

STANDING FAST

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF O'KANE FDNY RETIRED

Membership application is available on our website
www.okanefdnyretirees.com.

WELCOME to
 "Standing Fast." The
 official newsletter of the
 Gene O'Kane Division of
 FDNY Retired, the first
 and oldest FDNY retirees
 organization in the U.S.
 We have been chartered
 in the state of Florida
 since 1979.
 Postal Address: FDNY
 Retired, 2053 Blue Beech
 Ct., Trinity, FL 34655



Who Are We?

We are an organization of retired New York City Firefighters living on the west coast of Florida in the areas of Pasco, Hernando, Citrus, Pinellas, Hillsborough counties.

Although now retired, we share the bond of having had the privilege of protecting lives and property of the residents of the City of New York as members of the greatest fire department in the world, the FDNY. As retirees of the FDNY, in 1978 we banded together to form the first chapter of the FDNY RETIRED, received a charter from the state of Florida and named our organization after our founder, Gene O'Kane. Thus we are "THE GENE O'KANE DIVISION OF FDNY RETIRED." Our division is the oldest of all the divisions of FDNY Retired, one of nine divisions located in Florida and one of twenty six divisions scattered across the United States. We are also a member of the the "URFA, the United Retired Firefighters Assn. We welcome all FDNY retirees, of all ranks, retired volunteer firefighters from all other municipalities and non-firefighters to join us in friendship and brotherhood as members of our proud organization.

Membership and Meetings: Membership in the Gene O'Kane Division of FDNY Retired is open to all FDNY retirees of all ranks, paid and volunteer firefighters from all cities across the U.S.A., also non-firefighters are accepted as "Associate Members." Applications for membership can be obtained by completing the application located on our website and mailing it in as directed. Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month with the exception of June, July and August, at 7 p.m. at the America Legion "Paradise Post" located on Veterans Drive in New Port Richey, Fl 34654.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, 4/21/2026. 7pm,
 American Legion Paradise Post, New Port Richey, FL.



okaneclubfdny@icloud.com

email us for more info.

2025 EXECUTIVE BOARD



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727-744-5748



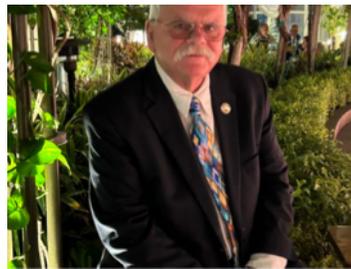
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PRESIDENT'S REPORT - APRIL 2026

Dear Members, Family and Friends,

Welcome to the April issue of "Standing Fast." The past month was a pretty busy one, starting with our St. Patrick's Day March meeting, followed by the Tunnel To Towers triple home dedication and ending with our annual Installation Dinner Dance. A special thank you to member Lenny Deszcz for cooking up some very delicious corned beef for our March meeting. It has been a great tradition for us and we look forward to it every year.

Happily there are even more good things ahead as we move through April and into May. Beginning with another Tunnel To Towers event on Friday, April 10th, members volunteer at this multi-sport event. The event takes place at the Ardea Country Club in Oldsmar, Florida.

Of course, we have our monthly meeting. April's date is the 21st. We move into May with our spring picnic. That's on Saturday, May 2nd. We will have some specially themed Cinco De Mayo treats on hand so you won't want to miss it.

You will find more details about these events later in this newsletter.

It's never too late to start being a Club Booster. Boosters are open to anyone, including you spouses, family and friends - so take a look at the Booster pages coming up in this newsletter and think about showing your support. Every Booster runs for 1 year and we greatly appreciate each one.

April is also a month of holidays and I wish all of you a Happy Passover, Happy Easter and Happy Orthodox Easter. Stay safe and be well.

Fraternally Yours,

Kevin Doherty, President

OKANE BOOSTERS: reminder...if your number is a 3 it's time to renew! Boosters run for 12 months. The number following your name indicates when your booster will expire.

Thank you for your support. Anyone can be a booster. Family members, friends, etc.
(Rev. 1/26)

Byrnes, Brian 1 Lt. Gene Sullivan, E39
 Byrnes, Brian 1 Firefighter James Byrnes 1824. Batt 21
 Byrnes, Brian 1 BC Carlo Andersen 456. Safety Batt
 Byrnes, Brian 1 Firefighter Marty Celic Murdered 7/2/77 13108. T.L.18
 Chichester, Dan10 Members of E275 1963-1987
 Chichester, Dan10 Members of L126 1963-1987
 Chichester, Dan10 Members of E234 1963-1987
 Dunscomb Jim11 Honoring all members of E82
 Dunscomb, Jim 1 Always in our hearts, E82
 D'Andrea, Jack10 Members of Ladder 126
 Incarnato, Charles10 Rockapulco - E268, L137 - Best on the Beach
 Incarnato, Charles10 On The Edge - E314 Members LOL
 Incarnato, Charles10 Never A Dull Moment E72, For Sure
 Incarnato, Charles10 Mid-town High Rise E8,L2, Batt8
 Incarnato, Charles10 The Bronx, must I say more? Great Memories
 Incarnato, Charles10 In memory of John Askin, E48, my friend and brother
 Kikis, Louis1 E22/ L13 "The Yorkville Nine"
 Kikis, Louis1 343 Never Forget
 Kikis, Victoria6 Honoring the memory or those who gave their all. 343 Never forget.
 Kikis, Victoria6 RIP Jeff Giordano - 9/11/01
 McCarren, Charles 1 BC Richard De Prima. Batt 49
 McCarren, Charles 1 Lt. James McCarren E48
 McCarren, Charles 1 Lt. Charles McCarren III FDNY Safety Command
 McCarren, Charles 1 Lt. Daniel McCarren E298
 McCarthy, William11 Members of L25, 9/11 Never Forget
 Martinsen, Ron1 Mem BC Tom Neary L134
 Martinsen, Ron1 Mem BC Chris Scalone E332
 Miccio, Rich6 Tom Gambino L163 - 9/11/01 - RIP
 Miccio, Rich6 L163/E325 - Woodside Warriors*Nilsson Mike1 L 126
 Nilsson, Mike1 Remembering members of E303, L126
 Nilsson, Mike1 September 11, 2001. 343 - Never Forget
 Ragusso, Rob11 Honoring all members of E289
 Savarese Jim11 The Tin House Gang E-232/L176 BMA
 Savarese Jim11 Watkins St. E-231/L-120/44BN
 Savarese Jim11 Briggs Ave E79/L37/27BN
 Savarese Jim11 RIP Ron Quartuccio
 Tarantino Ron1 In Memory of Louis Tarantino

See next page for full instructions about sending in your Boosters....

**BY SENDING IN YOUR BOOSTER!
YOUR MESSAGE COULD BE HERE. SHOW YOUR SUPPORT**

Becoming a Booster is simple. Just enter the name of your honoree and the message as you want it to appear. Each message is \$5.00 and runs for 1 year.

Example:

Your name and address

Your booster message:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

**Send your Booster. (\$5.00 per message) to:
Mike Doyle, Financial Secretary
5157 Silent Loop. Condo #314
New Port Richey, FL 34652**

You may also find booster applications on our website:
www.okanefdnyretirees.com or in our monthly newsletter

Boosters run for 12 months. The number following your name indicates when your Booster will expire. Thank you for your support. Anyone can be a booster. Family members, friends, etc. (Rev. 9/25)

YOUR MESSAGE COULD BE HERE. SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

BY SENDING IN YOUR BOOSTER!

UPCOMING EVENTS



Tunnel To Towers Foundation Tennis, Pickle Ball and Golf Tournament

Ardea Country Club
1055 East Lake Woodlands Pkwy, Oldsmar,
FL 34677

Date: Friday, 4/10/26

Volunteers should arrive by 8:00am.

Members are requested to wear their Class A's for the opening ceremony and then change into your O'Kane Golf Shirts as you are led out onto the golf course to your assigned hole, where you will greet golfers as they arrive at the tee. This is an all day event so you should plan on staying until 5pm. For more information and to sign up as a volunteer contact member Steve McNally: 914-329-4319



IT'S SPRING PICNIC TIME!

DATE: SATURDAY, 5/2/26

TIME: 12NOON

LOCATION: FRED HOWARD PARK, TARPON SPRINGS, FL.

SHELTER#6

Join us for our Spring Picnic. We're adding a little extra spice this time around celebrating Cinco De Mayo. Great food and fun guaranteed. Bingo is back too! **Cost is \$10.00 per person.**

Mail your reservation and payment to event chair:

Louis Kikis: 4973 W Breeze Cir, Palm Harbor, FL 34683. Make your check payable to O'Kane FDNY Retired. **Payments need to be received by 4/26/26.** You may also sign up and pay at our April meeting on 4/21. You won't want to miss this!

THE HARDING MEMO FINALLY FOUND...WHAT IS IT AND WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

THE HARDING MEMO is a 2001 document addressed to then-NYC Deputy Mayor Robert Harding. It revealed that the Rudy Guiliano administration anticipated anywhere from 10,000 to 35,000 liability claims following 9/11 due to toxic exposure and inadequate safety equipment for workers. It indicates city awareness of risks while officials publicly claimed the air was safe. The memo is central to lawsuits seeking more data on when the City knew of the hazards (per 9/11 Health Watch and Spectrum News NY1).

At this time statistics show that more people have died from 9/11-related illnesses than those who died on the day of the attacks, according to the 9/11 Memorial and Museum.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that tens of thousands of people have conditions doctors have connected to the air they breathed in the days, weeks, and even months after the towers fell.



Attorneys have made repeated requests for nearly 3 years for a response from the mayor's office on 9/11 air quality and liability records.

The non-profit 9/11 Health Watch group finally obtained The Harding Memo last February. They obtained it not from the NYC Mayor's office, but from a library at the University of Texas under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIL). They have filed the memo as an exhibit in its ongoing FOIL lawsuit against the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The DEP has denied the existence of any September 11th-related records and has moved to dismiss the case.

In an article by Spectrum News NY1 of March 30, 2026, it is reported that a few weeks ago the mayor's office and law department both told the lawsuit attorney, Andy Carboy, they would not be turning over any records (in a February letter) claiming nothing could be found. This despite the discovery of 68 boxes worth of information discovered on the subject in 2025.

The existence of the Harding memo and the 68 boxes strongly suggests that there are more documents in the City's records to be disclosed. The memo is drawing renewed attention to a painful reality for many 9/11 responders, recovery workers and survivors: serious health risks were known far earlier than the public was led to believe. The lawsuits will continue and the number of those succumbing to 9-11 related illnesses will continue to rise.

TUNNEL TO TOWERS FOUNDATION WELCOMES THREE FAMILIES HOME TO “LET US DO GOOD VILLAGE”

On Friday, March 27, 2026 O’Kane members and their families helped dedicate three new homes at Let Us Do Good Village in Land O Lakes, Florida. We are proud to have volunteered and attend many of these ceremonies from the start of the construction of this very special community.

“Tunnel to Towers is honored to welcome these three families into the Let Us Do Good Village. A community built for America’s heroes and their families,” said Frank Siller, Chairman and CEO of the Tunnel to Towers Foundation. “In the Let Us Do Good Village, every home, every street, every amenity is accessible, giving them back the independence and dignity they have earned.”

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the September 11th attacks, 25 years since FDNY firefighter Stephen Siller laid down his life to save others when America was attacked. For 25 years, the Tunnel to Towers Foundation has honored Stephen’s legacy by supporting the military and first responders who continue to risk life and limb in the line of duty.

To date, Tunnel to Towers has delivered over 1,700 mortgage-free homes to our nation’s heroes and committed over \$1 billion across all of our programs. This year, the Foundation has set a goal to deliver 343 mortgage-free homes to catastrophically injured veterans and first responders, as well as Gold Star families and families of fallen first responders who leave behind young children.



From L to R (rear) members Steve McNally, Jim Savarese, Chris Cioffi, Brian Byrnes, Louis Kikis share the celebration with 2 of the new homeowners: Denver PD Recruitment Officer Victor Moses and Army Sargent Joshua Tromanhauser.

MORE PHOTOS FROM THE TRIPLE HOME DEDICATION



We welcome home from right to left: Army Sgt. Joshua Tromanhauser, Army Sgt. Michael Mather and his spouse, and Denver PD Recruitment Officer Victor Moses.

Above: recipients are introduced. Below: recipients receive commemorative plaques for their homes.



O’Kane members and family in attendance: Steve McNally, Butch Ketchum, Kathy Miccio, Chris Cioffi, Jim Savarese, Louis Kikis, Brian Byrnes, Rich Miccio, Sharon Savarese. Not pictured: Kevin Doherty and Victoria Kikis.

14 FIREFIGHTERS INJURED IN BRONX FIREHOUSE BLAZE

Fourteen firefighters were injured early Friday morning, March 27, 2026, when fire broke out at Engine 79 in the Bedford Park section of The Bronx. Firefighters were working in the house when one noticed that there was a fire on the first floor. The firefighter told everyone to evacuate and called for extra help.

“We had some firefighters on the second floor of the building who could not get out through the stairway.” FDNY Commissioner Lillian Bonsignore said during a news conference. “So they did exactly what we ask everybody to do, exactly what we teach, was to shelter in the front room and close the door behind them, which gave them the opportunity and bought them time for another fire unit to come and help evacuate them from the building.”

All of the injuries sustained were minor and all are expected to recover, according to Chief of Department John Esposito.

Officials said more than 160 firefighters and EMS personnel responded to the firehouse to battle the blaze.



NEW YORK FIREFIGHTERS HELP IN HAWAII’S RECOVERY

A specialized incident management team has been deployed to Oahu to assist with storm recovery efforts. They are the New York City Fire Department’s All-Hazards Incident Management Team. They arrived in Oahu on Saturday, March 28th and are working alongside local crews following the recent Kona low storm.

The 14 member team will be assisting with coordination, logistics and debris removal operations. The Honolulu Incident Management Team requested the additional support due to widespread debris and damage across affected communities.

“This is what partnership looks like at its best,” said Mayor Rick Blangiardi. “We are grateful to the FDNY Incident Management Team for answering the call and standing shoulder to shoulder with our crews. Their experience in managing complex disaster operations will help us move faster and more efficiently as we continue to clear debris and support our impacted communities.”

New York City fire crews deployed to Oahu for storm recovery assistance



NYC’s Fire Department All-Hazards Incident Management Team was created following the September 11, 2001 attacks.



Honolulu, HI
aerial view of
flooding
following the
Kona low storm.

NYPD/FDNY HOCKEY PLAYERS BRAWL DURING GAME AT USB ARENA

A pair of brawls broke out during Sunday's charity hockey game between the FDNY and NYPD at UBS Arena, as New York City's first responders renewed their rivalry on the ice.

The NYPD came away with a 3-2 win over the FDNY, marking the first time in a decade that the Police bested the firefighters in the charity game.

Tied at one roughly eight minutes into the first period, several players on the opposing sides started walling on one another, and after the final whistle, the NYPD's celebration was delayed as fists flew once again.

The brawl began as two pairs of players stared fighting, and while a linesman went to monitor one fight, an NYPD player jumped in to keep one of the FDNY players from continuing to throw haymakers at a member of the Finest's hockey team.



As quickly as things started, they came to a close as the officials gained control of the situation, leading to a very full penalty box.

After the game, the temperature was still hot as several NYPD and FDNY players traded punches and shoves.

Both benches came together behind the net and it took several minutes for things to come under control.

The friendly rivalry between the police and fire departments has often led to very physical affairs when the two sides meet.

“That passion runs through you. ... We stand up for each other, we look out for each other,” FDNY right wing Stephen Kelly **told The Post** ahead of Sunday's game. “It's just like your family at home. You're going to defend them ... whether you're at work or on the hockey rink. That's the fire department brotherhood.” While the fisticuffs flew early in the first period and at the end of the game, the contest remained mostly clean and calmer than certain games in years past.



The following information is taken from the February 26th RMA (FDNY Retired Members Assn.) Newsletter.

MEDICARE ADVANTAGE UPDATE: The Organization of Public Service Retirees is awaiting court rulings on three cases. Depending on the outcome of the Bianculli case, the City may be required to refund the \$15.00 co-pays. You should keep co-pay receipts and other evidence. For more details and information check our website, fdnyrma.org.

WTC HEALTH PROGRAM FUNDED THROUGH 2040: The World Trade Center Health Program will remain fully funded under a provision included in the spending package passed by Congress and signed into law by President Donald Trump.

The program, which provides health care to more than 135,000 people who have fallen ill from their exposure to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack sites was facing up to a 3 billion dollar short fall over the next decade, as the program continues to see a rise in new patients.

HONORING OUR FALLEN HEROES ACT BECOMES LAW: The Congressional Fire Services Institute (CFSI) is pleased that the Honoring of Our Fallen Heroes Act (S237/H.R.1269) has become law as part of the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act. It expands eligibility under the federal Public Safety Officers’ Benefits (PSOB) Program to include certain cancers that result in death or permanent disability and are linked to service as a firefighter or other first responder. While cancer is a leading cause of death among firefighters, the PSOB Program did not reflect that reality until now. The PSOB Program, run by Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance, provides death and education benefits to survivors of fallen public safety officers, as well as disability benefits to qualified public safety officers.



See You Next Issue!