryn, was born. In 1987, Herb and his wife purchased a wooded lot, became the general contractors, and built their house.

Herb was promoted to lieutenant on May 18, 1987, and to captain on July 15, 1996. On December 23, 2002, Captain Berger was promoted to battalion chief, a position he held until his retirement. He retired after 31 years as an outstanding firefighter and officer on March 28, 2012.

Herb was one of the founding members of Harrisburg's Rescue One and was an active member of Pennsylvania Task Force 1 Urban Search and Rescue. He responded to the World Trade Center and Hurricanes Floyd, Sandy, and Katrina, among other deployments.

Herb and his family were avid skiers. He taught numerous fire schools locally and at Harrisburg Area Community College. After retirement he did plumbing, electrical, heating, and air conditioning work for friends and family. Herb passed away on December 3, 2019, of Stage 4 prostate cancer.

Herb was a loving son, husband, father, friend and a respected professional firefighter. He touched many people and is deeply missed.

Michael Booke

PENNSYLVANIA

Volunteer Captain ★ November 12, 2025 ★ Age 57

Northampton Fire Department

Captain Michael "Mike" Booke was born on March 25, 1968, in New York City. He grew up in East Brunswick, New Jersey. In 1987, he joined the East Brunswick Fire District #1, Old Bridge Volunteer Fire Department, where he actively served until becoming a Pennsylvania State Trooper.

In 1998, Mike joined the Northampton Fire Department. He was a familiar face at all the community service and fundraising events, Junior Cadet Summer Camp, and played the role of Santa on the annual Santa Runs.

Mike devoted 25 years to the Pennsylvania State Police as a trooper and then as fire marshal of Troop M Bethlehem. Some of his accomplishments include investigating the devastating explosion at Concept Sciences, serving in the security detail for the Pope during his visit to Philadelphia, assisting with Hurricane Sandy relief efforts in New Jersey, serving on the Baltimore City support detail during the civil unrest in Baltimore, and aiding in the search for Eric Frein.

Little did Mike know, his career would also bring him his wife. Mike and Donna's love was discovered on the front lines of public service. They met while responding to an accident in 1995—he as a trooper and she as an EMT. In 1997, they wed, and he accepted Dana and Danielle as his daughters.

Throughout their marriage, Mike and Donna enjoyed traveling, spending time with family, and going to local sporting events. They cheered on the Lehigh Valley Phantoms hockey team and Lehigh Valley Iron Pigs baseball team as season ticket holders. Most recently, they became Disney passholders and visited the parks regularly.

When he wasn't at the fire house, you could usually find Mike with his grandkids. He loved going to all the sporting events, theater programs, and concerts for Piper, Jax, Josiah, and Mya.

We will all miss Mike's dedication, humor, and selflessness. His legacy will live on through those who help others. As Gene Simmons of KISS once said, "Each of us on our own could only go so far. Together, we would go all the way."

Edward R. “Chip” Chidester

Volunteer Assistant Chief ★ April 27, 2025 ★ Age 55

PENNSYLVANIA

Harford Volunteer Fire Company

Edward R. “Chip” Chidester was called home to be with the Lord on Sunday, April 27, 2025, after complications from an injury sustained on March 11, 2025, while courageously fighting a wildland fire. He was 55 years old.

Born on May 26, 1969, Chip was the beloved son of Barbara (Deluca) and the late Eddie Chidester. From a young age, Chip was a fixture in the Harford community. His roots ran deep, and his devotion to the people around him shaped a life dedicated to service, kindness, and faith.

Chip was a proud 40-year member of the Harford Volunteer Fire Company, joining as soon as he was old enough and serving faithfully for the rest of his life. To his brothers and sisters in the fire service, Chip was more than a colleague—he was a mentor, a friend, and a source of calm strength in the most difficult moments. Whether battling a blaze or lending a hand after a storm, Chip was always among the first to arrive and the last to leave. His courage, compassion, and unwavering commitment to others made him a true example of selflessness and service.

Those who knew Chip will remember him as a man among men—a steady presence whose familiar smile could bring comfort and reassurance to anyone he met. He was the person you wanted by your side when times were hard and the one whose laughter could light up any room. Chip never turned his back on those in need. Often, he put aside his own needs and comfort to provide for others, guided by an unshakable belief that helping people was both his calling and his joy.

Chip’s love for his family and community never wavered. He stood strong as a pillar—one that withstood the test of time and weathered every storm that came his way. His compassion, generosity, and faith left an indelible mark on all who were fortunate enough to know him. He was the embodiment of kindness, integrity, and humility. Chip never knew a stranger in this world—only friends he hadn’t met yet.

In addition to his mother, Barbara, Chip is survived by his devoted wife of nearly 20 years, Barb (Sturdevant) Chidester, and his loving sister, Susie. He will also be deeply missed by his extended family, countless friends, and his brothers and sisters in the fire service. Through them, Chip’s legacy of love, compassion, and unwavering dedication to others will continue to shine brightly.

Chip’s life was one of purpose, faith, and service. Though his passing leaves a heartache that cannot be measured, his spirit will live on in the hearts of all who loved him.

Edward F. Hine

PENNSYLVANIA

Volunteer Firefighter ★ December 16, 2020 ★ Age 79

Colonial Park Fire Company

Edward F. Hine was the son of John and Elnor Hine. He was a 1959 graduate of Central Dauphin High School and continued his education at Millersville University, earning his degree in 1963 and setting the foundation for the life of work, family, and community service he would build in the decades that followed.

Service to the Colonial Park Fire Company (CPFC) stood at the heart of Ed's life. From 1966 until his passing in 2020, he gave more than five decades of faithful volunteer service to the citizens of his community. Ed served as president of the company from 1970 through 1989, helping guide its growth while strengthening its mission of protection, education, and public service.

Ed never hesitated to give of himself. Whether standing outdoors in harsh weather selling Christmas trees to support the company, visiting local schools to teach fire safety, or quietly supporting fellow volunteers, he believed no task was too small when it served the greater good. He held a deep conviction that education saves lives, and his lessons, especially to children, left lasting impressions that extended far beyond the classroom.

In addition to Ed's commitment to CPFC, he faithfully served Colonial Park Community Baptist Church (CPCBC) in a number of capacities. He also proudly gave back to his community through leadership positions in various Boy Scouts of America troops. In later years, Ed devoted many volunteer hours to the American Legion, Post 272. There, he honored fellow veterans by helping secure flags at cemeteries on patriotic holidays and by coordinating honor guard members for funeral services at Ft. Indiantown Gap and in the greater Harrisburg area.

Beyond his service, Ed was known for his warmth, humility, and sense of humor. To many, he was remembered as someone whose presence brought lightness, kindness, and comfort. He served not for recognition, but because it was who he was. Ed's legacy lives on through the community he served, the lives he protected, and the values he modeled every day. His lifetime commitment to service stands as an enduring example of honor, sacrifice, and love.

Ed's loving family includes his beloved wife, Katysue; his children, Guy, Nate (Misty), and Anita; his grandchildren, Jennifer, Cory (who preceded him in death), Brittany, Ashley, Alexis, and Keriann; and his great-grandchildren, Olivia, Savannah, Mallory, Jaxon, Gryffin, Madison, Nicholas, and Peyton, who carry forward his legacy of faith, service, and love.

Roger R. Lathrop

Volunteer Firefighter/Medical Captain ★ January 23, 2025 ★ Age 52

PENNSYLVANIA

Big Elm Volunteer Fire Department

Roger Lathrop, a man defined by his wholehearted commitment to others, passed away unexpectedly on January 23, 2025, doing what he loved—serving his community as a volunteer firefighter.

Roger's passion for emergency service began with the South Creek Fire Department as a senior in high school, when he obtained his EMT certification at the age of 18. This marked the beginning of his devotion to emergency medical services. Most recently, Roger was a valued member of the Big Elm Volunteer Fire Department in Millerton, Pennsylvania. He held the rank of rescue captain and served as a firefighter and EMT. His dedication to the department reflected his nature, and he died following a medical emergency while responding to a structure fire.

Professionally, Roger was an accomplished healthcare leader. He had worked for The Guthrie Clinic since 1997, starting as a respiratory therapist before advancing to roles including clinical instructor in the School of Respiratory Therapy, system director of care management, corporate compliance officer, and assistant vice president and chief compliance officer. His passion for education and living a life of service led him to earn a master's degree in crisis/emergency/disaster management from Elmira College in addition to two professional degrees from Mansfield University.

Beyond his fire service, Roger was a pillar of his community. He was an avid supporter of the Troy School District Music and Athletic Departments. He served popcorn with a side of humor for Troy booster concessions. He gave his time generously to young athletes, serving as a coach and umpire for the Troy and Wells-Jackson Little Leagues and Troy Legion baseball team.

Above all, Roger was a devoted family man. He is survived by his wife of 30 years, Ginger (Wright) Lathrop; their three children, Grace (Nicholas) Call, Ryder Lathrop (Ciara Pine), and Gabby Lathrop; and Rachel Hickok, whom he loved as a daughter. He was the heart of the Lathrop and Wright families, providing a constant source of love, humor, support, and unwavering strength.

Roger carried his heart on his sleeve and cared for everyone he met. A former colleague noted that Roger always made them feel "valued and seen, never as a bother or rushed." His presence in the community was cherished. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him. Roger is forever honored for his service as a firefighter, EMT, and medical captain. His life is a lasting testament to dedication, selflessness, and the profound power of a kind heart.

But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. 2 Thess. 3:13

Edward S. Margavich Jr.

PENNSYLVANIA

Volunteer Fire Police Captain ★ August 15, 2025 ★ Age 80

Third District Volunteer Fire Company

Edward Margavich Jr. began his service with the Third District Volunteer Fire Company located in Bristol, Pennsylvania, in 1960 at the age of 16. He was inspired by his parents' significant involvement with the newly established firehouse and their emphasis on the value of community service. He quickly became a dedicated member, actively participating in a wide range of fundraising activities integral to the volunteer fire company, such as Saturday newspaper drives, assisting with event clean-up, supporting ham dinners, bingo, car washes, coin tosses, and car shows. Even while attending high school, upon hearing the siren he would leave class to respond to emergencies.

Born in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, son of the late Edward and Jeanne Margavich, he was a Bristol resident for most of his life. Ed was employed as a truck driver at James D. Morrissey and later at DePaul Trucking. He enjoyed hunting and walking his dog, Tilly. While working at Lower Bucks Hospital, he fell in love with Trudy Jeffries. They eventually married and shared 52 years of life together. He and Trudy could be found at the station several days a week enjoying lunch and watching the news.

At one stage in his career, Eddie was employed by Bristol Township as a dispatcher, prior to the establishment of a county-wide dispatch system. He also worked in fire truck sales. His exceptional expertise in fire apparatus mechanics earned him the honor of being the longest-serving chief engineer in the fire company's history, holding that position for over three decades. Throughout this time, Eddie advanced through the ranks. After serving two years as captain and another two years as assistant chief, he became chief in 1978 and served as a fire police officer for the latter part of his career.

In November 2010, Eddie was recognized for 50 years of service with citations from the U.S. Congress, the Governor's Office, the Senate and House, and the Bucks County Board of Commissioners. Not content to devote himself to just one organization, he also became a Life Member of Goodwill Hose Fire Company, Bristol Township Fire Police Association, and Bucks County Fire Chiefs and Firefighters Association. Service for the public was in his blood. He was always the most active member of our organization.

Eddie will always be remembered for his daily presence at the station, becoming like a brother, uncle, or grandfather to our members. He attended all our important life events and celebrations, making him an integral part of our lives and family.

He will be forever missed and never forgotten.

Ronald D. Shaffer

Volunteer Captain ★ March 27, 2024 ★ Age 55

PENNSYLVANIA

George G. McMurtry Fire Department, Vandergrift No.1

Ronald D. “Ron” Shaffer, 55, of East Vandergrift, passed away unexpectedly on March 27, 2024, at UPMC-Presbyterian Hospital in Pittsburgh.

Born October 16, 1968, in Natrona Heights, he was the son of the late J. Howard Shaffer and Judith Rearick. Ron was a 1986 graduate of Apollo Ridge High School and proudly served our country with the United States Army for eight years. He was a member of the AMEDD Regiment and served as a sergeant and a combat medic for two tours.

He worked as an EMT all over the Kiski Valley. His EMS career started straight out of the army with Vandergrift #2 VFD, where he was named EMS Member of the Year in 1996. He also served with New Kensington Ambulance. In 1998, he became a volunteer with Lower Kiski Ambulance in Leechburg before becoming a full member from 2000 until 2013. He served with Citizens Hose Fire Rescue and EMS in Natrona Heights, where he received an Award of Merit in 2002 and an award for saving a life in 2008. He was also assistant director of the AK Pulsar Prehospital Paramedic Unit.

He joined Murrysville Medic 1 in 2008, where he was an EMT, dispatcher, and a member of the rehab, special operations water rescue, and dive teams. He received his Master Scuba Diver certification in 2015 through PADI, as well as being a member of the PA Region 4 and Region 13 EMS strike teams.

His fire career started with Vandergrift #2 VFD, and he transferred to Vandergrift #1 VFD, where he was their rescue captain, vice president, fire prevention leader, and bingo chairman. He was assistant chief for the Armstrong County Task Force Water Team, where he received multiple top 10 training rankings, Firefighter of the Month in November 2021, and his 25-year Life Member Award in 2022. He was also a non-suppression rescue instructor through the PA State Fire Academy.

Ron was a member of Pleasant View Brethren Church. He enjoyed watching television—especially NCIS, westerns, and his favorite show, M.A.S.H. Ron liked bingo and playing scratch-off tickets. He most loved spending time with his family, especially his grandson, Maverick.

Ron was preceded in death by his parents; his brother, Terry Shaffer; and his twin brother, Donald Shaffer.

He is survived by his loving wife of 30½ years, Lynette A. (Hill) Shaffer; daughters, Sabrina (Michael) Lerch and Meghan Fombutu; son, Daniel (Amanda Wolfe) Shaffer; grandchildren, Maverick and Calvin; brothers, James Shaffer and Artie “Rob” Shellhammer; sister, Debi (Jim) Carnahan; stepmother, Peggy Shaffer; and nieces and nephews.

PENNSYLVANIA

David L. Warfel

Career Forest Maintenance Supervisor ★ May 29, 2025 ★ Age 57

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Forestry

Dave Warfel lived the life he was made for. His parents, Nancy and Lee, were members of the local volunteer fire company, and Lee served as a volunteer forest fire warden for the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry. They demonstrated a life of service and commitment to their community, and it was natural for Dave to follow in their footsteps.

A member of multiple local fire companies, Dave's heart was in the service of wildland fire. As a member of his dad's warden crew, he found his true passion. Dave grew up on a farm and loved the outdoors. The combination of being in nature and fighting fire appealed to him.

In 1987, after high school graduation, Dave pursued a fire position in the Bureau of Forestry as a seasonal forest fire patrolman. He divided his time between this seasonal position and the local steel mill. In 1998, he took a seasonal position as an equipment operator. Since all field positions are expected to fight wildfire, he was still able to pursue his passion. In 2008, he was promoted to a full-time position as an equipment operator, and then to forest maintenance supervisor, overseeing a maintenance crew in charge of road and facility maintenance.

As a member of Pennsylvania's Type II wildfire crews, Dave took many trips to the western states, where he served first as a crew member, then squad boss, and eventually a crew boss on 2–3-week assignments, assisting with federal efforts in wildfire suppression. He was nationally qualified as a task force leader, heavy equipment boss, incident commander Type IV, and engine boss. He also qualified as a firing boss for ignitions on prescribed fires.

At the time of his passing, Dave was actively serving as a member of the Halifax Volunteer Fire Company and as chief of the Carsonville Fire Company. He earned a fire science degree from Harrisburg Area Community College. Dave was a leader to those he worked with, a mentor, and a teacher. He taught hundreds of students in both wildland and structural fire, taught operators and maintenance employees, and served as a role model for his employees and students. He did this with humility, humor, and patience. As one of his best friends and coworkers, Joe Walker, said, "He loved to teach fire, he loved to fight fire, and he loved to teach while on a fire."

Dave passed away on May 29, 2025, at the Bureau of Forestry's Wildland Fire Academy, doing what he loved most, teaching and instructing. He is one of the lucky few who figured out exactly who he was and what he wanted to do and pursued it with passion. His family, coworkers, and community miss him tremendously.

Lee F. Witman

Volunteer Firefighter/Trustee ★ December 11, 2020 ★ Age 88

PENNSYLVANIA

Colonial Park Fire Company

Lee was born on December 22, 1931, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, the youngest son of Vera and Charles Witman. Lee grew up on a farm outside the city and graduated from Lower Paxton High School, Class of 1949. His friendship with fellow graduates continued throughout his life, which began his link to his community and service to others.

Lee joined the United States Marine Corps and served on active duty from 1950 to 1954. He continued to serve as a reservist from 1954 to 1980 and retired as a first sergeant. He was a lifetime member of the Marine Corps League and the Robert H. Hoke American Legion Post 272 of Linglestown. He loved the Marine motto, Semper fidelis, always faithful.

After returning home from active duty, he was employed by Harrisburg Dairy. He did everything from picking up milk at farms to making ice cream, which we believe is where he developed his love of vanilla ice cream. While working at the dairy, he attended night school to learn computer programming. After he graduated, he was employed as a systems engineer for Electronic Data Systems until his retirement.

Lee, always looking for a way to serve his community, joined the Colonial Park Fire Company on April 1, 1957, when the fire company was only 13 years old. Of all the hats Lee wore in his life, the helmet of a firefighter was the one he valued and loved the most. Lee held the ranks of 1st and 2nd assistant chief before serving as chief of the department from 1963 until 1984. Most of the community of firefighters knew Lee simply as "Chief." After retiring, Lee was awarded the title of chief emeritus for his service. Lee was past president of Dauphin County Volunteer Firemen's Association and Dauphin County Fire Chiefs Association. He continued serving the fire company and the residents of Lower Paxton Township as a trustee. A fixture in the firehouse, Lee came in every morning after working out to share coffee with his fellow firefighters and handle his duties. Chief Witman was also a pinnacle of the fire prevention and public education programs offered throughout the township, educating children and adults alike to the dangers of fire.

Lee's most beloved role was being a husband to Nancy, father to Denise and Cynthia, and grandfather to Cameron, Gabrielle, Colin, and Pierce. Each of them held a special place in Lee's heart. Lee loved to sing, and both daughters were privileged to have him sing at their weddings. Lee was a big fan of Penn State and enjoyed attending Penn State football games, as well as watching both Eagles and Phillies games.

Lee's life touched so many people, and he will be deeply missed.

RHODE ISLAND

Mark P. Vincent

Career Fire Marshal ★ July 17, 2025 ★ Age 65

Hopkins Hill Fire Department

Fire Marshal Mark P. Vincent's journey with the Hopkins Hill Fire Department in Coventry, Rhode Island, began in 1974. Joining the then-volunteer ranks as a high school junior, he began a lifelong commitment to public safety that became the cornerstone of his life. After graduating from Coventry High School in 1977, Mark continued to prove his dedication. In 1986, he made history as the department's very first career firefighter.

In July 1987, Mark met his wife, Marilyn, and they were married in 1990. The following year, they built the home that would become an anchor for family and friends for decades. As Mark fondly recalled of that time, "We needed to be in Hope [Rhode Island], in a house that Mark built."

Despite being a veteran of the service, Mark never stopped striving for excellence. In 2000, he pursued his passion for the fire service, earning his degree in fire science from Pikes Peak College. This blend of "boots-on-the-ground" experience and technical expertise made him a formidable leader. He went on to serve as deputy chief and spent two decades as the department's fire marshal. His leadership eventually reached the state level as president of the Rhode Island Association of Fire Marshals. In 2012, he was appointed by the governor of Rhode Island to the Fire Education and Training Board, where he served for seven years. A respected authority on the Rhode Island Fire Safety Code, he was often entrusted by the state to oversee complex safety code enforcement for major industrial projects, most notably the Amgen complex in West Greenwich. A member of the International Association of Firefighters Local 4824 in Coventry, Rhode Island, Mark retired from Hopkins Hill in 2024, following a remarkable 50 years of dedicated service.

Mark's impact was measured in more than just titles and years of service. He was defined by a gentle spirit, unwavering integrity, and a commitment to doing what was right. He was a natural mentor who saw the potential in everyone. A multitude of young professionals looked up to him not because he demanded their respect but because he earned it through his quiet example. Rooted in his Catholic faith, Mark's life was guided by his love for the Rosary and the Blessed Mother.

Above all, Mark was a cherished husband, brother, uncle, and friend. The lessons he shared and the lives he touched remain immeasurable. He leaves behind a legacy of service that protected his community and a standard of character that continues to inspire those who follow in his footsteps. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

Steve Brockway

Volunteer Fire Commissioner ★ September 6, 2021 ★ Age 61

SOUTH CAROLINA

Piedmont Park Fire District

Stephen Crane Brockway was born in Bradenton, Florida, where he lived until 1963, when his family moved to Greenville, South Carolina. In 1977, while a junior at Eastside High School, Steve began his 41-year career in the fire service as a volunteer for the Wade Hampton Fire Department. After graduation, Steve attended Brevard College in North Carolina, where he received a certification in woodland firefighting. Steve's love for the fire service and desire to help others launched the career of a lifetime for him. In 1986, Steve walked into the headquarters of the Wade Hampton Fire Department and met the person who would become the love of his life. Karen was a recently hired paramedic with Greenville County EMS. Steve was polite and cordial, and Karen knew in an instant that this kind, handsome, polite hunk of a man with beautiful brown eyes was a person she wanted in her life. They married on May 7, 1988. Steve was a loving and devoted husband for 31½ years.

Steve and Karen complemented one another perfectly. They shared dreams of pursuing their careers and helping others and supported one another's aspirations. In 1992, Steve became a volunteer with the Piedmont Park Fire Department. In 1998, Steve ran for fire commissioner for the department. He won and ran unopposed until his death. In 2016, Steve became an adjunct fire instructor for the South Carolina Fire Academy. He taught for 17 years and loved sharing his knowledge and skills.

Steve advanced from firefighter to engineer. After an off-duty injury, he resumed his career in dispatch, becoming dispatch supervisor with the Wade Hampton Fire Department until he retired in 2018. Steve was instrumental in setting up Greenville County's E911 System. He never let anything slow him down. Steve obtained South Carolina State Fire Marshal certification and assisted the Piedmont Park FD with business inspections.

In their time off together, Steve and Karen spent time outdoors, either fishing and hunting at the family lake cabin or camping up on the lakes, Jocassee or Keowee. They made annual beach trips, sometimes taking their horses for the annual fundraiser for the American Heart Association Beach Ride.

Steve knew and loved Jesus Christ. He loved Karen as much as any man could love a woman. Steve was a servant to others and didn't have to know you to offer his services. He died doing what he loved the most, helping and sharing his skills and knowledge. Steve was exposed to COVID-19 while teaching and died from respiratory failure 22 days later.

All who knew him loved him and felt so blessed. He will remain in our hearts forever.

Jimmy Lynn Townsend

SOUTH CAROLINA

Career Deputy Fire Chief ★ September 28, 2025 ★ Age 61

Moncks Corner Rural Fire Department

Jimmy L. Townsend, a dedicated member of the Moncks Corner Rural Fire Department and a beloved figure in the Berkeley County Fire Service, passed away on September 28, 2025, at the age of 61. Born on October 17, 1963, Jimmy dedicated his life to serving his community with courage and commitment.

A graduate of Berkeley High School, Jimmy advanced into a career that became a true vocation for him. He achieved the rank of deputy fire chief, embodying the values of leadership, bravery, and compassion that are essential in the face of adversity. He responded to two emergency calls on September 27, 2025, demonstrating his unwavering dedication to helping others. Tragically, in the early morning hours of September 28, 2025, he suffered a fatal cardiac event.

Jimmy was not just a deputy fire chief; he was a rock for many. Fire Chief Scott Lee of Moncks Corner Rural Fire Department remarked on Jimmy's impact, "Chief Townsend was a staple not only in the Moncks Corner Rural Fire Department, but also throughout the entire Berkeley County Fire Service. His knowledge, experience, and professional demeanor made him the rock that so many sought during moments of chaos. He will be missed."

Jimmy leaves behind his brother, Mike Brown; his goddaughter, Maggie Gass; and his nephews, Kevin Brown (Robin), and Chad Brown. He was preceded in death by his father, Smith Townsend, and his mother, Maggie Lynch Brown Townsend.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Nicholas P. “Nick” Van Dam

Volunteer Captain ★ July 26, 2025 ★ Age 37

SOUTH DAKOTA

Murdo Volunteer Fire Department

Captain Nicholas “Nick” Van Dam died on July 26, 2025, while en route to a fire, serving the community that he loved.

Nick was born on November 3, 1987, to Terry and Gayle Van Dam and was the second of three children. He grew up alongside his older brother, Travis, and younger sister, Katie Anne. After moving from Faith to Murdo, South Dakota, he developed the strong work ethic and steady character that would define his life.

Nick attended Lake Area Technical College, graduating at the top of his class. He returned to Murdo and began working at Murdo Ford, eventually serving as parts and service manager. He earned the respect of coworkers and customers alike for his knowledge, leadership, and integrity.

For eight years, Nick served with dedication on the Murdo Volunteer Fire Department, achieving the rank of captain, a role he carried with pride and seriousness. He oversaw maintenance of the department’s fleet, helped update equipment and tankers, and became known for his mechanical expertise. Departments from miles away trusted Nick and his team to repair and upgrade their trucks. To Nick, being a firefighter was more than a title, it was a responsibility. He led with strength, quiet confidence, and an unwavering sense of duty.

Above all, Nick was a devoted husband and father. He shared nearly nine years of marriage with his wife, Shannon, building a life rooted in love and commitment. He was a proud dad to his stepchildren, Natalie and Hayzen, and to his sons, Max and Nolan. He loved his children fiercely and found his greatest joy in guiding and protecting them.

Nick treasured time with his family. He enjoyed vacations together and especially loved golfing, fishing, and hunting with his boys, teaching them patience, perseverance, and respect for the outdoors.

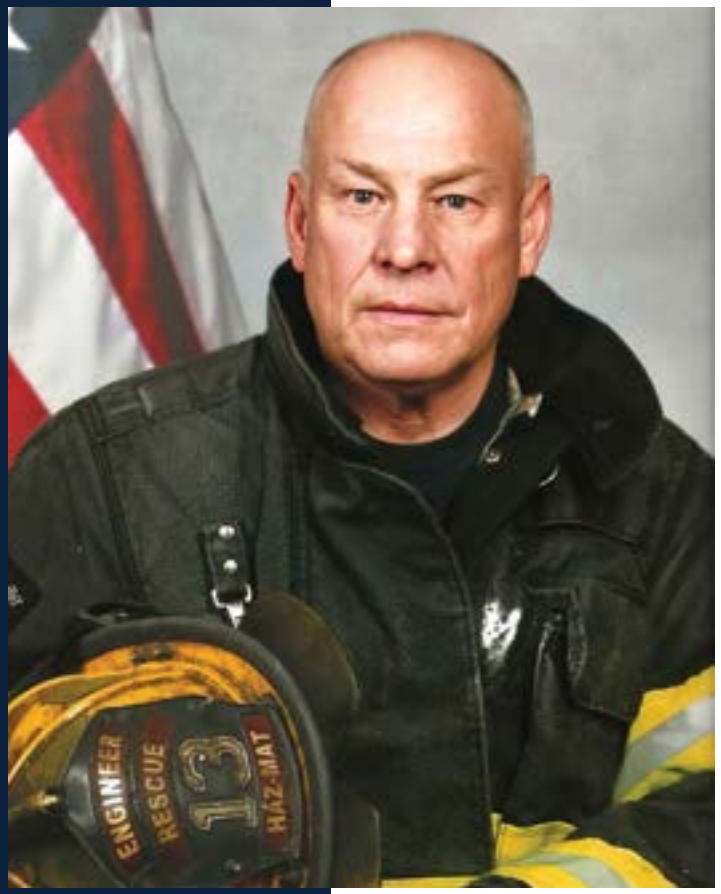
Nick’s legacy lives on in his family, in the community he served, and in the trucks that still run because of his care and skill. He is remembered not only for the uniform that he wore, but for the steady, loyal, and loving man he was. He gave his life in service, and his example will endure for generations.

He is deeply loved, missed, and forever honored.

Edward Wayne Tant

TENNESSEE

Career Engineer ★ December 19, 2024 ★ Age 69



Nashville Fire Department

Edward Wayne “Bubba” Tant led a life measured by faith, dedication, and the countless lives he touched. Born on August 20, 1955, to Paul and Betty Tant in Nashville, Bubba’s story was one of love—for God, family, and community.

He grew up surrounded by values that would shape his life: hard work, service, and faith. Bubba followed in the footsteps of his father, Paul, who served 33 years with Nashville Fire Department. Inspired, Bubba too answered the call to serve, beginning a 42-year career of commitment to others.

Starting as a firefighter and EMT, Bubba was promoted to engineer, driving the engine and rescue, a role where he brought his mechanical skills and calm leadership to lifesaving situations daily. His work didn’t stop at the fire hall. He partnered with KME and Nashville Fire to help design a fire rescue, one that bore his fingerprints in every detail, now proudly known as “Bubba Built.”

His story wasn’t just about fire trucks and emergencies. It was about how he made people feel—safe, seen, and loved. His workshop was never just for cars; it was where stories were shared, problems were solved, and lessons were passed on. A gifted mechanic for 30 years, he mentored many, both in the fire and the automotive worlds, always with patience, a knowing smile, and unmistakable Bubba wisdom.

Above all else, he was a family man. A devoted husband to Paula for 50 years, together they raised three children, who in turn gave him the joy of eleven grandchildren.

At the center of his life was his faith. He loved the Lord with all his heart, and he lived by Colossians 3:23: *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.* Whether he was in the fire hall, under the hood of a car, or sitting around the table with his family, Bubba lived this verse with deep conviction.

He passed into the arms of the Lord on December 19, 2024, after a courageous battle with occupational cancer, a final chapter that only further revealed his resilience and unshakable faith. He was preceded in death by his father, Paul, and his sister and leaves behind a family and a fire department who carry his legacy forward.

His life is not defined by the years he lived but by the lives he changed. His kindness, smile, and relentless light in the face of darkness left a mark that time cannot erase. He was a mentor, a husband, a father, a grandfather, a servant, a hero, and a legend to many.

His life was well lived, his love well shared. He is greatly missed.

James M. Young II

Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ December 14, 2023 ★ Age 52

TENNESSEE

Nashville Fire Department

James Maurice “Jim” Young II was a devoted husband, father, son, brother, firefighter, and friend whose life was defined by service, kindness, and an extraordinary love for his family. For 28 years, Jim proudly served the Bellevue community as an engineer, firefighter, and paramedic with the Metro Nashville Fire Department, answering every call with professionalism, compassion, and genuine care.

Jim was a true family man, and nothing meant more to him than those he loved. He shared a beautiful 34-year love story with his wife, Michele. Their marriage was built on friendship, love, and deep devotion, filled with inside jokes, quiet moments, and laughter only they truly understood.

Jim’s greatest joy was being a father to his sons, Jacob and Andrew, who were the center of his world. He coached their sports teams and spent countless hours playing games, riding bikes, flying kites, building Legos, and creating unforgettable childhood adventures. Jim turned ordinary moments into lifelong memories, building pirate ships, backyard carnivals, giant slip-and-slides, and Nerf battlefields.

Jim loved sharing his passions with his boys. He enjoyed sporting events with Jacob and talking sports with him daily. With Andrew, he loved working on projects, playing golf and tennis, and fishing. He also shared his love of music, movies, and video games with both sons, creating countless moments of laughter and connection.

Jim loved and respected his parents, Jim and Carole. He cherished hours spent fishing with his dad and the simple joy of being together on the water. He described his mother as the kindest, most loving soul and delighted in hearing her laugh. Jim shared a lifelong bond with his sister, Leigh, enjoying 80s music, trivia, and laughter together. He also took great joy in being an uncle to his nieces and nephew.

Jim was remarkably creative and could build or fix almost anything, and he loved teaching those skills to his sons. Known for his contagious laugh and warm presence, he made everyone feel welcome and was always willing to help someone in need.

Jim loved his Lord and Savior and went home to be with Him on December 14, 2023, surrounded by the friends and family he loved so deeply. One of the final things he said to his wife was, “Promise me you will keep your faith.” Jim lived a life that reflected 2 Timothy 4:7: *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.* Though his time on earth was far too short, his legacy of service, kindness, faith, and unconditional love lives on in the countless lives he touched.

David P. Greene

TEXAS

Career Engineer ★ September 19, 2022 ★ Age 56

Fort Worth Fire Department

David Paul Greene passed away peacefully on September 19, 2022, at home with his wife, Gwyn, and niece, Randi, by his side. He fought a nine-month battle of Stage 4 brain cancer, glioblastoma, for which currently there is no cure.

In 1993, he joined the Fort Worth Fire Department to begin his 29-year service to the city as a firefighter and engineer. He worked at Station 14, Station 18, and Station 39, where he completed his final shift. By his side were his closest brothers, David Childs, Anthony Quinones, Emmett Patterson, and Brant Collier.

David was known for his strong work ethic and for his giving and caring heart. He was always quick to lend a helping hand to those in need. He loved telling stories, and of course he was the expert prankster. Gwyn, his wife of 17 years, and his two bulldogs, Bella (his princess) and Bentley (the problem child) were at the center of his life and loving heart.

David was preceded in death by his mother, Sue Greene, and his father-in-law, Larry Chamberlain. He is survived by his wife, Gwyn Greene; father, Richard Greene; brother, Rick Greene; and sister, Nancy Adams. He will lovingly be remembered by his mother-in-law, Connie Chamberlain, and his three sisters-in-law, Beth Winters, Kay Lewis, and Kelly Jenkins.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

David Leos

Career Driver/Engineer ★ September 2, 2021 ★ Age 62

TEXAS

David "Super Dave" Leos proudly served the City of Dallas with 40 years of active duty with Dallas Fire-Rescue. He worked at many stations during his career as a paramedic, firefighter, and driver/engineer, with his last alarm being at 41B in Preston Hollow.

In 2014, David survived occupational cancer (leukemia), but he died in 2021 after a lengthy battle with COVID-19.

In October 2020, David organized the first annual Dallas Firefighters Memorial and clean-up day at Oakland Cemetery and was instrumental in locating each grave of the fallen firefighters and having them marked with the DFD insignia.

David was a man of integrity and moral character in everything he did. He loved God, his wife, family, fire family, friends, and church. He taught a Life Group class at church, and his hobbies included cooking, entering BBQ competitions, hunting, fishing, and anything outdoors in nature. He also loved to dance and travel.

David was a follower of Christ and lived out his faith. He would want everyone to know the importance of salvation with Christ Jesus and that he is now with his Savior in eternity!

Dallas Fire-Rescue

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Corby Michael McKenzie

TEXAS

Career Firefighter/EMT ★ March 3, 2024 ★ Age 44

South Montgomery County Fire Department

Corby McKenzie was a protector in every sense of the word, steadfast, faithful, and calm when others needed it most. In moments of chaos, he carried a quiet strength that steadied those around him. He was the firefighter you trusted without hesitation, whose presence brought reassurance before a word was ever spoken.

At the heart of Corby's life was his family. He was a devoted husband to his wife, Vicki, and a loving father to Chris McKenzie, Hailey McKenzie, Coltin McKenzie, Madison Stankevitz, and Taylor Decell, and father-in-law to Kyle Decell. Corby cherished his role as a grandfather and found great joy in time spent with his grandchildren, Hudson Decell and Evelyn Decell, whom he loved dearly. Whether at home or at the station, Corby's life was anchored in love and service.

Corby served three years as a volunteer with the Magnolia Fire Department before beginning his career with the South Montgomery County Fire Department in September 2015. He quickly became a pillar of Station 11-1, B-Shift, where he was known as a steady presence, a big brother, and a trusted leader. His dedication and courage earned him Life Saving Awards and Impact Awards for his efforts in the field, recognizing his role in saving multiple lives.

Within the fire service, Corby had a special passion for mentoring rookies. He celebrated phase completions, encouraged growth, and helped others find confidence in themselves. His leadership was marked by patience, humility, and an unwavering belief in those he served beside.

When faced with occupational cancer, Corby fought with courage, faith, and determination. Though his earthly watch has ended, we know he is fully healed and now stands guard over a far greater territory—his service complete, his peace secured.

Corby McKenzie's legacy lives on in his family, his fire family, and every life he touched. His watch continues in eternity, forever honored and forever remembered.

For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. Psalm 91:11

Jacob W. Owen

Career Engineer ★ October 2, 2023 ★ Age 25

TEXAS

Williamson County ESD #5/Jarrell Fire/Rescue

Jacob Wayne Owen, 25, of Lorena, Texas, went home to be with Jesus on October 2, 2023, after a courageous battle with brain cancer. Jake was born on September 9, 1998, in Waco, Texas, to his proud parents, Craig and Teresa Owen. Jake graduated from high school in 2017. He immediately enrolled in the MCC EMS program, and shortly after, he completed the fire academy. Jake's dream of becoming a firefighter, inspired by his father, Craig, of the Georgetown Fire Department, became a reality when he joined the Jarrell Fire Department in 2018. His dedication and hard work led to a promotion to engineer, a position he was thrilled to hold. Jake was also a proud member of the honor guard and had swift water and tech rescue training. He absolutely loved being a firefighter, and he loved his crew. You never heard a complaint come out of his mouth. He loved a challenge and would go all in no matter the circumstances. Above all, Jake strived to excel within his profession and always wanted to be the best he could be to serve others and his community.

Jake's personality was pure and sweet. He had an infectious smile and magical hugs that he shared often. He loved playing praise and worship songs in his truck or watching funny shows that made him laugh. He was slow to anger and quick to forgive. Away from work, he loved spending time with his grandparents, going to movies, and hanging out with his girlfriend, family, and friends. He and his younger sister, Bailey, had a special bond and spent lots of precious time together.

One word to describe Jake is selfless. He spent the entirety of his diagnosis worried about everyone but himself. Jake and his dad were inseparable during treatments and worked together every day to make sure he was the healthiest and strongest he could possibly be. Due to the diagnosis, Jake's family was able to hug him and tell him "I Love You" every day from the very beginning. While we didn't get enough time, there is no doubt that he knew he was loved. Not a day shall pass that he is not missed dearly, but we find peace knowing he is resting in the arms of his Savior in Heaven and is free from all earthly pain and sickness.

Overall, Jake's warm personality, work ethic, huge heart, beautiful smile, unwavering faith, and famous bear hugs left a lasting imprint on all those fortunate enough to know him.

Michael E. Phillips

TEXAS

Volunteer Chief ★ July 5, 2025 ★ Age 66

Marble Falls Area Fire Department

Michael Eugene Phillips was swept away in flood waters and killed in the line of duty on July 5, 2025.

Born on the U.S. Air Force base in Del Rio, Texas, Michael moved several times before his father retired and they settled in Orlando, Florida.

He married his high school sweetheart, Cecilia, and they remained married for 47 years.

He joined the Air Force, where he repaired and tested jet engines. After eight years, he earned a bachelor's degree in electronics and went to work for Martin Marietta in Florida. In 1991, the Phillips family moved to Texas, and Michael spent the next 30 years working for the Marble Falls School District as maintenance and bonds and improvements director.

In 1995, he joined the Marble Falls Area Fire Department and dedicated his life to serving his community. He became passionate about firefighting. He obtained an EMT-Basic license and certifications in rope, trench, swiftwater rescue, and confined space rescue. He completed a bachelor's degree in fire science and was appointed chief in 2016. A passionate educator, he held a Master Firefighter Commission, and a Level III Instructor certification. He trained and mentored countless firefighters all across Texas.

Michael is survived by his loving wife, Cecilia, who served alongside him; their only daughter, Megan; her husband and their four children, who called him Super Pops; and his older sister, Debbie.

He lived with integrity and a desire to be of service to others and died doing what he was passionate about.

His legacy of service, sacrifice, and love will never be forgotten.

William Alan “Bill” Pollard

Volunteer Firefighter ★ August 17, 2021 ★ Age 65

TEXAS

William Alan “Bill” Pollard, 65, a resident of Texas City, Texas, for 43 years, passed away August 17, 2021, in Webster, Texas.

Bill was born July 27, 1956, in Texas City to Ellen and Warren Pollard.

Bill retired from the Houston Fire Department after 38½ years of service. He was a member of the Hitchcock Volunteer Fire Department and a beloved brother and participant to so many other departments, including Santa Fe, La Marque, Southeast, Forest Bend, and Friendswood. He was devoted to teaching firefighters from around the state at the TEEKS Fire Training Academy in College Station. Galveston County Field Days, and Harris County Field Days.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

He was survived by his wife of 44 years, Norma Kay Pollard; his daughter, Erin Pollard, and husband, Jacob Williams; his sons, Ryan Pollard, and wife, Katie, and Reagen Pollard, and wife, Crystal; his grandchildren, Caeden Pollard, T.J. Campbell, Phoenix Levanne, Abbie Pollard, Drake Pollard, Brody Pollard, and Hugh Pollard; and his brother, Warren A. Pollard, and wife, Patsy.

Hitchcock Volunteer Fire Department

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS®

Michael Reedy

TEXAS

Career Captain ★ June 25, 2025 ★ Age 38

Roanoke Fire Department

Captain Michael Reedy was a devoted firefighter, a respected leader, and a cherished husband, father, and friend. For nearly 18 years, he faithfully served the Roanoke community with unwavering loyalty, honor, and a deep commitment to helping others.

Born on September 5, 1986, in Graham, Texas, Michael grew up in Wichita Falls and graduated from Northwest High School in 2005. Following in his father's footsteps, he began his fire service career as a volunteer with the Roanoke Fire Department in 2007 and became a full-time firefighter in 2008. His dedication, humility, and strong work ethic guided him through the ranks, ultimately earning him the role of captain. In this position, he was known not only for his leadership but also for the mentorship and guidance he offered to those around him.

Michael proudly served as a commander for the Roanoke Fire Department Honor Guard and brought joy to countless children through his involvement in the "Klownz on Fire" fire safety education program. He was also a passionate fire instructor in North Texas, always eager to share his knowledge and help others grow in their calling to serve.

Michael's faith was central to his life. His belief in Jesus shaped his character, his relationships, and the way he approached every aspect of his service. His legacy is one of compassion, integrity, and steadfast devotion.

Above all, Michael's greatest love was his family. He married his best friend and soulmate, Christina, on July 24, 2010, and together they built a beautiful life with their two sons, Kyle and Ryan. Michael's pride in his family was unmistakable—his face lit up whenever he spoke about them. Whether he was cheering from the sidelines, gaming with his boys, or simply spending time together, being a husband and father was the role he cherished most.

Anyone who knew Michael remembers his humor. He had an easy, playful way of joking that made people feel comfortable, valued, and connected. His teasing was always kindhearted and full of warmth — a simple, genuine way he showed he cared. Bringing a smile to someone's face came naturally to him, and he seemed to do it without even trying.

Captain Michael Reedy lived a life grounded in service, guided by faith, and filled with love and joy. The impact he made—through his character, his dedication, and the way he cared for others—will continue to inspire his family, his fire service brothers and sisters, and the community he was so proud to serve.

Stephen D. Scott

Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ September 17, 2025 ★ Age 62

TEXAS

Houston Fire Department

Husband, father, and friend, Stephen Scott died in the line of duty on September 17, 2025, at the age of 62.

Born at Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene to Marie Elizabeth and Fred Dewey Scott, Stephen grew up in a close-knit military family with his sister, Arlene. They got to experience the world, from Japan and England to Hawaii, California, Missouri, and finally Texas.

Born with hip dysplasia, Stephen spent years in a cast. Despite this start to life, he grew into an accomplished athlete, excelling in football and playing for Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas. He was recognized as a Collegiate All-American for his football prowess. That love of athletics carried into adulthood, as he inspired young athletes serving as "Coach Scott" to various youth sports teams.

In college, he worked on ranches in West Texas, Montana, and beyond. The long days, hard work, and friendships from those years left a lasting mark, and the stories of that time remain family favorites.

In 1997, Stephen joined the Houston Fire Department, where his service as a firefighter/paramedic defined nearly three decades of his life. He also served on the HFD Bike Team and squad car response and enjoyed mentoring young paramedics. More recently, he was honored to be named Manager of Telemetry through SETRAC. Alongside his fire service, Stephen was the proud owner of Paramount Property Analysts of Houston, a real estate appraisal company he operated for more than twenty years.

Away from the firehouse, Stephen's heart belonged to his wife and family. With his wife, Annette, he raised three children, Caleb, Madison, and Savannah. Along with his wife, he delighted in RV trips, beach outings, cooking, their family, and sunset walks.

He will be remembered for his dedication to the Houston Fire Department, family, and friends.

Shawn Michael Snider

TEXAS

Career Fire Chief ★ May 1, 2023 ★ Age 58

Edinburg Fire Department

Fire Chief Shawn Michael Snider of the Edinburg Fire Department passed away peacefully on May 1, 2023, after a courageous battle with cancer.

Chief Snider began his fire service career in 1981 with the Alamo Fire Department. He later joined the Edinburg Fire Department as assistant fire marshal and was appointed fire chief in January 1999, a role he served with dedication and pride until his passing. Throughout his career, he was deeply involved in the fire and emergency management community, serving with organizations such as the State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association (SFFMA) of Texas, Texas Task Force 1 Type 3 Rio Grande Valley, Texas Fire Chiefs Association, Hidalgo County Fire Chiefs Association, and the Rio Grande Valley Firefighters and Fire Marshals Association, where he was a past president. He also served as an adjunct instructor for Texas A&M University's Engineering Extension Service.

Chief Snider received numerous awards recognizing his commitment to public service. He served as president of the SFFMA in 2009, was named Firefighter of the Year in 2015, inducted into the Texas Division of Emergency Management Hall of Fame in May 2023, and posthumously inducted into the Texas Fire Service Hall of Fame in January 2024.

A tireless advocate for the fire service, Chief Snider championed key Texas fire service legislation, including tuition exemptions for volunteer firefighters pursuing fire science degrees, tax exemptions on fuel for volunteer fire departments, and the Black Hydrant Law. In 2004, he helped establish a Texas Task Force Type 3 designation for the Rio Grande Valley and continued advocating until the region achieved its own independent designation with the formation of Texas Task Force 3 in 2025.

Chief Snider was a devoted member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church, serving as a lector and Minister of the Holy Eucharist, and was a proud Knight of Columbus. While deeply committed to his faith, community, and profession, his greatest love was always his family.

Known for leading from the front, Chief Snider was a mentor to countless individuals and a fire chief who exemplified service, courage, and integrity. His legacy lives on through those he guided and inspired.

Above all, he cherished his wife, Edna, and daughter, Sarah. Chief Snider is remembered as a courageous, hilarious, and loving man whose impact will never be forgotten.

Eddy W. Wood

Career Division Chief ★ September 25, 2021 ★ Age 46

TEXAS

Saginaw Fire Department

Eddy approached life on full blast! Born November 5, 1974, Chief Wood dedicated himself to saving lives, mentoring others, and living a life of high integrity with the fire service. Eddy embodied his loveable clown persona while demonstrating humor, wit, and inventive playfulness. Eddy always put family first. He was a compassionate and considerate husband who truly believed he found his soulmate in Ann. She was his "ride or die." Eddy could be seen putting on a spectacle with Bert the fire puppet, chasing the kids as Daddy-saurus and bringing a smile to those around him.

Chief Wood's warrior spirit sustained him through his battle with brain cancer, which ended on September 25, 2021. Eddy started his public safety career in 1992 as a dispatcher with the city of Azle, Texas. After basic fire training, he served as a full-time firefighter with the city of Azle. Eddy joined the North Richland Hills Fire Department in October 1998 as a firefighter/paramedic and was promoted in 2009 to battalion chief. After he retired from North Richland Hills in 2017, he served as fire chief for the city of Brownwood until 2019. He then relocated to Saginaw, Texas as the fire marshal/division chief.

Chief Wood was a Master Mason, a Shrine Clown (Sparky), and president of the Mooslah Shrine Clowns 2014. At community events, he was a master face painter for the little ones. A native Texan, he was a well-known cowboy and was in high demand as a campfire cook.

Eddy leaves behind his beloved wife, Ann Ellison-Wood, and stepdaughters, Avery and Leah Ellison. He is also survived by his son, Taylor Wood (wife Lacie); grandchildren, Whitten, Waylon, and Rylee Farmer; daughter, Cheyenne Wood; mother, Linda Wood Peninger (husband Gary); father, Horace Wood; and sisters, Kristi Harm (husband Scott and son Collin) and Lisa Wood.

Greater love has no man than this: that a man lays down his life for his friends. John 15:13

Corban Summers

UTAH

Career Senior Firefighter/AEMT ★ April 21, 2025 ★ Age 49

South Jordan Fire Department

Corban Summers was an amazing husband to his wife, Kim. Newly married, they were incredibly happy and excited for the future together. Corban was the father to four beautiful children, Cadence, Dallin, Myrah, and Adelle, who were his world. All he had sacrificed in his life was for them.

Corban was born on June 13, 1975, in Salt Lake City, Utah, the oldest of six children. He was drawn to the fire service in his early 20s, not only to serve the community but to become someone his children would be proud of. He started his career at West Jordan City Fire Department, then transferred to South Jordan City Fire Department, where he served for 24 years as an engineer and senior firefighter. He also worked part-time for Saratoga Springs and Bluffdale City Fire Departments.

Corban thrived in his job. He believed in camaraderie and the brotherhood. He was the first to offer a helping hand to anyone in need, both on and off duty. He was selfless. No matter how he was feeling, he would make sure everyone around him had a better day because he was there with his quick wit, humor, pranks, encouragement, or a listening ear. Because of this, there wasn't a person that knew him that didn't love working with him.

He was the one to rally the troops when a call came in and never hesitated to share his knowledge. He would take any assignment and do it with a smile. South Jordan City has now instituted a yearly Corban Summers Award for those who embody his qualities.

Off duty, Corban loved the outdoors. His favorite place was his family's cabin near Fruitland, Utah, where he found restoration and peace. He loved to hike, fish, and watch nature, but most of all, he loved to sit around the campfire and play his guitar.

Corban enjoyed sharing even the most mundane activities with those he loved and turning them into the most incredible adventure.

We were so lucky to have known his generous and unique spirit. He is so deeply missed.

Darrin Rodney Spaulding

Volunteer Chief ★ April 9, 2024 ★ Age 59

VERMONT

Ascutney Volunteer Fire Department

With heavy hearts we remember and honor the life of Chief Darrin Rodney Spaulding, a dedicated leader, a fierce protector and beloved member of our community and the Ascutney Volunteer Fire Department service family. He was not only a chief but also a father, a son, a mentor, a role model, and a friend to all who knew him. Darrin built a firehouse culture based on trust, teamwork, and love for the work. He forged many friendships with our surrounding mutual aid communities on both sides of the Connecticut River, earning the respect of other leaders, making AVFD always a valuable resource in their times of need. After 44 years of fire service and leadership to our community, he died on April 9, 2024, at the age of 59.

As a young man of 15, he followed in the footsteps of his father, Rodney Spaulding. Chief Spaulding exemplified courage, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to the safety of our surrounding communities for 44 years. The community knew that he would show up at any hour to assist in their time of need, always arriving at the scene for medical calls before the ambulance. He cared deeply for this community, and his legacy will continue to inspire all who follow in his footsteps. He had both of his firefighter sons in firetrucks before they could walk, and they are both active members in AVFD today. Darrin worked for himself as an electrician since the age of 18.

Darrin was an advocate of fundraising for his department. He was well known for his Chief's Flower Sale at Mother's Day, his donation yard sale which attracted hundreds of patrons twice a year, and his pie sale, for which he always proudly made his grandmother's custard pie.

Darrin loved making maple syrup with his son, Jackson, deer hunting, and spending endless hours on his property watching deer, bears, and turkeys. One thing people will always remember is his sense of humor and practical jokes. He instilled a great sense of camaraderie with all surrounding departments.

May you rest in peace, Darrin. Your legacy is etched into the heart of our firehouse, our community, and our hearts, and you will never be forgotten.

William Kenneth “Ken” Carter

VIRGINIA

Career Captain ★ February 8, 2024 ★ Age 52

Newport News Fire Department

Captain William Kenneth “Ken” Carter passed away on February 8, 2024, at age 52, following a courageous battle with occupational cancer incurred in the line of duty. His life was marked by faith, leadership, and unwavering service.

Born in Danville, Virginia, Ken earned his EMT certification in 1991 while volunteering during college. After graduating from Virginia Tech in 1993, he moved to Newport News, completed paramedic training, and joined the Newport News Fire Department in 1996 as a firefighter and paramedic.

Throughout his career, Captain Carter served at multiple stations, rode the EMS supervisor’s unit, and later instructed at the training center, educating hundreds of firefighters and EMS providers. He also provided EMS training at Northstar 1st Response. Teaching was his calling. He challenged students to learn three new things in every class and referred to each test as a “certificate of knowledge,” believing growth was the true measure of success. Promoted to captain, he returned to Station 9 and led with humility and integrity.

In 2022, a routine screening led to a diagnosis of cholangiocarcinoma. Despite his illness, he continued serving as long as he was physically able, never complaining and always more concerned for others. When active duty was no longer possible, he returned to the training center. When he wasn’t physically able to go in, he would work from home to support the department. His faith remained steadfast. He often said, “If this battle helps one person come to know God, then the pain I endure will be worth it all.”

In December 2023, he was honored by the Peninsula EMS Council for exceptional service. The Ken Carter Certificate of Knowledge award was established by the Newport News Fire Department Training Center to recognize the top recruit of each class.

Ken’s greatest devotion was to God, his family, and country. He was a loving husband, devoted father, cherished brother, and proud PawPaw. He found peace in hunting and at his beloved “hobby” farm, where he and his wife, Judy, worked side by side tending grapevines, gardening, and growing lavender. He especially loved caring for his cows and chickens and took great joy in making jelly and venison jerky to share with others.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Romans 8:18

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7

Rodney J. Coles

Career Firefighter ★ August 3, 2023 ★ Age 49

VIRGINIA

Rodney Jermaine "CUP" Coles of Petersburg, Virginia, was born November 8, 1973. Rodney J. Coles met the end of his watch on August 3, 2023. He was educated in the Lunenburg County Public School System and graduated from Central High School with the Class of 1992. Rodney loved the outdoors, fishing, golfing, softball, and hunting. He was also a "die-hard" Dallas Cowboys fan.

Rodney was dedicated throughout his tenure as a public safety officer. He served in various public emergency services, such as at the Central State Hospital Forensic Unit, Popular Springs Hospital, and the Department of Corrections for eighteen years. His final contribution to the community was his employment with the Richmond Fire Department and Emergency Services since August 4, 2008. He was about to celebrate his fifteenth anniversary serving his community as a firefighter.

Rodney left behind to cherish his memory, his devoted wife of 22 years, Amy Coles; two daughters, Rachelle Bragg and Jazzmen Pope; parents, Daniel and Zelda Coles; two brothers, Daniel and Calvin Coles; sister, Natasha Coles; two grandchildren, Riley and Reign Fragbeni; two fur babies, RJ and Pachino; nieces and nephews, Emery Pope, Marissa Coles, Kayla Coles, Taylor Coles, Emon Ghee, Journey Coles, and Sanye Coles; brothers and sisters of both the Richmond Fire Department and Emergency Services and the Department of Corrections; and a host of other relatives and numerous friends.

Rodney dedicated his life's work and effort to making the very best life that he could for his family. He took nothing for granted, thanking God every day for all the blessings and grace shown to him over the years. He lived life to the fullest with no regrets.

Rodney J. Coles, who was called a "gentle giant" by many, was a true humanitarian and will be missed by all who knew him.

Richmond Fire Department

Linzie Scott Collins

VIRGINIA

Career Firefighter/EMT ★ November 16, 2025 ★ Age 50

Richlands Fire-Rescue

Some people live lives filled with applause and attention. Others live lives of steady devotion, showing up day after day, doing the hard work without asking for praise, loving without needing recognition. Linzie Scott Collins, better known as "Scottie," lived that way. His life was not measured by trophies or titles but by the countless lives he touched, the family he cherished, and the unwavering sense of duty that guided his work. To his community he was a firefighter and EMS provider. To his family he was a devoted father, a loving husband, a teacher, a protector, and the heart of their home.

Scottie dedicated over three decades to serving others. Emergencies that most people could not imagine—fires, medical calls, long nights, missed sleep, and moments of intense pressure—were part of his routine. He carried the weight of responsibility with quiet resolve, understanding that when alarms sounded, someone's worst day had begun, and it was his job to help make it survivable. He never treated his work as just a job. It was a calling, one he answered faithfully.

Firefighting and EMS work demand courage and compassion. Scottie had both. He understood that beyond the flames and sirens were people who were frightened, in pain, and in need of reassurance. He brought calm to chaos, stability to fear, and experience to moments that required action. His service was consistent, dependable, and rooted in care for his community. He gave his time, strength, and sometimes his peace of mind so others could be safe.

When he came home, Scottie stepped fully into his role as husband and father. He was deeply devoted to his family, and they were his priority. He didn't just tell his children what was right; he showed them through his actions, demonstrating the value of hard work, honesty, and commitment. When his kids asked questions, he treated their curiosity with respect and took time to explain. To him, learning was a lifelong process, and he was willing to be their guide. His children knew they mattered, because he made time for them and shared his knowledge.

Scottie's hands told stories of his life. His hands carried hoses, steadied medical equipment, welded metal, and fixed what needed fixing. Few things brought him more joy than celebrating the holidays with his kids. That time was sacred. Cornhole was another simple joy he loved. It was about connection—tossing bags, laughing with friends and family, enjoying the moment. These traditions became anchors in his children's lives, reminders that their dad would always show up for them.

Scottie was a true hero. Our hero.

Jeremy Lathan Compton

Career Firefighter ★ May 30, 2024 ★ Age 35

VIRGINIA

City of Radford Fire Department

Jeremy Lathan Compton began his firefighting career as a volunteer firefighter with Elliston Volunteer Fire Department. In 2014, he fulfilled his dream of joining the Christiansburg Volunteer Fire Department, where he served until his passing. He worked as a career firefighter/EMT for the City of Radford from 2022 until 2024. Jeremy also served as a deputy with the Radford City Sheriff's Office, where he helped develop the Crisis Intervention Team program and earned a cherished letter of commendation for his compassionate care and service.

Jeremy received numerous honors, including Firefighter of the Year from Elliston VFD (2011 & 2012); Firefighter of the Year from Radford City FD (2023); and Firefighter of the Year from Christiansburg VFD (2023). He earned the Eleanor Hawkins Award, the Never Give Up Hard Charger Hot Dog Award, and the Above and Beyond Award (2021 & 2023) from Christiansburg VFD. These accolades reflect Jeremy's tireless dedication and the respect he earned from his peers.

Known for his humor and positivity, Jeremy often lifted others' spirits with jokes and stories, especially those featuring his beloved alter-ego "Vinny." His tales of "Vinny" often left family and friends laughing until they cried. One of his best friends and firefighter brothers said, "If you were having a bad day, Jeremy always seemed to turn it around and make sure you saw the brighter side of whatever may be wrong."

Jeremy's greatest joy was family time, especially with his son Wyatt, his "best buddy." Their conversations, which Jeremy called "Words from Wyatt," were filled with humor and wisdom, He cherished his role as stepfather to Mason and Cassidy, wholeheartedly supporting their games and activities. His voice of encouragement was a familiar sound at sporting events, not only for his children, but others. One young man will always remember hearing, "All right 1-5, pick you out one and driiive it!"

When someone would ask how he was doing, Jeremy would answer, "Living the dream!" Jeremy preferred "see ya" rather than goodbye. He refused to let cancer define him. The Bible verse Isaiah 43:2 sustained him through difficult times. He believed that life is precious. He often said, "You have to stay strong for your family and your kids. Nobody is guaranteed tomorrow. You live every day like it's going to be your last."

To those closest to him, Jeremy's words, "Love you...mean it," were more than a phrase; they were a promise. His life was a testament to courage, compassion, and unwavering love. His legacy will continue to inspire all who knew him.

TyVaughn Nathaniel "Ty" Eldridge

VIRGINIA

Career Firefighter ★ July 3, 2021 ★ Age 26

Chesterfield Fire and Emergency Medical Services

TyVaughn "Ty" Eldridge was a member of Chesterfield Fire and EMS Recruit School 63. He died in the line of duty on his birthday, July 3, 2021, after suffering a medical emergency. Ty was just 26 years old.

TyVaughn was a fourth-generation firefighter. He was a light in his family and in his community. He had an intuitive nature, a giving spirit, and a great sense of humor. He enjoyed mentoring, playing the trumpet, basketball, baseball, painting, concerts, and giving back to the community.

In his early years, Ty was one of the first to attend Henrico Police Athletic League's summer program. In 2009, through his dedication and determination, he became the first Youth of the Year award winner for Henrico PAL. He was also awarded the 2011 Henrico Summer Camp Volunteer Award, as well as the Henrico High School Marching Band MVP Award. TyVaughn also served as an officer on the PAL Youth Leadership Council. Once he aged out of summer camp, he became a counselor.

Ty was featured in the Henrico Citizen in 2015 for his service as a Henrico PAL counselor. The article, fittingly titled "Full Circle," spoke on how Ty participated in the program as a child and how he gave back to the organization as a lead counselor. Kenneth Ragland, an executive with PAL, watched Ty grow up in the program and said in the article, "Ty is a by-product of what the Henrico Police Athletic League is all about." TyVaughn said that he "wouldn't have traded his experiences for any other organization" and that the mission "helped mold him."

TyVaughn was a 2013 graduate of Henrico High School. His experiences as a youth drove him to graduate from Old Dominion University in 2017 with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. He continued his service to both ODU and his home community. Given the caliber of man that Ty was, he chose to start his career in public safety with Chesterfield Fire and EMS.

Ty always served his community and ultimately fulfilled his lifelong goal to become a firefighter. His never-ending motivation would have continued to make a positive difference.

Ty is remembered as a loving son, brother, and friend. He was also the better half to his college sweetheart of seven years. He touched many people, and he is greatly missed. We are grateful for the privilege of having him in our lives. His smile, devotion, and dedication are forever engrained in our memory. We will never forget the ultimate sacrifice he made in service to our community.

Andrew Wade Jenks

Career Firefighter ★ July 6, 2024 ★ Age 37

VIRGINIA

Lynchburg Fire Department

Andrew Wade Jenks loved his community. He dedicated 15 years of honorable service to the Lynchburg Fire Department, most recently as a master firefighter at Station 1 on C Shift. His passion for firefighting developed during his teenage years while volunteering with the Brookville Timberlake Volunteer Fire Department. Andrew continued his career, sharing his knowledge and devotion to the mission throughout Lynchburg at Station 6 and Station 1. He was not only a valued member of the department; he was a role model for younger firefighters who joined the department and showed them the definition of determination, resilience, and hard work. He volunteered for all aspects of the profession by becoming a member of the Technical Rescue and Wildland Teams and played the drums in the Pipe and Drum Corps. During every C Shift, Andrew could be seen riding in the seat of Truck 1.

When not at the firehouse, Andrew enjoyed raising Black Angus cattle on his farm with his family. What started as a hobby soon became a shared passion with his son. Andrew and Wade would roam the fields, counting and feeding the cows. Nothing made Andrew happier than spending time with Wade, whether on his farm, at the beach, or sharing his love of music with him.

Wade was the reason Andrew fought so bravely every single day. Andrew was the definition of a hard worker. Even in the depths of battling brain cancer, he never let it stop him. Andrew never met a stranger and had a way of bringing people together with a smile and a hug. His memory will always be a testament to his courage, strength, and unwavering commitment to serving and helping others.

Andrew truly lived and loved his life to the fullest. He would challenge us all to live by the words of one of his favorite songs, "'Til You Can't," (by Ben Stennis and Matt Rogers).

If you got a chance, take it, take it while you got a chance

If you got a dream, chase it, 'cause a dream won't chase you back

If you're gonna love somebody

Hold 'em as long and as strong and as close as you can

'Til you can't

Christopher S. Jones

VIRGINIA

Career Captain ★ January 8, 2025 ★ Age 47

Portsmouth Fire Rescue and Emergency Services

Christopher "Jonesy" Jones was born August 1, 1977, in Norfolk, Virginia. Chris was a longtime resident of Chesapeake, Virginia, until moving to Dinwiddie, Virginia, in 2021. He graduated from Indian River High School in 1996.

On November 22, 1998, Chris married the love of his life, Samantha. Together, they welcomed three amazing sons, Andrew (2000), Eli (2003), and Jacob (2004). Chris was a devoted father and husband. He loved his family immensely and loved making memories with them. Between his wife, three boys, and two beautiful granddaughters, Chris always had something to do with the family. He loved being a husband, father, father-in-law, and grandpa. He did everything in his power to provide for his family and ensure they had what they needed, right up to his final days.

Chris found his passion for firefighting in 2002 when he was hired by the City of Portsmouth and never looked back. Chris was affectionately known as a "fireman's fireman" by his peers. He was a 20-year veteran of the department, having served in many roles and responsibilities. During his tenure, Chris served on Ladder 10, Squad 7, Engine 2, Engine 1, Ladder 1, Fire Marshal's Office, Engine 4, Rescue 1, Engine 7, and Engine 10. Of all these assignments, Engine 7-B Shift became his home. Over the decades, Chris served on both the hazardous materials and technical rescue teams. Chris received numerous distinguished honors, including Company Officer of the Year, the Fire Department Service Award, the Campaign Award, the Commendation Award, the Life-Saving Award, and six Unit Citations. Chris was a shining example of selflessness in his service to the city and the department. He had a way about him that screamed, "I mean business," but a heart that screamed, "Let's have some fun!" He was a doer, never shying away or backing down from a challenge in the firehouse or on the fireground. In his off time, Chris was an avid outdoorsman. He never needed an excuse to be outside, and he loved hunting and fishing.

Beyond all else, Chris was a man on fire for God. At the time of his death, Chris was a member of Smyrna Baptist Church in Dinwiddie, Virginia. He loved teaching Sunday School and Wednesday night Bible Study and enjoyed being a part of the men's group. He wanted everyone to know what God had done for him and that he loved the Lord. When planning his service with his pastor, Chris wanted only one thing—to spread the Gospel and draw people closer to Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Chris is deeply missed by his loved ones and fire department family.

Mack G. Mays Jr.

Volunteer Assistant Fire Chief ★ July 10, 2025 ★ Age 47

VIRGINIA

Mack G. Mays Jr., 47, of Monroe, Virginia, passed away unexpectedly on July 10, 2025. Born in Lynchburg on January 14, 1978, Mack was the beloved son of Janie Burks Mays and the late Mack G. Mays Sr.

Mack dedicated his life to the service of others, and his impact on the community will be felt for generations to come. For more than two decades, he served tirelessly as a first responder, beginning with the Amherst Life Saving Crew and Volunteer Fire Department. His commitment and leadership later led him to the Monelison Volunteer Fire Department, where he rose through the ranks and was proudly serving as assistant fire chief at the time of his passing. Mack's courage, compassion, and selflessness were evident in every call he answered and every life he touched.

Mack attended Ebenezer Baptist Church and worked with Nelson County Public Schools. His presence brought steadiness and kindness to those around him, whether in the school halls, firehouse, or sanctuary. He gave freely of his time, his skills, and his heart, never asking for recognition, but always willing to lend a helping hand.

Mack was survived by his loving mother, Janie Burks Mays; his fiancée and partner, Linda Bryant; his sister and brothers, and a host of nieces, nephews, extended family, and friends who cherished his generous spirit and unwavering dedication.

Monelison Volunteer Fire Department

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Robert Evans Talbott

VIRGINIA

Career Lieutenant ★ December 20, 2024 ★ Age 55

Chesterfield Fire and Emergency Medical Services

Robert Evans Talbott was born on February 2, 1969, in South Boston, Virginia. He was the son of Glennwood Watkins Talbott and LuRay Trout Talbott. He was a graduate of Blue Stone High School, Class of 1988, and a graduate of Danville Community College, Class of 2011, where he received a degree in fire science.

He devoted 40 years of his life to serving others, starting in his teenage years as an Eagle Scout, volunteer firefighter, and volunteer at the Danville Life Saving Crew, where he became a life member. He began his fire service career at the City of Danville Fire Department, where he served for eight years. He then joined Chesterfield Fire and EMS in Chesterfield, Virginia, where he became a 20-year veteran of the department. Robert's commitment to service was unwavering during his tenure.

Robert was promoted to lieutenant in 2017. Throughout his career, Robert received numerous awards for his heroism and lifesaving work as both a firefighter and paramedic. He helped rescue five people from a burning apartment building in October of 2023. He was known for his kind, calm demeanor that helped bring order to chaos and made him well-suited to impart his experience and wisdom on young firefighters and paramedics.

He was a great leader and mentor to many. Most importantly, Robert was a family man. He was a devoted husband to his wife of almost 30 years, Carol, and proud father to his three children, Austin (wife Jill), Evan (wife Emily), and Amanda. He also leaves behind his grandson, Ashton; sister, Lynn; and his brother-in-law, Curtis (wife Scharlotte). He was predeceased by a brother, Gerry, and a grandson, Ryland. He was an avid motorcross rider and, over the years, traveled across the United States with his family to compete in races.

Robert's strongest attribute was his character, which was comprised of compassion and a quiet confidence that he displayed daily. He had a humor that transcended his family life and the fire service. There are countless stories that still echo through the fire stations and his hometown of Robert's antics and love for sweets.

On November 15, 2024, he was transported in the middle of his shift to the emergency department. He was diagnosed with occupational lung cancer and shortly thereafter succumbed to his illness after a brief but valiant fight against the disease. He was surrounded by his wife, family, and fire station crew at the time of his passing. Robert will forever be in our hearts and minds. He was a friend to many, a stranger to none, and we will never forget the impact that he had on our lives.

Steve Alan Weikle

Volunteer Firefighter ★ February 13, 2025 ★ Age 70

VIRGINIA

Boiling Springs Fire and Rescue Department

Steve Alan Weikle was a devoted husband, father, and lifelong servant to his community. For eighteen wonderful years, he shared a deep and loving partnership with his wife, Libby Weikle. He was also a proud and caring father to Stephen "Joe" Weikle; his wife, Shannon; and granddaughter, Carlea, whom he cherished deeply.

Born on January 4, 1955, in Covington, Virginia, Steve was the son of the late Cebert Bernard Weikle and Ileita Gillespie Weikle. He built a long and dedicated career as a production operator with MeadWestvaco, retiring after an impressive 42 years of service.

Steve's commitment to helping others extended far beyond his professional life. For fifty years, he served his community through Boiling Springs Fire & Rescue and the Paint Bank Fire Department. Over the decades, he held many roles—firefighter, EMT B, safety officer, CPR instructor, training officer, 2nd vice president—and most notably served as chief for eighteen years. His leadership, courage, and unwavering dedication left a lasting impact on everyone who served beside him.

One of Steve's greatest passions was his involvement with the Virginia State Firefighters Association. He rarely missed a conference or meeting, and he cherished the camaraderie, mentorship, and shared purpose that came with being part of the VSFA family. For five wonderful years, he proudly served as co-chairman of the Truck Rodeo, a role he embraced with enthusiasm, dedication, and his trademark good humor. His leadership and commitment helped make the event a highlight for departments across the state, and his presence there will be deeply missed.

Outside of his service, Steve found joy in the simple, meaningful moments of life. He loved the outdoors—hunting, fishing, and rolling hay with his close friends Rich and Deb. Some of his happiest days were spent on the road exploring new places or relaxing on the lake with his family.

On February 13, 2025, Steve once again demonstrated his selfless commitment to others when he responded to a structure collapse involving trapped farm animals. Though he sustained no injuries while rescuing the animals, he suffered a cardiac event shortly after returning home. His final act, like so many before it, was one of courage, compassion, and service.

Steve Alan Weikle lived a life defined by love, loyalty, and an unwavering dedication to helping others. His legacy will continue to shine brightly in the community he served and in the hearts of all who knew and loved him.

Brian Annis-Levings

WASHINGTON

Career Deputy Fire Marshal ★ November 21, 2022 ★ Age 52

Central Pierce Fire & Rescue

Brian Albert Annis-Levings was born in Portland, Oregon, on October 28, 1970, to parents Richard and Elaine Annis. He grew up in Vancouver, Washington, with his mother and stepfather, Bob Levings. Brian was quiet, meticulous, thoughtful, and adventurous. He earned his pilot's license before his driver's license. He loved to play basketball, run, hike, fish, backpack, hunt, ski, mountain bike, rock climb, mountain climb, and learn.

Brian graduated from Ridgefield High School in 1989 and began his search for a vocation. He worked for Freightliner Corporation while completing a bachelor's degree in business and communications from Concordia University in Portland. Desiring to join the Mount Hood Ski Patrol, he earned his EMT certification from Vancouver's College of Emergency Services in 2000. He found that active emergency medicine challenged him, and he went on to complete his paramedic licensure. In 2002, he was hired by Central Pierce Fire and Rescue in Washington, where he served as a firefighter/paramedic for 15 years. During this time, he was an honor guard member, a material safety officer, and helped to train many of his fellow firefighter/paramedics. In 2016, Brian was promoted to deputy fire marshal in the Prevention Division. As a DFM, he was commissioned by Puyallup Police Department, served with the National Association of Fire Investigators, and became a hazardous materials specialist. Brian loved the growth his career provided and cherished the bonds of brotherhood forged between firefighters along the way.

Brian was a doting husband and father. He married his high school sweetheart, Nissa Hendrickson, in 1994. His greatest reward in this life was spending time with his family and the birth and raising of his daughters, Jacqueline and Melissa. He adored the girls. Brian taught them much about love, truth, forgiveness, and dedication—even to his last breath. He gave many hours to his local schools and clubs, Child Evangelism Fellowship, Heart and Hands Pregnancy Care Center, and to teaching the Bible. He was whole-hearted in all he put his hands to and was a skilled leader that Christ used in many ways. We who knew Brian were strengthened and comforted by his presence. He is loved forever and always!

Brian's favorite verse was Romans 1:16. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

Michael Jensen

Career Assistant Crew Captain ★ August 20, 2023 ★ Age 44

WASHINGTON

Mike spent his early years in Yakima and then moved to Naches. After graduation, he pursued studies in fire science, earned his EMT certification, and joined the fire training academy at Yakima Fire Department.

His desire, connection to nature, and adrenaline-seeking attitude ignited an interest in wildland firefighting. He began his career with the Naches Ranger District. His first year in fire was 2001, a year marked by a tragic wildfire that claimed the lives of members of his unit. Although he wasn't with his crew at the time, it had a huge impact on his life. Over the course of his 22-year career he assumed a wide range of roles and became a respected figure in the firefighting community. He traveled to numerous locations in the United States in his role at the U.S. Forest Service. He was involved in fire prevention, served as an engine captain and hotshot, and educated future firefighters. After an extended time on the Oregon coast with the Powers Ranger District, Michael arrived back at the Naches Ranger District, where his career started and ended.

Fire was a big part of his life, but his light never shined brighter than when he became a father. His children, Annelise, Aiden, and Haisley, were the highlight of his days. Fatherhood came naturally to him. He was a devoted dad whose unwavering patience, love, and stability in the face of any challenge made him not only an exceptional firefighter but an extraordinary father. Although he didn't get to be a father for as long as he would have wished, his children were the most important part of his life, and his love will continue to watch over them forever.

Michael's life was cut far too short after a sudden medical emergency. Though there were no final goodbyes, his love for life and the way he touched others will remain with us always. We are deeply blessed for the time we had with him and forever grateful that God entrusted him to our lives.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7

United States Forest Service-Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

Adam Lamb

WASHINGTON

Career Lieutenant ★ April 25, 2025 ★ Age 62

Bothell Fire Department

Known affectionately as “Lambo” or “the Unofficial Mayor of Bothell” to his friends, Adam bravely fought his second battle with cancer, this time against mesothelioma, a relentless foe acquired during his selfless service.

Adam is survived by his devoted wife of 36 years, Katherine, his loving children, Dak (15), Prairie (14), and Irie (14), and his adoring dog, Nugget.

Before joining the Bothell Fire Department, Adam served as a captain in the Air Force, where he distinguished himself as a missileer and a combat controller (CCT) Air Force Special Operations Forces known as Air Commandos. He completed the notoriously challenging two-year “pipeline,” one of the toughest training programs in the military, earning full qualification to deploy with Special Forces and Navy SEALs.

Adam was hired by the Bothell Fire Department on February 27, 1998, and dedicated his life to protecting the community, rising through the ranks to lieutenant and battalion chief. During his esteemed career, he served on the Technical Rescue Team (TRT), provided medical support for the Bothell Police Special Response Team (SRT), and responded to Ground Zero after 9/11. Adam was also the first officer on scene during the Main Street fire, earning him a Distinguished Unit Medal for his bravery and leadership. While serving the community of Bothell and surrounding areas, Adam cared deeply and compassionately for his patients, establishing bonds that lasted years to follow. He retired on March 14, 2024, due to his battle with cancer.

Adam was a resilient fighter who cherished his family and friends deeply. In his free time, he loved spending time with his family the most on hikes around the Pacific Northwest and at his cabin, boating and fishing in Eastern Washington, and attending concerts anywhere music was playing. He lit up any room he was in, leaving an instant and lasting impression on anyone lucky enough to cross his path.

Adam’s positive spirit, zest for life, and unwavering passion for service have left an indelible mark on our community and in the hearts of all who knew him.

Bill Mack

Career Deputy Chief ★ July 18, 2025 ★ Age 59

WASHINGTON

East Pierce Fire and Rescue

Deputy Chief Bill Mack of Bonney Lake, Washington, passed away peacefully in the early hours of his 59th birthday on July 18, 2025, surrounded by the loving embrace of his family after a courageous two-year battle with occupational cancer.

Chief Mack dedicated over 30 years to the fire service, beginning his career with the City of Auburn Fire Department in 1992, and quickly rose through the ranks. In 2021, he brought his experience and passion for mentorship to East Pierce Fire and Rescue as deputy chief, where he continued to make a lasting impact until his retirement in 2023.

Throughout his career, Chief Mack was a champion for training and development, teaching CPR and EMT skills, leading multi-agency regional training efforts, and helping shape the careers of countless firefighters and officers across King and Pierce counties. Bill also served as vice president of IAFF Local 1352, district representative for the Washington State Council of Fire Fighters, and advocated fiercely for firefighter health, safety, and labor rights. His service extended far beyond emergency response, volunteering with organizations like the Nick of Time Foundation, the Lionhardt Organization, and the First Responder Liaison Network, always putting community first.

Bill was more than a courageous firefighter; he was a steady presence, a loyal teammate, and a true friend. His laughter, compassion, and quiet strength left a mark on everyone he met. He loved fiercely, and what a gift it was to experience.

While his passing reminds us of the risks firefighters face, it also gives us a chance to reflect on what mattered most to Bill—his family, his friends, and his community. He gave his best to all three, never missing a moment to show up with support, kindness, or a quick-witted remark. His legacy will endure through the lives he touched and the deep respect he earned from those who had the privilege of knowing him.

His warm smile and ability to bring joy and laughter wherever he went left lasting impressions on everyone he met. His passing leaves a deep void in the hearts of all who loved him.

His life, legacy, and joy of life survive in all who knew him, particularly his beloved family—his wife, Jane; three sons, Taylor (Sarah), Joe (Kylee), Christian (McKenzie); and two grandchildren, Cooper and Addison.

Bill, your story lives on in us...

Luther Loyd McCallister

WASHINGTON

Career Lieutenant ★ February 22, 2025 ★ Age 67

South Kitsap Fire and Rescue

Lieutenant Luther Loyd McCallister was a devoted husband, brother, friend, firefighter/paramedic, and a cherished member of his community. Born on September 18, 1957, in Porterville, California, Loyd grew up with a strong sense of service and dedication to others, which led him to pursue a career in firefighting. From the moment he joined South Kitsap Fire and Rescue in 1989, it was clear his commitment to protecting and serving others went beyond just a job...it was a calling.

Throughout his career, Loyd's high standards and demanding personality on the job made him a force to be reckoned with. Those who worked with him and served under him knew that if he hadn't fired you at least once, you weren't going to make it in the fire service. But underneath the rough exterior, Loyd had a deep compassion for his friends, fellow firefighters, and the community they served.

Loyd retired in 2014 after 25 years with South Kitsap Fire and Rescue, having incurred cancer in the line of duty.

On February 7, 2023, Loyd married the love of his life, Diana. Together they spent the last years of Loyd's life dong the things they loved most—camping, wine tasting, and cooking fabulous meals for friends and family. Loyd will forever be known by his closest friends as the Grand Wagon Master, having established and organized the monthly retiree breakfasts and annual SKFR retiree "Camporee."

As we honor his life and sacrifice, we are reminded of the words often shared among firefighters, "When a firefighter falls, an entire community mourns."

We also celebrate a life well lived and a legacy that will live on in our hearts forever.

Lieutenant McCallister lost his battle with cancer on February 22, 2025. He is survived by his loving wife, Diana; his sisters, Nancy, Linda, Debora, and Cheryl; and his brother, Boyd.

Rest easy, Mac Daddy. We'll take it from here.

Brandon L. Minneman

Career Captain ★ June 24, 2025 ★ Age 43

WASHINGTON

Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority

Brandon was born on October 3, 1981, to Brad and Virginia Minneman, the youngest of three children. In high school he was a well-rounded athlete, lettering in both wrestling and water polo.

At 17 years old, Brandon joined the U.S. Army, serving as a combat medic with the 62nd Medical Brigade from 1999 to 2003. He rose to the rank of sergeant and completed a tour in Iraq.

After the Army, Brandon pursued his lifelong dream to become a firefighter. He began his fire service career as a volunteer with McLane Fire, Thurston County Fire District #9, and Thurston County Fire District #11-Littlerock Fire & Rescue. In 2008, he joined the Kent Fire Department, now Puget Sound Fire, where he would serve the community for more than 17 years under badge #268. During his career he was a member of the HAZMAT team for four years and was promoted to captain in 2020, eventually serving at Station 83.

Brandon was the definition of a quiet professional. He never sought recognition; he simply did the work, took care of his people, and showed up with purpose every day. He would never have called himself a hero, but those who worked beside him knew that he consistently chose what was right and led by example. His crew mattered deeply to him, as did the calling of the job itself.

Outside of the firehouse, Brandon's world centered on his family. He loved his wife, Abby, deeply and was incredibly proud to be the father of Makenna (15), Ben (11), and Elli (8). He was a devoted and present dad, rarely missing a game, practice, dance recital, or school moment. Whether cheering from the sidelines or helping with homework, he made sure his kids always knew they were his greatest priority.

Brandon loved the beauty and adventure of the PNW he called home. He felt most alive outdoors—mountain biking wooded trails, kayaking quiet waters, and exploring the landscapes.

Family trips to the coast, Hawaii, and Disneyland created memories that will be cherished forever.

Even when terminal cancer limited him physically, Brandon continued to find ways to show up for his children. He spent time building birdhouses and Lego sets with them, creating simple but meaningful moments together.

Brandon's positive spirit, unwavering dedication to service, and deep love for his family and friends left a lasting imprint on everyone who knew him. His legacy lives on in the lives he served, the firefighters he led, and the family he loved so fiercely. Those who knew him best will always remember him the way he carried himself every day—steady, humble, ready to serve, and with the perfect curve to the bill of his hat.

Shaun F. Ward

WASHINGTON

Career Division Chief ★ March 19, 2025 ★ Age 59

North Whatcom Fire and Rescue

Shaun Ferris Ward was born on October 8, 1965, in Salt Lake City, Utah. He passed away on March 19, 2025, in Lynden, Washington, after an 18-month battle from oligodendroglioma, a type of cancerous brain tumor. His passing marks the end of a life of dedication to service, leadership, and family.

Shaun's journey into public service began in 1999 when he joined Fire District 8 in Bellingham, Washington. What started as a passion quickly evolved into a distinguished career. In 2007, Shaun became a full-time firefighter with North Whatcom Fire & Rescue and was promoted just a year later to lieutenant. His commitment and leadership continued to shine as he rose to the position of shift captain in 2011 and ultimately division chief of Support Services in 2022. Throughout his career, Shaun played an instrumental role in shaping the future of the fire service by mentoring new recruits at the fire academy, helping others discover their own calling in the few that meant so much to him. Despite his cancer, Shaun continued to work faithfully until retiring in 2024.

Shaun's legacy extends beyond his professional accomplishments. He was a devoted father and grandfather who cherished time with his family. Shaun is survived by his daughter, Brittney, and husband, Levi Jansen; grandchildren, Savannah (Colby) Tjoelker, Tatum, Brooklynn, Axton Wiebe, Tinsley Jansen; great-granddaughter, Margot Tjoelker; father, Ferris Ward, of Utah; and mother, Joyce Peterson, of Oregon.

Shaun was preceded in death by his beloved wife of nearly 30 years, Pamela. Their partnership stood as a testament to their enduring love and support. Shaun was also predeceased by stepparents Matilda Ward of Utah and Jack Peterson of Oregon.

If there is one thing to take away from Shaun's passing, it is that no matter what comes your way, you push through and take each day with gratitude. Shaun's life was well lived. He gave his all each day and didn't let the hard days bring him down. He loved his grandchildren fiercely. They brought him so much joy, and making memories with them was so important to him. His life with Pamela was one of stillness, enjoying their time together each day along with their four pups. Many summer days, you could find Shaun smoking a brisket while basting it in his homemade Wardie Sauce.

This place isn't the same with Shaun gone, but his memory will live on forever. He will forever be in our hearts and memory. To our hero, watch over us and keep us safe.

Jimmy E. Webb

Career Deputy Chief ★ September 5, 2025 ★ Age 55

WASHINGTON

Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority

Deputy Chief Jimmy Webb died due to occupational glioblastoma brain cancer on September 5, 2025.

Jim was a loving husband to his wife, Pam, the most devoted father to his loving children, Megan, Courtney, and Nathan, and an amazing Papa to his three grandchildren, Jack, Elliott, and Sage. Jimmy cherished his family and friends immensely. He loved Pam deeply, loved being a father and grandfather, and loved the fire service.

Jimmy was employed by the Kent Fire Department (now Puget Sound Fire) starting on April 1, 1999, and served for over 26 years before retiring June 30, 2025, holding badge #208. Deputy Chief Webb held the ranks of firefighter, engineer, captain, battalion chief, division chief, and deputy chief. In his early years as a firefighter, he was a member of the HazMat team and the ladder company, but he also spent time in training as the Training Consortium was being developed. He collaborated with Marty Hauer to establish a fitness committee and spent several years working with Mitch Snyder to get FD CARES up and running.

As a captain, Jim proposed the creation of an in-house academy to the administration and personally designed and led the initial recruit classes through a program he built from the ground up. After his promotion to battalion chief, he served for several years as a shift battalion chief, then as a division chief before returning to training, where he served as deputy chief of the South King County Fire Training Consortium. In that role, the position from which he retired, Chief Webb oversaw training for 15 different agencies, successfully unifying multiple cultures and systems into a single consortium that now provides training for nearly 1,500 personnel.

Jim's contributions to his department were immeasurable, and his impact will be forever felt.

Prior to his fire service career, Jimmy served in the United States Navy from August 1, 1988 to May 1, 1994.

In his free time, Jimmy loved spending time with his family and friends, camping, traveling, and cheering for the Oklahoma Sooners football and softball teams, as well as playing fantasy football. Jimmy's positive spirit, his unwavering passion for service, and his love for his family and friends have left an indelible mark in the hearts of all who knew him.

People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel. –Maya Angelou

Steven Dale Griffith

WEST VIRGINIA

Volunteer Firefighter ★ March 3, 2025 ★ Age 66

Danville Volunteer Fire Department

Steven Dale Griffith, 66, of Danville, West Virginia, departed this life on March 3, 2025, at CAMC Memorial Hospital in Charleston, West Virginia.

He was born November 11, 1958, in Madison, West Virginia, the son of the late Clarence Griffith and Lucinda (Powers) Griffith.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his brother, James Griffith.

Steve was a member of the Danville Fire Department for 48 years. He enjoyed fishing and worked for Dominion Energy.

Those left to cherish his memory include his two sisters, Clara Griffith and Linda Fowler; Jordan Dingess, who was like a son to him; and a host of nieces, great-nieces and great-great nieces.

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Jeffrey Dale “J.D.” Lawson

Volunteer Deputy Chief ★ February 17, 2025 ★ Age 54

WEST VIRGINIA

War Volunteer Fire Department

Jeffrey Dale “J.D.” Lawson of War, West Virginia, was called home on February 17, 2025, while doing what he loved, responding to someone in need.

Jeffrey was born on October 30, 1970, in Welch, West Virginia. Known to his West Virginia family as “Jeff” and to his Maryland family as “J.D.,” he lived his life serving others.

Jeffrey joined the War Volunteer Fire Department in June 1985 and worked his way through the ranks to serve as the deputy fire chief. In March 1989, Jeffrey decided to serve his community as a police officer for his hometown of War, West Virginia. In July of 1990, Jeffrey transferred to the Bluefield Police Department, where he served until August 1997. JD made his way to Maryland in 1997, as he joined the Berlin Police Department in Berlin, Maryland. During his time in Berlin, Jeffrey served in many capacities. One of his proudest accomplishments was serving as the department’s SWAT commander. He also served as the department’s firearms instructor.

He retired from Berlin on September 30, 2023. At the time of his retirement, JD was serving as the department’s patrol commander, holding the rank of lieutenant. JD’s service to others in Maryland also included the Ocean City Fire Department, where he served as captain. He joined OCFD in October 1997 and was a life member at the time of his passing.

Immediately following his retirement from the Berlin Police Department, JD returned home with his loving wife, Bernadette, to War, West Virginia, where he began operating heavy equipment for Delric Corp.

Jeffrey was a very loving husband, father, stepfather, warrior, and friend. During precious time off, Jeff was found with his wife, riding the mountain trails, hunting, target shooting, teaching, loving his large family of pets, and living life to the fullest.

Richard V. Todd

WEST VIRGINIA

Volunteer Chief ★ September 23, 2020 ★ Age 58

Salem Volunteer Fire Department

Richard "Rick" Todd, 58, was a loving husband to Julie for 38 years filled with love and many blessings. He was an amazing father to Richie and Alie and a Pappy to grandsons Perry, Paxton, and Vance. Unfortunately, he did not get to meet his granddaughter, Ellie, but she has been told about her Pappy, and she talks about him often. Rick is described as a loving, caring, and selfless family man who enjoyed fishing, especially with his grandsons. Rick shared his love for the fire service with his family as he served as a firefighter, fire inspector, fire chief, and paramedic. Rick served as captain of Bridgeport Fire Department for 20 years and was a member of Salem Fire Department for 42 years, where he served as fire chief for 39 years. Rick was genuinely driven to make his community better.

Rick was born on May 9, 1962, in Clarksburg, West Virginia, the third of six children born to Roy "John" and Shirley Todd. Rick grew up in Lumberport, West Virginia, where he graduated from Lincoln High School in 1980. After graduating, he began volunteering as a firefighter with the Salem Fire Department while working with his father at a family-owned Exxon Station in Salem, West Virginia. Rick later attended and graduated from Fairmont State College and continued his career path in the fire service. Rick was hired as a career firefighter with the Bridgeport Fire Department while continuing to remain loyal to the Salem community. Rick had an incredible love for serving in the fire service and his community. Rick strived to continue to advance both the fire department and firefighters under his leadership, with continued education and training to grow the fire department and the community collaboratively.

Through countless experiences, Rick saw the crucial need to establish ambulance services to the Salem community for the preservation of life, and he began working on that with state and local officials. Through his tireless efforts, medical services were restored to the Salem area of Harrison County in 1993.

Rick is remembered as a strong leader who was an asset to his community and deeply loved by his family. He continually served and put others' needs before his own.

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. John 15:12-13

Lori Ann Boelkes

Paid-On-Call Firefighter-EMR ★ February 27, 2025 ★ Age 56

WISCONSIN

Warrens Area Fire District

Lori Ann Boelkes was born on April 6, 1968, in Madison, Wisconsin, to Thomas and Nancy (Faulhaber) Schmelzer. She graduated from Middleton High School in 1986. On February 7, 2000, her daughter, Amanda, was born. She was the light of Lori's life. Amanda's excitement for life was seen and felt by everyone. She had a great love of nature, animals, and the outdoors. Unfortunately, her time on earth was cut tragically short by an unexpected accident when she was only six years old. Lori mourned her sweet daughter for the rest of her days on earth.

After many years apart, Lori was reunited with her high school sweetheart, Ric. They were united in marriage on April 18, 2015. Together they built a beautiful home, life, and family.

Lori was a healer and a helper of people and animals alike. She worked as a veterinary assistant and later started a mobile RV/auto detailing business. Lori enjoyed all things crafting! Her happy place was in the craft room. She could be found quilting, making vinyl creations, scrapbooking, or making something for friends and loved ones. Recently, she learned the art of crocheting and made her dad a beautiful blanket on the first try. Her favorite colors were purple and orange. Lori loved to travel, especially cruises to anywhere sunny and warm. Lori was an avid outdoorswoman. She enjoyed nature, plants, wildlife, and bow hunting. She was very proud of the deer sanctuary that she helped create with Ric at their beautiful property, Horny Acres. Her last deer was her biggest, a nine-point whitetail buck proudly taken with her bow.

After Amanda's passing, Lori found her purpose in life by helping others. This was a way of healing and giving back to those who helped her on that tragic day. Lori began her life of service as a volunteer firefighter and EMR for 12 years, was a lieutenant on the New Auburn Area Fire Department, and finished on the Warrens Area Fire District. She selflessly served and dedicated much of her time, not only responding to calls but also volunteering on various projects and events.

Lori always rooted for the underdog. She had a special interest in mentoring new recruits, especially women in the fire/EMR service. She was a wonderful teacher and leader with a self-driven work ethic.

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6th Annual Metro Atlanta Firefighter Classic

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2025 NFFF 9/11 Memorial Stair Climbs

850 Heroes 4 Heroes 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb

9/11 Memorial Stair Climb at Lambeau Field

Baltimore 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb

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