



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Saying ‘Thanks’ to Our Volunteers

PATTY RITCHIE August 27, 2012

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Senator Ritchie’s Weekly Column

They save us from burning buildings. They are the first on the scene at motor vehicle accidents. They go searching when our loved ones go missing. They are the ones running towards danger when everyone else is running away.

Too often though, we forget to say ‘thanks’ to the more than 150,000 volunteer firefighters, EMS, search and rescue teams and other emergency responders that serve across New York State.

Last week, I had the privilege of meeting more than 200 volunteers and their families for Central and Northern New York at my first-ever Volunteer Appreciation Day BBQ, held in the Town of Cape Vincent.

Representatives from more than two dozen departments and organizations from across Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties attended the free event, which was held to recognize responders who sacrifice their time and risk their own safety on behalf of their communities.

The event was also an opportunity for volunteers and their families to show their support for “Mark’s Law;” as the petition received nearly dozens of new signatures in support of the legislation.

The measure, named in honor of 25 year-old Mark Davis, the Cape Vincent EMT who was gunned down while responding to a medical emergency in 2009, provides the toughest penalty allowed—life imprisonment without parole—for the killing of a firefighter or first responder. The Senate passed “Mark’s Law” with wide bipartisan support last spring, but it stalled in the Assembly.

Many emergency responders give their all for the communities they love. It’s only right that we repay them by giving them all the protection the law allows. If you’d like to support your volunteers, please visit [click here](#) to sign the petition for Mark’s Law and join the more than 2,000 people who have already advocated on behalf of the legislation.

If you were able to attend Volunteer Appreciation Day, I thank you for being a part of the event, and more importantly for you or your loved one’s service. I hope to host the event again next year, and look forward to meeting and thanking more of the volunteers who make our region a safer place to live.

And remember, across Central and Northern New York, there’s always an urgent need for volunteers. If you’re interested in serving, you can call the Oswego County Emergency Management Office at (315) 591-9150 to become an emergency services provider or (315) 349-8800 to become a volunteer firefighter. In St. Lawrence County, the Emergency Services Office can be reached at (315) 379-2240, and the Jefferson County Emergency Management office can be contacted at (315) 786-2654.