

FRIENDS OF FIREFIGHTERS



IMPACT REPORT 2019

A MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

With sincere gratitude for your support in 2019, I am pleased to share with you an overview of your investment in Friends of Firefighters, which enabled us to keep our meaningful services and programs going strong for active and retired FDNY firefighters and their family members.

With your support, we've engaged more than 11,000 members in the FDNY community and thoughtfully deepened the ways our services integrate with one another to reinforce the foundation of our mission – to provide free, independent, and confidential mental health and wellness support to NYC firefighters and those who watch them leave the house every day to go to a very dangerous job.

With your continued partnership, we're able to respond to the changing needs of New York City's firefighter community, ensuring that all who need us can access a continuum of services that make it easy for them to seek our help when they need it most.

Thank you for being part of our work,



Nancy Carbone
Founder and Executive Director



HIGHLIGHTS OF 2019 INCLUDE:



- **1,690 counseling sessions** were provided through our **Mental Health Counseling Program**, newly supported by the *Gary Sinise Foundation* as the *Gary Sinise Foundation Center for Wellness in Honor of John Vigiano*. An announcement of their \$300,000 multi-year grant was made at our 12th Annual Fall Gala on October 17th, 2019.
- Our **Peer Support Program** served **11 On the Arm Breakfasts** to **92 members** and **7 Firehouse Kitchen Talk** dinner presentations to **114 members**, leading to an increase in participation among both active and retired firefighters.
- **Direct contact** was made with **11,000 members** through various fire-related events, including union meetings, delegate seminars, fundraisers, funerals, plaque dedications and ceremonies. Our small but mighty outreach team made **545 firehouse visits**, engaging an additional **2,081 members**.
- **119 low-cost acupuncture sessions** were provided to **35 members** by our volunteer licensed acupuncturist.
- **25 members** received high quality **financial assistance** from our volunteer financial advisor.

I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for Friends of Firefighters.

-Anonymous, Retired Lieutenant

When I was prematurely retired, I felt lost and bewildered about my future. For me, leaving the job before I was ready was a trauma that had to be addressed. Speaking with a counselor at Friends of Firefighters and being able to recreate the continuum of the camaraderie I had when I was on the job was enough to convince me that a healing could begin. My suggestion to FDNY members who are resistant to seeking professional help is this: Building walls will rob you of happiness; realign your thinking, break down your barrier, and understand that it takes strength to be vulnerable.

-Patrick O'Grady,
Retired FDNY Lieutenant

Words cannot adequately express the debt of gratitude I feel for Friends of Firefighters. My husband retired from the FDNY last spring. Around the same time, our son was first diagnosed with ADHD. The couples counseling we have been receiving continues to give us the communication tools we both need to navigate these challenges and more. Thank you Friends of Firefighters for supporting our family.

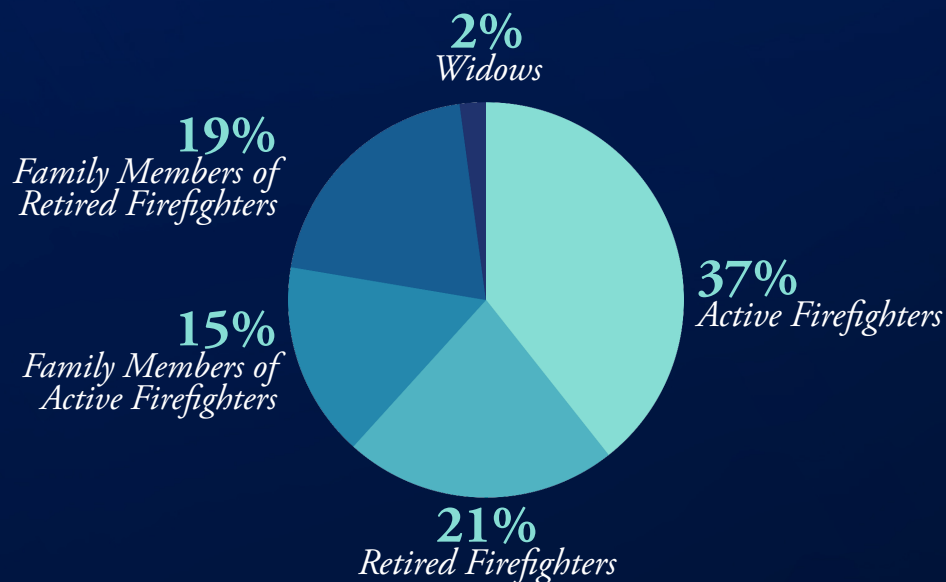
-Wife of Retired FDNY Firefighter

I don't think I'm overselling it when I say Friends of Firefighters has helped me through some of the most difficult times in my life over the past 15 years. They are always there, willing to help in any way that is needed. Having a place to go and people to talk to has not only benefited myself, but countless others. I personally am very grateful for all they do for firefighters and their families.

-Anonymous, Active FDNY Lieutenant

Testimonials

1,690 Counseling Sessions



Stigma

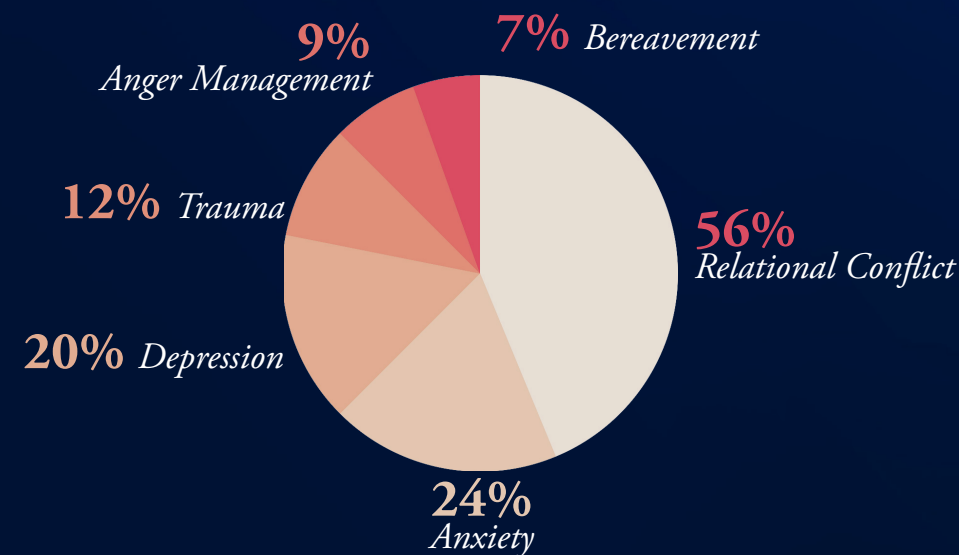
Great strides have been made with respect to mental health awareness but there is still an incredible stigma associated with firefighters seeking help. The perception that the need for counseling means a firefighter is weak and therefore a liability to the team presents as a barrier to connecting to help and support. Firefighters who seek help with Friends of Firefighters are aware that our services are completely confidential and separate from the Fire Department. Confidentiality is an essential part of any clinical relationship, one we take very seriously at Friends of Firefighters.

119
Acupuncture
Sessions

10
Women's Group
Sessions

33
Financial Support
Sessions

Primary Reasons for Seeking Counseling



WELLNESS

Gary Sinise
Foundation Center
for Wellness
In Honor of
John Vigiano

The nature of the work of firefighters, including repeated exposure to traumatic experiences and erratic sleep schedules, can pose significant risks to firefighters' mental health. These stressors extend to family members as well, and the knowledge of this contributes to the firefighter's mental load. Adding to that risk are the barriers to seeking help, including stigma and the cost of treatment. Because we operate separately from the job and are experienced in firefighter culture, firefighters and their families feel comfortable turning to Friends of Firefighters for free help and support.



PEER SUPPORT

1-on-1

Peer Support

No one should have to struggle in silence, especially those who lay their lives on the line for others every day. Because the fire service is such a brotherhood and sisterhood, firefighters lean on each other. Friends of Firefighters facilitates these connections. Our peer supporters are very well-respected in the firefighter community and can help serve as a bridge to other treatments or types of care.



On the Arm Breakfast

We provide a free monthly breakfast to FDNY members and family members, where staff and volunteers are present to answer questions and give tours of the facility. Established in 2003 by Friends of Firefighters' senior man, Tony 'Cat' Catapano, On The Arm breakfasts have become a welcoming invitation to our services, as firefighters become more comfortable once they establish relationships through trusted friends.

'On the Arm' Breakfast

11 Breakfasts
avg. 35 individuals per event

Firehouse Kitchen Talks

7 Dinners
avg. 70 individuals per event



Firefighters and family members receive free and confidential financial guidance and support to address contributing stressors. These private sessions help the firefighter gain insight into building a secure financial future, thereby adding stability to his or her personal life.

Financial Guidance

Acupuncture

We offer low-cost acupuncture in partnership with NYS licensed acupuncturist, Gina Piccirillo. Acupuncture has long been recognized as an effective treatment for chronic pain; a steady complaint from firefighters due to activities they endure on a daily basis, such as carrying hoses, lifting tools, and performing rescues that strain the body.

Our outreach team makes contact with members through various fire-related events, including union meetings, delegate seminars, fundraisers, funerals, plaque dedications and ceremonies. All New York City firehouses receive outreach visits from our small but mighty outreach team, engaging close to 11,000 FDNY members.



OUTREACH

Direct Contact
with
11,000 Members

545 Firehouse Visits
Engaging an
additional 2,081 Members





Responding to COVID-19

Counseling

Individual counseling transitioned smoothly and immediately to online telehealth platforms

Peer Support

Two online support groups were formed within two weeks of New York City's pause

Wellness

Tips on wellness are provided weekly via our newsletter and social media

Outreach

Outreach is providing support via phone and emails to all FDNY firehouses and contacts, as well as masks, gloves, cookies (courtesy of the Gary Sinise Foundation), and info on our services to firehouses and retirees

This report is a snapshot of the effective work our donors make possible every day. Your partnership is the reason FDNY firefighters and family members are able to access free, independent, and confidential mental health counseling and wellness services from Friends of Firefighters.

Your support ensures that we will always be here for them.



Make a gift today at
www.friendsoffirefighters.org/donate

STAFF

Nancy Carbone
Founder and Executive Director

Stephanie Cherry, LCSW
Associate Director and Counselor

Sylvie Brown
Marketing and Communications Officer

Marlo Lagrimas
Office and Events Manager

Kristina Hamilton, LCSW
Counselor

Lauren Johnson, LMFT
Counselor

Vanessa Fleury
Outreach Coordinator

Katherine Ragazzino
Outreach Worker

Christine Thyberg
Outreach Worker

Karen Donnelly
Volunteer Financial Advisor

Gina Piccirillo, LAC
Volunteer Acupuncturist

Kia Carbone
Graphic Designer



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Your support ensures that we will always be here for them.



199 Van Brunt Street
Brooklyn, NY 11231

Tel: 718.643.0980 **Fax:** 718.643.1240
Email: info@friendsoffirefighters.org

www.friendsoffirefighters.org



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