

A HOME FOREVER

Siller Foundation pays off mortgage for family of fallen Inwood fire chief

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A nonprofit founded in honor of an FDNY firefighter killed on 9/11 made good on a pledge yesterday to pay off the mortgage of a fallen Inwood fire chief.

"You're not going to have to worry about your mortgage payments anymore," Frank Siller, head of the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation, told the family of Joseph Sanford Jr. at their Davis Avenue home in Inwood.

Sanford, 43, was critically injured in a Dec. 19, 2014, fire at a Woodmere home that was under construction.

He was found facedown in up to 18 inches of water, partially covered by a piece of furniture that had been moved by other firefighters to cover a hole on the first floor caused by the blaze.

State investigators have not said whether Sanford fell through the hole or was hit by falling furniture when he went down into the basement.

He died on Dec. 23, 2014, of complications of a near-drowning, according to a state report issued in the investigation of his death.

Sanford's widow, Jacqueline Scott-Sanford, who stood arm-in-arm with the couple's daughter, Janisha, thanked the foundation and Bank of America, which held the mortgage.

"This is a huge burden that has been lifted off of us, and to know that our family has a home forever," Scott-Sanford said.

The nonprofit yesterday presented Sanford's widow with a mortgage-free letter. The foundation declined to say what the mortgage balance was, but had said it hoped to raise at least \$300,000.

White Christmas lights hung from the top of the beige one-story home, which was ren-



Frank Siller, of the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation, left, is shown with Jacqueline Scott-Sanford and daughter Janisha Sanford during a ceremony yesterday. ■ Video: newsday.com/inwood



Frank Parise, former Inwood Fire Department chief, salutes during the ceremony outside the Sanfords' Inwood home yesterday.

ovated after superstorm Sandy dumped four feet of water inside. Red bows decorated a white fence.

Sanford's widow said she and her late husband had been married for more than 22 years. They bought the home in 2007 after a two-year search.

"Family meant everything, to have our home with our children," she said.

Her husband would flop into his favorite white leather chair, in the corner, by the door, and hoist his feet onto an ottoman to watch Yankee games with the lights off, she said.

A former assistant chief, her husband was a 17-year veteran of the department. He was posthumously promoted to chief.

Members of his department

Alcohol killing more in U.S.

The Washington Post

Alcohol is killing Americans at a rate not seen in at least 35 years, according to new federal data.

Last year, more than 30,700 died of alcohol-induced causes, including alcohol poisoning and cirrhosis, which is primarily caused by alcohol use.

In 2014, there were 9.6 deaths from these alcohol-induced causes per 100,000 people, an increase of 37 percent since 2002.

This tally excludes deaths from drunken driving, other accidents, and homicides committed under the influence of alcohol. If those numbers were included, the annual toll of deaths directly or indirectly caused by alcohol would be closer to 90,000, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In recent years, public health experts have focused extensively on overdose deaths from heroin and prescription painkillers, which have risen rapidly since the early 2000s. But in 2014, more people died of alcohol-induced causes (30,722) than from overdoses of prescription painkillers and heroin combined (28,647), according to the CDC.

Philip J. Cook, a Duke University professor who studies alcohol consumption patterns, notes that per-capita consumption has been increasing since the late 1990s.

"Since the prevalence of heavy drinking tends to follow closely with per-capita consumption, it is likely that one explanation for the growth in alcohol-related deaths is that more people are drinking more," he wrote in an email.

The number of American adults who drink at least monthly rose by a small but significant amount between 2002 and 2014, from 54.9 percent to 56.9 percent, according to data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.



The late Joseph Sanford Jr.

attended the ceremony. Two Inwood trucks hoisted a massive U.S. flag at an intersection near the home, and more than four dozen flags lined the street.

"In the season of miracles, maybe this is the biggest miracle," said the family's Garden City attorney, Christopher McGrath, who grew up nearby and first reached out to the foundation.

"This has never happened for a volunteer firefighter who passed away in the line of duty." Sanford's wife said she planned to have friends and family over today, the anniversary of her husband's death.

"We're going to celebrate life and figure out how we're going to move forward," she said.