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Hero's son issues a plea heard 'round the world



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WORLDWIDE movements have started with less.

This one began with a computer, a boy, and his powerful desire to honor the father he loved.

Connor Geraghty was searching for a way to channel his grief. His father Edward, 45, a battalion chief for the New York City Fire Department, died while saving lives on Sept. 11.

Connor, 14, who possesses powers of persuasion you could bottle and sell, sat at a friend's computer on Long Island last month, and typed an e-mail.

"Hello, I am Connor Geraghty of Rockville Centre, N.Y.," he began. "I lost my Dad on September 11th.

"Many firefighters lost their lives to save someone else's. They truly are heroes."

Then, Connor made his pitch:

"In honor of the bravery, courage and determination of American firefighters, there should be a day in our nation to celebrate and appreciate their hard work and never-ending passion for saving lives."

Connor proposed establishing a National Firefighters Day, to pay tribute to the men and women who give selflessly each day.

He asked readers to place their names at the bottom of his e-mail petition, and forward the list to friends.

He signed it, "I Love u Dad." Then he hit the send key.

"I didn't expect any response," Connor, a freshman at Kellenberg Memorial Catholic HS, told me.

But the interest was so vast, so intense, it caught Connor off-guard.

"I got responses from Japan, France, from all over Europe and Asia," he said.

More than 4,000 people have signed the petition so far. The best part was "I met people from my dad's firehouse" — Battalion 9, Engine 54 in Manhattan.

Connor's mom, Mary, 41, soon got into the act.

She forwarded the petition to Rep. Carolyn McCarthy, whose son, Kevin, she used to baby-sit.

Yesterday, McCarthy read a tribute to Connor and his father into the Congressional Record.

With national magazines now calling, Connor hopes news of his petition reaches President Bush.

Connor initially wanted Firefighters Day to be held on Sept. 11, but now he thinks that date should be reserved for all sorts of heroes. Firefighters, he firmly believes, deserve another day all their own.

At a memorial service on Oct. 25, Connor's father was promoted to deputy chief. Now Connor, who had wanted to become a doctor, strives to fight fires. Like his dad.

Said his mom, "Those two had such a special relationship."

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