

REGIONAL

Hundred Club on duty aiding families of fallen officers, firefighters



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Key Points

Spouses receive lifetime support.

Children receive \$2,500 a year until age 22.

Scholarships, costs for grief counseling and other benefits are included.

Hundreds of mourners arrived at St. Mary Church in Franklin on Jan. 15 to honor the life of Uxbridge Police Officer [Stephen LaPorta](#). The 43-year-old was killed in the early morning of Jan. 7 after he was struck by a tractor-trailer while helping a motorist in icy conditions on Route 146 in Uxbridge.

Death in the line of duty can happen instantly. It can also happen long after the flames have been extinguished and emergency apparatus put away.

It is in those bleak hours after the loss, when survivors are stunned by grief, that the [Hundred Club of Massachusetts](#) steps in. The club, dedicated to ensuring that those who give their lives in the service of their communities are never forgotten, brings more than comfort.

The club brings a check.

“The Hundred Club shows up 24 to 48 hours (after the loss) with immediate financial support,” said Tracie Hines, the new executive director of the Hundred

Club of Massachusetts.

That financial support allows the family to focus on its loss, Hines said.

“Families are dealing with the loss, they don’t know which end is up,” said Richard MacKinnon Jr., president of the [Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts](#), which represents more than 13,000 firefighters in the Bay State.

“The check is a protective blanket,” MacKinnon said. “It helps create financial security. The club is famous for cutting a check within days and hand-delivering it in many cases.”

“We offer lifetime support for the spouse,” Hines said. The club also pays for out-of-pocket costs for benefits like grief counseling, mental health support and funds to send kids to camp, pay for piano lessons, dance lessons, sports teams, up to \$2,500 a year for each child.

“Life needs to go on for the children, they have to move forward, be kids,” Hines said. Scholarships are also offered as youngsters graduate high school and start thinking about college or trade school.

The club currently supports 105 Massachusetts families who have lost a member to a line-of-duty death. That support lasts long after the wake and funeral, a lifetime for a surviving spouse, and through age 22 for their surviving children.

In addition to the financial supports, the club also acknowledges anniversaries of the incident in which first responders perished, and sends birthday greetings to the surviving spouse, gifts and check-ins on social media. Even as funds taper off in later years, Hines said survivors will never feel as if they are alone.

“We want them to feel seen, heard, know that their sacrifice is honored,” Hines said and noted she belongs to first responder family; her husband is a firefighter and her brother-in-law a police officer. As she grows into the job, she has learned that those lifetime outreach efforts, small as it may seem, are highly valued by the survivors.

After LaPorta was killed in the line of duty on Jan. 7, the Hundred Club stepped up, offering both financial help and emotional support for his widow, Shannon, and their 13-year-old son.

“Our mission is to show up. We’re there to support, and that’s what we did,” Hines said.

The club has been taking care of the families of fallen first responders since its founding in 1959 by the late Norman Knight, who modeled the club along the lines of a similar organization established in Detroit in 1952. That's when a Detroit businessman dismayed by the death of a first responder and the financial straits faced by his survivors, gathered 100 of his most influential friends at a dinner, requesting a \$100 donation from each. The businessmen raised \$10,000 to give to the widow, worth approximately \$122,300 in 2025.

Knight had led the Hundred Club of Massachusetts for more than 50 years. The club operated behind the scenes, shunning press, publicity and fanfare, said Hines. The members tapped their social and business circles to support the survivors.

That low profile had started to work against the organization; it was fading from view, even from the consciousness of the first responder community, Hines said. The change in leadership after Knight’s death in 2024 at 99 comes with a directive to highlight its benefits to the community it serves.

The club raises funds through memberships for individuals, first responders and corporate memberships, along with fundraising events held throughout the year.

Sunday, Jan. 25, marks the 10th annual [Bfit Challenge](#) hosted by the Boston Bruins to benefit first responders and military charities.

Participation is open to all. Each participant must pledge to raise at least \$300. During the event participants run the stairs and around the different tiers of the TD Garden. Some firefighters don their gear, adding 50 to 70 pounds of equipment to their frames to make the run even more challenging.

Worcester Firefighter Andrew Staruk has been participating in the Bfit Challenge since 2019, signing up after the line-of-duty death of Worcester Firefighter Christopher Roy.

Roy, 36, was one of several firefighters trapped in a blazing building on Lowell Street on Dec. 9, 2018. Firefighters attempted to rescue Roy and one other man by pulling them through a window using an extension ladder.

Roy perished, the other firefighter survived. His cause of death was attributed to smoke inhalation.

The five-alarm blaze was determined to have been set in the basement by a former tenant who was fighting with roommates. In an analysis of the incident conducted in 2021 by Fire Engineering, it was determined that operational deficiencies, including in training and incident-specific communications, contributed to Roy's death.

Roy is one of nine Worcester firefighters who have died in the line of duty since 1999 when six firefighters – Thomas Spencer, Timothy Jackson, Paul Brotherton, Jeremiah Lucey, James Lyons and Joseph McGuirk – perished in the Worcester Cold Storage & Warehouse Co. fire on Dec. 3, 1999. More recently, three firefighters have perished: Jon Davies Jr. in 2011, Roy in 2018, and Lt. Jason Menard less than a year later in November 2019.

“I became a firefighter because of the brotherhood,” Staruk said in a December interview. The Cold Storage & Warehouse Co. fire and Roy's death inspired him to find a way to give back to the organization that he felt so much a part of.

Now, he's a top fundraiser for his colleagues and the organization. The first year Staruk signed up for the Bfit Challenge, all the money raised by Worcester first responders benefited Roy's 9-year old daughter.

While Staruk finds other ways to raise money for survivors of the city's fallen, he focuses on the Bfit Challenge because of its association with the Hundred Club of

Massachusetts.

“It is still helping,” Staruk said of the club. “The club is still helping the Roys, the Menards, the Davies, the Familias (Worcester Police Officer Manny Familia perished in 2021 while trying to save a teenager drowning in a city pond). “The club is helping everyone we’ve lost, all their families.”

The parameters defining a line of duty death are expanding, Hines said, explaining that in the past, it was defined as a loss confined to a specific incident. Now it extends to deaths that occur in the 24 hours after an incident.

“For every line-of-duty death, there are eight to 15 active-duty losses from heart attacks, cancers and suicide,” Hines said. “We know that families who suffer these losses, if they haven’t planned appropriately, can struggle financially for a long time.”

As the club expands its membership, it is looking to expand the scope of its supports for those active-duty deaths.

“It’s personal for me,” Hines said.