



# Friends of Firefighters

## *Impact Report 2020*





**Our Mission**  
Friends of Firefighters  
is dedicated to  
providing  
independent,  
confidential,  
and free mental  
health counseling  
and wellness services  
to active and retired  
FDNY firefighters  
and their families.

**Dear Friends,**

Like all others, Friends of Firefighters was tested during 2020, but together we approached 2021 stronger and more determined. Incredible as it seems, even with the hardship and loss that COVID-19 brought to our door, our organization succeeded in growing during those extraordinary times.

In March 2020, our team took a step back to consider the physical, mental health, and wellness needs of our active and retired FDNY firefighter community. We looked for ways to address new issues related to the pandemic, such as the risk of contracting the virus and bringing it home, feelings of loneliness due to social isolation, the negative impact on firehouse culture, and stress brought on by school closures and lack of childcare.

Remote did not have to mean disconnected. We quickly expanded our virtual capabilities and began offering online counseling on a HIPAA-compliant platform for all therapy sessions. Safe, sensitive outreach visits were made to every single FDNY firehouse with deliveries of face masks, medical gloves, and hand sanitizer.

Your generosity has helped Friends of Firefighters navigate through one of the most challenging years in its 20-year history. We see the growing interest in our work and recognize the need for our mission is even greater than when we started.

**Thank you for your partnership.**

*Nancy Carbone*

Nancy Carbone  
Founder & Executive Director



2,060 counseling sessions  
were provided in 2020



An estimated 37% of  
firefighters are suffering  
from PTSD



*"Friends of Firefighters' mission  
is incredibly important to me...  
my own life has been  
tremendously impacted by a  
tragic fire.*

*It took some time but  
eventually I reached out and  
got the help I needed... and that  
decision literally saved my life."*

-Josh Calacanis, Retired FDNY Lieutenant  
Friends of Firefighters Board Member

## Gary Sinise Foundation Center for Wellness *in Honor of John Vigiano*



In 2018, the Gary Sinise Foundation awarded Friends of Firefighters with a three-year grant to bolster counseling services at our headquarters in Red Hook, Brooklyn.

The Gary Sinise Foundation Center for Wellness in honor of John Vigiano is named for our beloved friend, John, a former Marine and decorated FDNY captain who lost both of his first responder sons on 9/11.





Firefighters  
are  
**3 times**  
**more likely**  
to complete  
suicide  
than to die  
in the  
line of duty

In January 2020, we expanded our virtual capabilities to offer online counseling.





### Acupuncture

Our licensed acupuncturist, Gina Piccirillo, is trained to work with clients with complex medical conditions, as well as healthy individuals who want to maintain wellness.

### Breath Practice

Private appointments with retired FDNY firefighter and Certified Mindfulness & Breath Practice Leader, Jon Henderson. Learn easy breathing exercises that are clinically proven to heal anxiety, depression, and boost health.

### Financial Guidance

Financial counselor, Karen Donnelly, lends a guiding hand on life insurance, wills, pensions, and more with free consultation.

### HeartMath

Professional HeartMath services help people self-regulate emotions and behaviors to reduce stress, increase resilience, and unlock natural intuitive guidance for making more effective choices.

### Life Coaching

Certified Life Coach, Kristina Stines, guides members and their families through life decisions and assists with making informed choices.

### Yoga & Core Strengthening

Private yoga and core strengthening designed around your needs and abilities. Our yoga instructors are certified to address trauma and effectively work with individuals of all levels.



764 visits to firehouses were made  
6,853 firefighters were reached



### 1:1 Peer Support

Firefighters who prefer less formal counseling can speak confidentially to trained peers for specialized support.

### Burning Issues

A free and confidential group for active and retired firefighters, led by Victor D'Aquino, a 26-year FDNY veteran.

### Drop-In Support

An opportunity for firefighters and their families to learn about self-care, coping techniques, and transition management.

### Firehouse Kitchen Talk

Dinner and presentation prepared by firefighters, for firefighters. FKT is a chance to hear stories and participate in discussions about the job.





## On the Arm Breakfast

Established in 2003 by the late Tony 'Cat' Catapano, Friends of Firefighters' beloved volunteer Pete Calascione (Retired FDNY, Engine 202), carries on the tradition of hosting a monthly breakfast for active and retired FDNY members.



*“The monthly breakfast is a great way to stay connected to the job and continue the tradition of brotherhood, friendship, and camaraderie that we all came to know in our own firehouse kitchens. Any active or retired member will find the breakfast to be a great place to relax, laugh, and unwind.”*

-Anonymous, Retired FDNY Firefighter



*“Any day when it’s a beautiful, clear, sunny, blue sky... the first thing I think of is, ‘wow, this is exactly what it was like on the morning of 9/11.’”*

-John Sorrentino, Retired FDNY Firefighter





We dropped off  
2,000 face masks  
and 1,400 hand sanitizers  
to all NYC firehouses

*“My kids are aware of everything... I try not to project my anxiety and downplay certain fears, but nothing gets past them. This has been a really tough year and I’m glad I have Friends of Firefighters to turn to when I need extra support.”*

-Mike Sapia, FDNY Firefighter







*“I battled COVID-19 for eight weeks...they told my wife to say goodbye. It just wasn't my time. I'm very fortunate to be here today to enjoy my family and friends. I feel like I have a second chance. Being a part of Friends of Firefighters and connecting with other FDNY members has brought me relief and excitement that someone else knows what I might be going through. I don't know where I would be without them.”*

-Pete Calascione, Retired FDNY Firefighter & Friends of Firefighters Volunteer

With your support, we took proactive steps to safely continue providing resources for firefighters in need, including those who were quarantined.



The COVID-19 outbreak overwhelmed the world, and we were reminded of our collective capacity for adaptivity and resilience.

*“I have family members with underlying health conditions that I help care for... It is a huge stress when you know others are depending on you. As a retired firefighter, I am aware that firefighters need help ... it's a relief that Friends of Firefighters is here to provide it.”*

-Arturo Grant, Retired FDNY Firefighter & Friends of Firefighters Board Member







## The Sopranos Reunion

Hosted by Kevin Smith and featuring Steve Buscemi, Lorraine Bracco, David Chase, Edie Falco, Michael Imperioli, Robert Iler, Drea de Matteo, Vincent Pastore, Tim Van Patten, Steve Schirripa, Jamie-Lynn Sigler, Maureen Van Zandt, Steven Van Zandt, and Terence Winter.



We are grateful to be the beneficiary of two livestream fundraisers that helped us reach our year-end goal of \$250,000.

## Fireside Chat with Steve Buscemi and Friends

Friends included comedians Judd Apatow, Julie Bowen, Dan Bulla, Tim Herlihy, Kevin James, Colin Quinn, Chris Rock, Adam Sandler, Jackie Sandler, Rob Schneider, and Kenan Thompson.



We are humbled by the many kind words of support and gratitude we have received over the past year.



# Staff

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