

Orange remembers its beloved fire chief

Headquarters named for DeMarzo

By Chris Sykes Staff Writer Orange Transcript

Government officials and local firefighters came to Orange last week to honor the memory of Fire Chief Marty DeMarzo during the renaming of the city's fire headquarters.

The members of the Orange Fire Department and the Orange community who lived, loved, laughed and worked side by side with him for years joined Friday for a noontime ceremony in front of the building at Central and Lincoln avenues.

Firefighters are known colloquially as “the bravest” in the same way that police officers are generally recognized as “the finest.” In DeMarzo's case, and based on the outpouring of affection and respect shown on Friday, he almost was recognized as “the most dedicated and beloved.”

“Any time you have a public building named after someone, you have to be pretty special,” said Essex County Executive Joseph DiVincenzo Jr., who was among the attendees. “I didn't know Marty, but that shows the kind of guy he was and how people felt about him.”

Deputy Chief James Fonzino said the county executive's thoughts perfectly described “Marty.” He said last Friday's station renaming ceremony was about “bringing our chief, our leader, Martin P. DeMarzo, home.” “Tomorrow, when you enter the Chief Martin P. DeMarzo Headquarters, be prepared because I suspect it is only the beginning,” he said.

DeMarzo died one year ago from complications following a hernia operation.

Fonzino and all the members of the fire department thanked DeMarzo's wife, Diane, for “lending” Marty to them. His widow and other family members were in attendance, and she thanked the men and women who worked with her husband for their sympathy, empathy, care, support and the respect they have shown her and her family since he passed away unexpectedly last year.

“I want to thank everyone for coming,” she said. “Marty would be proud of the Orange Fire Department. You've really taken care of his wife and family.”

Firefighter Edward Vega said his memories of DeMarzo go back to when they met in the third grade during their time in a Boy Scout troop at Mount Carmel School “before Route 280 was here.”

“Our friendship carried on up to when we were in high school, listening to music by Deep Purple, when the two of us, along with another friend of ours, called ourselves the Three Amigos,” Vega said. “Last month I listened to Marty's son, Joe, at the ‘Marty Gras’ event we held at Mayfair Farms in West Orange. He said, ‘My father didn't build anything in Orange, but we're always coming back.’ I thought about that and Marty did build something in Orange. He built friendships.”

Firefighter Elvin Padilla spoke for the firefighters and fire officers union. Padilla said he believed God blessed DeMarzo, and the proof was in the life, leadership and legacy he left behind.

“Recently at a Group 4 fire, I had a firefighter from another house who had come to the fundraiser come up to me and say, ‘You guys had a great event — you must have loved Marty,’” he said. “We got to know Marty on a personal level. He was different and we truly appreciated him for that.”