



# SDFRA

SAN DIEGO FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
SINCE 1907

## 2017 Summer Edition

### IN THIS ISSUE

## Message from the President

By George Duardo



We asked for your feedback and you gave it to us! Thank you! I'd like to take this issue and speak to the volumes of both anonymous and non-anonymous feedback we received. Your feedback helps us guide our decision matrix and we value criticisms just as much as accolades. Together we can do better. I can't think of a single program or initiative that hasn't been initiated or revised from your honest feedback. Legacy organizations, such as ours, can't rely on a "it's just the way we've always done it" attitude. Organizations should be courageous enough to abandon certain aspects of the past and look positively towards the future.

One such program that has grown with the help of your feedback is our Cancer Awareness Prevention Program (CAPP). With CAPP, we continually push ourselves to be

critiqued by industry experts and have modified the course as you suggested in your completed surveys. The below points are just a few examples of curriculum feedback:

- Create a program developed and delivered by a Firefighter from the ranks to enhance credibility
- Appeal to emotions with visual materials rather than statistics and numbers
- Instructor-led, rather than reading bullet points off of slides

This same approach and level of care has been taken with the development of our culturally-competent Mental Health Program. Our program has proven to be achievable by an optimistic, heads-up approach and by no means are we discouraged by its complexity, but encouraged by the diversity of our professional network. Sure, it takes stamina and lots of energy to work through historic norms, but our mental wellbeing is worth every challenge.

Please keep your evaluations coming. With our diverse network of talented partners and your continued support, we're excited to challenge ourselves by taking leaps, not steps, forward. I'm fully confident that future generations will build on our combined principles. Comfortable predictability is just not good enough and we won't stop because we know we can do better!

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# Benefits Update

By Sierra Lawrence, Member Services Representative

It's hard to believe that we're already into Summer and the middle of 2017! Since our last issue, we've implemented an exciting, new benefit and partnered with an amazing gym as a perk for SDFRA Members and their families!

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017, I was officially sworn in and commissioned as a California Notary Public. All notarial acts will be free of charge for Members and their families! If you'd like a document notarized, feel free to contact me at the office to set up an appointment!

With health and wellness being the forefront in many Firefighter's lives, we've created a community partnership with Performance360, a local cross fit gym, to provide our members (Active and Retired) and their families with discounted membership. The regular price of unlimited monthly membership is \$139, but for you it's only \$99. P360 has been a constant supporter of ours. Their goal is to drastically change lives by revealing the strength in every individual.

Have a great Summer and stay cool!



## Stair Climb

By Carlye Wund, Event Producer



Phones are ringing, email boxes are full, and things are in full swing at Stair Climb Central as we prep for our largest fundraising event of the year...the SD911MSC! Just in case you haven't heard, the 2017 Stair Climb event will be Saturday, September 9<sup>th</sup> at the Hilton San Diego Bayfront! Registration opens at 7:00 a.m. and the Opening Ceremonies will begin at 8:10 a.m. sharp.

This year's keynote speaker is Battalion Chief Joseph Downey, a 31-year veteran of FDNY who is currently assigned to the Rescue Battalion of the Special Operations Command. Downey lost his father, 7 members of his company, and countless friends during the attacks on 9/11/01. His personal story of turning a negative into a positive is a powerful one that you won't want to miss!

Registration has been open for a month and we're already over

halfway sold out! If you'd like to get in on the climb action, be sure to register and reserve your space because we will sell out!

Don't feel like climbing all those stairs?! There's plenty of ways you can get involved with our amazing event. You can volunteer, donate, fundraise, sponsor a team, or just come out to enjoy some live music, a frosty beverage, and amazing eats from one of our food trucks.

And don't forget to bring out the whole family! This year we'll have a fun-filled Kid's Zone with tons of awesome activities for the little...and even the big kids in your lives!

Should you have any questions about this event? Please check out the website or feel free to reach out to me personally:  
[www.sandiegostairclimb.com](http://www.sandiegostairclimb.com)

We can't wait to see you on the stairs in September!



# Board in Action

By Brandt Truver, Secretary/Treasurer

Your Board of Directors (BOD) has been hard at work once again: responding to members in the hospital, helping our widows, and planning for the current year. The ideas for great programs and services keep flowing which keeps us busy trying to implement them to serve our members even better.

This year was exciting as we welcomed back Kurtis Bennett to the BOD, who brought some great new ideas in the fight against cancer for Firefighters. It's because of these ideas we're exploring new avenues to reach more Firefighters and their families to promote cancer awareness and prevention. It is a priority of ours to not only be reactive to Firefighters in crisis, but actually be proactive in equipping SDFD Firefighters with the tools and knowledge to lead healthy lives.

Another priority of the BOD was to strengthen the relationship between Active Members, Retired Members, Widows, and SDFRA. The different types of Membership have become compartmentalized and this could not be further from what we want. This is where you, the Member, come in. There are a lot of opportunities to volunteer, fellowship, and engage with one another coming in the near future, so be on the lookout! If you have never been to one of our events before I encourage everyone, from Probie to Retired, to pick one and check it out. Together we're stronger, we can learn from one another, and we can make sure everyone is taken care of and included. Be safe out there and enjoy the summer time, we look forward to seeing everyone at our upcoming events!



## Line of Duty Death Benefits

By Robert Bunsold, Vice-President



We know there's been a lot of questions regarding San Diego Firefighter's death and disability benefits for those that were hired after July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012, also known as Post Prop B Firefighters. Please know that a vast majority of your death and disability benefits remain the same between Pre and Post Prop B Firefighters. These benefits include: Federal Public Safety Officer Death Benefit, California State Worker's Compensation, City of San Diego, and SDFRA. Generally speaking, the differences in benefits between both groups of employees reside with the benefits offered by SDCERS. Those members hired after July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012, are not eligible for SDCER's benefits, but a SPSP(H) instead.

As you can imagine, the issues surrounding death and disability benefits are complex and numerous. In an effort to help you better understand all of your benefits, we've provided informational guides on our website and as an insert to this newsletter.

As always, feel free to call us with any questions you might have. To learn more, visit the Member Benefit page on our website, [sdfra.org](http://sdfra.org).



# Cancer and your Coverage

By Robert Bunsold, Vice-President

With our current focus on cancer in the Fire Service, I thought it would be good to remind ourselves of the current state legislation regarding Presumptive Coverage of Occupational Cancer. Fortunately for us, the State of California has the very best presumptive illness laws in the nation for Public Safety Workers. This includes presumptive coverage for more than cancer, but also for infectious disease such as: Hepatitis, Tuberculosis, MRSA, HIV, and many more. We're granted this coverage due to the legislative efforts of the California Professional Firefighters (CPF).

I know many of you have questions regarding Cancer Presumption. The Relief wants to give you the best information we have, but we encourage each of you to do your own independent research in this area as well. The CPF website is a good start, along with the California Department of Industrial Relations website Labor Code §3212.1 (amended January of 2012).

To sum this up, while cancer is a presumptive illness, employers do have the right to challenge the presumptive cause of cancer. The burden of proof to deny the presumptive cause falls to the employer, but in a worst case scenario, the employee may be required to demonstrate a legal nexus of exposure to carcinogens that presumably lead to the development of the specific site and form of cancer.

This legal nexus can be proven asking your Oncologist two questions...

"What is the exact type of cancer that I have?" and "Could this cancer develop as the result of an exposure to known carcinogens?"

These answers will form the basis for the industrial injury claim filed with the City regarding the treatment of your cancer. If, for some rare reason, the City denied your work related cancer claim you

would simply need to demonstrate an exposure to smoke from a fire with the FS number, date, time, and location of the incident. This can be done by keeping your own notes or journal. With those notes you would then be able to pull CAD data to support the claim. This proof of exposure, coupled with your Oncologist's opinion regarding the specific site and form of cancer, could reasonably develop as a result of exposure to known carcinogens and would satisfy the legal standard of proving a work-related nexus.

However, it's also important to note that the City has 90-days to accept or deny all injury claims, including cancer. This 90-day review period causes concern among Members who are rightfully worried they might not receive treatment during the review period. Fortunately for us, we have the legal right to continue to receive care for life-threatening illness or injury during this 90-day review period. Additionally, for all work related injuries, regardless of severity, the City is required by Worker's Compensation Law to authorize up to \$10,000 of "appropriate medical treatment". All this means is that once your Oncologist gives you a diagnosis and they determine you need surgery immediately, you're entitled to have that procedure done. Regardless of the time it takes for the City to approve/deny your claim.

Additionally, the presumptive nature of cancer illnesses extends past employment and into retirement (3 months for every year of service, not to exceed 120 months). Meaning that if you retire after 30 years of service, your determination of presumptive cause cancer would extend for 90 months, or approximately 7½ years, past your final date of employment.

This is highly important for our Members approaching retirement. You should know when your presumptive cancer coverage ends



to ensure that you protect your assets and your rights as employees. If a Retired Firefighter is diagnosed with cancer within the window of post-employment coverage you should file a worker's compensation claim with the City.

I know this one-page article probably doesn't answer all of your questions related to cancer and worker's compensation benefits. That's why The Relief Association is developing a cancer FAQ sheet to help answer more of your frequently asked questions and provide guidance on when, and how, to fill out a blue packet for your cancer claim. We plan to make this information available on our website in the near future.

I look forward to working with each of you out in the ranks or having a cup of coffee with you in the office.

Thank you for your time.

Stay healthy...





# We Remember

By Sierra Lawrence, Member Services Representative

"We honor the noble traditions of a Firefighter by caring for them and those they leave behind."

The mission statement of The Relief Association is one that runs deep through our organization. Our Board and Staff Members take pride in being living reminders of that daily.

Every Memorial Day, we lay a wreath at Fireman's Rest located in El Camino Memorial Park to honor and remember those that came before us, as written in our Bylaws.

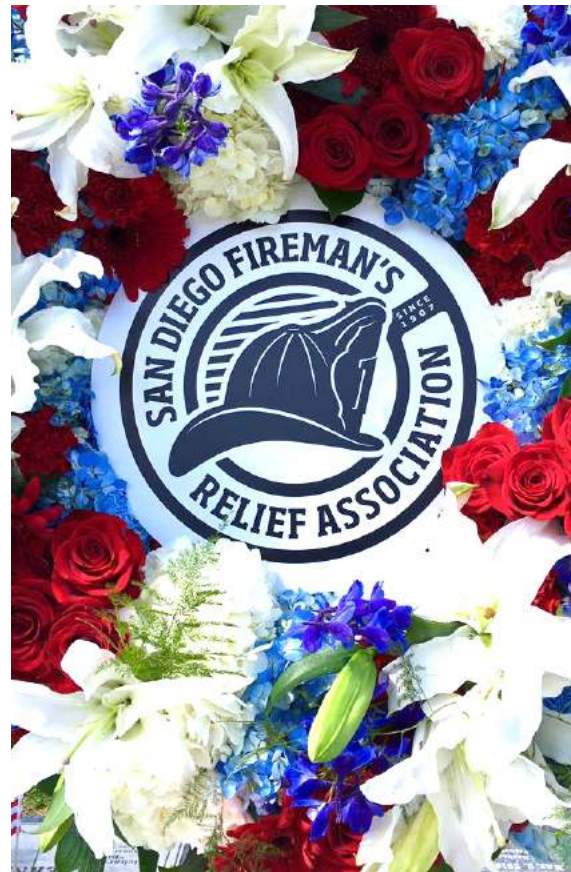
In the early days of the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department, Firefighters did not receive benefits and the job was extraordinarily hazardous. Firefighters were often harmed or killed during the execution of their daily duties.

The poor and working class families from which Firefighters hailed rarely possessed the means to pay burial costs and funerary expenses for their loved ones killed in the line of duty.

In 1907, a group of Firefighters bonded together to remedy this problem and the San Diego Fireman's Relief Association was founded.

The Relief's Last Alarm Program honors the service and sacrifice of our Members and provides funerary support to Widows and surviving family members. This support includes ceremonial presentations of flags and bibles to the Widow or surviving family members at funeral services, as well as, policy advocacy to promote supportive care and services for those loved ones left behind.

At The Relief Association it's important for us to continue to honor those that came before us and to keep their memory alive.





# New Members of Our Team

By John Allen, Director of Operations



**Tina Casola**

Director of Behavioral Health Services

A sincere hello to all of the SDFRA Membership! I hope you're doing well and spending time with friends and family. I'm excited to introduce you to two new additions to our team since our last newsletter. Please welcome Tina and Greg to our team!

Meet **Kristina "Tina" Casola**, our Director of Behavioral Health Services. Tina is a Licensed Behavioral Health Specialist in Emergency Services and Founder of First Responders Trauma Specialists. She is a licensed mental health clinician that specializes in treating individuals who experience psychological distress as the result of witnessing and experiencing a wide variety of traumas.

As a former Staff Therapist with the San Diego Veterans Health Administration and UCSD, she understands the nature of these stress reactions and the concerns people have about revealing their struggle and effects on their careers.

As an advocate for progressive behavioral health practices in Fire and EMS, Tina provides education to individuals, departments, businesses, and other organizations desiring a better understanding of PTSD and emotional distress. She's trained and experienced in facilitating effective treatments for PTSD and other stress related disorders with Veterans, Emergency Service Personnel, and Civilians.

Tina is a graduate of the University of San Diego's Marriage and Family Therapy Program. She continued her training and honed her clinical skills while working with UCSD Outpatient Psychiatric Services, Mental Health Systems, Inc., Veteran's Medical Research Foundation (VMRF), and the Veteran's Health Administration: San Diego.

As you can see by her credentials, she's a well-trained professional that adds depth and necessary services

to our programs and the work that we do within our organizations.

**Greg Donnelly** is a name that I'm sure you'll recognize. The Retired Battalion Chief has joined the Relief team as FirefighterAid's Trustee.

Greg will be assisting the Board and Staff with different projects, but his main focus is to assist Arnell Garcia, as we continue to support our Retired and Widowed Members.

Greg brings a new energy and huge smile to our team and is a pleasure to have around the office. It was a bit of a challenge to get him out of retirement, but when asked why he wanted to join, he said, "I want to give back to an organization that I believe in and supports my fire department family."

As I've said before, I couldn't be more proud to be part of this team of people at The Relief. I've been with you for one year now and enjoy every day, meeting new faces, and talking to old friends...all while carrying on the mission of The Relief. I want to assure you that your dues are working on amazing projects like CAPP and Fire Family Services, which directly impact and benefit our Members.

At The Relief and FirefighterAid, we continually strive to communicate, collaborate, and cooperate within our working groups, along with governmental and outside agencies. We are wheels up and soaring high! Thank you for your continued support and stay safe!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [jallen@sdfra.org](mailto:jallen@sdfra.org).



**Greg Donnelly**

FirefighterAid Trustee



## FirefighterAid

By Carlye Wund, Director of Development



The woman standing before me in the office was a Widow who was so grateful and so moved by our box that she wanted to come thank us in person...3 months later.

I was immediately worried that she had received it too late and that it may have upset her, but her story was quite the opposite. Since the day she received the box she had it sitting on her kitchen counter where she could see it and know that she was loved. She told me that she enjoyed every piece of candy and item in the box until there was nothing left. She also told me that one of the reasons she left it sitting on the counter was so her children would see it and remember that they too should get her something for Valentine's Day. When I heard this and saw how happy it had made her, I began to cry. I'm thankful that she let me hug her because I didn't know what else to do.

When we come up with an idea, such as these Valentines, we hope that our thoughts and sentiments will be well received. We pray that when that person receives what we've put together that they feel loved from the first moment it touches their hand.

Our wish is that it stays with them and that they think about it days, even months, after they open it. For this one Widow, for this one instance, we're grateful to know that 100% of our intentions were received.

We've only been doing these Valentines since 2016. Every year we send more and every year we receive more thank you cards and phone calls. We know we are reaching people and we won't be stopping anytime soon!

I've had the pleasure of being a part of this amazing organization for going on five years now. I still wake up every day and drive to work with a smile from ear-to-ear because I love what I do and who I do it for. YOU...you're who I do it for. I'd like to share a story about this with you.

As I sat at my desk one day in May, hard at work planning the Stair Climb event, when the office door opened. I heard a woman's voice say that she wanted to speak to someone about a box that she was holding in her hands. As I walked out to the front office to see if I could help her, I saw a sweet woman with gray hair and tears welling up in her eyes. I had recognized the box that she was holding as one of the Valentines that we sent out to our Widows for Valentine's Day.

In February, our staff creates boxes of Valentines filled with candy, hearts, fun little baubles, and lots of love. We handwrite a card, then cover the box with stickers, glitter and more love. We send them in the mail or hand-deliver them to our special Valentines. This year, we sent out over 50 Valentines to members that we wanted to make sure knew that someone loves them, especially on Valentine's Day, and that the someone is us!





# Fire Family Services

By Tina Casola, Director of Behavioral Health Services

SUMMER!!! Remember those days?! Summer was a huge fantasy of relaxed days, fun-filled time with family and friends...not a care in the world! I recall the word "bored" at some point would be exclaimed from my mouth. My Mom would usually reply "there is plenty to do, just pick something!" I imagine "boring days of summer" is no longer how any of us would describe the coming weeks! "Busy" and "stressful" may be adjectives better applied to our modern lives!

Whatever your summer schedule holds in store for you, I hope that you find even a small bit of time for slowing down, "pumping the brakes" as I often say in speaking with my folks, remembering that boredom isn't as much a reality as a frame of reference. Remember...choosing to "relax" is an option too!

Speaking of busy! A common theme discussed over coffee and candy pieces (thanks SDFRA for the easily-accessible and always filled jar of chocolaty goodness) in my office is the role of being busy. It's not as innocent as we sometimes think...

Voyeurism is something alive and well in our culture and society today. We all want to get that peek into a part of life that maybe we don't have access to in our daily routines. We see that through the popularity of reality TV shows. I like to explore how people think, try to see the world through their lens. One way that I like to do this is by looking at quotes. Sometimes people have much better ways of describing a concept or a thought than I do. I came across this quote by a favorite researcher and psychotherapist, Brene Brown and immediately thought how accurately it described myself, my friends and the people I work with.

*"Crazy busy is a great armor, it's a great way for numbing. What a lot of us do is that we stay so busy, and so out in front of our life, that the truth of power feeling and what we really need can't catch up with us."*

It's easy to recognize when we avoid the physical things that cause distress. In the Fire Service - the intersection where an accident occurred, the property where the baby drowned, and even the Fire Station where "bad things always happen when I'm on shift there". Avoidance does in fact serve a purpose. If I'm not reminded of those events, I won't feel about them either. People fail to realize how often we deploy the coping strategy of avoidance through the act of being busy.

A stealthy but effective way of avoiding our own thoughts and feelings is to busy ourselves doing for others. I will fully admit that I have used this strategy myself. Staying at work, taking the extra call, or responding to "just one more quick email" sometimes feels a lot less anxiety provoking than walking across the threshold of the house to the calls of "Mommy! Mommy! Mommy!" Sometimes work feels a lot more controllable, logical and less emotionally risky.

How do you deploy this coping strategy in your own life? I know the stories- people pick up shifts, "don't tell anyone that I requested that extra shift...", volunteer for every special project, bake brownies, Chair committees, run children from one event to another, keeping ourselves in constant motion until we collapse into bed at night with no energy to spare. We keep ourselves so busy that often our only "connection" is a quick message or post through a handheld device.

Maybe we keep ourselves busy because we feel that taking time to care for ourselves is a selfish thing to do? "Jimmy needs help moving some furniture", "Terra is having a tough time and wants to meet for coffee to talk". Seldom will someone give us crap for helping out another person. Consider however, the motivation for such helpfulness?

Have we simply lost the ability to politely decline an invitation or



request? Maybe. Consider the role of your busyness. In what way is it promoting good in your life? What consequences are there for its presence? What might it be shielding you from feeling or thinking about?

Have a quote, saying or short story that inspires you or gets you thinking? I'd like to hear what's spinning around in your mind!

Be safe and well, Tina

## FIRE FAMILY SERVICES

For more information about Fire Family Services, please contact Tina Casola at [tcasola@sdfra.org](mailto:tcasola@sdfra.org) or visit the Programs tab on our website, [www.sdfra.org](http://www.sdfra.org).





# College for America

By Kurtis Bennett, Board Director

To all those who have aspired to start and/or finish college for personal or professional reasons... this article is for you!

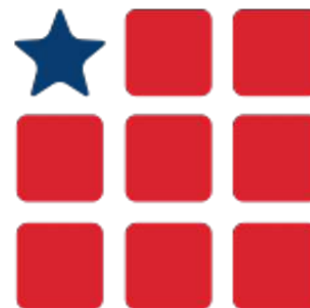
Roughly two years ago, SDFRA partnered with the College for America (CFA) program and Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) to offer low-cost, flexible education opportunities to our Members.

These programs recognize that working adults possess a wealth of experience, knowledge, and skills derived from the workplace, albeit they lack a degree, creating a potential barrier to career advancement. CFA has developed

a 100% online university-level program with no set schedule... making it the perfect fit for the Fire Service.

Currently, CFA/SNHU offer Bachelor degrees in the following: Business Management, Communications, and Healthcare Management. An Associate's degree completion program is also offered in General Studies.

CFA/SNHU tuition is \$3,000 per year. That's it! This remarkably low tuition is made possible because the programs do not advertise to the general public. Enrollment in either program is open to all SDFRA Members and their family.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact Kurtis Bennett at [kbennett@sdfra.org](mailto:kbennett@sdfra.org) or visit the Education Portal on our website, [www.sdfra.org](http://www.sdfra.org).

# Old Timer's Luncheon

By Sierra Lawrence, Member Services Representative

On August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017, the Chief Officer's Club will be hosting their annual Old Timer's Luncheon. The luncheon is open to all Active and Retired San Diego Fire-Rescue Department employees.

The event will be held at the San Diego Police Department's Shooting Range from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. There will be a taco cart on site grilling up some great bites and an amazing raffle filled with top-notch prizes. Chief Fennessy will also be in attendance as the honorary Keynote Speaker.

This year's event will cost \$10. Please make all checks payable to the "Chief Officer's Club". Please note that your check will be your RSVP.

HUGE thank you to the Chief Officer's Club, San Diego Fire-Rescue Department, San Diego City

Fire Fighters Local 145, Sports Club, and SDFRA for their dedication and planning this event!

### Active Employees

Please mail your checks to the SDFRA office:

10509 San Diego Mission Rd., Ste. F  
San Diego, CA 92108

### Retired Employees

Please mail your checks to Ron Moskowitz:

7207 Melotte St.  
San Diego, CA 92119

Please note that your check will be your RSVP.

If you have any questions regarding the event, please feel free to contact me via email [slawrence@sdfra.org](mailto:slawrence@sdfra.org) or by phone (619) 281-0354. We can't wait to see you all there!



# Retired Corner

By Arnell Garcia, Board Director

Hello from the Retiree's Corner!

There's been a lot of things going on in the Retired Community since our last issue. I'd love to share what I've been up to:

- I attended the Vacation Draw. It was great to see so many Retirees in attendance. If you have not been to one, think about it for next year.

- I also had the pleasure of attending the Retired Fire and Police Service to remember and honor those that we lost in the last year.

- Please note that there has been a change in the meetings for the Retired Fireman's Club. The Club will only meet once a month, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month.

Deepest sympathies for all we've lost this year we have lost: Retired Engineer Chuck "Bro" Rivas, Retired Engineer Jay O. Basham, Retired Captain "Manny" Fernandes, Retired Captain Albert Smith, Retired Captain Malcolm Barnett, Retired Captain William Burmeister, and Deanna Key, the beloved wife of Retired Engineer Kenny Key. May they rest in peace.

I would also like to welcome Retired Battalion Chief Greg Donnelly to our Board. He's our new FirefighterAid Trustee. He'll be assisting me with our Retirees, funerals, flag and bible presentations, comfort box deployment, and other activities in the community. Thank you Greg, it's great to be working with you again!

We also have a couple strong fighters in the shop for repairs: Retired Captain Frank Alfano and Retired Captain Ken Hannibal. Wishing you both a speedy recovery!

As many of you may know, we acquired a 1943 Seagraves Fire Engine from Retired Firefighter Lloyd Dailey's family. We are going to start the restoration process shortly. Initially, we have to clean up and unbolt parts to draft our game plan on restoration. I have also located a donor rig for an updated engine, transmission, rear-end, and brakes. It is 1974 Chevy powered Fire Engine and is currently located in Ramona.

I would like to thank Captain Brian Fox for soliciting volunteers to work



on this big project...we definitely need all hands on deck!

If you would like to get involved or donate to Apparatus #1114 project, please feel free to contact me at (619) 322-9914 or [agarcia@sdfra.org](mailto:agarcia@sdfra.org).

Until next time, stay healthy and we will see you soon! Look forward to another newsletter this December!





# Where in the World are SDFRA & FFA?

By Sierra Lawrence & Carlye Wund

From Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park, AZ to Mexico's Baja California Peninsula...we want you to take us with you!

The Relief and FirefighterAid are everywhere you go. We're always ready to help you and your family no matter what! We hope you take comfort in knowing that...we've always got you covered!

SDFRA Member, Andy Vasquez, and his wife, Nicole, took us on a dusty, hot cruise through the Southwest while they celebrated their 5-year wedding anniversary. We're happy to know that, just like SDFRA, our sticker on their car held on strong! Cheers to 50 more years Vasqui!

Matt Scarpuzzi and his crew of San Diego Fire-Rescue Department Firefighters packed up and headed down to Baja California, Mexico where they participated in the 49<sup>th</sup> Score Baja 500 Race. The team members of Racing for Mason, shared the responsibility of driving over 500 grueling miles through the Mexico desert...all to raise money for FirefighterAid!

Along with all of their sponsors, the race car sported a FirefighterAid sticker and was with them as they crossed the finish line in 4<sup>th</sup> place! Congratulations on rocking the race and for all your fundraising efforts for FirefighterAid! We're so grateful for all your support!

So where are you headed off to for the Summer?! Stop by the office, grab your official SDFRA and FirefighterAid stickers, slap them on your wheels, and take us on an adventure!

Be sure to share wherever you take us next! We can't wait to see them!

Tag us on Facebook:  
@FirefighterAid

Tag us on Instagram:  
@sd911msc\_ffaid

To be in our next feature, please email [slawrence@sdfra.org](mailto:slawrence@sdfra.org)

