

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Scholarship established in honor of deceased firefighter

(Lake Worth, Fla. – May 23, 2006) The family of Matthew Cole, a Riviera Beach firefighter killed in a motorcycle crash in 2004, has established a scholarship fund through the Palm Beach Community College Foundation to help other aspiring firefighters pay for training.

The Matthew Joseph Cole Celebration of Life Scholarship Fund was created with \$5,000 that Cole's family raised from a memorial picnic held last September on what would have been his 28th birthday. The family plans to hold additional fundraisers and is seeking donations to raise the \$20,000 needed to endow the scholarship fund. The remaining \$1,000 from the picnic fundraiser was used to establish a separate scholarship in Matthew Cole's name that will be awarded in the fall.

"He had such a passion for firefighting that we wanted to enable other young men and women to go back to school that might not be able to because of finances," said Patricia "Trish" Cole, Matthew Cole's mother. "I don't know of anyone who had a passion like he had for it."

"It's a tremendous way to honor the memory of their son and to pay honor to the firefighters and paramedics of the county," said Pat Lord, major gifts director for the PBCC Foundation. She noted that contributions to the fund will be matched by the state dollar for dollar.

Cole, the youngest of three sons and a 1997 graduate of Atlantic High School, had worked for the Riviera Beach Fire Rescue for nearly three years. He received his firefighter training at South Tech and graduated from PBCC's paramedic program in December 2001.

Val Williams, director of the Fire Science program at PBCC, said the scholarship fund will be a great benefit for those who want to attend the academy, which costs about \$1,850 for tuition, books and equipment. It also will help address the need for firefighters in the county. The Fire Academy currently graduates between 100 and 120 certified firefighters a year. But fire officials estimate that Palm Beach County will need more than 900 new entry-level firefighters over the next five years.

“There are many individuals who might be good firefighters, but they can’t afford the tuition and the expense,” Williams said.

Trish Cole said she and her family are teaming with Toussaint L’Overture High School, a Delray Beach charter school, to hold a car wash. Part of the proceeds will go to the school, and the remainder will go to the scholarship fund. The car wash will be held from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. June 18 at Wal-Mart, 16205 South Military Trail in Delray Beach.

To learn more about Matthew Cole, visit <http://matthew-is.homedns.org:82>. For more information about the Matthew Joseph Cole Celebration of Life Scholarship Fund, please call Pat Lord at the PBCC Foundation, (561) 868-3570. Donations may be sent to the PBCC Foundation, 4200 Congress Ave. Lake Worth, FL 33461. Write Matthew Joseph Cole Celebration of Life in the memo line.

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