

A Look Inside



Firefighter Ministries, Inc.



Wendy Norris
President, Firefighter Ministries

“Firefighter Ministries is dedicated to helping and serving emergency service workers and their families regardless of race, religion, sex, or status within the industry. There are a vast number of needs within the emergency services, especially amongst those who have suffered a physical injury or a psychological trauma. We are here to provide resources, comfort and care with confidentiality and compassion to those who seek our services.

Firefighter Ministries is a not-for-profit organization that serves the emergency services throughout the United States and in several countries around the world.”



Firefighter Ministries, Inc.

Firefighter Ministries is dedicated to protecting and promoting the spiritual, mental, and physical well-being of emergency service workers everywhere.





Everything Has A Beginning

History

Firefighter Ministries essentially was born on August 22, 1997, when a dedicated volunteer firefighter was seriously injured in the line of duty, and due to her injuries was unable to continue in her passion for fighting fires and rescuing others. That firefighter's name was Wendy Norris. She underwent a startling revelation when in the face of this, her department folded, declaring bankruptcy rather than assisting her at this time. In addition, due to her volunteer status, she was taken from her regular paying job, and found that there were precious few resources available to volunteers, when they are often the ones that need them most of all.

In dealing with all of the emotional and physical injuries that she had suffered, she vowed to make a difference. It is then that the idea for Firefighter Ministries was forged. She began with a website, aptly titled The Ultimate Firehouse, where emergency workers could find devotionals, articles, and a person to vent to, and to counsel with them. Initially, Ms. Norris did all of the work herself, planning and maintaining the website, writing the devotionals and a monthly newsletter, and providing the counseling. However, the ministry was constantly growing, and adding new programs and divisions, and eventually became more than one person could bear alone.

She initially enlisted the help of a few close friends, who were also fellow emergency workers, and later posted a request for chaplains and certified counselors on the website, to better be able to meet the needs of the emergency community. In June of 1999 the decision was made to incorporate as a business and to research becoming a federally recognized nonprofit organization. To this end, after much discussion and thought, Ms. Norris reserved the name 'Firefighter Ministries' within the State of Texas, under an assumed name certificate, granted on November 15, 1999.

At that point the Organizational Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation were written by Timothy Wright, a Licensed Paramedic, and Ms. Norris' chief aide, with much input from Ms. Norris. Once these documents were written, they were submitted to the State of Texas with a request for a Certificate of Incorporation. The initial request, under the name of Firefighter Ministries, was denied due to another business operating under a similar name. It was then decided that the request would be resubmitted under the name of Firefighter Ministries. That request was approved, and on March 20, 2000, Firefighter Ministries received its Certificate of Incorporation. On March 27, 2000, Ms. Norris abandoned the assumed name certificate for Firefighter Ministries, so that it could be transferred to Firefighter Ministries.

Once Firefighter Ministries was incorporated, Ms. Norris and Mr. Wright, while working with the organization's accountant, James Hill, began the paperwork in application for Federal Nonprofit status, under section 501(c) (3) of the Federal Tax Code. On May 31, 2000, Firefighter Ministries was recognized as a Nonprofit Organization with the federal government, as a 509 (a) (1) Public Charitable Organization. Once this paperwork was received, a copy of it was sent with the appropriate application for State sales and franchise tax exemption. This exemption was received on July 17, 2000.

About Wendy, President of FFM



In August 1997, a truss roof collapsed on Wendy Norris, causing a severe head injury and respiratory and facial burns when a falling beam knocked off her facemask.

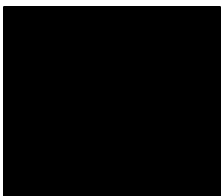
Her experiences from this injury gave her the idea of creating an organization that would assist other injured emergency workers and give them the support that they needed to get past the injury and get on with life. Since the inception of Firefighter Ministries in 1998, the programs have increased to include all emergency workers who need assistance in their emotional, spiritual, and physical lives.

She serves as the Presiding Officer on the Governor's Advisory Panel for the Star of Texas Awards. Wendy is also a Chaplain for Forest Bend Fire Department, Chaplain for the Texas Burn Survivors Society at burn camp, the Benefits Coordinator for the Texas State Fire Marshal's LODD Task Force, and as a peer advisor for the SOAR program at Shriners' Hospital in Galveston. She also serves as a writer for Firefighting.com, Emergency Grapevine, 1st Responder News, American Firefighter Today, the Los Angeles Firefighter and many other emergency service news agencies.

Previously, Wendy worked as an industrial firefighter in Antioch, California and in Houston, Texas until she was injured in a structure fire in 1997. She also served as a volunteer firefighter. Wendy received her fire, rescue, EMS, and instructor training at Solano College in Fairfield, California, and Texas A&M in College Station, Texas. She received her training as a Chaplain through the Episcopal Diocese of Houston, Texas, the Federation of Fire Chaplains, and the American Association of Christian Counseling, and the Counselor Training Institute in Dallas, Texas. Wendy is a member of the Forest Bend Fire Department, Federation of Fire Chaplains, American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress, the American Association of Christian Counseling, The Phoenix Society, The American Lung Association.

Wendy is pursuing her degree in Christian Counseling with an emphasis on traumatology.

Wendy has spoken at numerous events, churches, and conventions regarding her story as well as on emotional and spiritual topics that affect emergency workers. She also teaches classes on preparing for line of duty deaths and injuries, notifications, and beyond CISD.





About Firefighter Ministries

Firefighter Ministries, Inc. is a social/human service organization. What exactly does that mean? Our organization has been designed to meet the human needs and the special needs of emergency service workers. Emergency workers come to us for advice and help when they find it hard to cope with the special issues that affect their lives. This may be at a time of crisis; in response to an injury, illness or a death; or in dealing with a mental health or spiritual issue.

Some of the issues that we address are: mental health care; physical health care; services and assistance for the injured and dealing with after-injury disabilities; services and assistance for those who have experienced a death; social issues such as alcohol and other substance abuse, domestic violence, divorce, etc; spiritual care.

In summary, Firefighter Ministries helps emergency service workers meet the challenges of living and working as a public servant. Since 1998, we have been providing these services.

Firefighter Ministries provides two separate websites to offer easy access to information on each of the programs as well as being a separate resource unto themselves. The first of these websites is www.firefighterministries.org, which acts as the organization's official website while also housing the Phoenix Project, the Health and Fitness Project, and the Chaplains Corner. The second of these websites is www.fallenfirefighter.com, housing the Line of Duty Death Assistance Project and its related resources.

The physical needs of emergency workers, and their families, are met through the Phoenix Project, the Health and Fitness Project, and the Line of Duty Death Assistance Project. The Phoenix Project acts as an information clearinghouse, with extensive resources on specific injuries, available and applicable benefits, and much more. Traditionally the leading cause of death in the fire service is cardiac or health-related, with this in mind, the Health and Fitness Project provides guidelines for proper nutrition and basic exercises, as well as promoting a generally healthy lifestyle. The Line of Duty Death (LODD) Assistance Project seeks to provide assistance to emergency service departments throughout all phases of a LODD from preplanning and protocol writing to assisting at the time of a death, and even to follow-up care and assistance. This program provides advisement and information for not only the emergency workers as individuals (as well as their families), but also the emergency service departments as a whole.

The mental needs of emergency workers, and their families, are primarily met through the chaplains, peer/lay counselors, and Master's & PhD certified counselors on the staff, with referrals to qualified mental health professionals in their area. Additionally, articles, educational materials, resources, and links relating to specific emotional issues are offered. By offering assistance at the point of need, as well as helping to set up perpetual care, emergency workers themselves are more likely to spot the signs and symptoms of potential problems that could affect their lives in both the short and long term, as well as providing a higher likelihood of a positive resolution to the situation.

The spiritual needs of emergency workers, and their families, are met through the Corps of Chaplains. The Corps of Chaplains are a dedicated group of emergency service chaplains of various denominations who have volunteered their time to advise and assist in whatever capacity needed. They are all trained and experienced in critical incident debriefing and trauma issues, and provide assistance in any capacity needed. Chaplains work within their communities or state organizations, as well as provide services to those individuals who do not have Chaplaincy services within their department. Additionally, the Corps of Chaplains will provide non-denominational devotionals and articles for the website and the email newsletter. The Corps of Chaplains will also provide information, standards, and educational materials for those interested in becoming emergency service chaplains or starting chaplaincy programs within their local departments. For those individuals who are seeking training and certification as a Fire Chaplain, we refer to the Federation of Fire Chaplains.

In addition to the above programs, Firefighter Ministries staff has worked as instructors, counselors and chaplains at burn camps, disaster sites, training classes, and conventions across the country.

Goals & Development



Statement of Goals

The goals of Firefighter Ministries are multifaceted, but can be best summarized in the statement of "Serving those who serve others." The primary goal is to provide for the unique needs of those within the emergency services community. The emergency services (Fire, EMS, and Police) consistently have among the highest rates of suicide, depression, and substance abuse of any profession. It is our goal to provide services that are specifically catered to the particular needs of these individuals. It is our goal to serve as a social services agency to the emergency services. Currently, there are no other programs in the United States that serve the complete social service needs of an emergency service worker.

Reaching Goals

Through its various programs and projects Firefighter Ministries will be continually providing assistance to firefighters and EMS workers (both Career and Volunteer, as need dictates) and their families. Additionally, the staff, chaplains, and counselors will provide their services, at no charge. Our extensive resources, both online and off-line, will be eminently available.

Future Development Planning

In addition to future plans for chapters in each state (and possibly more than one in larger states), Firefighter Ministries will explore further expansion if and when it is plausible. Firefighter Ministries will also continue to examine and utilize new programs and ideas to better provide for the needs of those emergency workers they serve, and will maintain its extensive and ever growing resource bank.



Programs & Projects

The Phoenix Project

Assisting in the healing process of emergency workers injured in the line of duty through recovery resources, injury specific information, a database of attorneys, physicians, worker's compensation and other insurance information. Peer/Lay Counselors who have also been injured in the line of duty are available for support and encouragement. Advocates are available to help file insurance benefits.

Fallen Firefighter Program

The fallen firefighter program located at or www.fallenfirefighter.com provides education, resources, and assistance to departments that are creating LODD Protocols and planning. Included on this site is sample guidelines, diagrams, Q&A, and much more. Firefighter Ministries also serves at-need assistance to departments in the State of Texas that have experienced a line of duty death. Long term care for the families & departments are also provided for Texas departments.

Serve a Public Servant

The mission of the "Serve A Public Servant" program is three-fold: 1) For a church to provide genuine, Christ-like care and support to its local public servants, i.e. law enforcement, firefighters, ems through various opportunities and activities. 2) To improve lines of communication between the body of Christ and its local public servants. 3) To actively pursue opportunities to show public servants, in real and tangible ways, that the community they serve appreciates them.

Chaplain's Corps

Firefighter Ministries' Chaplain's Corps has partnered with the Federation of Fire Chaplains to help provide a myriad of services to Chaplains. Support, networking opportunities, and resources are available to help emergency services chaplains serve their personnel more effectively. Firefighter Ministries also has Chaplains on staff to assist individuals who ask us for Chaplaincy assistance.

Programs & Projects Cont.'



Education

Firefighter Ministries offers training and classes to the emergency services in a variety of subjects. Classes are taught by individuals experienced in the emergency services as well as in the subjects they teach. It is our promise to deliver excellent education opportunities. Classes are provided free of cost or for a nominal fee. Sometimes we will request financial assistance for travel expenses.

Speakers Bureau

Wendy Norris as well as several other of our staff are available to speak at events, churches, conferences and conventions regarding Firefighter Ministries, as well as on emotional and spiritual topics that affect emergency workers.

Fear Not the Fire Dog

Our children's program that offers fire prevention tips, games, education, and spiritual and emotional encouragement.

Provided By

All of the services, other than education and the speakers bureau, are provided by Firefighter Ministries are free of charge, and are provided by our staff and chaplains, all of which do so on a volunteer basis. Education and speaking engagements that are requested outside of the Houston, TX area are available for a nominal fee, usually the cost of travel.

Provided Where

Although Firefighter Ministries is based in Houston, Texas, it is a national support organization, with future plans for regional chapters. Due to the website, the resources within it, the Chaplains and therapists who provide counseling via email and phone consultation, and all of the staff members who represent the organization in their locales, people nationwide benefit from the services that Firefighter Ministries provides.



Volunteering

Our organization has individuals volunteering in many different areas. Most of our volunteer work is done virtually, or online or through computer work. However, we have volunteers that spend time at fire departments, burn hospitals, camps, and on locations of disasters. There are so many ways to volunteer for Firefighter Ministries. We will match your interests and attributes to the right area of our organization.



Firefighter Ministries is Headquartered out of Houston, TX. A majority of our business is conducted through our websites, with our main website www.firefighterministries.org. Firefighter Ministries reaches people both nationally and internationally.

FFM is currently composed of a President, Vice President, a Corps of Chaplains, and other staff members assisting in the areas of Marketing, Public Relations, Website services, counseling, and other various positions. All positions within the ministry, are strictly volunteer. Please note that volunteers must be at least 18 years old and be able to make an ongoing commitment to the organization, unless otherwise specified by the Volunteer Manager.

Some Areas For Volunteer Needs:



- Advocacy
- Fundraising
- Public Relations
- Technical Assistance
- Psychology Advisors
- Peer Counselor
- Writers
- Researchers
- Consulting



Giving & Fundraising



Firefighter Ministries and its programs and projects are supported by fundraising donations & grants. We are not financially funded by federal grant programs or by the United Way giving programs.

How You Can Help!

We offer several ways that you can help us keep our services available to emergency workers. Every donation helps!

- You can make a donation straight to our bank by either sending, cash, check, or money orders. These donations are the easiest way to make anonymous donations. Send donations to the following bank:
**Firefighter Ministries
c/o Moody National Bank
3550 Spencer Highway
Pasadena, Texas 77504**
- If you would like to make a credit card donation, you can do so through our e-giving company Network For Good. They take both Visa and American Express. You can be assured that your credit card donation will be secure and safe, with 100% of the proceeds going to us. Visit <http://www.networkforgood.org/> and then type Firefighter Ministries into the search area.
- We have a logo merchandise store, where items are available to choose from when you make a minimum donation.. These items make great gifts. We except check, cash and money orders. Visit our website for more details.
- We also run online fundraisers, offer advertisement space for donation, and have online auctions. Keep your eye out on our front page for these opportunities.

A Few Dollars Go a Long Way

\$10.00 will buy 100 Care Notes for our Resource Center

\$25.00 will make a care kit for a family experiencing a line of duty death, or a care kit for an injured worker

\$50.00 will help maintain our extensive database of resources for 2 weeks

\$100.00 will help us assist a needy emergency worker pay one to two bills, or buy groceries

\$250.00 will help a family get counseling

\$500.00 or more will help us provide onsite, one on one education and support to departments in need.

\$1,500.00 or more will help us long term family and department care for those who have suffered an on duty death for one year.

FIREFIGHTER MINISTRIES, INC

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www.firefighterministries.org

www.fallenfirefighter.com

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