

SEPTEMBER 2007

# 5-5-5-5

## Firefighters Graffagnino and Beddia killed in the line of duty

The FDNY suffered a tragic loss on August 18 as Firefighters Joseph Graffagnino of Ladder 5 and Robert Beddia of Engine 24 made the Supreme Sacrifice battling a seven-alarm fire at the Deutsche Bank building in lower Manhattan overlooking the World Trade Center site.

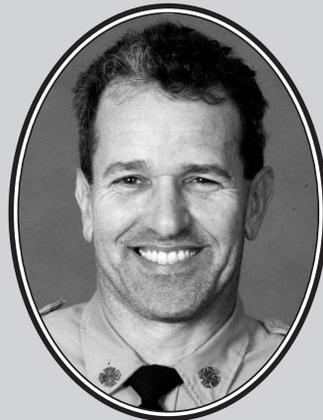
“They died doing what they loved,” said Mayor Michael Bloomberg. “They acted with courage and bravery.”

Firefighter Graffagnino was an eight-year veteran of the FDNY, appointed on May 9, 1999. Firefighter Beddia was a 23-year veteran, appointed on October 24, 1983.

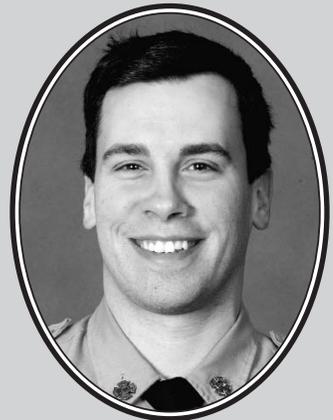
“The City will remember them as two men who loved their families, loved their job and who stuck together to the end,” said Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta.

The two firefighters became trapped on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor of the building at 130 Liberty Street, which is undergoing demolition and was covered in hazmat abatement after being damaged on 9/11. They suffered severe smoke inhalation and were taken to NY Downtown Hospital in cardiac arrest where they succumbed to their injuries.

More than 275 firefighters and 70 units responded to the seven-alarm fire, which



**Firefighter Robert Beddia**  
Engine Company 24



**Firefighter Joseph Graffagnino**  
Ladder Company 5

was reported at 3:36 p.m. and was deemed under control at 10:40 p.m.

Fire marshals determined the cause of the blaze to be careless smoking.

“We have lost two men who were not only brave, but our best citizens,” said Governor Eliot Spitzer.

This is the second time this year the FDNY has suffered a line-of-duty tragedy. On June 21, 2007, Firefighter Daniel F. Pujdak of Ladder Company 146 died when he fell from the roof of a building in Brooklyn while battling an all-hands fire.

### Funeral for Firefighter Graffagnino

Thousands of firefighters gathered at St. Ephrem’s Church in Dyker Heights, Brooklyn on August 23 to remember 33-year-old Firefighter Graffagnino, who was remembered as the quintessential firefighter.

“He’s the kind of firefighter every officer would want in his or her company,” said Captain Patrick McNally of Ladder 5. “I will always miss Joey G. and our firehouse will never be the same.”

His childhood home backed up to

Engine 284 in Brooklyn and many said that he knew from a young age that he wanted to be a firefighter.

“He died doing what he believed in – what he had wanted to do since he was a child,” said Mayor Bloomberg. “And while his life was short, he won the admiration of this City.”

He also was remembered as a family man, proud of his wife, Linda, and two children, Mia, 4, and Joseph, 9 months, and a kind man who would shovel sidewalks for his neighbors in the winter.

“Let us hold Joseph up as an example of how we should live our lives with valor and courage but also with compassion,” said Governor Spitzer.

Commissioner Scoppetta added: “Joseph was a good man, an important man. His neighborhood was the foundation for the two most important things in his life – his family and the Fire Department.”

Firefighter Graffagnino’s family members said they were overwhelmed by the outpouring of support they have received

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## Investigation of the 130 Liberty Street Fire

The Department suffered a devastating blow on August 18 as two firefighters – Joseph Graffagnino and Robert Beddia – made the Supreme Sacrifice while battling a seven-alarm fire in the former Deutsche Bank building.

Every member working at the fire did an extraordinary job under the most adverse conditions and the entire Department commends your efforts.

Yet there are many questions concerning this fire and the building - which was under demolition and abatement of hazardous substances - that must be addressed. The Manhattan District Attorney's Office is looking into all aspects of the tragedy and we are assisting them with their thorough investigation. We will also be conducting our own administrative review and will assist the state Attorney General's office as they conduct their investigation.

Our Safety Command is looking into the circumstances that led to the deaths of these firefighters. Our Bureau of Fire Investigation is looking at the cause of the fire, and marshals also are working with the DA's office on its investigation. In addition, we will conduct an administrative review concerning what actions were taken – or not taken – by Department personnel at the building prior to the fire. This will focus on why there were no inspections during several months of demolition work despite our regulations that call for them every 15 days.

Pending the outcome of the investigation regarding no inspections, I felt it was prudent to detail to headquarters three officers who are responsible for making sure these inspections get done. No disciplinary charges have been filed against these officers, and we will wait for the investigation to be completed before any such actions are considered. As to why inspections weren't done, again, we'll await the outcome of the investigation – and as I've said several times before, we'll follow the investigation wherever it leads.

Additionally, I've determined several actions must be taken immediately as the investigation proceeds.

First, I have directed deputy chiefs in our nine divisions to order surveillance by fire units of all buildings under construction/demolition in their respective administrative areas. These regular inspections will ensure these structures will be safe for our personnel to operate in the event of a fire or emergency.

Divisions have also been ordered to review all existing pre-fire plans in their respective administrative areas, and to have units and battalions canvass their districts for any potential structures that might require the creation of such plans. Borough commanders also are ordered to oversee and coordinate all field fire inspection activities in their respective boroughs.

We have also started a comprehensive review of the Department's AFID program – with an emphasis on ensuring accountability at all levels and making recommendations to strengthen and improve the quality and frequency of inspections by field units.

These steps are appropriate and necessary so that we understand the truth about what occurred, and so that we can prevent a tragedy like this from ever happening again.

## Study Regarding WTC Medical Monitoring Program to be Released

The Department this month is releasing a comprehensive study on the FDNY's World Trade Center Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program which has tracked the mental and physical health of our members since the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

Every active member, and all those who are retired and have participated in the program, will receive a copy of this groundbreaking report. It details the short- and long-term health effects on thousands of FDNY members who responded to the World Trade Center and participated in the largest emergency rescue operation the world has ever seen. These medical findings are a critical step in evaluating the enormous impact of 9/11 on our membership and determining how we can best treat those affected.

Just four weeks after the attacks, Chief Medical Officers Dr. Kerry Kelly and Dr. David Prezant, who both responded to the World Trade Center on 9/11, developed a medical program that would evaluate, treat and monitor the effects of the tragedy. They immediately started performing screenings of our firefighters and EMS members – including medical examinations and detailed surveys – and providing necessary treatment.

FDNY physicians and other medical professionals from the Bureau of Health Services (BHS) continue to improve and expand upon the program that since has become a nationwide model in evaluating the effects of the disaster and providing services to those affected.

Five years later, our dedicated BHS medical professionals continue to monitor the health of our first responders and offer the best treatment possible. The FDNY was the first government agency to chronicle the health of first responders on 9/11, and so far, nearly 14,300 FDNY members have participated in the program. The quick and unprecedented response by BHS was essential in helping us, as well as the City and the country, understand the long-lasting impacts of that horrible day.

I am confident that the report will answer many questions our members may have about the impact of 9/11. It essentially proves what we have assumed for some time – the effects of exposure to the World Trade Center site are extensive and far-reaching. The best way to honor the heroism displayed on 9/11 is to accurately record and analyze the health effects of those heroic acts. Every first responder deserves no less.

I commend Drs. Kelly and Prezant and the BHS staff for their commitment to this important project. Their thoughtful development of this program and their pledge to provide the best medical assistance possible will benefit our members for many years to come.



Commissioner's  
Message

*Nicholas Scoppa*

## Two Heroes, One Year Later

### Plaques dedicated in memory of Lt. Carpluk and Firefighter Reilly in the Bronx

A solemn tribute recalled a sad day in 2006 when a fire in the Bronx took the lives of a senior man and a proby.

Two plaques were dedicated in honor of Lieutenant Howard Carpluk of Engine 42 and Probationary Firefighter Michael Reilly of Engine 75 on August 27, the one year anniversary of the devastating fire that took their lives.

“These two firefighters were gentlemen, good neighbors, people who would do anything to help others,” said Mayor Michael Bloomberg. “They put themselves in harm’s way to keep us safe.”

Firefighters, family and friends filled the quarters of Engine 75 to honor the two firefighters who were killed while battling a three-alarm fire at 1575 Walton Ave., a one-story 99-cent store near the Grand Concourse.

FDNY units had entered the building in a search for fire and victims when a collapse occurred, fatally injuring the firefighters.

“This day is to remind us of the courage of Lt. Carpluk and Firefighter Reilly,” said Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta. “Our admiration for them will stay bright and constant.”

Among those attending the somber ceremony were Lt. Carpluk’s wife, Debra, his daughter Paige and his son Bradley, along with many other family and friends.

“Howie was a purposeful and serious man – and I was always proud to call him my friend and colleague,” said Captain Stephen Wall of Engine 42.

Firefighter Reilly’s parents, Monica and Michael, his brother Kevin and sister Erin, also attended the ceremony. They were surrounded by members of the U.S. Marine Corps, for which Firefighter Reilly served as a Sergeant during a tour of duty in Iraq, and many of his former comrades from the Ramsey (NJ) Rescue Squad, Ramsey Fire Department and Stratford (CT) Fire Department.

“He was a great firefighter who always wanted to be where the action was,” said Battalion Chief Robert Alfieri, who formerly served as captain of Engine 75.



(Top) Michael and Monica Reilly and (Below) Debra Carpluk and her children, Bradley and Paige, attend the plaque dedication for Lieutenant Howard Carpluk and Firefighter Michael Reilly at Engine 75 on August 27.

Firefighter Reilly’s plaque will hang in the quarters of Engine 75, where he worked for eight weeks as a proby, and Lt. Carpluk’s will hang at his firehouse, Engine 42.

“These plaques ensure that we will uphold the pledge we make to all firefighters – that we will never forget them or their families,” said Chief of Department Salvatore Cassano.

# Bravery and Compassion

## 265 probationary firefighters graduate from the Fire Academy

It was standing room only as 265 probationary firefighters joined the ranks on July 31.

"The Fire Department runs through your blood," said Mayor Michael Bloomberg during the ceremony at Queens College. "The paths that led you here are different, but you made the same bold, courageous pledge to protect the citizens of New York, and for that we are grateful."

The graduates were the first to complete an 18-week training program at the Fire Academy on Randall's Island, receiving five additional weeks of training in the unprecedented expansion of the firefighter school. (The class that starts in August will spend 23 weeks in training.)

"You are joining the greatest fire department in the world and you are already among the best trained," said Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta. "Yet you are still learning. Pay attention, learn from the best and you will become the best."

The group included more than 60 members who are following in the footsteps of family on the job, including Probationary Firefighter Stuart Ingram, whose father is Battalion Chief Robert Ingram of the FDNY Center for Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness.

Before joining the Department, Probationary Firefighter Ingram served as an NYPD police officer. He made headlines when he arrested a man who stabbed him in the chest. His life was spared when the knife struck the police shield on his uniform.

Also among the graduates were three probies who have family members who died in the line of duty, including Probationary Firefighters Christopher Russel, David Levens and Daniel Sullivan.

"This job requires a certain kind of person," said Chief of Department Salvatore Cassano. "You're held to a higher standard. And what you learn in the Fire Department will stay with you the rest of your life."

Also graduating were 19 veterans of the U.S. military, four of whom served in Iraq



265 probationary firefighters graduate from the Academy during a ceremony at Brooklyn College on July 31.

as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The class valedictorian was Probationary Firefighter Sean Denigris, the salutatorian was Probationary Firefighter Michael Padula and the Physical Fitness Award was given to Probationary Firefighter Recordo Demetrius.

"We are what we repeatedly do, excellence is not an act it's a habit," said Probationary Firefighter Denigris. "Demand excellence and you will get it."

Yet beyond their bravery and commitment, the class was lauded for their kindness. The group took part in the Wounded Warriors bike race, volunteered to help elderly hospital patients and developed a community garden at a nursing home in the Bronx.



Probationary firefighters wore pink ribbons in support of Lt. James Brennan's family (executive officer at the Academy). His wife was recently diagnosed with breast cancer.

While at the Rock, the class also raised money for the family of Lt. James Brennan, executive officer at the Academy, whose wife was recently diagnosed with breast cancer.

In a show of support, all of the probationary firefighters wore pink ribbons during the graduation ceremony.

## FDNY Family

### 42 fire officers promoted in enthusiastic ceremony

It was a day to celebrate generations of commitment to the FDNY.

Fire promotions on August 16 included two assistant chiefs, one deputy assistant chief, 15 lieutenants and 24 fire marshals.

"You are all the future of the FDNY," Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta told the promoted members during the ceremony at the Fire Academy. "You are leadership. You inherit the history and legacy of this job."

Hundreds of firefighters, family and friends filled the field house for the ceremony, many climbing the fire escapes to get a good view.

When Queens Borough Commander, Assistant Chief John Acerno, was sworn into his new rank, the crowd erupted into cheers – including his son, Firefighter Brian Acerno of Rescue 1. Chief Acerno noted that his family ties to the FDNY run deep, father also served as a battalion chief in Manhattan.

Also promoted were Lieutenants Robert Torrey and John Keenan whose namesake fathers too were promoted to



Newly promoted Fire Marshal Josef Pruden (left) was promoted from the same firehouse as his father, retired firefighter Edward Pruden.

battalion chief in the same ceremony in 1995.

"It's a hard road and I know you have waited a long time to get here," said Chief of Department Salvatore Cassano. "You

deserve it."

Newly promoted Fire Marshal Josef Pruden was elevated from the same firehouse that his father, Edward Pruden, worked as a firefighter before he retired in 1996.

"As I kid I went to the firehouse and it was great to follow in his footsteps," said Fire Marshal Pruden. "But it wasn't easy ... he had a great reputation."

Among the other high-ranking chiefs promoted in the ceremony were Assistant Chief John Coloe who is head of Fire Communications, and Deputy Assistant Chief Raymond Goldbach, who heads the Bureau of Personnel.



**Lt. Dan Van:** Actor Gary Sinise donated a van to the FDNY Family Transport Foundation on August 10, while attending a Cyclones Game at KeySpan Park in Brooklyn. The following evening the Lt. Dan Band - featuring Sinise - played a concert at Brooklyn College to raise funds for the Brooklyn Wall of Remembrance at KeySpan Park. The Wall pays tribute to first responders from Brooklyn who made the Supreme Sacrifice on 9/11.

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## Quick-Thinking Firefighters Save Woman in Bronx

Firefighters valiantly rescued a trapped woman after they spotted her flailing arms through a child-proof window of her burning apartment on July 21.

About 7:45 a.m., firefighters responded to an all-hands fire on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor of 2050 Seward Avenue, a 12-story, brick apartment building in the Hunts Point section of the Bronx.

Firefighters saw the 56-year-old woman's desperate waves through the child gate of an 11<sup>th</sup> floor bedroom window and relayed the message to other members inside.

Firefighters from Ladder 54 used

forcible-entry tools to open the woman's apartment door. Lt. Joseph J. Lowney, Jr. of Ladder 47, searched the apartment and found the semi-conscious woman hunched near the bedroom window.

"Everyone [working] at the fire deserves credit," said Lt. Lowney about the rescue. "We do things as a team and this was a perfect team play."

The woman was transported to Jacobi Hospital for non-life-threatening smoke inhalation. Firefighter Stiebel was also transported to Jacobi Hospital for minor injury to his left hand.

The fire was under control shortly before 8:30 a.m.



Lt. Joseph Lowney, Jr. of Ladder 47

## Three Children Rescued in Brooklyn Fire

As the steam pipe explosion was roaring in Midtown Manhattan on July 18, firefighters bravely saved two girls and a teenage boy from a Brooklyn fire.

Members responded to an all-hands fire at a two-story, private dwelling on Siegel Street in East Williamsburg.

The fire had started in the front of a first-floor apartment and the children

could not escape through the burglar bars on the rear windows.

After entering through the front of the residence and searching for about two minutes, Firefighter Salvatore Diorio of Ladder 102 located the children. Simultaneously Firefighter Andrew Hassell of Ladder 102 removed the burglar bars from outside the rear window, providing an escape.

"When there are kids involved in a rescue feels good," said Firefighter Diorio.

The 2-year-old girl, 4-year-old girl and 16-year-old boy were transported to Kings County Hospital for non-life-threatening burns. Firefighter Hassell and three others were taken to Long Island College Hospital for minor injuries.



**Stormy Tour:** Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta and Assistant Chief Thomas Haring tour the areas damaged by the destructive storms on August 8. More than 800 firefighters and EMS members responded to emergencies throughout the five boroughs caused by high winds and heavy rains, including numerous reports of flooding and downed wires. Firefighters also assessed structural damage to more than 40 buildings citywide. EMS members transported five people in Brooklyn for storm-related injuries, including a 40-year-old woman who suffered a fractured leg after being struck by a falling tree limb. More than 240 emergency calls were answered between 6:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.

## Firefighters Rescue Two From Bodega Fire

Firefighters rescued two workers from a fire in a Bronx bodega on July 27.

At 4:24 a.m., firefighters responded to an all-hands fire at 1225 Fulton Avenue, a one-story brick building in the Morrisania

section of the Bronx. The fire, which started in the front of the store, caused a heavy smoke condition throughout the location.

Two workers, who are related to the store owner, had locked themselves in the

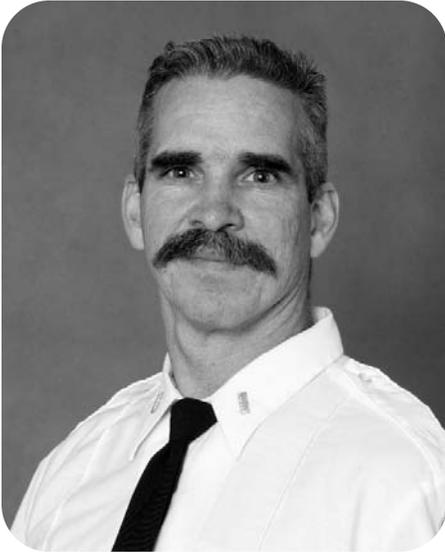
store overnight when the fire started. Lt. Sean Genovese and Firefighter Steven Gillespie, both from Squad 41, found the unconscious workers lying next to each other inside a beverage cooler.

Lt. Genovese, a 20-year veteran, and Firefighter Gillespie, a 13-year veteran, squeezed through a two-foot-wide side door to enter the cooler, tossing out boxes of soda to reach the workers. With help from other firefighters, Lt. Genovese and Firefighter Gillespie dragged the workers out through the front door.

The critically injured workers were taken first to St. Barnabas Hospital and then transported to Jacobi Hospital for smoke inhalation. Three firefighters suffered minor injuries.

Fire marshals determined the cause was an overheated extension cord attached to an air conditioner.

This fire demonstrated an important safety message to all New Yorkers: do not use extension cords to power air conditioners.



*Lt. Sean Genovese of Squad 41*



*Firefighter Steven Gillespie of Squad 41*

## Fifth-Alarm Fire in Queens

***FF spend more than four hours fighting flames***

A spectacular fifth-alarm fire broke out in a one-story brick Duane Reade drugstore at 37-28 Junction Boulevard in Corona, Queens on August 7.

More than 200 firefighters battled the blaze, which was first reported at 3:45 a.m. when members of Ladder 138 spotted flames extending through the roof of the store as they responded to a nearby, unrelated carbon monoxide emergency.

The fire was a second-alarm on arrival and was transmitted as a third-alarm minutes later.

Due to the extreme heat and humidity, thermal inversion occurred as smoke from the fire was trapped on the ground, making it challenging for all FDNY personnel to operate.

"The firefighters really got a beating from the heat, humidity and smoke," said Chief of Operations Patrick McNally, who responded to the fire.

Flames spread to two attached busi-



*Firefighters battle a fifth alarm fire in Corona, Queens on August 7.*

*Photo courtesy of Charles Eckert.*

nesses and five residential buildings were evacuated, but no homes sustained fire damage.

Firefighters used five tower ladders, six hand lines and two multi-versals to keep the fire from spreading further.

The fire was brought under control at

8:04 a.m. Twenty-one firefighters suffered minor injuries, 14 of whom were transported to area hospitals. There were no reported civilian injuries.

Fire marshals continue to investigate the cause of the fire.

## Play Ball!

### *FDNY members attend seventh annual FDNY Night at KeySpan Park*

It was a night of food, friends and remembrance.

FDNY members and their families celebrated the seventh annual FDNY Night at Brooklyn's KeySpan Park on July 20.

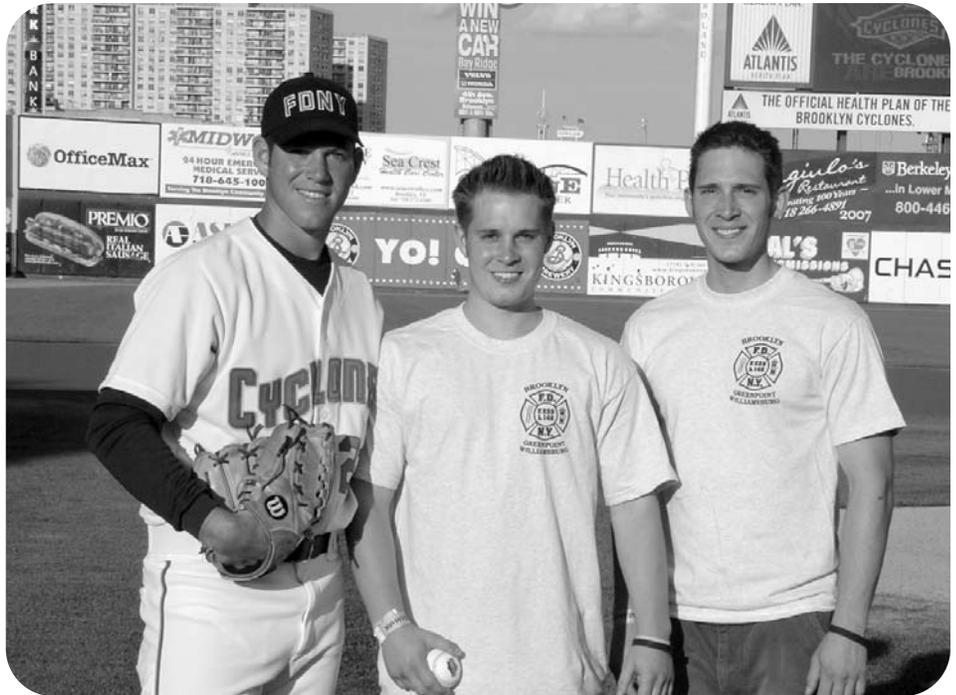
The night was bittersweet as Matthew and David Pudjak, brothers of fallen Firefighter Daniel Pudjak of Ladder 146, threw the game's ceremonial first pitch. Firefighter Pujdak was fatally injured while battling an all-hands fire on June 21.

Children of FDNY members got to stand beside Cyclones players during the singing of the National Anthem by Firefighter Regina Wilson of Engine 219.

The event also included a memorial ceremony at the Brooklyn Wall of Remembrance, a fireboat water display, a performance by the FDNY Pipes and Drums band and fire safety education demonstrations.

Unfortunately the evening ended with the Cyclones losing to the Tri-City Valley Cats, 8-6.

Proceeds from the night's ticket sales support the Uniformed Firefighters Association



*Matthew and David Pudjak, brothers of fallen Firefighter Daniel Pudjak of Ladder 146, gear up to throw out the ceremonial first pitch at a Cyclones game during the seventh annual FDNY Night.*

scholarship fund, which gives the families of active and deceased firefight-

ers the opportunity to receive higher education.

## Born Again

### *Deteriorating firehouse will become new state-of-the-art EMS station*

An old firehouse soon will get a new life in the Bronx.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta announced on August 15 plans to build a new state-of-the-art EMS station at the former quarters of Ladder 39.

Located at 243 E. 233<sup>rd</sup> Street near the Bronx River Parkway, the facility will serve residents in Woodlawn, Riverdale and Kingsbridge, consolidating the work of six ambulances based out of three stations into a single unit.

At an estimated cost of \$12.4 million, the new EMS facility at the 5,300-square-foot lot will include a captain's office, training and equipment storage areas, and

a separate decontamination area, as well as locker facilities and bathrooms for up to 100 employees.

There are currently 29 EMS stations and three outposts located throughout the five boroughs. Since the 1996 merger of the Fire Department and EMS, the number of EMS facilities constructed by the City has nearly doubled, with nine stations built and opened since 2002.

Firefighters from Ladder 39 were temporarily relocated to the quarters of Engine 63 in June 2006 because of the structural deterioration of their century-old firehouse – the last wood frame firehouse in the City. Ladder 39's new home is less than seven-tenths of one mile away

from its former location.

From June 12, 2006, to June 11, 2007, Ladder 39's travel times to all structural fires dropped 55 seconds, from 4:51 to 3:56 when compared to the previous year, as did overall travel times, which decreased 27 seconds from 4:57 to 4:30.

During the same period, travel time to structural fires in the Woodlawn section increased only slightly, from 4:12 to 4:17, while firefighters responded to more total emergencies, from 1,172 to 1,719. In Fiscal Year 2007, the citywide average travel time to structural fires for all ladder companies was 4:50.

## Grillin' to Win

### Firefighters compete in Gallagher's Steakhouse cook-off

It is well-known throughout New York City that some of the most flavorful cooking is done in the City's firehouses, and on June 21, Firefighter John Sierp from Ladder 169 proved it when his original steak recipe won first place in the Firefighters Grill-Off Challenge at Gallagher's Steakhouse.

"I'm surprised I won because the other recipes were more ambitious," said Firefighter Sierp. "Like most recipes, I just picked it off the top of my head. I don't know where it came from."

Firefighter Sierp was one of four firefighters who participated in the challenge hosted by Gallagher's Steakhouse. The five judges scored the recipes based on flavor and presentation.

As the winner, he received a Leroy Neiman lithograph and a chef's jacket from the restaurant. And "Sopranos" star Lorraine Bracco, who attended the competition, donated a case of Chianti Classico from her wine company, Bracco Wines.

Gallagher's also donated more than \$600 to the FDNY Foundation.

"We are delighted to host the FDNY at a culinary event for their favorite charities," said Gallagher's General Manager Terry Condon. "New York's Bravest have a special place in our hearts and in the kitchen."

Firefighter Gene McConnell of Engine 14, who used a family recipe, was named



Firefighters cook up their favorite steak recipes during Gallagher's Grill Off Challenge at Gallagher's Restaurants. They were joined by "Sopranos" star Lorraine Bracco and the restaurant's head chef. The winner was Firefighter John Sierp of Ladder 169 (second from left).

runner-up.

"[It's] something my father used to make for me when I was younger and it just stuck in my head," said Firefighter McConnell, who said he learned to cook from his father.

Also competing was Firefighter Steve Brunner from Ladder 36 and Firefighter Salvatore DePaola from Engine 160.

The contestants not only impressed the attendees and judges with their dishes, but

they also won rave reviews from Gallagher's head chef, who said: "They really know their way around a kitchen."

As the New York City winner of the Firefighters Grill-Off Challenge, Firefighter Sierp will compete against firefighters from Tampa, Fla.; Newark, N.J.; Atlantic City, N.J.; Denver and Las Vegas (cities where Gallagher's has restaurants) in a national challenge later this year.

## Did you know? Firehouse Patches

The uniform connects a member to the Fire Department, but it is the company patch that binds firefighters to the tradition of their firehouse.

"There's individual pride," said Honorary Battalion Chief Fred Melahn at the Mand Library. "Every company has its own quirks and the patch is their symbol."

Company patches generally are worn on the right sleeve, opposite the Department's official patch.

No one really knows when or how the tradition started, but many firehouses

adopted their design in the late 1970s or early 1980s when the FDNY held a contest for the most creative patch, Chief Melahn said.

The contest winners, Engine 205 and Ladder 118, created a combined patch featuring the Brooklyn Bridge and the Manhattan skyline, characteristics of their Brooklyn Heights neighborhood.

Many others similarly have patches that reflect their firehouse's neighborhood, such as Engine 9 and Ladder 6's that includes a green dragon in homage to their Chinatown neighborhood.

Others reflect a firehouse nickname or slogan, and many also use cartoons in their designs – including Yosemite Sam, Popeye and, of course, fiery red-devils.

The patches are designed by anyone affiliated with the firehouse or are familiar with the company's members.

They are optional, yet the only company that does not have one is Engine 67 in Manhattan. The colors and designs are subject to approval by each company's borough commander, and they can not be larger than 4 ½ inches high and 3 ¾ inches wide.

## Safety Partnership

### *FDNY and Department of Buildings join forces to make NYC buildings safer*

The Fire Department and Department of Buildings (DOB) have devised a joint operations initiative to improve safety for first responders and expand inter-agency communications.

In the past, fire officers have used a standard form to report violations, notifying the FDNY Bureau of Fire Prevention. Members from fire prevention then relayed the complaint to 311 operators, who notified officials from the DOB.

The new partnership yielded the Fast-Track Pilot Program, which was launched in Bronx Divisions 6 and 7. Using a new High Priority A-8 Referral Form (which is used to report building violations during

inspections), the pilot program enables FDNY deputy chiefs to enter critical information about buildings directly into the DOB's Business Information System, drastically reducing notification and action time required for DOB officials to address structural hazards that could endanger FDNY members and the public.

The pilot program also includes joint follow-up inspections with uniformed FDNY officials and DOB engineers, thus increasing the number of building tenants and owners that allow access to their property.

Since the pilot program was launched in October 2006, the number violations

served by the DOB have increased by 40 percent. Additionally, 50 percent of all high-priority complaints have resulted in violations.

Officials from both agencies say they are pleased with the results of the partnership and intend to expand cooperative efforts to all five boroughs, including field and administrative units.

Next, the two agencies will address the use of lightweight construction material in buildings, since substandard construction work and flimsy materials can affect structural stability, creating hazardous conditions for both firefighters and the general public.

## Day of Celebration and Hard Work

On Independence Day, millions of spectators lined the East River to watch the Macy's 4th of July Fireworks display light up the sky. Four double barges blasted more than 35,000 shells over the River for the annual show.

But members of the FDNY's Explosives Unit don't pay much attention to the skies during the spectacular exhibition. They were too busy making sure that the barges remained 1,000 feet from the shore, people on the boat stayed safely behind a steel container on the barge and there are enough lifejackets for everyone involved.

"When dealing with explosives, you can't play around," said Chief Inspector James Lauer. "There's a lot of pressure to make things work and keep them safe. It's difficult to stop a show."

He said the unit begins meeting with Macy's fireworks organizers and other city agencies involved with the display in



*Fireworks inspectors from the FDNY gear up for the 2007 Macy's 4th of July display on the East River.*

March. Members of the FDNY's Explosives Unit are closely involved with the entire process - from approving new shells to ensuring organizers have the proper permits.

During the show, two FDNY fire inspectors stand on the barges, another is stationed on a tug boat and one mans the

command station on land.

They are just a few of the 40 specially trained inspectors who ensure safety for all fireworks shows that occur in New York City - from New Year's in Times Square to the Music in the Park concert series in Central Park.

## Peaceful Entry

### *Firefighter Wally Blum gives the entrance to the Rock a facelift*

If you've admired the newly landscaped entrance to the New York Fire Academy, then you have one man to thank: Firefighter Walter Blum.

Firefighter Blum, building coordinator at the Academy, supervised the installation of a waterfall and seating area at the entrance and worked with other members to clean up the embankment.

"We are a showpiece for the world's visitors," he said, acknowledging hundreds of students, media and FDNY relatives visit the Fire Academy every year.

He said he wanted the entrance to be welcoming ... and it is.

Visitors can sit on one of three benches at the entrance and listen to the soothing sounds of the waterfall while admiring the lush greenery and historical pieces on display, including metal placards from old firehouses, stone sculptures of firefighters' faces, a hand-drawn chemical engine from 1900 and a fireboat's monitor.

"Over the last five years we brought the training to a new level and Wally is giving the Rock the look to go along with it," said Chief of the Fire Academy Stephen Geraghty.

Firefighter Blum said he uncovered many of the historical pieces in storage at Fort Totten. Deputy Commissioner Milton Fischberger told him about metal placards stored there that were in danger of being damaged. Firefighter Blum also found the sculptures there, which originally were displayed at the New York City Fire Museum, but were found to be too large.

"We were trying to uphold the history of the Department and trying to instill pride in the younger guys, who are just coming on the job," he said.

Firefighter Blum, a Belle Harbor native, said he joined the FDNY for excitement and to partake in the Department's tradition of service in New York City. But his 25-year career has taken him on a journey very different from the average firefighter.

After more than two decades at Ladder 174, he was asked to be a building construction instructor at the Academy. He started teaching in November 2003 and



*Historic statues and equipment are part of the new entrance at the Fire Academy designed by Firefighter Walter Blum.*

continued for a year-and-a-half. At that time, he also became building coordinator at the Rock, responsible for the completion of new construction projects.

Teaching in a classroom and working in an office setting took some readjusting, said Firefighter Blum.

"It's a whole different way of life," he said.

Although he misses the firehouse, he said he enjoys using his skills in contracting and construction to benefit the Department.

"I worked in a firehouse for more than 23 years and that's a large part of my life," said Firefighter Blum. "But I enjoy the work I do at the Academy, too."

The FDNY is lucky to have Firefighter Blum as a member, not only for his knowledge of building construction and firefighting, but also for his acts of bravery. He received eight meritorious citations between 1985 and 2003.

Yet Firefighter Blum remains humble about the honors, saying: "It's really just what our job is to do."



Thousands of firefighters line the streets in Dyker Heights, Brooklyn to honor the life of Firefighter Joseph Graffagnino.

## TRAGEDY

(Continued from page 1)

from members of the FDNY.

"Joey always wanted a brother," said his mother, Rosemarie Graffagnino. "Who would have thought that all these years later he would have thousands? I feel as if I have adopted all of you."

### Funeral for Firefighter Beddia

More than 9,000 firefighters lined Fifth Avenue to pay tribute to Firefighter Beddia, 53, at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan on August 24. He was remembered for his humor, kindness and extraordinary skills as a firefighter.

His sister, Susan Beddia Olson, recounted childhood memories of him saving her from drowning in a pool, teaching her how to drive and taking her to her first baseball

game.

"You are my friend, you are my brother, you are my hero," she said.

Firefighter Beddia was Engine 24's senior man, and many remembered him as the ultimate firefighting coach – calm and always willing to teach new firefighters entering the house.

"He had a passion for his work," said Lt. Raymond O'Hanlon of Engine 24. "He was a true professional. And if anything rattled Bobby, I never saw it. We were all deprived of Bobby's calm and soothing voice saying 'I'm with you tonight boss, I'm with you.'"

Lt. O'Hanlon added that when responding to New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Firefighter Beddia brought a sense of calm to the area.

"This was a guy who was driven and happy, competitive and compassionate,"



Firefighter Robert Beddia was honored by thousands of firefighters, family and friends during a memorial service at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan.

said Mayor Bloomberg.

Governor Spitzer added, "I'm amazed by how many lives he touched."

Firefighter Beddia loved golf, card games and most of all his family – including brothers Edward Carman and James Beddia and sisters Barbara Crocco and Olson.

And to keep alive his love of family and generous nature, his family requested that in lieu of flowers, donations be given to a fund benefiting the Graffagnino children.

"It keeps alive his giving spirit for future generations," said Commissioner Scoppetta.

**Donations honoring Firefighters Beddia and Graffagnino can be sent to:**

**FF Joseph Graffagnino Children's Fund**  
c/o FDNY Foundation  
9 Metrotech Center  
Brooklyn NY 11201  
**For more information**  
please call **718-999-0779**



# VIEW

POINT

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**FIRE DEPARTMENT  
CITY OF NEW YORK**

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OF COMMITMENT, COURAGE & COMPASSION**

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