

STANDING FAST

WISHING A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR MEMBERS, FAMILY
AND FRIENDS..WELCOME 2026!

**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.



okaneclubfdny@icloud.com

email us for more info.

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, 1/20/2026. 7pm,
American Legion Paradise Post, New Port Richey, FL.

2025 EXECUTIVE BOARD



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT - JANUARY 2026

Dear Members, Family and Friends,

On behalf of your Board I welcome you to our first newsletter of 2026.

What a perfect time for us to recap what a great year 2025 was for our club. Read on and get

February started us off with our annual Day At The Races. While there were winners and losers, everyone (over 50 attendees) had a blast. We will do it again on February 7, 2026, so mark your calendars!

March was a big month for us. We had our traditional St. Patty's Day meeting with Lenny's famous Corned Beef Dinner. We ended the month in grand style celebrating our club's 45th anniversary at Seven Springs Country Club. We are so proud that we have stayed strong and, thanks to your efforts, we continue to grow. Mark your calendars for this year's dinner dance: March 28, 2026.

Our April Spring Picnic was unfortunately cancelled due to ongoing repair from our 2024 hurricane season..remember that?! Happily all is well and we are on schedule for 2026, Saturday, May 2.

We returned after our Summer Break and attended an awesome series of 9/11 memorials. Our membership was well represented by members and their families. Never forget.

October brought us back to our favorite picnic spot, Fred Howard Park for our 2nd Annual Oktoberfest! Everyone enjoyed the beautiful waterfront views, great food and fun.

In November we were lucky to have a representative from the latest health care plan for NYC retirees join our meeting. Members and their spouses attended and had many questions cleared up. It was an important meeting and, again, we were lucky to have this in-person opportunity.

We wound up the year 2025 with our annual Holiday Party. On December 16th, more than 50 members, family and friends celebrated in fine style. The holiday spread was hard to beat and the traditional raffles and games led the way for the grand finale.....our own personal visit from Santa himself!

What a year it was and now we look forward to a New Year filled with good will, health and happiness for all.

HAPPY NEW YEAR,

KEVIN DOHERTY, President

All the best from your Board Members: Rich Miccio, Louis Kikis, Jim Savarese, Mike Doyle and your Board of Trustees: Jack D'Andrea, John Pasquale, John Murphy, and Steve McNally.

OKANE BOOSTERS: reminder...if your number is a 12 it's time to renew! *Indicates booster renewed.

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)

*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
*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
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 E303
*Nilsson Mike1 L 126
*Nilsson Mike1 deceased 343
*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 Mem Lou Tarantino
*Tarantino Ron1 Detective Sergeant James Van Valen
*Tarantino Ron1 Nick Barone

YOUR MESSAGE COULD BE HERE. SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

BY SENDING IN YOUR BOOSTER!

YOUR MESSAGE COULD BE HERE. SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

Send your Booster. (\$5.00 per message) to:

Mike Doyle, Financial Secretary

Gene O'Kane Club Holds Annual Holiday Party

On December 16, 2025, over 50 members, family and friends gathered to celebrate the holiday season at our Annual Holiday Party. The event included an arrangement of cheeses and other nibbles for guests while awaiting the main meal...a buffet dinner featuring traditional foods like ham and sweet potatoes, plus delicious additions indulging baked ziti, sausage and peppers, more veggies and a beautiful mixed salad. Sweet endings topped off the meal (a variety of home baked cupcakes). What could be better than that?

As always, each guest received a raffle ticket for prizes and each table participated in our famous (!) holiday trivia game. Ending the evening was our very own visit from Santa who presented candy canes to all members of the “good” list. Santa shared a few jokes and words of well wishes for all.

It was a wonderful evening and a fine ending to our club's last meeting of the year.

Special thanks to all of our Holiday Helpers:

Kitchen and Cooks

Kevin Doherty
Rich Miccio
Kath Miccio
Louis Kikis
Victoria Kikis
Jim Savarese
Charles Incarnato

Cheese & Cracker Crew

Sharon and Jim Savarese

Set-Up, Check-In, and Games

Jeannie Doherty
Sharon Savarese
Ruthann Incarnato
Victoria Kikis
Kathy Miccio

Group Picture Photograph

Mike Doyle (fresh off a
Caribbean Cruise!)

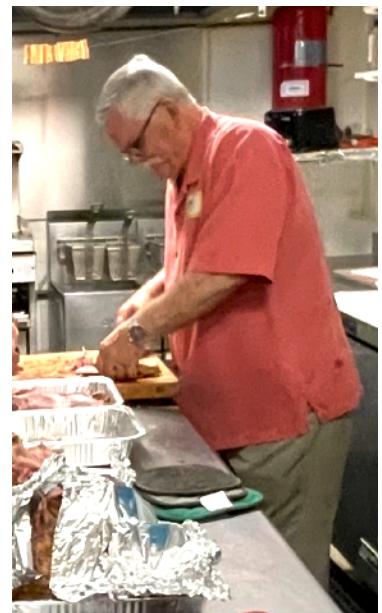
Santa

Tom McVeigh (Shhhh!)

If you couldn't make the party, be sure to take a look at the pictures that follow. As always, our parties and picnics are open to all members, their families and friends.

It was certainly a Happy Holiday....bring on the New Year!

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words...photos from the O'Kane 2025 Holiday Party.



Getting ready for the fun...ABOVE - (L) Treasurer Louis Kikis and Secretary Jim Savarese begin trimming the ham. Center: (Rear) President Kevin Doherty oversees the holiday ham progress. (R) Jim Savarese makes the perfect cut. Vice President Rich Miccio (Front R) awaits the taste testing.

BELOW - (L) The Cheese and Cracker table courtesy of Sharon and Jim Savarese). (R) Those sweets..cupcakes courtesy of Victoria Kikis.



More pics: Top to bottom: The Group, Kevin gets us started, Santa shenanigans with the Incarnatos and Jeannie Doherty, Team 8 plus 1 Trivia winners, More merry maker...



ENDING THE YEAR WITH THE RIGHT STUFF...GRADUATIONS AND PROMOTIONS!

On Thursday, December 18th, the FDNY Foundation joined the FDNY for a graduation ceremony at St. John's University in Queens, for 74 FDNY Paramedics who graduated from the Paramedic Basic program.

The FDNY Foundation congratulates all 74 paramedics on their graduation! This is a tremendous accomplishment for them and their families. We wish them continued success and thank them for their service and commitment to protecting the people and City of New York and proudly representing the FDNY.

“Today is the culmination of months of intense training, long hours of study and unwavering commitment. You have earned your place among the very best in emergency medical care,” FDNY Commissioner Robert S. Tucker said. “Choosing to become an FDNY paramedic is choosing a life of service. You have committed yourself to answering the call at any hour, in any condition, at the most difficult moments in a person’s life. You will meet New Yorkers on their worst day—and your calm, skill and professionalism will make all the difference. Your training has prepared you for the challenge, but it is your character, your empathy, your professionalism, and your teamwork that will define you.”

The graduates trained for 11 months at the EMS Academy at Fort Totten, at hospitals on clinical internships, and in field rotations. Paramedics have extensive training in anatomy and physiology, biochemistry and pharmacology, as well as many critical lifesaving skills.



On Monday, December 22nd, the FDNY Foundation joined the FDNY for a promotion ceremony for 97 FDNY Officers at the College of Staten Island. These 97 members were promoted to the ranks of: Assistant Chief, Deputy Assistant Chief, Deputy Chief, Battalion Chief, Captain and Lieutenant.

“Promotions are great days in the FDNY,” Acting FDNY Commissioner Mark Guerra said. “It’s a big deal to be promoted in the FDNY. I want to thank you all for stepping up—taking on that new leadership role.

Chief of Department John Esposito said: “Promotion is a reflection of the hard work each of you have displayed throughout your careers. Many of you are already officers moving to the next rank. Whether you’re a firefighter or an assistant chief, leadership is more than a rank or title. It’s a responsibility you accept every time you start your tour. Our Department’s legacy was built on the leaders before us. It’s now your responsibility to carry that forward.”



Left photo shows the newly graduated class of EMS. Photo above shows opening prayer at the Dec. 22, 2025 promotional ceremony.

LATEST NYC ELECTIONS BRING CHANGE TO THE FDNY

New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani selected retired **FDNY EMS Chief Lillian Bonsignore** as the new Fire Commissioner, making her the second woman to hold the position, a choice that drew both praise for her extensive experience and criticism from figures like Elon Musk, to which Mamdani responded by emphasizing her crisis leadership and deep roots in emergency medical services.

The mayor-elect made the announcement on Tuesday at Fort Totten in Queens, home of the FDNY EMS Academy. "They deserve a leader who cares about their work because she did it herself, who understands every detail and will fight tirelessly to empower FDNY and make it the best firefighting force in the world," Mamdani said.

Bonsignore was appointed Chief of EMS Academy at Fort Totten in 2016, and served as Chief of Ems Operations from 2019 - 2020. Although she never served as a firefighter, she is confident that it won't matter.

"I know the job. I know what the firefighters need, and I know what the EMS needs," Bonsignore said.

During the interim days before the official swearing in of the new mayor, First Deputy Commissioner Mark Guerra was appointed to Fire Commissioner by Mayor Eric Adams. Commissioner Guerra will maintain that role until the new mayor takes office.

Bonsignore led EMS Operations during the COVID Pandemic. She is the first openly gay FDNY Fire Commissioner and only the second woman to lead the department. She is the first woman to achieve a 4-star rank in FDNY history.



PHOTO ABOVE IS FACEBOOK POST FROM MAYOR-ELECT ZOHRAH SWAME MAMDANI: "Welcome to The New Era, Lillian Bonsignore."

More Changes coming to New York City...End of the Line for the MetroCard

It's almost time to say Goodbye to the NYC Metro Card! The NYC MetroCard is ending: the last day to buy or refill any MetroCard was December 31, 2025. The MTA is fully transitioning to the new OMNY contactless tap-to-pay system.

Here's what you should know if you are using the NYC transit system:

Current MetroCards may be used until their funds run out. You may also transfer balances to OMNY.

OMNY: This is a tap-to-pay system. Just tap your contactless credit/debit card, phone (Apple Pay, Google Pay) or buy a physical OMNY card (cost is \$1.00) from vending machines or retailers. Get used to tapping as the OMNY systems will become the only options for riders.

What people are saying: Folks all over are waxing nostalgic about the demise of the MetroCard. Many began collecting used cards for their advertising on the back. "I started to collect them after my younger son mentioned the advertisements. It had an ad for 1-800-Mattress," said collector Lev Radin, recalling the long ago-limited edition card for the defunct bedding company. Many sets of "Branded" MetroCards have been distributed over the decades including five that celebrated the New York Rangers 1994 Stanley Cup, a Modell's-sponsored version given to fans at Yankee Stadium in 1997 for the first subway series game, one from 2000 promoting the Mostly Mozart and Lincoln Center Festivals and a 2022 commemorative card that was available at four Brooklyn stations for The Notorious B.I.G.'s 50th birthday.

Using Your MetroCard in the Subway



Hold your card with the **MetroCard** name facing you. Without lifting your card, slide it *smoothly* and *completely* through the Card Reader on top of the turnstile. When the display says "**GO**," walk through the turnstile.

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Pictured above: Early advertisement showing instructions on how to use your MetroCard

In a fitting send-off for the MetroCard, a curated exhibit about the card is on display at the NYC Transit Museum in Downtown Brooklyn. Curator, Jodi Shapiro (pictured below) states, "New Yorkers really don't like change, but they accept change and then they come to love change. I think MetroCard is a symbol of that, as the token was." The exhibit is called: FAREwell: MetroCard



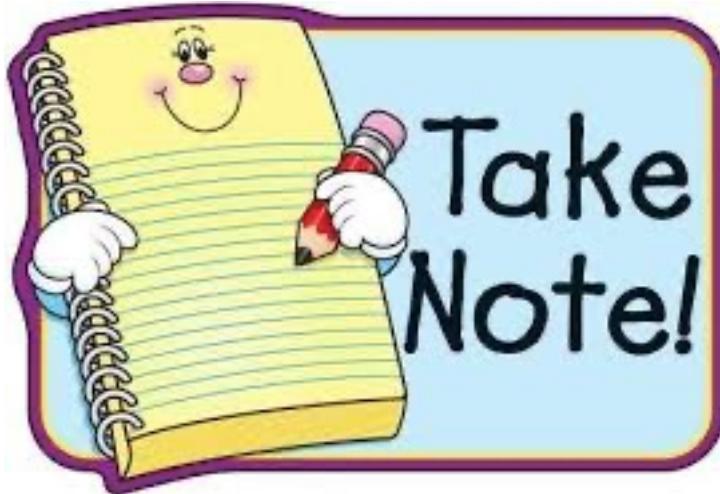
Times Square has a dazzling new ball for the New Year’s Eve drop — and it’s the biggest yet

It’s out with the old and in with the new in Times Square this year as the famous New Year’s Eve ball drop rings in 2026 with a dazzling new ball — the largest in the history of an event that started in 1907.

The Constellation Ball, as it has been named, is the ninth ball to usher in the new year at the famous Midtown Manhattan intersection. It measures 12.5 feet in diameter and weighs just over 12,000 pounds. The ball features 5,280 circular Waterford crystals in three different sizes — 1.5-inch, 3-inch and 4-inch — as well as LED light pucks. The shape of the crystals is a departure from the triangular ones seen on previous balls since 1999.



2026 will mark the first time that the Times Square ball will drop twice! Once as usual on New Year’s Eve, and the second drop will be on July 3, 2026. The occasion? Celebrating our country’s 250th birthday! So, if you don’t fancy standing out all night long in December, you have the chance to celebrate in the warmer weather this year! Happy New Year and Happy Birthday America!



Here's some info on upcoming events.
Mark your calendars!

■ **January:**

- Monthly Meeting - Tuesday, January 20, 2026. 7pm, American Legion Paradise Post, New Port Richey. (Remember to pay your 2026 dues and purchase boosters!)

■ **February:**

- Saturday, February 7, 2026. 11:00am. **DAY AT THE RACES at Tampa Bay Downs!** Don't miss out on this...attendance is limited to 50 guests. Cost is \$40.00 per person. All guests get buffet luncheon and exclusive indoor seating in the clubhouse. Get your payments in quickly so as not to be left out. Mail your check (payable to O'Kane FDNY Retired) to Financial Secretary, Mike Doyle, 5157 Silent Loop, Condo #3, New Port Richey, FL 34652. You may also pay at the January membership meeting, but remember, space is limited.

■ **March:**

- Saturday, March 28, 2026, 4pm. Annual Installation Dinner Dance at Seven Springs Golf and Country Club, New Port Richey. Pricing and more details to follow.