



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Three Western New York Firefighters Among Those Honored at New York State Fallen Firefighters Memorial

CATHARINE YOUNG October 8, 2013

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*Ronald J. Keddie, Michael J. Chiapperini, Tomasz M. Kaczowka, and Six Other Firefighters
Posthumously Honored in Memorial Ceremony Held in Albany*

ALBANY - Today, three Western New York firefighters, and six more from throughout New York State, who lost their lives in the line of duty were honored at the New York State Fallen

Firefighters Memorial. With family, friends, and hundreds of firefighters there to pay their respects, Lieutenant Governor Robert J. Duffy led a ceremony in adding the names of nine fallen firefighters to the memorial.

“Firefighters from across the state came to pay tribute to the service and sacrifice of these individuals. We must never forget the fact that our first responders risk their lives every day, and for that we are eternally grateful,” said Senator Catharine M. Young (R,C,I-Olean), who attended the ceremony to memorialize the nine brave firefighters honored.

Ronald J. Keddie, a 41-year member of the Sheridan Fire Department, passed away on June 27, 2012 at the age of 64. While reporting to the fire station to drive an engine to a motor vehicle accident, Ron collapsed on the floor of the fire station due to a medical emergency, and succumbed to his injuries.

Ron was a New York State Fire Instructor for more than 30 years. He had a passion for the fire service that was difficult to rival. He attempted to instill that passion to all of his students, as well as to anyone else who would listen. He coordinated the Chautauqua County Weekend at the New York State Fire Academy, where there was rarely an empty seat. Ron also loved to work with children, and routinely taught fire prevention to children at local schools, youth groups, and at the Children’s Safety Village. Ron was a burly man with a deep, gruff voice, which may normally frighten a child, but due to his gentle ways, almost always endeared the children to him and his message of fire safety.

Ronald Keddie served the Sheridan Fire Department in the offices of President, Chief for two terms, and most recently as a Fire Commissioner in his third term. Through the course of his career, he also served on countless committees. Ron served his country in the Viet Nam War from 1967-1970 in the U.S. Navy, and received the National Defense Medal. He was also very active in local fraternal organizations, clubs, charitable organizations, and an avid Buffalo

Sabres fan.

Surviving are his wife Kathleen and son Michael, both active members of the Sheridan Fire Department, and daughters Jennifer and Melissa. He was predeceased by his parents Robert and Esther, and his son Todd.

Michael J. Chiapperini was born April 1, 1969 and grew up in Webster, New York with his loving parents Marcia and John, and sister Michelle. He dedicated his life to serving the Webster community as both a volunteer firefighter and police lieutenant. Mike volunteered with the West Webster Fire Department for over 25 years rising through the ranks of lieutenant, captain, first and second assistant chief, and chief. Mike really loved serving as the Explorer Post Advisor, volunteering for deployments, and going on calls, especially with his son, Nick. Mike also worked for the Webster Police Department for over 19 years. Within the department, he rose through the ranks of patrol officer, investigator, sergeant and lieutenant. Mike served on many committees and was trained in many areas of emergency response.

On December 24, 2012, Mike responded to a call for a reported car fire. Upon arrival, a gunman ambushed the firefighters and opened fire. Mike and Tomasz Kaczowka were fatally wounded, and two other firefighters, Joe Hoffstetter and Ted Scardino, were also wounded by gunfire. The shooter took his own life shortly afterwards.

Mike leaves behind his wife, Kim, and three children, Nicholas (20), Kacie (5) and Kylie (3). He is also survived by his mother, Marcia; sister, Michelle (Dane) Ehrich; mother and father-in-law, Pete and Shari Munding; brother-in-laws, Mike and Ryan Munding; sister-in-law, Julie (Jeffrey) Dawson; numerous cousins, nieces, nephews, and many friends.

Mike had a deep passion for life - he enjoyed boating, snowmobiling, hunting, road trips, vacations and lots of family time. Every weekend, he planned something fun to do with his family. He also adored his two boxers, Jax and Carlie. Courageous, determined, outgoing, humorous and generous are qualities that Mike possessed. He adored his family, would always help a friend in need, and was a true public servant. Mike is and will always be greatly loved and missed.

Born May 16, 1993, Tomasz Marian Kaczowka was a first generation Polish-American and the youngest of three brothers. He loved his friends and family, visiting Poland, and helping others. Those who knew him remember him as an energetic, fun-loving individual with a sense of humor and a contagious smile. He enjoyed making people laugh and playing jokes on his unsuspecting brothers Dariusz and Greg. His parents Janina and Marian taught him to work hard and reap the benefits of a career he was passionate about.

Tomasz joined the West Webster Explorers Post at age 14, eagerly training to develop himself and others as firefighters. Tomasz also attended the Eastern Monroe Career Center in Rochester, eventually earning CFR and EMT certifications. In August 2011 at age 18, Thomasz became the youngest volunteer firefighter in the department, earning nicknames like "kid" or "skidda." He continued his studies in Fire Safety at Monroe Community College while simultaneously working full time as a Fire Dispatcher for the Rochester Emergency Communications Department on the overnight shift. Even with this rigorous schedule, Tomasz still dedicated time to attend incidents, and was placed on the Dean's List for the fall of 2012. Tomasz planned to become a professional firefighter.

Tomasz Kaczowka was killed in the line of duty along with his friend and mentor Michael Chiapperini during an ambush at the scene of a fire on Christmas Eve 2012. He had selflessly offered to stay at the firehouse overnight so that other firefighters could spend time with their families. His heroic actions will not be forgotten.

Tomasz's dedication and drive to succeed in civil service serves as proof that age is not always an accurate measure of a person's character and ability. Hopefully, Tomasz's actions will serve as a guide for other young firefighters.

Also honored were Richard A. Nappi of the New York City Fire Department, James P. Wickham of the Cutchogue Fire Department, Isaac L. Ransom of the East Clinton Fire Department, Gerard Marcheterre of the Borodino Fire Department, Harry L. Davidson of the Winona Lake Fire Department, and George W. Dove of the Skaneateles Fire Department.

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