



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**October 28, 2023**

## **EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT HONORS FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS**

**Uniontown, PA** - Fighting fires is a service performed by everyday heroes who don't always get the recognition they deserve, even when giving their lives to help others. A Laurel Highlands junior set out to change that recently, using his Eagle Scout project to recognize and honor fallen firefighters from South Union Volunteer Fire Company by building a memorial in their honor.

"I'm just glad that I could get something done for them because of all they do for the community," Laurel Highlands junior Casey Karwatske said.

Casey, the son of Ted and April Karwatske, is a member of Boy Scout Troop 620. He joined Cub Scouts in first grade, he said, crossing over to Boy Scouts in fifth grade.

Casey said Scoutmaster Chuck Coldren "kind of has a running list of things that need to be done around the community." Coldren suggested the project to Karwatske.

"The fire station wanted to implement a memorial," April Karwatske said. "Casey met with them in March."

From there, Casey set out to design, plan and build the memorial, with family members, friends and fellow Scouts helping with the labor. Local businesses and individuals funded the project.

"He was able to get his project fully donated," April said, explaining that some businesses donated materials, while others donated the money to purchase materials.

Also involved in the project was South Union firefighter Richard Barron, who works as Chief of Security at Laurel Highlands School District. April said having someone he knew on the project was helpful for Casey.

"It kind of helped the process along because they were comfortable with each other," she said.

The end result is a 5-foot concrete wall perched on a 10-foot by 10-foot concrete slab. The slab is inlaid with a stamp, and two statues – one a placard and one a figure of a firefighter – stand on either side. Behind the wall, three flags fly.

The finished project will undergo a review by Boy Scouts administrators, and if the project passes their assessment, Casey will receive his Eagle Scout ranking. The memorial already has passed the firefighters' assessment.

"The firefighters love it. They're so happy that they finally have this," April said. "We want them to get the recognition."

April said the many people and organizations who helped Casey with the project also deserve recognition. She said donors of time and/or funding included Penn Plus, LLC, Scott Goodwin, Jody Petko, Marcon Building Supply, Inc., Keslar Innovative Concrete, South Union Township Volunteer Fire Company, The Flag Factory, Jim Shorkey Kia of Uniontown, Speedy Meedy's, Ben's Auto Parts, Christopher and Charlene Matthews, Hunter Matthews, Charlie Frantz, Dave and Hope Blazek and Troop 620.

The memorial was unveiled at a ribbon-cutting Oct. 24 attended by local officials, including Fayette County Commissioners Dave Lohr, Vince Vicites and Scott Dunn.

Commissioner Chairman Lohr said he had no doubt Casey gave the project his all.

"Anytime a person puts in the effort that an Eagle Scout puts in to do a project, his whole life is into it, and usually his family's, too," he said.

Lohr praised both the Boy Scouts organization as well as Casey and other teens like him.

"They're just an example of what our future holds. These are good people," he said. "I'm excited to acknowledge his accomplishments."

Vicites, too, expressed his support for scouting and said Casey's work deserves recognition.

"I'm really pleased that he made that effort. These Eagle Scouts projects are wonderful," Vicites said. "I have a lot of respect for Eagle Scouts and the things they do to get to that level. I think it's a good project, and I (was pleased) to be there to support his efforts."

"I'm always impressed by the hard work and dedication our local scouts put into everything they do," Dunn said. "These are our next generation of Fayette County leaders, and I truly appreciate their many contributions to our communities. This memorial is not your typical Eagle Scout project. It stands as a testament to our firefighters who risk everything to help others and don't always get the thanks they deserve. Thank you, Casey Karwatske, for recognizing our South Union Township heroes."

To learn more about Fayette County, visit [www.fayettecountypa.org](http://www.fayettecountypa.org).

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*This communication is part of the Fayette County PR Initiative, which is funded through the Fayette County Local Share Account (LSA) and Hotel Tax Grants in cooperation with the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette, The Redstone Foundation and other partners. This funding has been designated for the continued promotion and marketing of Fayette County, PA.*

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