



Members of the FDNY VFW Post, Capt. Paul Conrad of Division 6, Firefighter Patrick McElvaney of Ladder 22, Firefighter Billy Hayes of Ladder 45, Firefighter Justin Devine of Ladder 45 and Firefighter Mike Cook of Ladder 27, donated a hand-crank bike to wounded veteran Matt Bradford (in camouflage utilities) in Texas.

Members of the FDNY's Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post donated a hand-crank bicycle to one needy veteran in Texas in late February.

Matt Bradford, a Marine veteran, was seriously injured by an AED while serving in Iraq. He lost his legs below the knee, became blind in one eye and lost partial sight in the other.

Yet the brave 22-year-old did not lose his spirit, so members of the FDNY VFW Post, including Capt. Paul Conrad of Division 6 (Marines), Firefighter Patrick McElvaney of Ladder 22 (Marines), Firefighter Billy Hayes of Ladder 45 (National Guard), Firefighter Justin Devine of Ladder 45 (Air Force) and Firefighter Mike Cook of Ladder 27 (Air Force) journeyed to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, to bring him his own specially-made hand crank bicycle.

"We talked to Marines and vets who were at the base - many double amputees, some burn victims - and they said when they feel like giving up, they look at [Matt]," said Firefighter McElvaney. "They see him still struggling with the therapy, but smiling the whole way. He makes them want to keep going."

An organization called Hope for Warriors told the FDNY VFW members about the brave soldier.

After learning more about Mr. Bradford's situation, Firefighter McElvaney said he and the other members of the Post agreed to use funds donated by Firefighter George Cain's mother, Rosemary Cain, (Firefighter Cain died in the terror attacks of Sept. 11) to purchase the special bike.



Members of the VFW Post and Zac Briseno (red shirt), who also was wounded by an AED in Iraq, help Matt Bradford onto his new hand-crank bicycle.

They paid their own way to Texas and not only donated the \$3,500 bike to Mr. Bradford, but also gave a "343" FDNY helmet to the Intrepid National Armed Forces Rehabilitation Center at the Brooke Army Medical Center and gave more than 50 t-shirts to other veterans at the facility.

"The vets down there are just phenomenal," said Firefighter McElvaney.

Mr. Bradford's mother, Debbie Bradford, told the firefighters that the bike will help the Marine with his rehabilitation and enable him to keep up with his friends.

"She thinks it will be the best thing for him so he can get out be with his friends and do something that will keep him going," Firefighter McElvaney said.

Mr. Bradford and his friends, as well as many other veterans at the facility, said they also hope to make it to New York City this autumn for the annual Firefighter Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Run.

Firefighter McElvaney said the FDNY VFW Post is already planning to donate two additional hand-crank bicycles - one of which will go to the Intrepid Center using funds from Frank Siller, whose brother, Firefighter Stephen Siller, also was killed on Sept. 11.