

# Dude Fire memorial ceremony to honor, remember fallen firefighters

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PHOENIX, August 5, 2024 — A memorial dedication ceremony recognizing six firefighters who died battling the Dude Fire will take place from 10 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. in Bonita Creek Estates on Aug. 17.



Bonita Creek Estates resident Mike Lynch will facilitate the formal service starting at 10:30 a.m. Featured speakers will include Bobbi Scopa, a retired Forest Service firefighter who worked on the Dude Fire, along with firefighters who survived the fire.

Representatives from the Forest Service, Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management, Sano Unda Foundation (SUF) and Wildland Fire Foundation (WFF) also will share remarks.

A barbecue fundraiser to benefit SUF and WFF will take place at the adjacent fire station following the ceremony.

A dry lightning storm started the Dude Fire under the Mogollon Rim on the Tonto National Forest Payson Ranger District on June 25, 1990. The fire engulfed the forest subdivision of Bonita Creek Estates and the historic Pyle Ranch, destroying 63 homes. Before the fire was declared controlled 10 days later, the fire burned through 24,000 acres in two national forests.

The six fatalities – five inmates and one prison supervisor -- were firefighters from the Arizona State Prison Complex-Perryville. Five additional firefighters from the Perryville crew suffered injuries.

Bonita Creek Estates residents initially built a memorial of six crosses with the names of fallen firefighters etched on wooden plaques. The public can access the memorial via a trail through Walk Moore Canyon.

The memorial now includes portraits of the firefighters etched on metal with a brief story and bio. Community members created a tribute board that will preserve the original wooden plaques and names. A storyboard outlines the fire's timeline and includes pictures taken by Tom Story, a former Arizona Republic photojournalist who was at the fire. WFF donated a bronze stature of a firefighter and SUF donated six stainless steel plaques sharing the story of each lost firefighter.

Film director and Co-Executive Director of Sano Unda Foundation Scott Briggs will document the ceremony for historical purposes.

## For More Information

- For media inquiries, contact Tonto Public Affairs Officer Susan Blake at [susan.blake@usda.gov](mailto:susan.blake@usda.gov).

