



Sean M. Berenholtz “always wanted to see our younger members succeed and was a positive mentor to so many,” said Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company President Kathleen Resnick. (Provided photo)



Goldseker, his wife of 18 years. “All of that inspired him to get trained as an EMT.”

Berenholtz eventually earned a medical degree from Virginia Commonwealth University and a master’s degree from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. He enjoyed a 30-year career with Johns Hopkins Medicine, serving as an anesthesiologist, critical care physician, patient safety researcher and professor.

Despite his busy schedule, Berenholtz returned to the PVFC in 2015, going on calls, joining the board of directors and serving as a vice president.

“Sean always wanted to see our younger members succeed and was a positive mentor to so many,” said PVFC President Kathleen Resnick. “He especially liked the idea of starting a scholarship program and would send out all the applications and announce the winners.”

Berenholtz also served as fire surgeon for the Baltimore County Fire Department and a member of Baltimore County Volunteer Firefighters Association Medical Review Board. In addition, he organized and implemented the Baltimore County Fire Department EMS Training Academy Series, an online program for EMTs, paramedics, nurses and doctors throughout Maryland.

In 2020, he was named the Pikesville Volunteer Emergency Medical Services Provider of the Year, the BCVFA EMS Provider of the Year and the Maryland

Legacy of Love

Sean Bernholtz’s commitment to the Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company continues after his passing.

By Caryn R. Sagal

“Be humble, be grateful, give back, share, pay it forward, chase your dreams, go for it, and take a moment to remember where it is all from.”

Dr. Sean M. Berenholtz took this Justin Bieber quote to heart, demonstrating a lifelong commitment to the Pikesville Volunteer Fire

Company and gifting it \$1 million upon his untimely passing last April.

Back in 1986, Berenholtz, an Owings Mills native, dropped out of the University of Maryland, College Park. Uncertain of his future, he came home and started volunteering for the PVFC, working with paramedics.

“He soon found mentorship, community, purpose and meaning going on calls and helping others,” said Ana

State Firefighters Association Josiah A. Hunt EMS Person of the Year.

"He was always about others and other people's success," Resnick said. "He was never about himself. He always thought others deserved it more."

After suffering from back pain earlier this year, Berenholtz was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer at age 58.

"When we found out Sean was sick, the volunteers at the fire company came to the hospital and then to the house every day, every hour, to make sure both Sean and our family were being supported," said Goldseker, who raised her daughter Madeline, now 21, with Berenholtz. "They brought us meals, took turns sitting with Sean, kept him entertained with stories, picked up and delivered medications, and even carried Sean outside one afternoon so he could see the eclipse."

Through this outpouring of kindness, Connie Hare, Berenholtz's cousin, confidant and attorney, discovered "the significant impact Sean had made on others. PVFC members, as well as Sean's neighbors and co-workers, shared stories

of how he had taken care of them at various times. ... Sean's personality was always quiet and unassuming, so it was amazing to see that he was a superhero to so many."

The PVFC was always on Berenholtz's mind, especially during those final weeks of his life.

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—Kathleen Resnick

"Sean and I spoke at length during his illness about how to ensure that the programs he had spearheaded would carry on in perpetuity," Hare said. "He knew that I understood his goals and would be a willing gatekeeper for his vision. It is an honor to be able to continue what he had started."

Berenholtz chose to make his legacy gift with Goldesker and Hare as trustees.

"The Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company is an amazing group of humans. These are men and women of all ages, socioeconomic levels and religions working together," Goldseker said. "After seeing the incredible people from the PVFC firsthand, not only did I want to give back but I also wanted to be part of that amazing community. I really believe that they are superheroes."

With Berenholtz's donation, the PVFC will build an ongoing scholarship program and the inaugural recipients will be awarded at a banquet next February. The funding will also support equipment purchases and training facility improvements, as well as training and continuing education classes.

"The legacy gift that Sean has left the PVFC will be able to help our members and the Pikesville community for many years to come," Resnick said. **❶**

For information about the Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company, visit pvfd32.org.

Caryn R. Sagal is a Baltimore-based public relations consultant and freelance writer.



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