

Firefighter Andrew Bartnikowski Champions First Responder Support through the Class 12.10.12 Foundation

Carrying the Flame Forward: Firefighter Andrew Bartnikowski Champions First Responder Support through the Class 12.10.12 Foundation



Columbus, Ohio Oct 30, 2025 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Few professions demand as much courage, compassion, and composure under pressure as firefighting. For [Andrew Bartnikowski](#), a veteran firefighter and lead paramedic with the City of Columbus Division of Fire, service is far more than a profession; it is a lifelong calling. With over two decades of combined experience in emergency response, public service, training, and financial planning, Bartnikowski has built a career defined by leadership, mentorship, and an unwavering dedication to the well-being of his fellow first responders.

Since joining the Columbus Division of Fire in 2012, following earlier service in Worthington, Ohio, and Bluffton Township, South Carolina, Bartnikowski has answered more than 10,000 emergency calls. Known for his steady composure under pressure and exceptional patient care, he has become a respected leader both on the fireground and within the community. Yet, his most meaningful contribution extends beyond the line of duty. It lies in his enduring commitment to honoring those who serve and those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

A Legacy Born from Brotherhood

In 2012, during his time at the Firefighter Training Academy, Bartnikowski met fellow recruit Brandin O'Keefe, a man whose courage in the face of cancer left a permanent mark on all who trained beside him. Diagnosed with melanoma while still in the academy, O'Keefe refused to quit. He completed his training, graduated with his class, and served briefly at Station 12 before passing away in December 2014.

"I remember being in the academy and seeing Brandin wrapping his legs with bandages to keep the swelling down," Bartnikowski recalls. "When we asked what was going on, he told us about his diagnosis, but he said, 'I'm going to beat this, don't worry about it.' He trained harder than any of us. There was nobody tougher than Brandin."

Inspired by O'Keefe's strength and humility, Bartnikowski and his classmates organized a small fundraiser to help O'Keefe's wife, Karen, and their children, Abigail and Evan. What began as a simple act of brotherhood soon evolved into something far greater, and it became the Class 12.10.12 Foundation, named after their Fire Academy class number and graduation date.

The Class 12.10.12 Foundation: Service Beyond the Firehouse

Today, the Class 12.10.12 Foundation stands as a beacon of compassion and solidarity within the Columbus Fire Department (CFD) community. Under Bartnikowski's leadership, the foundation has raised over \$150,000 to support injured firefighters, families of fallen heroes, and first responders struggling with mental health challenges.

A major source of these funds comes from the annual Brandin O'Keefe Memorial Golf Outing, an event that brings together current and retired CFD members, friends, and supporters to celebrate service, sacrifice, and brotherhood. Now in its 11th year, the outing has grown into a major philanthropic tradition, raising over \$10,500 this year alone.

The event also contributes to the Save A Warrior Foundation, a nationally recognized program for veterans and first responders battling PTSD and trauma-related stress. Golfers participate in friendly competitions such as "closest to the pin" and "longest drive" contests against professional golfers like

Heather Manfredda and Shelby Martin, with all proceeds directed toward mental health and suicide prevention programs.

“This isn’t just about a game of golf,” says Bartnikowski. “It’s about connection, remembrance, and making sure no one in our fire family ever feels forgotten.”

Passing the Torch and Building Tradition

As the foundation continues to expand, Bartnikowski and his peers are guiding the next generation of firefighters to carry the mission forward. The 2024 memorial outing marked a pivotal moment, as Firefighters Joshua Cumston and Tom Covert stepped in to help organize future events. This handover represents more than just logistics, because it signifies the preservation of values that define the firefighting profession.

For Bartnikowski, this transition reflects the deeper meaning behind the work. “Brandin wasn’t with us long,” he says, “but his impact was enormous. The fact that, over a decade later, people still come together in his name shows the strength of this family and the heart of our department.”

Leadership Beyond the Line of Duty

Bartnikowski’s commitment to public service extends well beyond the fire station. Within the Division of Fire, he has become known as an educator, mentor, and union leader. He has taught at the Firefighter Academy, led live fire training exercises, and provided instruction in fire safety, prevention, and emergency medical response.

As a union steward and member of the negotiation committee, he helped shape a \$300 million labor contract and introduce new safety protocols designed to better protect firefighters on and off the job. His leadership combines empathy and experience, and it reflects the balance of tactical skill and human understanding that has defined his 20-year career.

Before joining the fire service, Bartnikowski gained experience in mortgage planning, construction project management, and skilled trades. This background contributes to his analytical and resourceful approach to problem-solving in high-stakes environments.

He holds a Bachelor of Science in Resource Management from The Ohio State University and multiple specialized certifications, including Paramedicine, Fire Instruction, HAZMAT Operations, Rope Rescue, and Technical Response. He is an active member of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), the Ohio Association of Professional Fire Fighters, and the Ohio State University Alumni Association.

Carrying Forward a Spirit of Service

For Bartnikowski, the legacy of Brandin O’Keefe and the mission of the Class 12.10.12 Foundation are deeply personal reminders of why firefighters serve others with strength, humility, and heart.

“Brandin showed us what real toughness looks like,” Bartnikowski says. “He faced the impossible with grace and humor. If we can carry even a piece of that forward by helping others, then we’ve done right by his memory.”

Now in its second decade, the foundation continues to expand its reach and impact, supporting not only

the CFD community but also first responder mental health programs and families in crisis throughout Central Ohio. Its events, mentorship, and outreach efforts are a testament to the power of unity and the truth that even in the face of tragedy, compassion can light the way forward.

As the next generation of firefighters takes the helm, Andrew Bartnikowski's leadership, integrity, and dedication ensure that the spirit of the Class 12.10.12 Foundation will continue to burn bright.

About [Andrew Bartnikowski](#)

Andrew Bartnikowski is a Firefighter and Lead Paramedic with the City of Columbus Division of Fire, bringing more than 20 years of combined public and private sector experience in emergency response, training, and program management. He is the founder of the Class 12.10.12 Foundation, a nonprofit supporting families of injured or fallen firefighters and promoting first responder mental health. Bartnikowski holds a BS in Resource Management from The Ohio State University and is certified in Paramedicine, Fire Instruction, HAZMAT, and Technical Rescue. He is a proud member of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) and the Ohio Association of Professional Fire Fighters.

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