



Creators of the #1 online resource for firefighters and family members.



MISSION:

*To Honor,
Strengthen &
Encourage*

the marriages and families
of first responders
by providing the best
resources for relational,
emotional, physical and
family health.

MEASURING THE RESULTS OF MARRIAGE SUPPORT

April 2016 Report

Dear Supporter,

All businesses strive to deliver the best products and value to their customers. As a non-profit, it's essential that we provide the most impact for every dollar donated or raised and that we are transparent with our efforts to do so.

Measuring the impact of marriage support is not easy. We can't say "for every dollar donated 25 children are given clean drinking water for a month." But we do actively measure our results, adjust for greater impact and are diligent about staying focused on the mission.

We believe the most successful way to strengthen and support marriages is to create a safe community with peers and mentors and access to tools and resources that apply to their lifestyle (the fire family life). In serious cases of marriage crisis, professional one on one counseling is always recommended, however when surrounded by a positive community and the resources to help you learn and understand that...

1. You are not the only one who experiences this.
2. There are other viewpoints you can learn from.
3. There are peers and mentors who care about your marriage and want to help you over the little road bumps.

...you can prevent the major crises faced by some couples.

24-7 COMMITMENT delivers on our mission by creating these resources and the community as follows:

- Online communities via Facebook Groups (currently the most common platform for connecting)
 - Guided marriage support programs led by trained mentors in these spaces
- Organically via the friendships that are formed within these safe communities
- In person via:
 - Local fire family events
 - Live Workshops held during national fire service events or locally at departments
 - Phone calls / video calls either one on one or in small groups
 - Commitment Weekends for firefighters and their spouse

We believe creating resources that are relatable to the first responder life is the most effective way to earn the trust and respect of fire families needing support in our communities.

Our resources include:

- **Marriage On Fire** - 6 Week Self-Paced Video Series created by founders Dan & Lori Mercer who are both trained as small group leaders and share from personal experiences while connecting the audience to the right marriage tools for their needs.
- **“Honor & Commitment: Standard Life Operating Guidelines for Firefighters & Their Families”** Our End-to-End guidebook for everything related to fire family life.
- **Commitment Weekend** A getaway weekend for couples with fire themed activities and messages for marriage.
- **Free Resource Library:** Over 800 articles, videos and resources created and accessible free of charge at our website
- **Social Engagement:** Daily posts, challenges and encouragement posted across our social media channels. For those who won't engage at a deeper level, social media allows us to deliver a message that can change cultures and inspire individuals to take the first steps.
- **Guided programs for our small groups** for topics including
 - Marriage & Family
 - Fitness, Diet and Exercise
 - Blended Families, Families with Special Needs, Infertility
 - Finances
 - Behavioral Health, PTSD especially pertaining to the fire service
 - Working Moms, Business Owners
 - Spouses of Officers and Chiefs
 - Volunteer Fire Families

In short, we bridge the gap for firefighters and families to form a support community and have access to resources that are typically not available at their local department. This

also alleviates the need for departments to invest in creating these programs on their own so they can focus on keeping firefighters well trained and safe on the job. By reinforcing a strong family foundation, firefighters do perform better on the job.

So how do we measure the impact of our work? It's not by tracking saved marriages which would be impossible. We watch the numbers for who and how our community engages:

- Social Media: Over 100,000 followers on Facebook reaching over 1 million views in a week. With the constant changing landscape of Facebook, this is a very large and admired audience we have grown and sustained over 4 years.
- Small groups: nearly 400 registered in January 2016
- Over 250 Women applied to our Rescue My Marriage Program in the first 18 months
- Commitment Weekend: over 300 attendees in the first 3 years
 - Over 60 full or partial scholarships given since 2013 totalling \$25,000
- Fire Wife Sisterhood (Women's Community): 2400 newly registered in the past 12 months
- Honor Guard (Men's Community): 1300 registered in 2015
- Marriage On Fire Program: 156 paid subscribers in the first year, Over 200 more subscriptions donated

Facebook Group Activity

Example numbers from a 2 year period of the Fire Wife Sisterhood Facebook Group

- 20,710 posts
- 176,099 comments
- 8.5 average comments per post
- 1,356 active members
- 99.3% of posts liked or commented

Resource View / Download Examples

- Disarming Your Irritable Sleep Deprived Firefighter - 93,000 views
- When A Firefighter Needs Help - 81,000 views
- Why My Firefighter Goes In Before Shift Time - 64,000 views
- 12 Steamy Nights With Your Firefighter - 12,000 downloads
- Fire Family Life eBook (released in Feb 2016) 1700 Downloads
- Over 42,000 views on our YouTube Channel

Understanding Our Expenses and Funding

Many people say "Facebook is free. How can this cost anything?" There are many people involved in preparing the materials, graphics, emails, articles, videos and actually being an encourager and leader within our online communities. The majority of our expenses go towards this **Program Development and Delivery** such as the staff tasked with creating these

resources and the tools to host them (websites, content management systems, etc) This encompasses 60% of our annual expenses.

Commitment Weekends are our most expensive endeavor, but with the biggest impact on individual marriages. On average, these weekends are 30% of our annual expenses.

Marketing Expenses

Getting the word out about this mission is essential to it's effectiveness and not possible without investing in marketing for items such as brochures, events (like attending FDIC and Firehouse World / Expo) and paying for some online advertising since our audience uses online tools as our primary access. Attending events is the largest expenditure and to an extent, these marketing expenses are covered under Program Delivery as we use these venues to deliver our resources to the audience.

Administration: All organizations have administrative expenses for legal, accounting and liability purposes. We carry insurance for the safety of our team and event participants and use professionals in these spaces for both integrity and quality of work. All partners offer significant non-profit discounts in support of our mission.

Funding in 2015

Other organizations creating these valuable resources online are charging for them and running for profit businesses. As a non-profit, our goal is to provide these to as many fire families as possible for free or lower prices. This happens when donors (individuals or businesses) provide financial (and other kinds) of support for our organization. Those who believe in the mission and are able to provide financial support are truly what sustains these programs.

24-7 COMMITMENT was funded as follows in 2015:

- 30% Individual Donors
- 40% Partners, primarily QALO
- 20% Revenue from Program fees i.e. Marriage On Fire
- 10% Proceeds from Merchandise Sales

Commitment Weekends are not considered a source of additional funding for our organization as the cost to hold them exceeds the registration fees which are charged. We believe in the power of these events and will continue to bring them to the community as affordably as possible.

While merchandise may seem to be a likely source of funding to everyone who offers t-shirt campaigns online, it has a high cost to participate with inventory purchases and a lot of manual labor that can be distracting from the true mission of our group. We will continue to selectively

participate in merchandise opportunities where the effort, message and value align with our mission.

Volunteer Support

No non-profit operates without an army of able and willing volunteers. At the end of 2015, our volunteer team count was at 86 in roles such as: Fire Wife Captain, Community Group Leader, Group Administrator, Marriage Mentor, Event Coordinators and Care Team.

While we did not officially track hours of all 86 volunteers, it is estimated that **nearly 5,000 volunteer hours were donated to the mission in 2015.**

The Intangible Measure

What matters most are the words from our community. Here are a couple of our most recent comments..

“You have no idea what this group did for my marriage, I was about to walk away and file for divorce, I did this dare without my FF knowing and it changed BOTH of us! We are now moving forward and Working on our marriage!”

“The love dare group is building great connections and women are sharing their vulnerabilities and successes! It's an awesome small group with major impact!

“I joined firewife 24-7 after our first Christmas party in our new department. FF had already put in a year of service. I was really surprised at the amount of wives (there were only a handful). When I asked my FF about it he explained about the industry having higher divorce rates. I was pretty scared and made a commitment to do all that I could to prep for the harder seasons ahead of us by building a strong foundation. When explained to my mom the rate of divorce she asked me "Are you sure this is what you want?". My response was "yes, these women are making it work. they are so strong and so independent. They have built great networks of support. I can identify with that already.”

“I've just finished the intro and LOVE this book already! Thank you from the bottom of my heart! Every fire wife, new or seasoned should give this a read!”

“This is what happens when you become part of an organization that truly is about you and your [#firefamily](#) ▯ You are surprised with Commitment Weekend Swag and you spend \$20 on raffle tickets and win the jackpot!! ▯▯✓thank you to all those sponsors who help!”

"I highly recommend this book and learning more about our [#firewifesisterhood](#) ♡ It has been a life changing experience for me and I think it will be for you! "

"This weekend we met several lifelong friends and had a wonderful time!! We firmly believe that God puts people in your lives for support, courage and healing and this couple right here we know will be just that for us!! We are so happy to have found you guys and spent the weekend together! We conquered a lot together in 3 short days and are so excited for our future as [#accountabilitypartners](#) [#teamcoffeesnobs](#) [#partofteamNC](#) ☐☐☐☐ ♡"

"I never really considered that for my marriage. I've never even really seen what 'support' looks like in a marriage. I have friends that support me in being married (and friends that don't, so much, after watching me be hurt so many times), but support for the marriage itself? Not so much. People have a tendency to see a couple as two people instead of one marriage - they support the person (generally one or the other because it's easy to take sides). I never saw my parents have support in their marriage. And, while I grew up in public safety, I saw my step-mom receiving support as a police wife from other police wives, but that was it. There wasn't really a 'marriage' side to it or, if there was, I didn't see it and she's never talked about it. I know how to be a public safety wife. I grew up learning how to be a public safety wife. It doesn't scare me. Scott running into burning buildings doesn't phase me. Scott taking calls with psycho/dangerous patients doesn't phase me. It's what they're trained to do and I trust his training. His schedule doesn't bother me. Him not being home for holidays doesn't bother me. I learned, from my step-mom, how to handle all of that like a champ. But the marriage itself? As the living, breathing, important central thing that it really is? No one talks about or supports that, really.

That's the hardest part, isn't it? Keeping it together. Getting through things as a couple? Coming out of the other side stronger and closer?

Firefighter marriages have a 75% divorce rate. Add in that this is my third marriage and Scott's second, and our statistical chance of making it are super low. So low that, at one point, I joked we probably had better chances if we just lived together and getting married was signing a relationship death certificate.

Then, I stepped foot into the [24-7 Commitment Fire Family Life](#) 'Commitment Weekend' last weekend. I knew most of these ladies - we're in a fire wife group together the same way my step-mom had her LEO wife group. But they also have a group for the men. And they focus on the marriage. The entire weekend focused on our marriages and, not just how to survive crazy shifts or the anxiety of having a husband in danger, but how to stay together, happy, committed, and close.

There were 44 couples, and I can't tell you how many testosterone-filled, macho firefighters I talked to who opened right up, all vulnerable like, and talked about the importance of committing, admitting your faults, being vulnerable with your wife, etc. I talked to a firefighter couple who is currently struggling with the same major issues with which Scott and I struggle - issues we have a hard time admitting but they openly talk about *because* they want to see

other marriages succeed. I watched firefighters admit really big faults and mistakes, openly, in front of 40+ of their peers. I saw men who live to make their marriages happy ones because, as they repeated often, your relationship with your wife is all you have left when you retire. In the end, the kids are grown, your jobs are gone, and all you have is each other. I saw firefighters and couples offering to mentor other couples. I saw my own husband - with his giant ego - admit faults and say he wanted help, on his own.

Mine and Scott's wedding was perfect - the perfect tree, surrounded by our closest family, saying the sweetest words that I know we both meant even if we sucked at keeping them true. But standing up there and recommitting in front of these 44 couples, it felt like I had a whole team really, really behind us and our marriage. The couple that did the ceremony are an *amazing* couple who have survived everything we're going through, and the founder of 24/7 COMMITMENT gave me a big hug and asked if she could stand with me. They didn't just watch me stand there in a pretty dress and say 'I do' again, they were there backing us up and saying 'You can do this, and we're here for you'. It felt amazing. It felt do-able. It felt like I had 80-something people behind my marriage.

One of the speakers this weekend reminded us that the Vikings used to burn their boats when they landed on shore, because they were *that* committed to what they were doing. There was no going back. And, he said that marriage should be the same way. Scott publicly proclaimed in our fire group that he was burning the boats. Me, too, Mister. I'm burning the boats."

"This past weekend we had the opportunity to experience a 247 Commitment Weekend with Fire Service couples from across the country. Friendships were gained, relationships were renewed, and it was so inspiring to see a brotherhood and sisterhood of like minded people come together in support of each other's fire marriage and families. I urge all fire couples to experience a Commitment Weekend. Also, if anyone or department is interested in hosting a commitment weekend in their area, 247 Commitment Fire Family Life is looking for future host sites as well as sponsors. I cannot say more about this organization and what they do for our fire service families."

Our Commitment To Integrity and Focus On The Mission

Saving every marriage is not realistic unfortunately. But we vow to stay committed to the mission and deliver everything with the utmost integrity. Our door is always open and we are eager for more believers in this mission to join in.

Lori Mercer, Founder 24-7 COMMITMENT *Daniel Mercer*, Contributor & #1 Supporter