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Firefighters hit the ice for fundraiser

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By MAURY THOMPSON thompson@poststar.com | Posted: Friday, April 9, 2010 11:15 pm | (1) Comments

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GLENS FALLS -- Veteran firefighters at Engine Company 46 tell plenty of stories about sifting through the rubble after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

"Somebody told me that they found a golf ball - a golf ball that was completely intact - probably scratched up a bit, but you picked it up and there was a golf ball," said Brian White, a New York City firefighter since August 2007.

"Clocks - people were finding clocks that stopped the moment the tower fell," he said.

White is a member of the FDNY hockey team.

The team, made up of New York City firefighters, was in Glens Falls to play a benefit Guns 'n' Hoses game to raise funds for a planned Glens Falls 9/11 Memorial.

The goal of the memorial is to keep people telling the stories about 9/11, said Ric Stafford, a Glens Falls firefighter who is spearheading the memorial campaign.

"I fear that the memories of 9/11 are fading quickly," he said.

The FDNY team won 12-4 against a team of local police, firefighters, correction officers and paramedics, but the game was more about camaraderie than about the score.

Firefighters have a tradition of helping one another

T.J. HOOKER
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Dan Fitzgibbon, Assistant Fire Chief of the South Glens Falls Fire Department controls the puck while the local 'Guns N Hoses' hockey team plays the FDNY hockey team in a charity game at the Glens Falls Civic Center on Friday, April 09, 2010. The money raised at the event benefits the campaign to build a 9/11 monument at the Ridge Street Fire station in Glens Falls.

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9/11 memorial hockey game
The Glens Falls Guns N' Hoses hockey team played the FDNY hockey team to raise money for the 9/11 memorial.

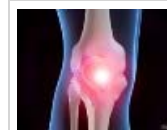
out, said White, the FDNY hockey player.

"And you need to put a roof on your house? Guess what; those 50 guys are showing up to your house and they're going to put a roof on your house," he said.

The camaraderie was appreciated by local hockey fans who turned out for the game, played as a doubleheader with an Adirondack Phantoms game later in the evening.

"It's good - oh, it's good," said Russ Chatham as he watched the action. "Our local heroes and our downstate heroes."

The crowd of about 1,000 - which included Phantoms season ticket holders, who were admitted to the game free - roared when local firehouse ringer Ryan Bennett scored the first goal for the home team with



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3 minutes and 57 seconds left to play in the first period.

Bennett, of Queensbury, turned amateur on Friday, just after finishing the season with the Corpus Christi (Texas) IceRays of the Central Hockey League, his eighth, and probably last, season of professional hockey.

Bennett, who also had two assists in the game, said he has moved back to Queensbury and is setting up a real estate franchise.

Other home team goals were scored by George Carpenter, Jamie Johnson and Brian Donovan.

Hockey fans said the caliber of play was good.

"Great game so far - great game," said Nate Washburn of Queensbury.

Washburn said it was a great cause, too.

"I drive by the sign every now and then to see how much they're raising," he said, referring to the sign tracking donations outside the Ridge Street firehouse.

The local memorial committee hoped to raise \$6,000 on Friday, to close a fundraising gap so the memorial can be built this summer.

Though officials said the total amount raised wouldn't be available until Monday, Phantoms Vice President Mike Thompson said later Friday evening that the goal had been reached.

Stafford said having FDNY firefighters here to help raise money was equally as emotional as the day last summer when committee members picked up a steel beam in New York City, which will be part of the memorial.

"It's another direct connection for Glens Falls to New York City and the 9/11 tragedies," he said.

"We lost 343 members that day, so every knew somebody," White, said.

The FDNY hockey team, formed about 40 years ago, travels around the country playing games to raise money for charity, said Michael Rossidis, a retired firefighter who is one of the team's managers.

Practices and games are all held during off-duty time.

The team paid its own travel expenses, and the Queensbury Hotel in Glens Falls donated overnight lodging.

The newly formed local team had seven practices prior to Friday's game.

Local players got a little last-minute coaching from Glens Falls Mayor John "Jack" Diamond at a pregame reception at the Queensbury Hotel on Friday afternoon.

"Don't eat too much. You won't be able to skate," Diamond joked.

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