

Homewood training center carries fallen firefighter's name

In Brian Carey's honor

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A bright sun shined down on the crowd of nearly 100 as the Homewood Fire Department christened its new building the Brian Carey Training Center on Sunday afternoon. The ceremony included a dedication and a ribbon-cutting ceremony by the Carey family.

The event opened with dedications by Fire Chief Robert Grabowski, Homewood Mayor Rich Hofeld, St. Joseph Parish Associate Pastor Dan Jarosewic and a tearful tribute from Carey's mother, Kathleen.

"We thought there was no more noble case than naming the training center after him," Grabowski said. "Outside of responding to emergencies, there is nothing more critical to a firefighter, and we wanted to honor Brian by carrying on his memory here."

Kathleen Carey fought back tears as she publicly addressed the death of her son. She thanked the crowd for its overwhelming support and said she had little doubt Brian Carey was smiling down on the gathering.

"I miss him desperately, but I wake up every morning knowing his name is connected to saving lives," Kathleen Carey said. "The center will aid in addressing training so that firefighters will be better prepared for the unexpected."

Inside the doors, the front wall sports large block letters proudly proclaiming the name of the center's hero along with a wall dedicated to memorabilia remembering Brian Carey. The event also marked the unveiling of a painting of Carey done by Homewood artist Bart Jerner.

Carey's sister Anne said the family greatly appreciated the honor and took solace in knowing it would contribute to improving firefighter safety.

"It means a lot. We know he didn't die in vain," Anne Carey said. "His memory will aid in training future firefighters."

The Brian Carey Training Center is the first of its kind in Illinois and will serve as the regional base for MABAS Division 24, a coalition of emergency response personnel that serves south suburban Cook County, counting 22 departments in total. In addition to training, it will provide a headquarters for the city's emergency operations center.

Brian Carey died in March 2010 while trying to save an 87-year-old man from a burning home.

Grabowski said the center would ensure Carey's memory is kept alive.

"Current firefighters and firefighters in the future will know of and honor Brian," he said. "We must finish Brian's mission, and today we are one step closer to that goal."

- Caption: Missing him: Brian Carey, father of fallen firefighter Brian Carey, gets a hug Sunday before a ceremony where a new training center was named in the firefighter's honor in Homewood. | Photos by Matt Marton~Sun-Times Media Matt Marton On the wall: Homewood Fire Chief Robert Grabowski unveils a portrait of Brian Carey in the training center. Matt Marton Carey

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