

Fallen firefighter was Mount Carmel alum

Though most never knew him, present-day students and teachers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel High School in Essex are honoring the memory of an alum who gave his life trying to protect others.

Mark G. Falkenhan, 43, a member of the Lutherville Volunteer Fire Department who graduated from Mount Carmel in 1986, died fighting a four-alarm blaze at a Hillendale apartment complex Jan. 11. His funeral was offered at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland, Jan. 24.

"We explained to the kids who he was and prayed for him over the announcements and before each class," said Kathleen Sipes, principal of the high school and president of the Mount Carmel campus.

"He's certainly been in our prayers."

Carol Falkenhan, a part-time secretary at the high school whose husband is the fallen firefighter's cousin, remembered that as a child, Mark Falkenhan loved to watch a television program about firefighters called "Emergency!" It was that program and the example of his firefighter uncle, William Falkenhan, that inspired him in the fire service.

"Mark was just a nice, easygoing guy who looked out for other people," Carol Falkenhan said.

The firefighter was not Catholic, she said, but held a quiet faith in God.

"He didn't talk about it," Carol Falkenhan said, "but he went and did what he thought was the right thing to do and that's why he was out fighting fires as a volunteer because that's what he did: he helped other people."

Lee Knox, a former Mount Carmel religion teacher who now works at Maryvale Preparatory School in Brooklandville, never had Mark Falkenhan in class, but knew

him at Mount Carmel. Knox called Falkenhan a friendly person who put others first.

“He was just a wonderful guy,” said Knox, noting that he believed Falkenhan was active in Mount Carmel’s Red Cross Club as a student.

“I know that he loved the work that he did,” Knox said, “and he spent a lot of time with the fire department.”

Falkenhan is survived by his wife, Gladys, and two children aged 14 and 5.