



NATIONAL FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS FOUNDATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NFFF Launches #ForThe343, Inviting Every American to Honor 9/11 Fallen Firefighters During 25th Anniversary

For the first time, anyone can join the tribute: climb near you from anywhere, share it, and challenge three others to do the same

EMMITSBURG, MD (August 11, 2026) — Twenty-five years after the attacks of September 11, 2001, the [National Fallen Firefighters Foundation](#) (NFFF) today launched #ForThe343, a nationwide movement inviting every American to honor the 343 firefighters who gave their lives that day — and every firefighter who has made the ultimate sacrifice since — through one shared act of remembrance.

For more than two decades, the NFFF's 9/11 Memorial Stair Climbs have brought firefighters and communities together to climb 110 stories — the height of the World Trade Center towers — in tribute to the 343 FDNY firefighters who died in the line of duty when the towers fell.

On this milestone anniversary, that tradition becomes a national campaign: more than 40 traditional 9/11 Memorial Stair Climbs will take place in communities across the country, concentrated the weekend of September 11–13. [Retro Fitness](#) will host climbs at 75 locations nationwide in a single day. And for the first time, participation is open to every American — anyone, anywhere — at [ForThe343.org](#).

The call to action is simple: **climb the equivalent of one flight of stairs, post a short video or photo to social media, then challenge three others to do the same**, carrying the tribute from person to person and community to community in all 50 states.

“I was one of the members of the NFFF team that responded to New York immediately following 9/11 and witnessed the nation come together to support the fire service” **said Victor Stagnaro, CEO of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation**. “Now we are asking the nation to stand with New York again and symbolically complete the climb these 343 heroes could not finish. We're inviting everyone to climb from a firehouse, their workplace or their home, because every step helps us keep the promise to never forget.”

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The NFFF's connection to that tragic day runs deep. At the request of the Federal Emergency Management Agency the NFFF mobilized on the ground in New York, opening a field office within five days of September 11. Over the two months that followed, the Foundation coordinated more than 400 peer-support specialists, chaplains, and mental health professionals who reached all 211 FDNY firehouses and thousands of workers at Ground Zero. The peer-support model the NFFF built for the FDNY in those months went on to shape how the fire service cares for its own after a loss.

The sacrifice of September 11 began in New York, but it did not stay there. In the weeks after the attacks, firefighters and rescuers traveled from far and wide to help with the search and recovery at Ground Zero. Many carried the toll of that work home with them, and 25 years on, firefighters are still dying from the illnesses it caused. The NFFF now recognizes more than 300 firefighters lost to post-9/11-related illnesses on the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland, their names enshrined alongside those lost on 9/11.

The losses are national because the response was national. And so is the tribute.

How to Join the Movement Today

Anyone can step up **#ForThe343** from wherever they are. The digital experience at ForThe343.org, developed in partnership with **SugarXR**, includes the following ways to participate:

- Climb the equivalent of one flight of stairs, record a selfie video for social media, and challenge three others to keep the **#ForThe343** movement growing. (For non-climbers, honor from anywhere by remembering, walking, running, biking, or capturing and sharing a tribute.)
- Find a climb near you and join one of the more than 115 official 9/11 Memorial Stair Climbs taking place nationwide, including at Retro Fitness locations.
- Give back to the NFFF with a monthly gift of \$9.11, or a one-time donation of your choosing, to directly support the programs benefiting [Fire Hero Families](#) and fire departments across the U.S.

Traditional in-person climbs will take place in major markets including Denver, Charlotte, Nashville, and Long Beach, California, and at landmark venues such as Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wisconsin, M&T Bank Stadium in Baltimore, Maryland, and MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Organized climbs are also being held in communities far from any skyline, such as Estes Valley in the Colorado Rockies; Bismarck-Mandan, North Dakota; the Morongo Reservation in Southern California; and the Wiregrass region of Alabama.

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The movement is amplified by national partners including [Retro Fitness](#), which is mobilizing 75 locations nationwide in support of **#ForThe343**. All community members, regardless of membership status, are invited to work out for free and participate in their local climb using Retro Fitness's state-of-the-art cardio equipment. Participants can also support the NFFF through point-of-sale donations at club locations, helping Retro Fitness reach its fundraising goal for the Foundation. Donations support the NFFF's work to honor fallen firefighters, support their families, and reduce future line-of-duty deaths.

"Connection, purpose and community are central to what we do at Retro Fitness," said **Kim Gouch, Chief Brand Officer of Retro Fitness**. "Through these climbs, we're bringing people together to honor the courage, sacrifice and service of those we lost to 9/11. Our partnership with the NFFF provides an opportunity to live our values while challenging ourselves physically. And we're proud to do it **#ForThe343**."

The movement is also made possible through the generous support of [5.11, Inc.](#), a global innovator of purpose-built apparel, footwear and gear, and the [National Fire Sprinkler Association](#) (NFSA), a non-profit advancing fire protections through advocacy, safety codes and legislation, and industry training. As **#ForThe343** Tribute Partners, 5.11 and NFSA continue their longstanding commitment to the NFFF's mission to honor fallen firefighters, support their families and strengthen the fire service community.

Every act of remembrance — a climb, a walk, a tribute shared, a gift given — is **#ForThe343**. Together, we can ensure the Fire Heroes who ran toward danger, and all who followed them during rescue and recovery, are never forgotten.

Find a climb, honor from anywhere, and join the movement at [ForThe343.org](https://forthe343.org).

Media interviews with NFFF leadership, stair climb organizers and Fire Hero Family members are available throughout the remembrance window. [Photography and video from past NFFF 9/11 Memorial Stair Climbs are available here.](#)

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About the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF)

The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) was established by the United States Congress in 1992 to lead a national effort in honoring America's fallen firefighters. Since then, the Foundation has created powerful programs that pay lasting tribute to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice while providing meaningful support to their families and colleagues. Through its close partnership with the fire service and its affiliate, the First Responder Center for

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Excellence (FRCE), the NFFF is also deeply committed to reducing firefighter line-of-duty deaths and injuries. To learn how you can support this important mission, visit firehero.org.

About SugarXR

SugarXR is the BrowserXR + AI engagement platform that turns audiences into participants and awareness into measurable action through frictionless, app-free experiences. As the Technology and Experience Partner of For The 343, SugarXR powers the campaign's nationwide participation platform and creative experience. Learn more at [SugarXR.ai](https://sugaxr.ai).

About Retro Fitness

For more than 20 years, Retro Fitness has been a leader in the High-Value, Low-Price (HVLP) fitness space, empowering members to live healthier lives on their own terms. Rooted in its GET REAL brand philosophy, Retro Fitness is dedicated to creating welcoming environments, fostering authentic connections, and delivering fitness experiences that feel inclusive, motivating, and attainable— both in-club and beyond.

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