

THE Hundred Call

***"The Club
with a Heart"***

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North Haven firefighter dies of natural causes while battling blaze

A North Haven firefighter died while on the scene of a fire that displaced 13 residents of a multi-family home in North Haven on December 26, 2022.

Matthias Wirtz, 46, was outside the home operating a fire engine at a multi-alarm fire on Quinnipiac Avenue in North Haven when he became distressed and issued a mayday. He was quickly located by on-scene personnel, who administered medical aid. He was then transported to Yale New Haven Hospital, where he was later pronounced dead.

It was determined that his death was natural, caused by a number of factors, including hypertensive and cardiovascular disease, according to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

Governor Lamont ordered all U.S. and state flags to be lowered to half-mast in honor of Wirtz.

"This is particularly upsetting as it comes at a time of year when families and friends are gathering to celebrate the holiday season", Lamont said in a statement. "His passing is a painful reminder that first responders work every single day of the year, 24 hours a day, and often miss holidays with their families in order to protect the people of our state."

Wirtz was a 1994 graduate of Notre Dame High School, an all-boys preparatory school in West Haven, according to the school. He later earned a bachelor's degree from the University of New Haven.

He began his career in 1996 as a volunteer firefighter with North Haven's North East Volunteer fire company No. 4. He then spent 22 years with the North Haven Fire Department.

According to North Haven Fire Chief Paul Januszewski,



North Haven Firefighter Matthias Wirtz

Wirtz responded to the 9/11 attack in New York City. He also received "numerous letters of commendation" during his time with the department. He sought several continuing education opportunities during his career, including coursework on fire investigation, aerial operations and hazardous materials work. More recently, he had signed on to be a fire engine driver and was excited about the assignment.

Januszewski described Wirtz as "everybody's friend." The chief said he was "a great person, he was a great family man; he would do anything for anybody."

Wirtz taught the fire program at Gateway Community College and worked as a security guard at Hopkins School, according to his obituary. He was also active in the

Knights of Columbus and played snare drum in the New Haven County Firefighters Emerald Society Pipes and Drums band.

Hundreds of people attended his funeral service at St. Barnabas Church. The entire North Haven Fire Department was able to attend due to the help of mutual aid partners, who temporarily took over coverage of the town.

A wooden box with his name on it, his firefighter helmet and a United States flag were placed on altars at the head of the church and his snare drum that he played in the New Haven County Firefighters Emerald Society Pipes and Drums was placed on the floor in front.

"Matt died while doing what he loved the most, helping people and being there for his firefighter brothers and lifelong friends," said his childhood friend Jurgen Weber.

He leaves behind his companion, Barbara Cardito, and his mother, Erika Zwinger Wirtz.

Wife of slain Bristol police officer gives birth to healthy baby girl, department says

The Bristol Police Department recently announced that Laura DeMonte, the wife of late Bristol police Lt. Dustin Demonte, gave birth to their third child.

Penelope Dustin-Ann DeMonte was born on Monday, March 6, at 12:35 pm. She weighed 7 pounds, 3.7 ounces and was 20¼ inches long.

"Her big brother and sister were excited to meet her also," the police department said in a Facebook post. "Both mom and newborn are healthy and doing well."

On her way out of the hospital on Tuesday morning, Penelope and her mother were met by more than two dozen Bristol police officers who had assembled to greet them and offer warm applause.

Dustin DeMonte, 39, and Sgt. Alex Hamzy, 34, were shot and killed at a Redstone Hill Road home in Bristol on October 12 after they were lured to the home for a reported domestic violence incident between two people. Officer Alec Iurato, 26, was wounded in the attack, but killed the gunman.

The slain officers were promoted posthumously. DeMonte,

a 10-year veteran of the department, was promoted from sergeant to the rank of lieutenant, and Hamzy, an eight-year veteran of the department, was elevated to sergeant days after they were killed.

DeMonte and Hamzy were honored by thousands gathered at Rentschler Field for their funeral on October 21.

At the funeral, a pregnant Laura DeMonte said she and their children — Phoebe and Porter, who were 2 and 3 years old at the time — were honored to have him in their lives.

"Thank you for these beautiful children, wonderful memories that we will cherish together and an amazing life and the deepest, purest, most special love that I have ever felt," she said. "You will always be our hero and our angel. Please stay with us always. These kiddos and I will be dancing with you, for you, forever."

Informed of the baby's birth, President Peter Carozza affirmed the Club's commitment to the family, noting, "On behalf of The Hundred Club of Connecticut, I want to welcome Penelope, extend our best wishes to the family and assure Laura and the children of our continued support".

A Valentine's Day Gift

A fundamental principle of The Hundred Club is that "we take care of those who care for us". That covenant with the surviving families is continually demonstrated through ongoing support and periodic remembrances each year.

These holiday gifts include a food basket for each family at Thanksgiving, checks of \$750 for each surviving spouse and \$200 for each child under 19 at Christmas, and gifts at Valentine's Day and Mother's or Father's Day, as appropriate.

This year, the surviving spouses received a gift prepared by family-owned and third generation chocolatiers, Munson's Chocolates, headquartered in Bolton, CT. The Valentine's Day gift was a Chocolate Bridge Mix, consisting of a combination of peanuts, raisins and cashews, lavishly covered in milk and dark chocolate. The treats were presented in a tin with The Hundred Club logo printed on its top and included a note, "Remembering loved ones – Happy Valentine's Day from 'The Club with a Heart'".



Holiday remembrance

Save the Dates

Thursday, May 25, 2023

Law Enforcement Memorial

Connecticut Police Academy, Meriden

Monday, June 12, 2023

Fairfield County Golf Outing

Oak Hills Park Golf Course, Norwalk

Tuesday, July 25, 2023

Edward Funk Memorial Golf Outing

Tunxis Country Club, Farmington

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

Annual Meeting & Luncheon

Casa Mia at the Hawthorne, Berlin

Second Annual Golf Outing Scheduled in Fairfield County

Following the success of last year's debut golf outing in Fairfield County, the Golf Committee has scheduled another event in the southwest region.

The Oak Hills Park Golf Course in Norwalk will host the event on Monday, June 12. Registration will open at 10:30 am, with a shotgun start at noon. The registration fee is \$160 per golfer and includes green fees, carts, lunch and a buffet dinner. Non-golfers are welcome to attend and enjoy lunch and dinner for \$40.

Oak Hills Park, located at 145 Fillow Street, Norwalk, is considered the best public course in southwest Connecticut. The 18-hole course offers a blend of naturally designed holes and presents a variety of challenging shots for golfers of all skill levels.

A fun test of golfing skills in a peaceful and picturesque setting, the course features 6,407 yards of golf from the longest tees for a par of 71. The course rating is 70.3 and it has a slope rating of 133.

The Oak Hills Park course is especially noted for its well-conditioned greens. The putting surfaces typically roll fast and true. Practice facilities are limited. There is a putting green and a chipping green but no driving range.



A view of Oak Hills Park

Proposed Bill Would Expand Benefits to Firefighters

The Connecticut General Assembly is considering legislation that would help firefighters, who are battling cancer, by providing expanded access to workers' compensation benefits.

S.B. 937, a proposal to establish a rebuttable presumption that a firefighter's cancer occurred as a result of their job, would allow current firefighters access to workers' compensation benefits for any cancer of the brain, skin, digestive, endocrine, hematological, lymphatic, reproductive, respiratory or skeletal systems. Retired firefighters would be eligible for the benefits for their first five years of retirement.

Hundreds of volunteer and career firefighters from departments across the state presented written and oral testimony in support of the bill, sharing their fears of contracting cancer on the job, their personal experiences fighting the disease, and the memories of beloved coworkers who lost their battles.

A number of professional and public health organizations identify cancer as a leading cause of death for firefighters. According to the International Association of Fire Fighters, nearly 75% of line-of-duty deaths in 2022 resulted from occupational cancer.

A study from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that, compared to the general population, firefighters have a 9% increased risk of cancer diagnoses and a 14% increased risk of cancer-related death.

Other researchers have found that risk for certain types of cancer, such as mesothelioma and testicular cancer, are up to two times greater among firefighters.

The proposed bill provides some exceptions to the compensation. It would not apply to firefighters with evidence of cancer or a propensity for cancer identified during their entry

examinations. Exemptions may also be made for those who failed to submit to annual physical exams, did not wear respiratory and personal protective equipment at fire scenes, smoked within 15 years of the diagnoses, or have worked less than five years as a firefighter.

The proposal has been contested by insurance companies, first selectmen and municipal interest groups who fear the expansive protections for firefighters will unduly burden towns and workers' compensation insurers.

The eight people who testified in opposition to S.B. 937 said that a rebuttable presumption shifts the burden of proof from the employee to the employer, authorizing a considerable step away from the current workers' compensation protocol. They said that such broad protections eliminate the need for a causal connection and would allow those suffering from non-work-related cancers to access the benefits. Furthermore, they argue the new unfunded mandate provides no state assistance to the towns that could end up paying out \$1 million throughout a firefighter's lifetime in a single claim.

Opponents suggest that the state should instead focus on cancer prevention and remediation efforts, assist firefighters in purchasing life insurance, offer coverage through critical injury policies, and secure steady revenue streams for the Connecticut Firefighters Cancer Relief Fund.

The last time rebuttable presumption legislation saw substantial debate was in 2016. That year legislators passed a policy that placated both sides by establishing the state cancer relief fund to provide wage replacement benefits to firefighters diagnosed with cancer for up to two years using a one-cent surcharge on landline and mobile phone bills.

A bill passed last year would add even more money to the cancer relief fund by requiring municipalities to contribute \$10 annually for each qualifying firefighter starting in 2024. However, Peter Brown, the president of the Uniformed Professional Firefighters Association of Connecticut, said firefighters need the entire suite of benefits that workers' compensation provides.

Source: Hartford Courant



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Two New Directors Appointed to Club Board

Two new Directors have joined The Hundred Club's Board of Directors, replacing retiring members. The new members will serve a two-year term, expiring on December 31, 2024.

George Battle is a thirty-one year veteran of the Connecticut State Police, joining the agency in 1987. During his career, he held a varied series of progressively responsible positions, supervising, managing and administering both administrative and operational functions. His tenure with the agency culminated in 2018, with his appointment as Commanding Officer of the Division of State Police and Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. For the past three years, George has served as the Director of Public Safety Operations and Policy for Mutualink, Inc. Based in Wallingford, Mutualink is a leading provider of interoperability technology, connecting communities, public safety agencies, schools, private enterprise security, hospitals and critical infrastructure. A graduate of the FBI National Academy, George also holds a BS degree from Western New England College and a MS degree from Quinnipiac University's School of Business.

Trooper First Class **Mark E. Roberts** is a 17-year veteran of the Connecticut State Police, currently assigned as Resident Trooper for the Town of Essex, where he supervises the 7-person Essex Police Department. A familiar presence at the Club's Annual Meetings, Mark has been a member of the Connecticut State Police Honor Guard for his entire career and served as Unit Commander between 2018 and 2022. During that time, he oversaw the formation of the previously all-volunteer group into the formal State Police Honor Guard Unit. Mark also serves on the Board of Directors for the Connecticut Law Enforcement Memorial, as well as the Steering Committee for the National Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial Fund Ambassador Program, based in Washington, D.C. Mark has a personal understanding and appreciation of the impact of a public safety officer's death; his great grandfather, Pearle E. Roberts, was the first Connecticut State Trooper killed in the line of duty. His name is inscribed on the walls at both the Connecticut and National Memorials.