

Remarks - Jon Henes
Michael Lynch Memorial Foundation - 8th Annual Dinner - March 22, 2010

Winston Churchill once said:

“There is no doubt that it is around the family and the home that all the greatest virtues, the most dominating virtues of human society, are created, strengthened and maintained.”

This quote is apropos for tonight because Churchill could easily have been speaking about the Lynch family.

Jack and Kathleen Lynch left Ireland and moved to a modest home in the Throgs Neck Section of the Bronx, where they raised 10 amazing and unique children.

It was in this home that the children grew up, the family supported each other and memories were forged.

I had the opportunity to visit the Lynch home this weekend, which is mission control for tonight’s event and which remains the place where the family gathers and the most important family decisions are made.

It was also in this home where the family conceived of the idea for the Michael Lynch Memorial Foundation and where the Michael Lynch Memorial Foundation was born.

Just over a year ago, I learned about the Michael Lynch Memorial Foundation from my good friend Fred Lynch.

Fred told me all about Michael - a brother, a son, an uncle, a fiancé, a friend and a proud member of the New York City Fire Department - who, on September 11th, raced down to the World Trade Center and entered a burning tower to help save the thousands of men and women desperately trying to get out.

Tragically, Michael, like so many other firefighters, police officers, paramedics and employees who worked in the Towers, did not make it out. We all remember the days and months that followed, as family members searched for their loved ones and the grief we all felt as we realized so many were lost.

It was exactly eight years ago yesterday when Michael was found at Ground Zero. The medical examiner explained that Michael's remains were intertwined with those of a woman who Michael was either carrying out of the building or protecting from the devastation raining down from above.

Michael was doing his job until the end.

In fact, Michael was doing what firefighters do everyday.

Edward E. Crocker, the Chief of the Fire Department of New York from 1899 to 1911 once explained that:

“When a man becomes a fireman his great act of bravery has been accomplished. What he does after that is all in the line of work. . . . Firefighters do not regard themselves as heroes because they do what the business requires.”

Well, Chief Crocker may have been right that firefighters do not regard themselves as heroes, but there is no question that we all do.

Firefighters are our heroes.

Firefighters wake up everyday, go to work and put their lives on the line to make sure we're all safe.

When Michael went to work on September 11th, he didn't know - he couldn't even have imagined - the horror he would later face.

But, when he faced it, he didn't hesitate, he didn't flinch, he did his job, he raced into the tower and he was our hero.

The character that Michael displayed on September 11th is not surprising if you know the Lynch family.

Just think about this amazing family. Faced with Michael's death, in the midst of a national calamity, they did not sit down, put their heads in their hands and lament about how unfair life can be.

Heroically, they focused on the virtues that were created, strengthened and maintained in their home in the Bronx and they held hands, rose up and started this Foundation so Michael would live forever and so the children of firefighters would have the gifts of hope and opportunity through higher education, and we would all have an example of how to live life, how to give back and how to be courageous.

The mission of the Foundation, as you know, is to provide scholarships to the children of New York City firefighters.

The goal is to be able to provide more scholarships and larger scholarships to these children.

The ability to provide more and larger scholarships requires generous monetary support.

Thanks to all of you and the many volunteers, this year, the Foundation raised more than \$440,000, which does not include checks still coming in and the results of the silent auction.

This is an amazing accomplishment that will allow the Foundation to lift up more children and it's an accomplishment of which everyone here tonight should be proud.

Before I sit down, I want to acknowledge both the New York City firefighters here tonight and the scholarship winners.

First, on behalf of everyone here, I want to thank the members of the New York City Fire Department.

We all appreciate what you do for us and the sacrifices you and your families make so we are safe.

Second, I want to congratulate tonight's winners.

You should be very proud of your accomplishment.

You should also realize though that with this opportunity, you have the obligation to work hard, do well and do good.

Whenever you feel like you are overwhelmed or defeated, which you will, because that happens when you are trying to accomplish great things, think of the courage exemplified by Michael Lynch and his 341 brothers and sisters of the New York City Fire Department who lost their lives on September 11th after they ran full speed into the burning twin towers, did their jobs, saved lives and demonstrated the ultimate courage - always keeping that in mind will give you the strength to persevere and succeed.

Thank you.