

Hero fireman's legacy lives on

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The turnout was more than I had imagined. The mixture of people was more amazing than I had imagined. Being so close to the bagpipers that I could see the sweat on their brows was more intense than I had imagined. Everything about Harvest Moon on Jan. 22 was more than I had imagined. Everybody was there for the same purpose, for the same man, for the same legend, for the same hero — "Jimmy D," the deputy fire chief killed in the line of duty when he rescued 15 people from a burning building on Lee Avenue a little more than one year ago.

If you are from New Brunswick, James d'heron has most likely become a household name. His story, his life, his family, his friends, or his "brothers" have most likely become the topic of one or more of your conversations. But no conversation could have prepared anyone for the year anniversary of "Jimmy D's Firehouse Red."

Jimmy's closest family and friends were there. People who knew of Jimmy through other people were there. There were college students there who just flocked to the sight of drinking in the street out of traditional plastic red cups. People who did not even know Jimmy D were there. Whatever the reason you may have stepped into Harvest Moon, the reason was the same once inside. You were there to honor one of the greatest men to ever leave this earth. He lived each and every day to the fullest and left behind so many who loved and cared for him deeply. There were moments where holding back sorrowful tears were impossible. There were also moments where laughing so hard almost made you lose your beer. That was Jimmy — he could make you laugh harder than anyone could, but missing him brings endless tears.

Maybe it was because Harvest Moon was so crowded that made me feel so close to everyone there that day. But, I don't think that was it. I think it was the nod of the head from one person to the other, the hug from one person to the other, the handshake from one person to the other. You did not need to know the person on the other end of these gestures. Anyone, if they came out for Jimmy, was worth sharing a moment with. You did not even need to yell "two Jimmy D's" to order yourself and a friend a beer — all you had to say was "two" to the bartender. That was the only real drink there that day. There was a feeling in that bar that could only be summed up with the word "honor."

Jimmy is in our hearts forever, and we will never stop honoring him and the cause he loved so much. Jimmy would be so touched if he could see how much he has become an inspiration to the burn camp he put so much time and effort into before he left us on Sept. 3, 2004. No matter who you are — love Jimmy, always remember him, and do not miss out on the second anniversary of Jimmy D's Firehouse Red next year.

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