



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## Former Sheridan Fire Chief and Commissioner Ronald J. Keddie to be Added to New York State Fallen Firefighters Memorial

CATHARINE YOUNG October 7, 2013

| ISSUE: **FIREFIGHTERS, VOLUNTEERS/ING**



**For Release:** Immediate, October 4, 2013

*Nine Firefighters To Be Posthumously Honored in Memorial Ceremony Held in Albany*

ALBANY - Recognizing his sacrifice and a lifetime of service on behalf of his neighbors and community, Sheridan firefighter Ronald J. Keddie and the names of eight other firefighters from across the state who made the ultimate sacrifice will be unveiled on the New York

State Fallen Firefighters Memorial on Tuesday, October 8 in Albany.

The memorial at Albany's Empire State Plaza was first dedicated in 1998 to commemorate the heroism and valor of our fallen firefighters. Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I - Olean) attended that long overdue inaugural ceremony establishing the memorial, and will again be in attendance at next Tuesday's ceremony.

When created in 1998, the Fallen Firefighters Memorial was given a prominent location on the Empire State Plaza where it would be accessible to all. The central plaza of the memorial consists of grey and red bricks forming a Maltese Cross with a cast bronze sculpture sitting at its center in front of a granite wall bearing the names of the fallen. The emotionally-charged and moving sculpture depicts two firefighters carrying an injured brother firefighter to safety, poignantly symbolizing the spirit of sacrifice and fraternal service of those memorialized.

During National Fire Prevention Week each year, the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control engraves on the Fallen Firefighters Memorial the names of our firefighter heroes deserving of the honor, and remembers all of those whose names have already been etched into the memorial's granite wall, which now contains 2,381 names dating all the way back to 1811.

Sheridan's own Ronald J. Keddie, a 41-year member of the Sheridan Fire Department who previously served as chief, commissioner, and president, before falling in the line of duty is now among those inspiring heroes honored for laying down their lives as firefighters.

"The fire service was Ron's second family. His passion for the fire service is what got me interested in joining the Fire Department," said Chief Keddie's wife Kathy, who has also served as a member of the Sheridan Fire Department and will be travelling to Albany for

Tuesday's ceremony, along with their son Michael, and dozens of Ron's fellow firefighters and friends from Sheridan and throughout Chautauqua County.

"Ron was a personal friend, so this ceremony means a lot. His devotion to the fire service was tireless, and I would see him at every event. He was extremely involved in the community, even carrying on the family tradition of organizing the Memorial Day service in Sheridan every year to honor our fallen heroes. He personally understood as a Viet Nam veteran the horrors of war and the sacrifices that our armed forces make to protect our freedom, and he was determined to remember those who gave their lives," said Senator Young, who is also attending the memorial ceremony.

"I miss seeing his smiling face, and his legacy lives on. Adding his name to the memorial will ensure that his contributions that touched the lives of so many people will never be forgotten," said Senator Young.

"Ron played an incredibly important role training hundreds of volunteer firemen throughout Chautauqua County. His legacy lives on through the many lives that he touched in a positive manner, both directly and through the efforts of those he helped train. It is certainly appropriate that his name be added to the firefighting heroes honored in Albany. Hopefully, his outstanding example of service will continue to inspire others to even greater service.," said Assemblyman Andrew Goodell (R,C-Chautauqua).

"I remember meeting Ron at the fire department when I was about eight years old and started marching in local parades with the department's banner. He was a great guy and a tremendous member of not only our department, but the entire county-wide community of fire services in Chautauqua County. From his work as a State Fire Instructor, his role with the Chautauqua County Office of Emergency Services, and his service as commissioner and past chief with our department, Ron's service was far-reaching and left a significant impact

on so many of us,” said Aaron Brinkman, current Chief of the Sheridan Fire Department.

Born in Silver Creek, New York, on September 16, 1947 to the late Robert and Esther (Bartlett) Keddie, Ronald L. Keddie’s life of service began early when he went to Vietnam with the United States Navy in 1967 and served until 1970, earning the National Defense Service Medal.

After his time in Vietnam and service with the Navy, Keddie worked professionally at American Axle and was a New York State Fire Instructor for over 30 years. He also worked at Robert Basil Chevrolet and was previously employed with IPSCO Well Drilling and Cobb Ambulance.

As a volunteer firefighter, Keddie served as chief for two terms, fire commissioner for three terms, and was a past president of the Sheridan Fire District. As a professional New York State Fire Instructor, he trained young firefighters across New York State and also worked at the Chautauqua Children’s Safety Education Village in Ashville where he educated children on fire prevention.

In addition to his professional work and service with the fire department, Keddie was a member of the Sheridan Methodist Church, Silver Creek Emergency Squad, Sheridan VFW Post No. 6390, Fourth Ward Falcon Club, First Ward Falcon Club, Kosciuszko Club, Moniuszko Club, Dom Polski Club, Dunkirk Firemen's Exempt Club, Fredonia American Legion Post No. 59, Fredonia Beaver Club, Montour Falls Moose Club, and Silver Creek Fireman's Club. Keddie was also a past member of the Northern Chautauqua Conservation Club and Dunkirk Moose Club, and was the bingo caller for the Fredonia American Legion and St. Columban’s on the Lake Retirement Home.

Following years of service in his community through these various capacities and roles, on June 27, 2012, at the age of 64, Chief Keddie passed away from a heart attack in the Sheridan Fire Hall as he prepared to respond to an emergency motor vehicle accident.

“It is always a sad and solemn occasion when new names are added to this memorial, but the many friends, family, and fellow firefighters that will be coming to pay their respects and celebrate Ron’s life reveals how significantly he impacted those around him. It shows the love and respect so many people had for him. His service and the character he demonstrated throughout his life is a model to admire and aspire to emulate,” said Senator Young.

###