

PRESS RELEASE

City of Niagara Falls Dedicates New Ladder Truck in Honor of 9/11 First Responder

Mayor Makes Public Presentation before Niagara Falls Blues Festival Crowd
(Niagara Falls, NY)

Contact: Office of the Mayor (716) 286-4310, cell 417-7458

September 10, 2011

Niagara Falls, NY

Niagara Falls Fire Captain John Asklar knew he was being asked to go on stage at 9:30pm at the City's annual Blues Festival, but he didn't know why. He assumed it was to read an essay he had written about his experiences as a first responder in New York City on 9/11/2001--something he had already done at ceremonies on Thursday opening the Niagara Falls "New York Remembers" exhibit, and on Friday at a student-organized ceremony at Niagara Falls High School honoring the City's four post-9/11 war dead. But a handful of elected officials, public safety co-workers and family members knew the real reason: tonight, John himself was being honored for his role as a first responder on 9/11.

Along with fellow NF Fire Department Captain Dave Williams, Asklar was in New York City on 9/11/2001 for training, ironically on terrorist response among other subjects. Both men rushed from their training to render assistance, arriving at Ground Zero shortly after the collapse of the second tower. Both men continued work on the site for two days, in spite of injuries sustained by both of them. Williams, who died of complications related to medications in 2007, was posthumously honored on May 31st, 2010. That day, the City dedicated one of its new pieces of fire apparatus, Engine 7, in his honor, at a ceremony at the 72nd Street Fire Hall. Asklar was in attendance that day, along with Williams' family.

Tonight it was Asklar's turn. Surrounded by his proud family, Asklar did indeed read his essay relating his 9/11 experiences. But when he finished, Mayor Paul Dyster read a proclamation announcing that the City's newest piece of fire equipment--a 100' Rosenbauer Aerial Ladder Truck slated to become Truck 2 when delivered later this month--would be emblazoned as "Dedicated to the First Responders of 9/11 In Honor of Captain John Asklar." At the conclusion of the proclamation, Niagara Falls Fire Department engines stationed around the festival grounds turned on their lights and sirens in a tribute to Asklar and all 9/11 First Responders, as Asklar was presented with a framed drawing of the new ladder truck. According to Dyster, "The only thing that prevented John and Dave from being killed that day was that, in all the confusion, they couldn't get to the scene fast enough. We've already honored Dave posthumously, and we felt we could not in good conscience let the tenth anniversary of 9/11 go by without honoring John in a special way. In this day and age, with so many kids in need of positive role models, we need some live heroes, too. And John is certainly that."

WHEN: 9:30pm TONIGHT, Saturday, Sept. 10th (Arrive 9:15pm for set-up)

WHERE: Old Falls Street festival grounds, downtown Niagara Falls
