



OCTOBER 2022

# BACK STEP TALKS

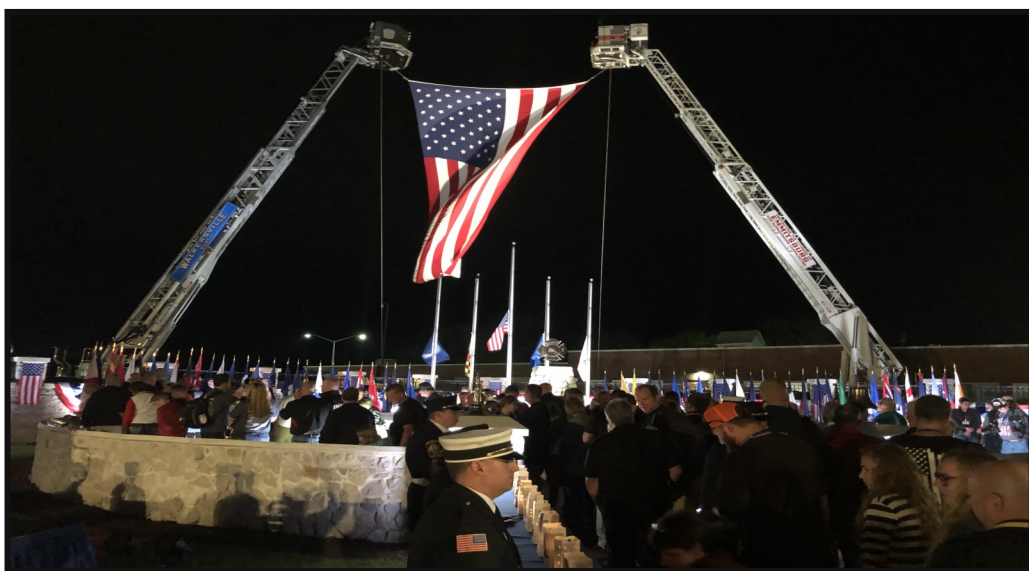
## Remembering Our Own

### Remembering Our Own

Each year, America pauses to remember our fallen firefighters who have died in the line of duty during the previous year. This year, on the weekend of October 6-9, 2022, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) will honor the 159 line of duty (LODD) deaths of firefighters who died in the year 2021, as well as some others whose deaths occurred previously. Some of the activities that will be included in the weekend are:

On Thursday, returning families begin to arrive and prepare to greet and support new families during the NFFF Weekend. Members of the fire service pay special tribute by placing a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery.

Saturday is Family Day during the NFFF Memorial Weekend. Activities include small group sessions, family activities, and a



vigil in the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Chapel, followed by a Candlelight service.

On Sunday, thousands of family members, guests, and members of fire departments from across the U.S. will gather for the annual National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service.

Maryland Firefighters to be honored at this year's Memorial Weekend are:

- William Andre Sheffield, Baltimore City Fire Department

Look for the bios of Maryland's fallen heroes in other pages of this newsletter.

Since 2002, the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association (MFCA) has provided transportation to the families of the fallen firefighters attending the weekend events. The MFCA will send 30 to 35 members to the NFFF Weekend event to serve as the transportation group and operations command staff. The teams will set up in the hotels before the weekend, as the families begin to arrive, and stay until the last family leaves to go home, providing all of their transportation needs.

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# In Memory



## Nicholas Finamore

### Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department

Chief Nicholas Finamore died from complications of COVID-19 on January 5, 2021 at age 75. He was born in Washington, DC, and spent 53 years in Prince George's County Fire/EMS, as both a paid and volunteer firefighter. He began volunteering with the Allentown Road Volunteer Fire Department while he was a student at Oxen Hill High School. He spent time in the United States Army and was discharged as a Sergeant before pursuing a career as a firefighter. In 1989, he retired as a Lieutenant Colonel and the Deputy Fire Chief of Operations for Prince George's County. He then became the Allentown Road Volunteer Fire Department Fire Chief and continued to serve in various leadership positions throughout the county. He was the Volunteer Operations Commander for Prince George's County when he died. In his career he was recognized with the Gold Medal of Valor for rescues made in a house fire. He was a life member of the Maryland Fire Chief's Association.

## Joshua Laird

### Frederick County Division of Fire and Rescue Services

Battalion Chief Joshua Laird was killed while fighting a two alarm house fire in Ijamsville, MD, on August 11, 2021 at age 46. He was born in Pennsylvania and first started with the Mont Alto Fire Department (PA) at age 16. At one point, he was the youngest paramedic in the state of Pennsylvania. He spent time working with many different departments across Pennsylvania before joining Frederick County Division of Fire and Rescue Services as a member of Recruit Class 4. He served as a paramedic, Division Safety Officer, and member of the COVID-19 Incident Management Team, in addition to assignments at many stations throughout the county. He was posthumously promoted to the rank of Battalion Chief in Frederick County following his death. During his career he was recognized with the Silver Star of Bravery among other departmental accolades. Outside of the department, he was a member of the school board for the Fairfield Area School District (PA). He left behind his wife of 20 years and two daughters.





# In Memory



## Brad A Scott

Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services

Lieutenant Brad Scott died on May 31, 2020 at age 43, following a three year battle with colon cancer. He was born and raised in Pennsylvania. Brad spent 28 years in the fire service, starting with the Linwood Volunteer Fire Company (PA) at age 14, and also working with Claymont Fire House (DE). He joined Howard County as a member of Recruit Class 23. He was posthumously promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in Howard County following his death. He spent most of his career at Banneker Station 7, driving Engine 71 as a Firefighter/Heavy Vehicle Operator. For actions throughout his career he was recognized with the Bronze Medal of Valor and named both Delaware Volunteer Firefighter's Association Firefighter of the Year Award and New Castle County (DE) Firefighter of the Year. He left behind his wife and three daughters.

## William A Sheffield

Baltimore City Fire Department

Lieutenant William "Dre" Sheffield died from COVID-19 on January 27, 2021, at age 60. He moved to Baltimore from his native Florida at age 18. He graduated from the academy and began working at Truck #6 in Baltimore City in 1993, thus starting his 28 year career. Throughout his career he was also assigned to Engine 23, and Engine 35. He also served as a Safety Officer and Fire Investigator and was promoted to Lieutenant in 1999. His wife, Crystal, was the first woman in the Baltimore City Police Department to be killed in the line of duty, in 2002.



## This is My Story

On January 19, 2011, my husband, Mark Falkenhan, died in the line of duty in Hillendale, Baltimore County. I had no idea how our two sons and I would face our new normal. I quickly became overwhelmed with memorials and events that honored my husband. I felt that if he was being honored it was my duty to show appreciation and attend every event. As you can imagine, it was a very emotional time. I knew Mark would be honored in October of 2012 at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, MD, eighteen months after his death. I set a goal for myself, Emmitsburg would be the last memorial I would attend. Then I could finally take a breath and focus on myself and my sons, and our new normal. I had no idea that the three day memorial in Emmitsburg would align us on the track we needed to heal and regroup. From the moment we arrived at the hotel until we packed the car to return home, we were met by other Fire Hero Families that had walked



*Above: Firefighter/Paramedic Mark G. Falkenhan died in the line of duty in 2011 while serving the Lutherville Volunteer Fire Company.*

the same grief journey before us. They led us through the entire weekend and, by their example, showed us that we would survive and learn to live again. I felt like we had been treading water for eighteen months and finally, someone threw us a life ring. They began teaching us to swim strong, with confidence and humor; something we had lost

over the past 18 months. My sons were 5 and 14 years old when Mark died, in two very different stages of their lives. They both made friends with other children who had lost a parent in the line of duty and to this day they still have those friendships thanks to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and Comfort Zone Camps. I found my strength bonding with other spouses who had recently suffered a line of duty death and the Fire Hero Families that have walked the same journey for years before us. Like my sons, I made friends and often reach out to them when I am having a bad day or just to vent. The bond our family has with our Fire Hero Family is stronger than I could have ever imagined. I thought it would just be the final memorial we would attend then we could try to put the pieces back together. I didn't realize I was just treading water until I reached Emmitsburg. I never thought just one weekend with the right people would be a lesson in surviving and forming bonds with others like our family. Memorial weekend taught us that we would not just "survive" our loss but that we could live again. We saw others that have grief similar to ours and paved the healing path for other families. The National Fallen Firefighters Memorial weekend will always hold a very special place in our hearts. We could never have imagined the strength, friendships, and the foundation of our healing from our trip to Emmitsburg,

*Gladys Falkenhan*





# Is Your Department Prepared?

You have experienced a Line Of Duty Death, now what.

First thing, control social media the best you can. Unfortunately, this will be a difficult task to accomplish as people want to be the first one to post on social media. Look at it this way, do you want to be notified by social media that your loved one has died? Does your department have a social media policy?

Second, make sure the Chief Officer, Chaplain, or preappointed designee makes the family notifications. Remember, you are on a race against social media.

Third, get all your members together as soon as possible. This is where you want to have a Peer Support Team (CISM Team), and Chaplains available for your members and their

family members. This is also where your command staff will keep members informed of accurate information to prevent rumors.

Fourth, contact the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation to activate the Maryland Local Assistance State Team. **Report a Line Of Duty Death (866) 736-5868.** The Maryland LAST will walk with the department and survivors through the entire process from the memorial to filing for benefits.

Fifth, begin to prepare station preparations which include the hanging of the bunting. Consider using a message board to notify the community as to why the bunting has been hung.

Sixth, the funeral/memorial service. Everyone wants to jump in and do a

big Line Of Duty Death funeral with all the bells and whistles that go along with that. Don't start planning anything until the team is put together to ensure that all the pieces are available to do all the bells and whistles. The family liaison, chief, and chaplain will meet with the family to explain what can be done. It is the family's decision on what they want done for their loved one. **NOTHING HAPPENS WITHOUT THE FAMILY'S APPROVAL.**

Seven, establish an incident command team to handle the activities and resources to do the funeral/memorial service.

Eighth, complete all the paperwork for applying for benefits, state, federal, insurance, etc.



# A Weekend in the Life of A NFFF Family Escort

For eleven years I have served as a Family Escort for Memorial Weekend. Serving the families is an honor that is not taken lightly by myself or any other Escort. We are all committed to our motto, "Service Above Self" to ensure the Weekend is a memorable and positive event for each family.

Memorial Weekend begins for me on Thursday where I team up with local and national firefighters to meet families as they fly into BWI. We greet them at the gate, get their luggage, answers questions, and offer them a quick snack before their ride to Emmitsburg/ Gettysburg.

I leave BWI early Friday evening with my daughter, who is also an Escort, to get checked in and assigned my family. From there I get unpacked at the National Fire Academy and make my way over to the Command Post Pub. Friday night is reserved for reconnecting with fellow Escorts from around the nation. My group of regulars catch up on the past year's events over beer and pizza.

Saturday morning usually begins with a walk over to the Memorial site where I pay honor to my firefighters from past years. I place a coin by each name signifying my visit. Morning on the Academy grounds is a peaceful time that allows one to reflect on the sacrifices made by those we honor. After breakfast with my Brothers and Sisters, its off to the morning's



briefing. From this point on its game time.

The Saturday morning briefing is where our team of 200+ Escorts are briefed on any last minute changes, reminded of our mission, paired up with our fellow Escort, and meet with our Branch Directors. By now the Academy grounds have woken up, the Honor Guard and Pipes & Drums have started practicing and the support teams are busy with last minute preparations.

Over the years I have learned to be prepared for anything. Like most other Escorts I carry a backpack that has tissues, a Tide pen, spare Class A buttons/clasps, band aids, phone

charger, business cards, pen & note paper, the weekend schedule, and Department challenge coins.

Our Families arrive at the Academy soon after lunch. After brief introductions, we are off to tour the Academy, visit the Memorial, visiting the Academy chapel where they can leave a rose and light a candle in honor of their firefighter, making etchings of their firefighter's name on the plaque, take pictures, etc. As we walk around the grounds, I like to have the family tell me about their firefighter, his/her likes, fond memories, etc. Late in the afternoon we watch the Red Knights motorcycle group arrive from all over Maryland.



## A Weekend in the Life of A NFFF Family Escort (cont...)

After dinner, my fellow Escort and I walk the family to the Memorial site where they can light the luminary they have made in honor of their firefighter. We find our seats and get ready for the evening's Candlelight service. After the service, we see our families back to their buses and gather in the Chapel for the evening briefing. This briefing usually lasts until 9:00 P.M. and is an update for Sunday's ceremony.

Sunday morning starts with getting into my Class A uniform, checking out of my room, and meeting for breakfast. We pickup the badge that will be presented to the family and check it for spelling, etc. Once out of breakfast, its over to the seating area where we make sure each seat has a Remembrance Book and water. If it is cold, I usually grab a few blankets for the family.

The families start arriving at 9:00 A.M. The Honor Guard has assembled in a Sea of Blue and we walk our family through this sea on the way to our seats. Once at our



seats, we discuss who is going to receive the flag/rose and a few other details about the ceremony. When directed, we escort our family up to meet one of the Nation's Fire Chiefs who presents the family with a flag flown over the U.S. Capital, a red rose, and the badge. The Memorial Service is an emotional ceremony that impacts everyone involved. Tears are shed not only by the family, but Escorts as well.

them and then we say our goodbyes until we meet again.

Over the years I have become good friends with several of my families. I have been able to share good times with them and for a few I have been there again for the bad times. I have watched their kids & grandkids grow up into adults. It was not until I had a chance to talk with my families after the weekend that I began to understand what an impact I have made by supporting them during the weekend.

So, if the opportunity arises, I recommend you apply to serve as a Family Escort you will never forget the experience. And as I end, I would like to remember fellow Escorts Battalion Chief Charlie Woodard (1959 - 2020) and Deputy Fire Marshal John "Stretch" Crist (1968 - 2022), until we meet again Brothers.



After the service the family likes to go back up to the Memorial so they can see their plaque one more time. This is also the time for group photos. I make sure the family has my information if they need to reach out, and I present them with my Department's challenge coin. I go to lunch with

*Dave Reid*

## Are Your Personnel Files Up to Date?

The following things need to be in every member's personnel folder in the event of a LODD to streamline the beneficiary process:

1. **Public Safety Officer (PSO) Beneficiary Designation Form:** This form is used to designate the beneficiary (s) of the Federal Government's Public Safety Officer's Benefits. There is a legal precedent as to who the benefits get paid to. That being said, this is a good place to record all of the PSO's information.
2. **Insurance Beneficiary Forms:** If your department provides insurance for the PSO, make sure the beneficiary forms are up to date with the correct information. Too many times these forms are not updated and past family members (ex-spouse or girlfriend) are the beneficiary of the insurance policy.
3. **Emergency Notification Form:** This information is important when the time comes so the notification can be made in a timely manner to the right people. It is important to have information on where the next of kin lives, and works. Do they have medical conditions that need to be considered when making the notification. Religion of the PSO and a contact if they want them notified.
4. **Marriage Certificate:** A copy of the PSO's marriage certificate needs to be in their file. Also, any divorce decrees must be in their file.
5. **Birth Certificates:** Copies of all their children's birth certificates need to be in their file. Also include any adoption certificates for adopted children.
6. **Military Service:** Copy of their DD214. This is proof that the member served in the Military. This will be needed to apply for military benefits, they qualified for.
7. **Will:** You do not need to have a copy of the Will on file. Just a note that there is a will and where it is. This is important if the member has left specific requests upon their death. Everyone should have a Will. Wills for Heroes will do basic Wills at no cost to the PSO.
8. **Have a member of your department complete the Taking Care of Our Own class from the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation with the link to the right.**
9. **Photograph:** It is important to have an up to date photograph on file. This could be accomplished each year with annual testing or physicals.

## Resources



[Back Step Talks  
Back Issues](#)

[Maryland  
Fire Chiefs](#)



[National Fallen  
Firefighters  
Foundation](#)

[Maryland Fire-Rescue  
Memorial Foundation](#)



[MD Local Assistance  
State Team](#)

[Taking Care of  
Our Own](#)



[Fire Hero Learning  
Network](#)

[Frederick Co. LODD  
Report](#)



# 73

The number of fallen  
firefighters through  
September 30, 2022.

*US Fire Administration*

# 988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE