

HBO says 'Good Job' to firefighters in Boonton home

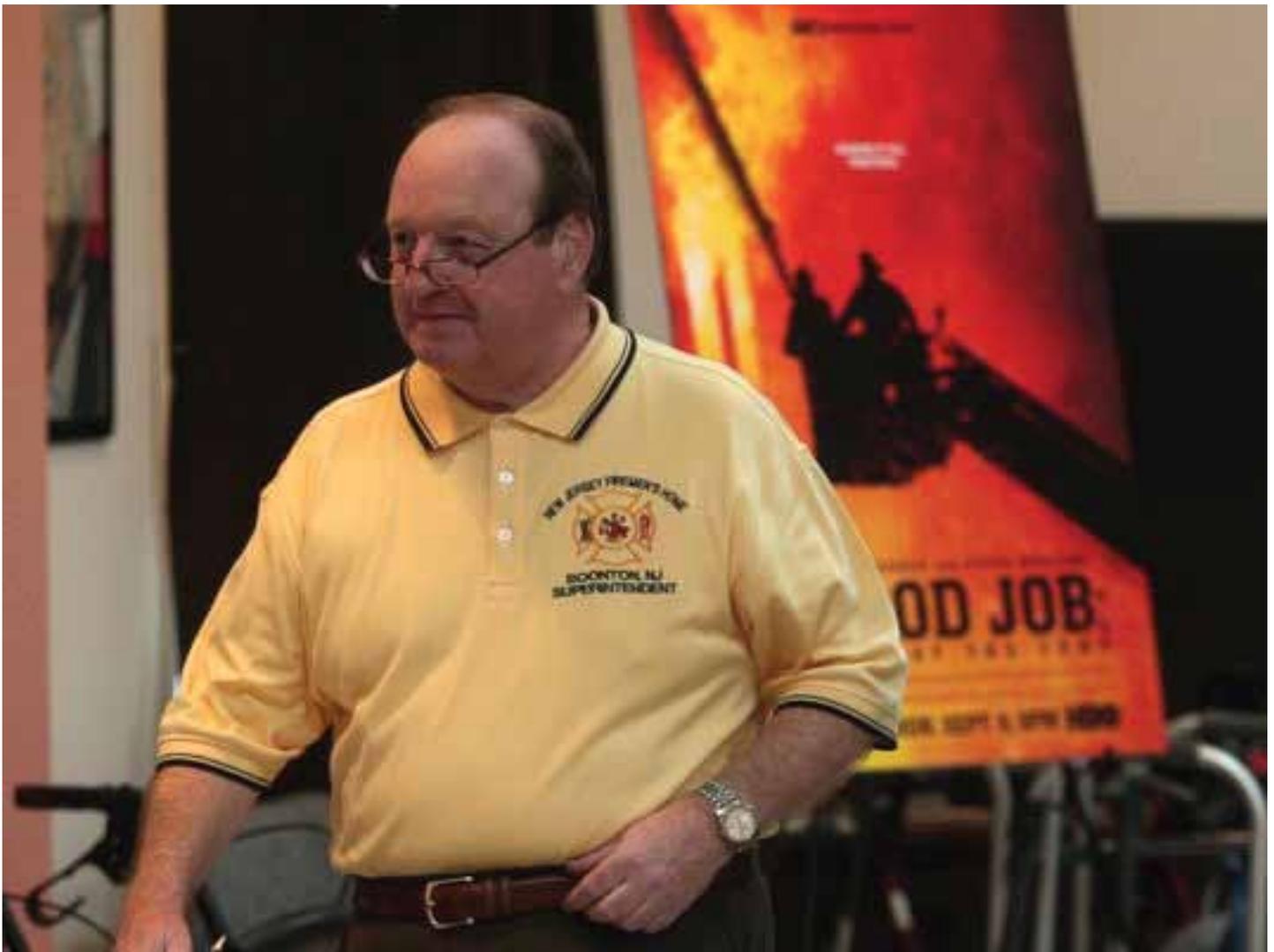
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BOONTON – Dozens of firefighters gathered with friends, family, and faculty at the New Jersey Firemen's Home in Boonton Friday for a special screening of a new HBO documentary on the New York City Fire Department.

"The NJ Firemen's Home sets the perfect backdrop to show this film which serves as a tribute to the men and women who dedicate their lives to protecting their communities," Firemen's Home Superintendent Hugh Flood said.

"A Good Job: Stories of the FDNY" focuses on stories from the Fire Department of New York City, including former FDNY firefighter turned "Boardwalk Empire" actor Steve Buscemi.



Hugh Flood, superintendent of the New Jersey Firemen's Home in Boonton, was on hand as residents watched a special screening of "A Good Job: Stories of the FDNY," a documentary set to air Monday on HBO. (Photo: Bob Karp/Staff photo)

It will debut on HBO at 9 p.m. Monday, but before that HBO wanted to show the documentary to residents of the Fireman's Home. The Firemen's Home was established in 1898 to care for the aged, indigent and disabled firefighters of New Jersey and is now licensed by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Service to operate as a long-term care facility and residential healthcare facility, according to its website.

"We picked the Firemen's Home because it was the perfect backdrop to host this screening," HBO Director of Corporate Affairs Loraine Anderson said. "The Firemen's Home houses people who save the lives of those in the community. It takes a lot of courage to run into a building when everyone else is running out."

Anderson added the screening was to celebrate new renovations to the facility. Recreation Director Monica Story said the most recent renovations were to a block of dorms, but workers are constantly updating the facilities.

"It's exciting to be a part of the premiere," Director of Nursing Dana Russo said. "Most importantly the men are excited. They are wearing their Sunday best today."

Donald Stemen, 65, Vice President of the Firemen's Home, was a Port Monmouth firefighter for 39 years before coming to the Firemen's Home.

"When I was a kid, I always wanted to join, so I did," Stemen said. "It's a hard job. A lot of training before you can get in."

The documentary had the perfect audience and held the attention of the packed room. The film was telling stories to those who could relate the most, and while they were quite captivating, so were the ones from the residents in the room.

Jerry Hicks, 56, has been a resident of the facility a little more than a year. He was Fire Chief in Montville in the late 90's, and spent 40 total years as a firefighter.

"When I was young, my father's youngest sister and her five kids died in a fire," Hicks said. "I was too young to go to the funeral. I said then when I grew up I was going to be a firemen. I've been one ever since."

Siro Del Fabero, 89, was a Garfield firefighter for 17 years, and enjoys swapping stories with fellow firefighters at the Boonton home. A recent run-in with the FDNY had him looking forward to the documentary screening.

"A few weeks ago I was on Broadway in New York City and I saw the firefighters open the gates and come out," Del Fabero said. "I remembered how they were so calm. That's why I'm interested in seeing this movie about them."

The 95-bed New Jersey Firemen's Home currently has about 75 active and retired firefighters in residential and long term care. It is the only nursing home in the state dedicated to the 77,000 active and retired New Jersey firefighters.

The facility is administrated by the New Jersey Firemen's Board of Managers, and has served about 1,800 people since it opened. Applicants are welcome statewide, and firemen are encouraged to apply.

The 85-acre property also has a firefighter museum on site.

"They take very good care of us here. There's nothing we ask for that we don't get," said Charlie Wilcox, 71, a firefighter for 20 years in Independence Township who enjoys the camaraderie with others in the facility. "We are very close. Unless you're a firefighter it's hard to believe the brotherhood you have. It's born in you. They're your brothers and sisters."

The title of the documentary, "A Good Job," has a few meanings. It references the hard work and effort firefighters put into saving lives. It's also a firefighter term for a particularly large or daunting fire.

But in Boonton at the Firemen's Home it was particularly fitting, as the residents in the audience were as deserving of recognition - for their hundreds of combined years of service - as the firefighters featured on screen. And those retired and active firefighters credited the Firemen's Home workers with taking care of residents and the facility.

Everyone watching the film in the packed room had done "A Good Job," and celebrated after the documentary with a barbecue.

To learn more about the New Jersey Firemen's Home, go to <http://www.njfh.org/>.

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