

FDNY and New York Blood Center Honor Firefighters who Donated Bone Marrow



Firefighters were honored on January 28 for saving lives a world away.

Firefighters William Zask, Jr., of Engine 257 and Louis Dym of Ladder 168 were lauded for their donating bone marrow and saving the lives of two children, whom they met for the first time during the 4th Annual Honor Roll of Life ceremony at FDNY Headquarters in Brooklyn.

During the ceremony, fifteen other firefighters also were honored for their life saving bone marrow donations in 2007.

“Today is one of those wonderful days when we get to honor what firefighters do best - save lives,” said Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta. “Our firefighters do all sorts of things to save lives, and this way is lesser known to the public.”

Firefighter Zask joined the FDNY as an EMT in 2004 and was promoted to the rank of firefighter in 2006. In the spring of 2006, while at the Fire Academy, he joined the National Marrow Donor Program.

Four months later he was called as a potential match for Alex Jomar Maldonado Cruz, a 2-year-old boy from Puerto Rico suffering from Osteopetrosis Renal Tubular Acidosis, a life-threatening condition.

After seeking treatment at the New England Medical Center in Boston, his family learned he needed a bone marrow transplant. They searched for a match for six months, and just three days before his third birthday, on February 1, 2006, the young boy received his life-saving transplant.

When he met the boy, the firefighter gave him a toy fire truck and a t-shirt from his firehouse. “This is incredible,” he said. “I never thought I’d get this opportunity.”

“Thank you, I am so very grateful,” said Alex’s mother, Jeinny.

Firefighter Dym, a five-year veteran of the FDNY, also joined the National Marrow Donor Program while at the Fire Academy. Nearly four years later he was called as a potential match for Coleman (Cole) Sierens, a 10-year-old boy from Winnipeg, Canada suffering from Acute Myelogenous Leukemia.

The boy was first diagnosed with the pediatric form of the disease, Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia, just before his sixth birthday. After more than three years of treatment, he was told he was free of cancer.

Yet in May 2006, the cancer had returned and he was told he would need a bone marrow transplant. After learning his sister was not a match, the boy’s family turned to the donor registry, where they were connected with Firefighter Dym. The boy received his life-saving transplant on October 13, 2006.

“I’m speechless,” Firefighter Dym said as he met Cole, who is now 12-years-old. “To be able to save his life like this is pretty special.”

Cole’s mother, Trina, said she, too, was overwhelmed by the experience: “It was so incredible to find a match for Cole. All I can say is ‘thank you,’ but it’s just not enough.”

Since the program’s inception in 1990, 98 firefighters have donated bone marrow to help 106 patients with life-threatening diseases, including cancers and blood disorders. The FDNY is the largest single group registered with the NYBC, with more than 8,000 members.

“Each of you has gone above and beyond to save lives,” said New York Blood Center’s Board of Trustees Chairman Howard Milstein. “Running into burning buildings isn’t enough, now you have to do more. The FDNY is batting at about 40 times its weight to help the community.”

Firefighters who were added to the Honor Roll of Life plaque for donating bone marrow in 2007 include:

Firefighter Frank Criscuolo, Engine 53
Firefighter Jason Dorry, Ladder 3
Firefighter Daniel Fitzsimmons, Ladder 128
Firefighter Michael Galvin, Ladder 156
Firefighter William Greenberg, Ladder 17
Firefighter Michael Guli, Engine 290
Firefighter Alexander Lee, Engine 69
Firefighter Edward Long, Engine 69
Firefighter Robert McCormick, Ladder 106
Firefighter Mark Mianulli, Engine 45
Firefighter Fernando Moscoso, Engine 297
Firefighter Christopher Nobile, Ladder 25
Fire Marshal Robert Ravert
Firefighter Henry Santiago, Jr., Engine 8
Firefighter Thomas Westhoff, Engine 280
Firefighter William Zask, Jr., Engine 257