

9/11 blood brother

How lost fireman will be laid to rest

EXCLUSIVE

By STEPHANIE GASKELL

The remains of 9/11 firefighter Michael Cammarata haven't been identified, but his family will finally lay him to rest today — burying a vial of his blood instead.

"I think this is better than his remains because this blood ran through his body, this actually ran through his heart, and that's what these firefighters died with that day — their hearts," Cammarata's brother, Joseph, a firefighter with Engine Co. 157 in Staten Island, told *The Post*.

Michael worked at Ladder Co. 11 in Manhattan for four months before he was killed on Sept. 11, 2001. At 22, Michael was the youngest firefighter killed in the terror attacks and one of six probationary firefighters to die that day.

His family held a memorial service on Oct. 5, 2001, but they've been waiting — and praying — for his remains to be found so they could bury him.

Last December, Michael's mother, Linda, read a *Post*

story about how the National Marrow Donor Program has dozens of vials of blood that belonged to firefighters who were killed in the attack, Joseph said.

Sure enough, one of them belonged to Michael.

"Once my mother was strong enough to do it, we started to make plans," Joseph said. "It feels good. Now we won't have to go to a tombstone with nothing in the ground."

FDNY spokesman David Billig said 144 of the 343 firefighters who died on Sept. 11 had donated blood.

The Cammaratas are the first to bury a vial of blood in place of remains.

Joseph said he wasn't surprised that his brother gave blood and never mentioned it to anyone.

"These guys are ready to give their lives, they'll give blood, no problem," he said.

Today's funeral service for Cammarata will be held at Our Lady of the Sea Church in Staten Island, nearly a year and a half after Michael died.

Hundreds of people are expected, including Mayor Bloomberg and Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta.



REMEMBER HIM: Michael Cammarata — who at 22 was the youngest fire hero to die on 9/11 — will be interred today in rites using a vial of his donated blood.