

# Farewell to a Hero: Community Lays Fallen Firefighter to Rest

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
March 14 2019 2:17 PM



## SEE PAT SCHWARTE VIDEO:

ALTON – Godfrey Firefighter Captain Jacob Ringering, 37, is being laid to rest Tuesday at the Valhalla Memorial Park in Godfrey following a funeral at St. Mary's Catholic Church and a funeral procession including as many as 250 fire engines from across the region.

Ringering was killed in the line of duty on Tuesday, March 5, while responding to a mutual aid call in the 4600 block of Culp Lane in Bethalto. He was working to extinguish a fire when a brick wall collapsed outward upon him and fellow Godfrey Firefighter Luke Warner. Ringering was taken to Alton Memorial Hospital, where he perished from his injuries. Warner was taken by chopper to a St. Louis area hospital with two broken legs and other non-life-threatening injuries in stable condition. He was able to return home over the last weekend after going through surgery.

Capt. Ringering's funeral was attended by hundreds of first responders as well as his family and loved ones. Capt. Ringering came from a line of firefighters. His father was once the East Alton Fire Chief, and his grandfather worked in that department as well. East Alton Mayor Joe Silkwood described Capt. Ringering as “one of the best” before a March 6 press conference at the Godfrey Fire Protection District Station #1.

Silkwood's description of Capt. Ringering was echoed by several people who knew him. When asked at that conference to describe him in one word, Godfrey Fire Protection District Chief Erik Kambarian said “gold.” He said a “Jake” is a slang term in the firefighting community for a great firefighter. He said Capt. Ringering embodied that title.

[\*\*CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE DRONE VIDEO\*\*](#)



After graduating from East Alton Wood River High School in 2000, Capt. Ringering attained an associate's degree in fire science from Lewis and Clark Community College in 2004. He also got an EMT degree. In 2001, he started working at the East Alton Fire Department in 2001, going career in 2005. In 2010, he joined the Godfrey Fire Protection District, earning Lieutenant in 2013 and captain in 2014. He became a master trainer in that department.

“People wanted to work with him,” Kambarian said during that press conference. “Firefighters would want to go in there with him, so they could learn something.”

Capt. Ringering worked to train several firefighters in the Godfrey Fire Protection District. Godfrey Mayor Mike McCormick said Capt. Ringering was “well-respected and professional,” saying he worked with him on several occasions. Ringering acted as a spokesperson from the fire protection district to the Village of Godfrey, despite the two entities not being directly related and also represented the union.

He was eulogized by fellow firefighter John Farmer, who served with Capt. Ringering at the Godfrey Fire Protection District for eight years. Farmer described Capt. Ringering as “passionate” in all of his pursuits, from teaching firefighters to his hobby of woodworking. He recounted a story of Capt. Ringering building a “perfect cabinet for his brother” in “typical Jake fashion,” adding he brought that passion and skill to the fire station. He helped his fellow firefighters build the tables at station #2, saying “they were built to last.”







Farmer said Capt. Ringering was his mentor, adding he saved his life one day after Farmer inhaled too much chlorine gas during routine pool maintenance. He contacted Capt. Ringering and told him of the troubles as much as he could.

“Jake repeatedly told every one of us, 'family comes first,’” Farmer said, saying Ringering loved his wife and three children more than anything in the world. Before he left for the fateful call last Tuesday, Capt. Ringering checked on his sick son.

Friends and former co-workers, Paul Stover and James Musgrave, said Capt. Ringering saved Musgrave's life in April 2007 when a truck they were driving to deliver shingles accidentally touched a power line. Musgrave was electrocuted as a result. Stover was able to get him from the truck away from the danger zone, and the homeowner called emergency services.

On his day off, after recently accepting a position at the East Alton Fire Department, Capt. Ringering went to the aid of his friends after hearing the call on his pager. He was a mere block or two away from the incident and was able to perform CPR on Musgrave and saved his life just before the truck burst into flames.

“James has a wife and has had two kids since then,” Stover said. “Those are three lives, which wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Jake. He really was a hero.”



Without Capt. Ringering, there would also not be three young children he left with his passing. His wife, Allison Ringering also delivered a eulogy for her husband. The two were married at St. Mary's Catholic Church in 2009 following seven years of dating. She spoke of handwritten letters they wrote to each other, based on advice from marriage preparation classes.

“I am so very thankful that we followed this advice because now I have so many treasures to give me comfort when I am in trouble,” she said.

She also said Capt. Ringering gave her the three best things that ever happened to her – their children. She said her husband was not only a good “Jake” in the fire service, but was a good “Jake” in everything he did. She called for everyone to embody that example when serving others and being a good family member.



Backstoppers, Inc., an organization dedicated to assisting the families of first responders killed in the line of duty, posted a release stating they were helping his family.

Backstoppers, Inc. provides both immediate and ongoing support to these families, and are currently working with approximately 80 families with as many as 65 dependents. They also give \$10,000 immediately to families to do with whatever they may need.

Several other fundraisers are being held throughout the area for the benefit of both Ringering's family and Warner's recovery and family. The Alton Branch of the Salvation Army donated their iconic red kettles used around Christmas to nearly a dozen Riverbend police departments to collect donations. This is being done through the organizers of Mustache March, a group dedicated to raising money for police departments in the area.









“I kept thinking, 'two colors, one family,’” Alton Public Information Officer and Mustache March Committee Member Emily Hejna said last Thursday. “We wanted to make sure people had a place to donate where they were absolutely sure the money would go where they want it to. Every cent donated to these kettles will be distributed to Captain Ringering's family as well as the family of Luke Warner as he recovers.”

Those wanting to donate or start fundraisers on their own for Capt. Ringering and Warner should know the Godfrey Fire Protection District only recognizes two accounts as legitimate. They have been opened at Carrollton Bank and are “Benefiting the Jake Ringering Family,” and “Benefiting the Luke Warner Family.” Anyone raising funds or wanting to donate should be aware of these accounts.

Every member of the family involved in that blaze is reported to be safe at this time. The cause of the fire is unknown at this time, and any efforts to raise funds to help them recover will be reported by Riverbender when details are made available.



