



Chicago Fire Department Foundation



2025 ANNUAL REPORT





**The Chicago Fire Department Foundation
2025 Annual Report is dedicated to the memory of**

CAPTAIN DAVID MEYER

Truck 29 * April 23, 2025



Lori Healey

We also lost our dear friend and Board member Lori Healey, who dedicated her professional life to public service, urban development, and community building. Lori was an inspiration to all of us. She was the driving force behind the Foundation and will be missed by all.





Every day, the city of Chicago wakes up, ready to begin. Its residents go out into the world with hopes, dreams, and aspirations. Families gather. Communities are built. Life moves forward, every day.

And every day, a group of men and women suit up, ready to protect these lives, to protect this city. Not out of heroic desires, but because of an inherent sense of duty and honor that is part of who they are.

They are the men and women of the Chicago Fire Department. Prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice to keep us safe. They place the needs of the public and their fellow firefighters and paramedics above personal comfort, personal desires, and even self-preservation. This is a choice they make freely, understanding the risks and accepting them willingly, not as a grim duty but as a calling.

The Chicago Fire Department Foundation was created to support the men and women who are out there protecting us every day and to help keep Chicago residents safe.





Chicago Fire Department Foundation



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Dear Supporters,

Thank you for your generous support of the men and women of the Chicago Fire Department.

Chicago is a city worth protecting, worth keeping safe. The firefighters and paramedics of the Chicago Fire Department are out there every single day of the year to do exactly this.

Rich or poor. South side or north side. No matter faith, politics, or gender – all they see is a human being in need of help.

Our CFD members and our city have been faced with more threats and challenges than ever before. The only way we can continue to do our part – to support the CFD family – is through your generosity and financial commitment. We will continue to deliver on the necessary technology and tools required to save lives, and we will continue to provide financial support to firefighters and paramedics in their time of need.

Our goal for the future remains the same – to help Chicago be the most prepared city in America. If recent years have taught us anything, it's that you can never be too prepared. We ask for your continued support of our vital cause, which is making a difference for our city.

We are the Chicago Fire Department Foundation. Supporting those who protect us all.



2025 AWARDS

The Chicago Fire Department Foundation honored 17 Chicago Fire Department members for their acts of bravery and heroism.



Firefighter Award of Valor



FIREFIGHTER / EMT

Anthony J. Rouba, Jr. Omar Bucio

On the evening of December 31, shortly before midnight, Truck 49 responded to a report of a fire in the 7400 block of S. South Shore Drive. While en route, the Fire Alarm Office updated the call to a Still and Box alarm due to reports of numerous residents trapped.

Upon arrival, Truck 49 learned that residents were trapped on the fifth floor, and the firefighters immediately began climbing the stairs. At the top of the fifth-floor staircase landing, they came across a woman who said her mother was trapped inside the unit that was on fire.

The fifth-floor corridor was filled with heavy black smoke, and firefighters felt excessive heat coming from the open apartment door. The conditions were rapidly deteriorating, and Firefighter Rouba, Jr. and Firefighter Bucio knew they had to act immediately before fire engulfed the entire apartment and hallway on the fifth floor.

With zero visibility and intense heat conditions,



Firefighters Rouba, Jr. and Bucio pushed deeper into the apartment to conduct their primary search. They quickly located the victim and carried her to the end of the corridor and down five flights of stairs.

The firefighters brought her to paramedics for treatment and transport to the hospital.

Because of their quick, selfless actions that night, these firefighters saved a mother who might not be here today without their courage.

2025 HEROES

Firefighter Award of Valor



FIREFIGHTER / EMT Anthony Torres

Just before midnight on February 28, Engine 38, Truck 48, and Battalion Chief 18 were dispatched to a fire in the 1200 block of South Independence Boulevard.

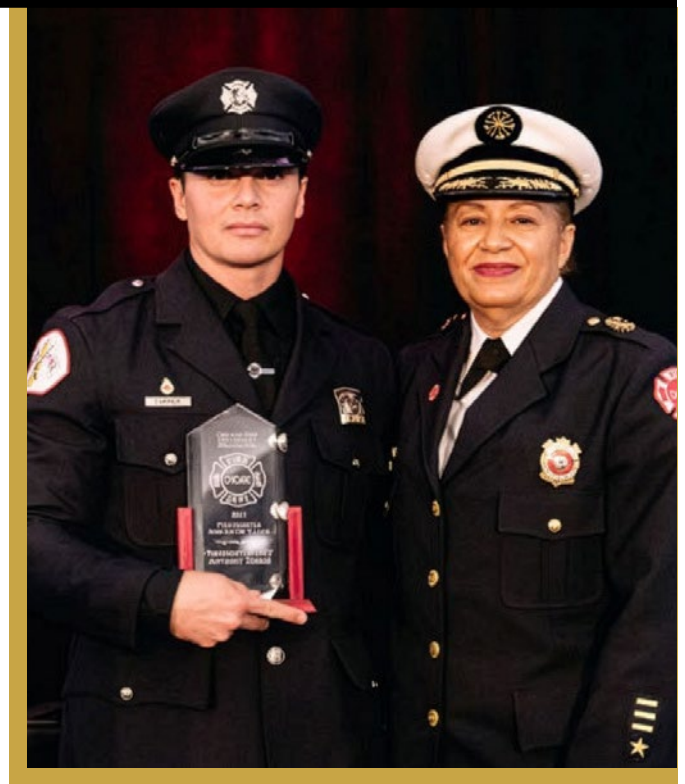
Once on scene, firefighters discovered a three-story, multi-unit building with heavy fire blowing out of the front of the building from the second and third floors. They witnessed occupants rushing out of the front door as the fire continued to blaze.

Truck 48 immediately pulled up to the front of the building and set up aerial operations. Members also prepared for possible rescue operations of any remaining occupants.

While exiting the truck, Firefighter Anthony Torres noticed a male victim leaning out of the second-floor window, desperately waving for help. As the fire and heat continued to increase, the occupant moved even further out of the window, appearing ready to jump due to heat and smoke that cut off his path to the apartment door.

Firefighter Torres quickly coordinated with Firefighter Nee and deployed the 28-foot extension ground ladder. Firefighter Torres saw the victim now clinging to the edge of the windowsill, unable to withstand the increasingly deadly conditions. While other residents yelled at the victim to jump, Firefighter Torres was able to calmly engage the victim and encourage him to hold on for a few more seconds.

After raising the ladder, Firefighter Torres raced up and performed a successful ladder rescue



before the victim panicked and resorted to further drastic action. Firefighter Torres carried the victim down the ladder as other Chicago Fire Department personnel began to triage him.

The victim was transported and treated for burns and smoke inhalation.

The actions of Firefighter Torres – from his sharp situational awareness to his swift, courageous rescue – embody the very best practices and traditions of the Chicago Fire Department.

2025 HEROES

Firefighter Award of Valor



FIREFIGHTER / EMT

Michael P. Gettes

On the morning of June 15, Truck 34, along with other companies from the 23rd Battalion, responded to a fire in the 2400 block of East 78th Street. Upon arrival, they encountered a three-story, multi-unit apartment building with heavy fire and thick smoke conditions.

The first arriving engine reported flames engulfing the stairwell and heavy black smoke pouring from every window of a third-floor unit, where residents were hanging out of windows to escape the heat and smoke. Truck 34 immediately began rescue operations.

Firefighter Michael Gettes and the remaining Truck 34 members moved to the rear of the building and encountered heavy black smoke coming from the first-floor rear unit. Residents were pointing to the third floor, indicating that a child was trapped inside. Fire was quickly encroaching on the second-floor units and starting to spread upward toward the child.

Firefighters began a two-front effort to rescue the trapped child, using the rear entrance and a ground ladder directly to the bedroom windows. There were several obstructions, which added to the difficulty of raising the 35-foot ladder to the third-floor window.

With no hose line yet in place, Firefighter Michael Gettes climbed up to the bedroom window and immediately realized the only way to reach the child would be to perform a Vent-Enter-Isolate-Search operation. Because of the extreme fire and heat conditions, Firefighter Gettes knew time was running out for both him and the trapped child. He



entered to begin a primary search and saw that the interior bedroom door had been completely burned away, making it impossible to safely isolate the room from the fire conditions outside.

Undeterred, Firefighter Gettes continued the search and, within seconds, emerged at the bedroom window with the trapped child. He handed the child to a waiting member of Truck 34 at the top of the ladder.

From his position near the bedroom window, Firefighter Gettes observed that Engine 72 was preparing to make entry into the rear door from the porch, with the hose line in place, and decided to continue his search.

Pushing deeper into the unit as the hose line was advancing, now joined by the engine and interior search teams, Firefighter Gettes discovered another victim in the living room who would later succumb to the fire conditions.

Firefighter Gettes performed heroically, with complete disregard for his own personal safety, and in the highest traditions of the Chicago Fire Department.

2025 HEROES

Firefighter of the Year



FIREFIGHTER / EMT

Daniel M. McGovern

Brendan J. Reilly

Samuel J. Shanahan

On February 21, Truck 49 responded to a high-rise fire in the 7100 block of Jeffrey Boulevard.

Upon arrival, Firefighter Brendan Reilly observed civilians hanging from ninth-floor windows, struggling amid heavy smoke above them. Firefighter Reilly immediately raised the aerial ladder to the ninth floor, extending it nearly vertically to almost 100 feet in the air. His partner, Firefighter Samuel Shanahan, climbed to the top of the ladder and rescued two people, including a child in cardiac arrest.

After this rescue, Firefighters Reilly and Shanahan then raised ground ladders to the third floor, where more residents were in distress.

Firefighter Reilly performed a Vent-Enter-Isolate-Search maneuver to rescue a disabled woman and bring her safely down the ladder.

As these rescues were underway, Firefighter Daniel McGovern, a member of the Fire Investigation Team conducting a primary search in the initial stages of a high-rise fire, encountered a family struggling to make their way down the hot, smoke-filled stairwell. Firefighter McGovern saw that the family was quickly

becoming overcome by smoke and time was of the essence if they were to survive. He made his way to them in zero visibility, picked up two children and carried them to safety, all while urging the parents to follow. Once the children were safely in hands of other firefighters, Firefighter McGovern returned to rescue their parents along with the family dog.

After exiting the building, he noticed that firefighters from Truck 49 needed assistance with ladder rescues from lower-floor windows. He raised a ground ladder to the second floor and brought another resident to safety. Engine 126 and Truck 49's quick, decisive initial actions resulted in the successful rescue of at least ten civilians.

Firefighters McGovern, Reilly, and Shanahan acted swiftly, bravely, and skillfully, with little regard for their own safety.



2025 HEROES

Paramedic of the Year



PARAMEDIC FIELD CHIEF David J. Ernst

January 2025, Paramedic Field Chief David J. Ernst was near the University of Chicago Hospital when he heard a call reporting that two construction workers had fallen approximately 140 feet from scaffolding at a building under construction. He immediately responded and was the first on scene.

Upon arrival, he learned that high winds had left the scaffolding unsecured and debris was falling from above, making entry extremely dangerous. Without hesitation and with complete disregard for his own safety, Paramedic Field Chief Ernst descended to the basement sub-level to reach both patients and determine whether lifesaving care could begin prior to the arrival of first-response companies.

He found one patient deceased and triaged the second patient with critical, life-threatening injuries. He worked diligently to assess the worker and relayed critical information to responding paramedics regarding injuries and necessary lifesaving equipment.

Paramedic Field Chief Ernst coordinated with on-site construction crews and multiple agencies to facilitate the removal of the critically injured patient. Construction crews lifted the patient via



crane and basket to street level, where University of Chicago Hospital staff were waiting to transport him for trauma care.

Recognizing that immediate extrication was essential due to the severity of the injuries, Paramedic Field Chief Ernst's critical thinking, rapid response, and skilled leadership ensured the patient was safely transported for advanced, life-saving care.

The Chicago Fire Department Foundation honors the bravery and selflessness of our first responders. Join us in supporting their mission at CFDFoundation.com.

2025 HEROES

Paramedic of the Year



PARAMEDIC FIELD CHIEF Joseph DiGiovanni

On November 20, Paramedic Field Chief Joseph DiGiovanni responded to and was the first to arrive on the scene of a working fire.

Paramedic Field Chief DiGiovanni updated the dispatcher with a size-up, including that heavy fire was blowing out of the second-floor windows and there were heavy smoke conditions throughout the building. There were also reports of occupants trapped.

Understanding the immediate danger to the residents trapped inside, Paramedic Field Chief DiGiovanni made the heroic decision to enter the building to save lives. He had no protective clothing or self-contained breathing apparatus. He began by working to get the attention of the first-floor resident by knocking on the front door of her unit. After multiple attempts, she finally opened the door. At this point, smoke was filling the stairwell, along with heat from the fire just above. Paramedic Field Chief DiGiovanni explained that the floor above her was on fire and she needed to vacate the building immediately. The resident was hesitant to leave due to animals in the apartment. Visibility was quickly diminishing due to the increasing smoke conditions, and heat was intensifying. He knew that in a moment, conditions would become untenable for survival.

Paramedic Field Chief DiGiovanni again stressed the urgency of evacuating and rescued the



resident. Once outside the building, he immediately began patient care and triage. Fortunately, the first arriving suppression companies were on the scene and working to extinguish the fire.

Paramedic Field Chief DiGiovanni showed outstanding bravery and heroism while demonstrating personal courage, going beyond the call of duty under adverse conditions, along with the possibility of extreme risk.

2025 HEROES

Valor & Exemplary Service Award



BATTALION CHIEF

Steven Groszek

COMMANDER

Christopher Grande

LIEUTENANT

Michael Curtin and Felix Serrano

ENGINEER

Jamie Delgado

FIREFIGHTER / EMT

**Sean Gore, Garrett McCarthy,
and Paul Simandl**

On July 4, destructive and deadly flooding took place in the Hill Country region in the state of Texas. Flooding began early that morning after significant rainfall accumulated across Central Texas. Six flash flood emergencies, which included the cities of Kerrville and Mason, were issued the same day. The Guadalupe River rose about 26 feet in 45 minutes, surging to an estimated 29 feet in the area.

The State of Texas requested additional Urban Search & Rescue (USAR) teams to assist with rescue operations. Thirty-nine Illinois firefighters and paramedics, including eight members of the Chicago

Fire Department from USAR Task Force 1, deployed to Texas as part of a coordinated rescue effort.

These members undergo thousands of hours of training in search and rescue disciplines including structural collapse, swift water rescue, confined space rescue, and high angle rescue as part of their training required to be USAR team members.

Although team members had responded to previous disasters, nothing compared to what they encountered in Texas. Catastrophic flooding swept away entire neighborhoods — many people were missing, including children — and the mission ahead was unimaginable. The landscape was filled with debris, downed trees, and dangerous conditions that made every step physically and mentally demanding.

Despite it all, the team pressed forward with search, rescue, and recovery operations throughout their 14-day deployment. They never lost hope and never wavered in their commitment to save lives and bring comfort to survivors in their darkest hours.

Although many lives were lost, many lives were saved due to the dedication of those who responded. That is why the Chicago Fire Department Foundation believes it is so important to honor these members who left their families behind and willingly stepped into harm's way to help others.



Supporting our Members

The Chicago Fire Department Foundation was created to support the men and women who protect us every day and keep Chicago's residents safe. Over the last year, we've made great strides in honoring our commitment.



- ▶ We provided support for the family of Captain David Meyer, who lost his life in the performance of his duty at a fire on Chicago's west side this past April.
- ▶ We stood beside the families of five active members who passed away this year.
- ▶ We assisted six active members and their families during periods of serious injury and illness.
- ▶ We also provided aid to 28 Department families with 49 children headed back to school this fall, including nine Line of Duty Death (LODD) families and 19 families of Active-Duty Death members.
- ▶ The Foundation continues to support the Chicago Fire Department Gold Badge Society, including funding the Eileen Coglianesse Annual Scholarship and supporting the Annual Charity Baseball Game between the CFD and CPD.
- ▶ We continue to sponsor the Annual Chicago Battle of the Badges, which supports the CFD Gold Badge Society and CPD Gold Star Families.



CHARITIES



► **The Foundation awarded six scholarships to graduates of the Chicago Police Fire Training Academy (CPFTA).** These high school students completed a two-year after-school program introducing them to careers in public safety. The annual scholarships were awarded in memory of Lori Healey.

► **The Foundation provides annual support for the Chicago Fire Department Pipes & Drums and the Chicago Fire Department Honor Guard.** These dedicated firefighters and paramedics attend countless events on their own time and at their own expense. Special thanks to the members of CFD Pipes & Drums and the CFD Honor Guard for all they do for CFD families.

► **The Foundation also supported the 90th Annual Memorial Day Parade and Mass** honoring deceased members of the Chicago Fire Department, Fire Alarm Office, and Chicago Firemen's American Legion Post #667. The 2025 Mass remembered members of the CFD family who have died since last Memorial Day, especially Captain David Meyer, who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty, along with five active members of the Department and more than 125 retirees.



► **EMS Week 2025:** EMS Week is a time to recognize and thank the Chicago Fire Department paramedics and EMTs who provide critical, life-saving care to the people of Chicago. In recognition of their service, the Foundation provided over 800 "grab-and-go" lunches to Chicago's finest.

Thank you for all that you do.



Working to Keep Chicago Safe

Community Support



The Foundation continued its partnership with CFD Community Pop-Up events and local food pantries, which distributed free smoke detectors we provided to residents of Chicago during these challenging times.

Thousands of smoke detectors have been given to families in need again this year. Two thousand were distributed in the months of October and November alone.

As you can see, we are working our way into Chicago's 77 neighborhoods.

That is why we funded The Fire Escape project, an investment of over \$1 million. This new virtual reality technology helps teach and engage students in the 10 steps to fire safety in the home. It is a first-of-its-kind program in the United States. Students immerse themselves in a three-dimensional world and learn how to respond and safely evacuate during a fire in their virtual reality



home. It is a powerful learning tool.

Every day, the Chicago Fire Department Foundation strives to take further steps toward the goal of becoming the most prepared city in America, with the ultimate goal of zero fire deaths.

We acknowledge your commitment to this cause. None of this would be possible without your continued support.

With your help, we can do our part to help those who are devoted to protecting us.



Home Fire Safety Tips: The Foundation has 25 Home Fire Safety tips available for download on our website home page, CFDFoundation.com.



Dear Supporters,

All of us at the Chicago Fire Department Foundation are grateful for your generous gifts to our 2025 *Tribute to Broad Shoulders* luncheon. Your support makes such a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

It was wonderful to have the opportunity to gather together in shared dedication to the Chicago Fire Department, the finest in our nation. Your gift will help the Foundation’s mission to support the heroic CFD Firefighters and Paramedics who selflessly put on a uniform each morning to protect our great city and all that is precious to you and me.

On behalf of everyone with the Foundation, thank you for your kindness and generosity.

If you were not able to join this year and would like to view a short clip of why we do what we do, please [click here](#).

Wishing you a happy and healthy 2026!

Raymond Orozco

Board Co-Chair, Chicago Fire Department Foundation





Thank You Sponsors

We are grateful for the incredible support from our sponsors and co-chairs throughout 2025.



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CFD FOUNDATION MISSION

The CFD Foundation supports the critical lifesaving work of the Chicago Fire Department. The Foundation works collaboratively with the CFD and its members to support its most crucial priorities; to reduce firefighter, paramedic, and civilian deaths and injury. The Foundation supports CFD initiatives for education, fire prevention, training and equipment needs that are not funded through city, state or federal budgets. The Foundation assists the firefighters/paramedics and their families in times of need. The CFD Foundation Board Members are all volunteers and receive no compensation. The CFD Foundation's resources are utilized to meet the mission of the CFD Foundation.



There is a famous quote by an unknown author that reads; **"Poor is the Nation that has no heroes, but shameful is the Nation that has them and forgets."** We will not forget and we will continue to recognize these men and women who give so much and ask for nothing in return.



To live a life of service is to give a life in service.

**We remember the brave men and women who never wavered
in their commitment to “You Before Me.”**

**We carry them in our hearts not just today, but every day,
at home, in the firehouse, and on the streets of Chicago.**

We need more men and women like them.



SUPPORT OUR MISSION!

Scan the QR code to learn more about our work or to make a donation.



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