

## a mother's view

# Give thanks to our heroes

At our house, giving thanks is an everyday occurrence.

Each night, we pray for each member of our family (immediate and extended — even distant cousins). And each night we end with a prayer for all of the firefighters. It helps soothe the kids' anxiety about their dad's job. Greg is a fire lieutenant and a paramedic with one of the local fire departments.

It's difficult for us to watch the news while he is at work. (We have seen him on the news working everything from car accidents and fires to scaling buildings during training sessions.) The kids love to see him in the newspapers and on television, but it often causes unrest about their daddy's safety.

When Greg returns home from



Erin Harrel of Cape Coral is the mother of three children.

work, the kids bombard him with questions about the kind of calls he ran: "Did anyone die?" or "Were there any kids that got hurt?" or "Did you have any good fires?" Greg always responds to their inquisitive prodding with a smile, but I can often see the pain of the night before on his face. It comes with the job, and he knew what he was signing up for, but responding to someone else's injury or death is never easy.

Firefighters have always been heroic (at least in my mind), but 9/11 shed

a whole new light on just how brave they truly are. Working car accidents on Interstate-75 at 2 a.m. or searching house fires for potential victims puts them in eminent danger.

We try not to think of it and only talk about what Dad does when he's around to appease our fears. Yet, Greg never leaves the house without kissing the kids good-bye. Occasionally, this wakes them from a sleep and he catches a "Bye, Daddy, I love you" on the way out the door. Greg and I never part mad at each other because life is short and unexpected, especially in his line of work.

Greg is the dad the neighbors run to when their kids get hurt. He is the first one on the ball field when a child is injured. Unfortunately, he is not always around to help out. Although ▶▶

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Greg's firefighting family in Bonita Springs.

firefighters are known for posh schedules, I don't think most people realize the hours they keep. Greg has missed countless holidays (that will include

this Thanksgiving), ball games, dance recitals, and countless milestone moments for our three children. He often works more than 60 hours a week.

I'm not complaining by any means, nor would he, even if I gave him the opportunity. Greg loves his job. He really enjoys his "family" at the station.

In the last year or so, Greg's department and others have come under tough scrutiny by fire commissioners and public tax advocates trying to save money. But there is no price you can put on saving lives. The richest of the rich and the poorest of the poor all gasp for the same breathe of air in their last moment. If the ailing and injured are lucky, a real life hero will be there to spare them from their worst fate.

This Thanksgiving, be sure to give thanks for those who put their lives on the line everyday to ensure your safety. Thank you, Greg, for being our hero! Happy Thanksgiving to all! 