

# ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2018



278 SPRING STREET  
NEW YORK, NY 10013

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## Museum Staff

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Alyssa Borger  
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## Overview

The New York City Fire Museum celebrated its thirtieth year at its Spring Street location in 2017. A lot has happened in those thirty years for our Museum. The collection has grown, displays have evolved and the FDNY has changed in many ways, particularly since 2001. At this milestone anniversary, the Board of Trustees seeks to determine how best to move into the future. How do we best communicate the history of the Fire Department of the City of New York to approximately 40,000 visitors each year, and motivate them to keep coming back? What technologies are available to enhance our displays and our story-telling? What goals should we set for ourselves in terms of visitors, funding, activities, etc.?

As we close Fiscal Year 2018, these questions will be addressed to move the New York City Fire Museum into the next thirty years and beyond.

Overall, support and revenue grew significantly, (approximately ten percent) over last fiscal year. In FY2018 support and revenue was \$606,193, up from \$563,168 in FY2017. Expenses were up (approximately five percent) as well to \$592,776 from \$565,052 for the previous year. Total assets dropped slightly to \$666,522, down from \$671,762 in FY2017. This is attributed to depreciation on the aging assets associated with the investment to convert 278 Spring Street from a firehouse into the Museum, as well as for spending of previously-raised capital to update the fire safety “mock apartment.” Cash and cash equivalents were up by \$8,240 to \$557,617. This data is drawn from the annual independent audit performed by the accounting firm of Condon, O’Meara, McGinty and Donnelly, LLP.

## Visitors

The Museum hosted a total of 35,851 visitors during FY2018, negligibly higher than last year (35,619). Of these, 6,112 were school children and accompanying adults who participated in the Fire Safety Education Program. The number of participants in the Program was reported as 8,021 in FY2017. This precipitous drop was due to the renovation of the “mock apartment” feature of the program. The mock apartment was unavailable for five months during this fiscal year (six months total). Many school groups decided to forego enrolling in the Program without this important element. The new Fire Safety Learning Center was re-opened in August 2018 (FY2019).

In total, ticket sales (including individuals, tours and school groups) generated revenue of \$170,972 in FY2018, up 7.7 percent over FY2017.

Free admission is extended to a limited number of eligible individuals. These include Museum members, members of New York City’s uniformed services, members of the United States Armed Forces, participants in New York City’s Cool Culture program, and participating institutions of the Museums Council of New York City. The Museum continues to participate in the Smithsonian Institution’s “Museum Day Live” which offers free admission at participating museums for pre-registered individuals. In total, the Museum was visited by 2,364 complimentary guests during FY2018, up 49.4 percent from FY2017.



Not captured by our Visitor Tracking is a significant number of attendees to special events, particularly those hosted by the FDNY. These include the Annual 9/11 Wreath-laying Ceremony, the FDNY annual Medical Special Operations Conference reception, Firefighter Entrance Examination preparation classes sponsored by the FDNY United Women Firefighters, Fired Up for the Cure, and the annual FDNY Headquarters holiday party. Participants at all of these events take full advantage of the Museum from viewing exhibits to making purchases in the Museum shop.

Not surprisingly our Museum often attracts visitors from international fire services and governmental agencies. On April 15 a group of firefighters from Torun, Poland hosted by the FDNY Pulaski

Association took a tour of the Museum. They were accompanied by two television crews and their visit here was aired on these stations in Poland. On June 8, a delegation from Belfast, Ireland, including representatives of government, business and community, toured our Hudson Square neighborhood and utilized our third-floor event space to hear a presentation by Deputy Borough Commander Michael Gala on the rebuilding of the FDNY after 9/11.

## Collection

Cataloging and digitizing our photograph collection has continued through this year with 3,549 items cataloged and scanned. Two major cataloging projects were completed; both the framed objects and uniform collections were all cataloged and photographed with the help of our incredible group of interns. These were the last major projects necessary to finish cataloging our object collection. We accepted seventeen donations to the collection, including two signed photographs of Miss Rheingold 1948 and 1952, both of which were dedicated to FDNY Engine companies. We provided access to the collection for five researchers and completed genealogy research for ten families. The collection was also featured three times on Travel Channel's "Mysteries at the Museum."

## Museum-sponsored Events

For a number of years, the Museum has hosted several community events including the Egg Hunt, Halloween Party and Santa Rescue. The Annual FDNY Cook-Off is the principle fundraising event of the year. In FY2018, 846 people attended these ticketed events. They are included in the visitor total reported above.

The Annual FDNY Cook-Off was held on November 2, 2017. Over the past three years, the event has realized contributions to the Museum in the amounts of \$10, 856 in 2015, \$16,171 in 2016 and \$16,516 in 2017. Judges for the 2017 event were renowned chef Harold Moore, owner of Harold's Meet+3 restaurant at the Arlo Hotel, Executive Chef Mike Jeanty of City Winery and Martin Sheridan, owner of The Ear Inn, a landmark establishment on Spring Street. Winners received gift cards from event sponsor, Stop & Shop.

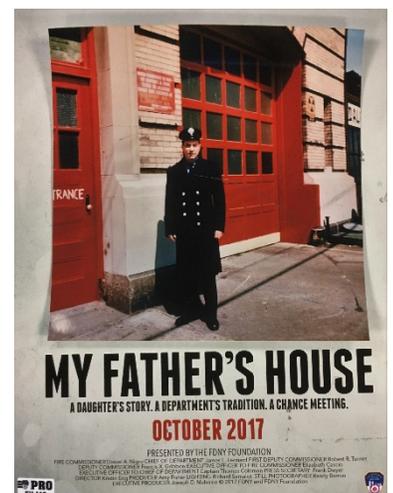


The other events were targeted at families. This year, attendances were: Egg Hunt – 408, Halloween Party – 53, and Santa Rescue – 271.

## Other Events

The NYC Fire Museum has teamed up with the FDNY's Multi-Media Unit to premiere the Department's new "FDNY Pro" film productions. This year's films included, "My Father's House" on October 17, 2017; the story of one daughter's discovery of her father's legacy after making the Supreme Sacrifice at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Street Fire. The second was "Legacy of Bravery" which premiered on April 21, 2018, documenting the story of the first female "legacy" firefighter. Both films, and those that will be introduced in the future, are free with Museum admission.

On October 11, 2017, Sony Pictures sponsored, "Only the Brave" day at the NYC Fire Museum. Sony's film by the same name, starring Josh Brolin, tells the tragic story of twelve wildland firefighters known as the Granite Mountain Hotshots who lost their lives in the June 2013 Yarnell Hill Fire in California. The film company promoted the event at the Museum with the distribution of free hats, shirts and posters commemorating the release



of the film. Also distributed with every paid admission to the Museum were free tickets to the film's premiere at AMC Empire Theater on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street.



The New York City Fire Museum was offered an opportunity to benefit from the generosity of Scottish artist Alexander Millar. Millar offered to contribute a portion of the proceeds from his series, "Everyday Heroes" to the Museum, as well as to paint a subject of our choosing. The series was unveiled at a VIP reception held at the Museum on April 6, 2018 and was on display in our third-floor event space for one week before moving to a pop-up gallery on Wooster Street. The series has met with success and Mr. Millar is planning on opening a permanent gallery in New York City from which he will continue to sell originals and prints from the Everyday Hero series. The opening garnered a full-page, illustrated article in the April 2 edition of the New York Daily News, as well as in the July 5 edition of The Journal. To commemorate the legacy of docent Lt. Walter (Wally) Malone, Mr. Millar painted his portrait. The portrait was unveiled at a reception held for the Malone family on April 22. It is now displayed at the entrance to the second-floor gallery.

On September 20, 2017 WFAN Sports Radio talk show host Mike Francesca broadcast one of his final shows from the Museum's third floor event space. WFAN ran a contest in conjunction with this event giving fans an opportunity to attend the broadcast and meet Mr. Francesca and his guests including baseball star Daryl Strawberry. The show was opened by FDNY Commissioner Daniel Nigro who, with Mr. Francesca, spoke on air extensively about the Museum. Ticket holders had access to the Museum's galleries and availed themselves of making purchases in the Gift Shop.



## Publicity

The New York City Fire Museum is now part of the New York State "Path Through History." As a benefit of this participation, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority has placed signs in subway stations within proximity of the Museum, including the Houston Street and Canal Street stations of the #1 line and in the Spring Street station of the C and E lines.

New York City has partnered with CityBridge who replaced the antiquated pay phones around Manhattan. These digital kiosks include a large screen that display advertising and community announcements. The Museum has been accepted to promote our events at the LinkNYC kiosks of our choosing. Beginning in FY2018, we now promote our Egg Hunt, Cook-Off, Santa Rescue and other events. This greatly increases our visibility within the growing Hudson Square community.



The Museum is now included in a unique phone app called, "LiveXYZ." Featured in the April 24, 2018 issue of the Wall Street Journal, LiveXYZ advises tourists and other pedestrians of the attractions in the area where they are walking. In addition to being included in this app, the Museum was graphically represented in the WSJ article.

On April 29, the Museum participated in the annual Spring Thaw Firematic Flea Market in Allentown, Pennsylvania. This consisted of a booth to promote all aspects and programs at the Museum ranging from membership, exhibitions, venue rental and education. A "Donate A Dollar – Take A Patch" bucket was set up which raised over three hundred dollars.

Guest speakers on topics of relevant FDNY history were provided to outside groups during the year. These included presentations on the "FDNY on Blackwell's/Welfare/Roosevelt Island" to the Roosevelt Island Historical Society and the

“History of 269 Henry Street” to the groundbreaking at this address, the former quarters of FDNY Engine Company 15, by the Henry Street Settlement.

## Building

The long-anticipated renovation of the “mock apartment” utilized in our Fire Safety Education program, began in February 2017. The work completed through the end of the fiscal year included excavation of the external perimeter to a depth of five feet to address water seepage, complete demolition of the interior finishes down to the brick walls and concrete floor including removal of the existing electrical system. The entire project will take an estimated six months to complete, carrying it into the next fiscal year. However, an immediate benefit was realized with the waterproofing performed. The room is now dry, as is the artifact storage area in the basement below. Unrelated to the renovation work, a substantial leak in the roof in the 9/11 annex room was resolved there. Water seepage has been an on-going problem in this 1904 building and hopefully these repairs have abated the majority of them.



In 1990, artist Steve Linn donated his mixed media sculpture, “Firefighters.” to the FDNY. It was installed in a custom enclosure displayed to the street in the easternmost apparatus bay of the Museum. Unfortunately, the bay door was operated by a manual, chain hoist that required the operator to access the chain through a small ten-inch-square opening. Given the difficulty of opening and closing the door, it remained in the open position throughout the day and night. The slight recess from the sidewalk in this bay became an open invitation for use by vagrants. Eventually, the decision was made to close the door permanently. During FY2018, the FDNY changed the manual-hoist to an electric-hoist, and in January 2018 the beautiful sculpture was put on daily display once again, adding greatly to the Museum’s curb appeal, while allowing the door to be closed for security in the overnight hours.

## Grants

We continue to apply for, and receive, grants to support restoration of various artifacts in the collection. In FY2018 a grant was received from the Greater Hudson Heritage Network in the amount of \$1,500 for restoration of a helmet frontpiece from Tiger Hose Company 8 of the Astoria (Queens) Fire Department. This piece is a complement to the hose reel from Tiger Hose 8 that is exhibited in the second-floor gallery and which will be displayed along with it. The Museum was also the recipient of a \$10,000 grant from FM Global for use in the Fire Safety Learning Center renovation.



## Gift Shop

The gift shop is one of the top revenue generators for the NYC Fire Museum. The gift shop generated \$169,482 in FY2018. While sales were down 6.3% from previous year, we are continually working on providing a wide array of products. This year we added a customized children’s watch featuring teaching dials, and a Fire Museum ornament with the façade of the building etched. The FDNY has granted the Museum permission to produce merchandise with the FDNY copyright. In the upcoming year, we are predicting sales will improve by producing Museum merchandise incorporating the FDNY brand, working with new vendors and increasing foot traffic.

## Community

As the Hudson Square neighborhood continues to flourish, we keep abreast of the developments and, as opportunity presents itself, play a role in improving our community. In FY2018, the Hudson Square BID informed us that Spring Street will become the District's "Main Street," with parks anchoring its east and west ends. That puts the New York City Fire Museum right in the middle of this vibrant community.

As previously mentioned, the Museum served as a meeting point for the Belfast delegation who were here to observe Hudson Square. And we regularly host meetings of our local Community Board 2.

These involvements are of mutual benefit to the Museum and our community partners. More and more, the Fire Museum elevates its stature and visibility among the cultural institutions of New York City.

## Looking Ahead

While the New York City Fire Museum is first and foremost the steward of the history of firefighting – and firefighters – in this City, it is a business. It is a harsh reality that the non-profit organization that operates the Museum on behalf of the FDNY must sustain itself. Therefore, just like any business, particularly one whose audience is the general public, its image is paramount. In order to create an identity for the Museum, a slogan, or tagline, has been adopted. It is:

### **Preserve – Educate – Celebrate**

We *Preserve* the colorful history of the Fire Department of the City of New York. We *Celebrate* the role of firefighters in the history, culture and society of New York and its neighborhoods. We *Educate* families, especially children, in fire safety, prevention and survival.

These characteristics are not just buzzwords; they truly convey our mission. Every member of the New York City Fire Museum Board, staff and volunteers are committed to this mission.

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