



DEBBIE EGAN-CHIN

A PROUD DAY Ex-cop Francesca Smith stands with her parents, Marie and David Smith, after graduation. She was the only woman in her class of 292 at the Fire Academy.

Grads bolster Bravest

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Two hundred and ninety-two probationary firefighters — including four who lost a firefighter father or brother Sept. 11 — joined the ranks of the Bravest at a graduation ceremony at Brooklyn College yesterday.

It was the second class to graduate since the terror attacks on the World Trade Center that took the lives of 343 members of the FDNY.

Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta, inducting his first group of Fire Academy graduates, said of those who died, "They will never be forgotten, and we will always find inspiration in their legacies."

Battalion Chief Brian Dixon announced the names of the graduates, who received diplomas and posed for photos with Mayor Bloomberg.

Calling out the name of 30-year-old Brian Stack, whose father died in the attacks, Dixon

paid tribute, saying the probie stood "in the shadow of a giant, Battalion Chief Lawrence Stack."

"I've got a great second family now," said Stack. Still, he added, "It's a tough day, not having my father."

Joseph Pansini, 28, lost his 35-year-old brother, Paul, of Engine 10 in Manhattan. "We're happy that we're here, but we're sad," Pansini said. "There's something that cannot be replaced."

Timothy Riches, 28, whose brother James of Engine 4 in Manhattan was killed, said, "I know my brother is looking out for me."

Joseph Cammarata, 24, whose brother Michael, 22, died in the attacks while still a probationary firefighter, said, "This is the best day, this day. It's still the greatest job in the world."

The class also included one female firefighter, Francesca Smith, a former New York City cop, and two brothers, Joseph Szewczyk, 26, and Steven Szewczyk, 24.