

# Firefighter's final request: 'Make my spirit live on'

the ground."

The Cammarata family decided burying blood that once coursed through his body would allow them to lay him to rest.

"Because he died so young we will never know what Michael would have achieved in the Fire Department or as a member of our community," said Mayor Michael Bloomberg to the hundreds of mourners gathered inside the church.

"Those who responded showed a courage, professionalism and devotion to duty that the rest of us can only imagine," Bloomberg said, adding that they must be memorialized so "future generations will be able to appreciate their heroism."

A wide circle of Staten Islanders already knew Cammarata as a hero on the playing field even before the word "heroism" took on more somber hues.

At 13, he competed in the Little League World Series as a member of the South Shore Little League All Stars. The team came in second in the United States and third in the world.

But for the multi-talented athlete, hockey came first.

From the age of 6, Cammarata was a powerful force on the ice, playing hockey with the New Jersey Arrows-mite, a double A hockey club. He was tapped to join the junior varsity ice hockey for Tottenville High School while he was still a student at Bernstein Intermediate School.

The handsome teen-ager arrived at the school with a



STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE PHOTOS/MICHAEL McWEENEY

Mayor Michael Bloomberg mourns as the casket of rookie Firefighter Michael Cammarata passes by during his funeral procession from Our Lady Star of the Sea R.C. Church, Huguenot to Resurrection Cemetery, Pleasant Plains.

reputation as a gifted athlete and team player.

"He was a leader in whatever he did," said his brother Joseph. "He set an example."

He made the varsity team as a sophomore. As a junior in 1995, he won best defenseman title, and was named Most Valuable Player for the hockey team.

As a senior, he was team

captain and the first Staten Island defenseman to win a scoring title in the New York Ice Hockey Association.

Cammarata earned Rookie of the Year as a freshman at Wagner College, where he also was named youngest MVP in the college's history. In 1997 the Seahawks won the Metropolitan Collegiate Conference Championship title.

After graduating college, he joined his father, Joseph, in the building trades while waiting to be called for the city Fire Department, a job he wanted since childhood. Cammarata followed in the footsteps of his uncle, retired firefighter Doug Bartucci, inheriting his shield number 1138.

Recognizing the potential risks of his choice, Cammarata wrote a letter instructing his family what to do in the event something happened to him.