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WTC hero's kin finally get word

Firefighter's body is found

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After 91 days of searching for his son in the ruins of the World Trade Center, retired firefighter Lee Ielpi can finally bring his boy home.

"They found my son," Ielpi said yesterday. "I can't tell you the relief I have."

Late Tuesday night, Ielpi got the news he and his family were waiting for: The remains of Jonathan Ielpi, a firefighter with Squad 288, were found.

Ielpi, 57, and his son Brendan, also a firefighter, rushed back down to Ground Zero, where the two have been digging every day through the rubble since the towers collapsed.

"We carried him out," Ielpi said, his voice sounding fragile yet calm.

Father pitches in

A month after the attack, Ielpi vowed to search for his son, who was 29 and the father of two sons, and the other victims, no matter how long it took.

"*If God is willing, I will find* my son and bury my son, and I'll be back the next day," he told the Daily News then.

Last month, Ielpi acted as an intermediary between firefighters and the Giuliani administration after firefighters, upset with the city's plan to cut the number of recovery workers at Ground Zero, clashed with police there.

Recovery demands won

The city agreed to increase the number of cops and firefighters at the site to monitor recovery efforts amid the heavy construction equipment brought in to step up the cleanup.

Jonathan Ielpi was among dozens of victims found in an area of stairwells and underground levels unearthed by high-powered clawing equipment the past week.

Three colleagues in Squad 288 were found Friday, giving his father hope.

Jonathan Ielpi's funeral will be held at St. Aloysius Church in Great Neck, L.I., at 11 a.m. Monday.

Asked yesterday if he would continue to search for victims now that his son has been found, Ielpi said, "Absolutely. I will still be involved down there."

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