

## FUNDRAISER

# Beef and Beer expands foundation's work to aid first responders

## Family organization is in memory of son

**By M. English**  
For MediaNews Group

"The firefighters out there...they're the ones who run into a building when others are running out."

Tough to argue with that assessment. And when Dave Kelble, Sr., is the one speaking, the statement has particular substance. Following the death of son David, the Dresher man, wife Deb and several friends and relatives established The David G. Kelble, Jr., Memorial Foundation, Helmets Off 4 David.

The group was created to benefit volunteer first responders — like their late son — and is looking to extend its reach during a beef and beer fundraiser at the North Penn VFW, 2519 Jenkintown Road, Glenside, Sept. 14 from 6 to 11 p.m.

The Kelbles have long contributed to this area's roster of emergency responders. Son Jim, a Pennsylvania State Police Trooper, routinely runs with the Fort Washington and Oreland fire companies and, periodically, with volunteers in Chestertown, MD, where he

attended Washington College. He also serves as an alternate fire marshal for the state police.

Before he sustained fatal injuries on his job with a tree service in December 2012, oldest son David had been volunteering with the Weldon and Fort Washington fire companies for 12 years. The 32-year-old Glenside man left behind wife Jacqueline, daughter Brooke, 3, and son Tyler, 15 months.

And although nothing can make up for their loss, the Kelble family decided to use personal tragedy to increase awareness and support for the emergency volunteers who risk their own personal safety to help others: "To keep David's legacy alive by serving the first responder community."

That goal spearheaded The David G. Kelble, Jr., Memorial Foundation, Helmets Off 4 David roughly a year-and-a-half ago. The grassroots non-profit's mission: "To honor David G. Kelble, Jr., by supporting the first responder community, in which he was a part, by offering scholarships to volunteer



David G. Kelble, Jr., was a volunteer with the Weldon and Fort Washington fire companies for 12 years before his job-related death in December 2012.

first responders, to help them further their education and provide grants to help promote volunteerism and improve safety in the first responder community."

Although Sept. 14's Beef and Beer is the foundation's largest fundraiser to date, the organization drew from "a few smaller benefits" to give Oreland Volunteer Fire Company \$1,920 for the purchase of a new automatic external defibrillator last year.

"The Oreland Fire Company and all of its members



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Members of The David G. Kelble, Jr., Memorial Foundation, Helmets Off 4 David, hope their Sept. 14 beef and beer at North Penn VFW in Glenside will raise support and awareness for this area's community of emergency responders.

are proud to be the recipients of the foundation's first donation and will use the (automatic external defibrillator) it paid for to help keep our members and the public safe," the company's volunteers noted.

But bottom lines aren't The David G. Kelble, Jr., Memorial Foundation's only concern. Co-Founder Kelble explains the organization is also trying to spread the word that more men and women are needed to join the ranks of "these brave volun-

teers who are out there helping the rest of us 24-7."

"At the moment, the number of volunteer firefighters is down drastically from what it was 30 years ago," he says. "I've seen data that indicates there were 300,000 volunteers in Pennsylvania during the 1970s versus approximately 36,000 in Pennsylvania now. Why are the numbers down? For one thing, the demographics have changed. For example, back in the '70s, people tended to live close to where they worked...and employers allowed for time-off to answer calls. That's just one of the ways things have changed. I think it's really a combination of factors...another example, the high percentage of families with two people working outside the home.

"Safety is another one of our concerns...making sure the volunteers have the equipment and (gear) they need to keep them as safe as possible when they're out there keeping the rest of us safe. And education...helping the volunteers (achieve) their educational goals. As a family, we started a scholarship (fund) for the volunteers six years ago, but we're hoping

to do more as time goes on."

Kelble describes his oldest son as "an avid skier (who) loved cars and trucks and was a huge Philadelphia Flyers fan." But above all, he continues, David was a dedicated community volunteer.

"David was a fairly shy, unassuming young man, but he was so service-oriented he'd probably be proud that his death put (the foundation's work) into motion," he says. "I don't know that anyone ever gets 'over' something like this, but even if we only get our message out to a few more people...that's something."

In addition to David, Sr., Deb and Jim Kelble, David G. Kelble, Jr., Memorial Foundation board members include David Asher, Joseph Lowe and Nancy Schneider. Sept. 14's Beef and Beer will also feature a number of basket raffles, 50-50s and DJ-provided music. Tickets (\$30 before Sept. 5; \$35, after) and more information are available via email to [dgkjrmmemfound@gmail.com](mailto:dgkjrmmemfound@gmail.com) or Facebook message (Helmetsoff4David). The foundation's website is [www.helmetsoff4david.org](http://www.helmetsoff4david.org). All contributions are tax-deductible.