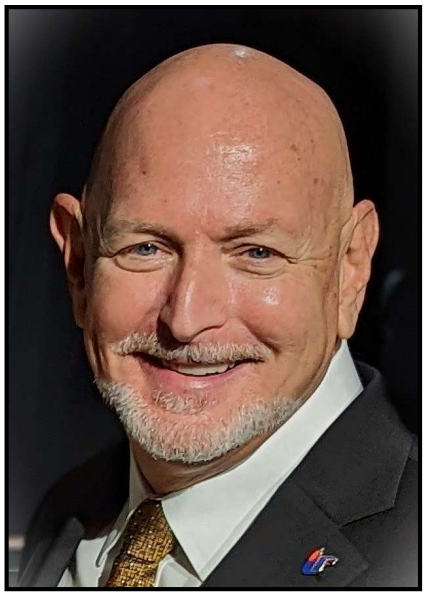
Spotlight on LAF Founding Board Member Daniel Matlick



Daniel Matlick was not involved with the Last Alarm Foundation (LAF) from day one—but he quickly became one of its most essential contributors. Recruited by retired Tucson Fire Department Deputy Chief James Russell, Daniel brought a unique set of skills that the founding group of retired firefighters needed: deep fire apparatus knowledge and strong business acumen. His experience in fire truck sales and maintenance made him a natural fit to support the vision of restoring the 1954 Mack fire engine that would honor fallen firefighters across Arizona.

Daniel was instrumental in formally establishing the LAF Corporation, developing the restoration specifications, obtaining the 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, and securing donations to fund the restoration. As Development Director, he helped raise significant support from fire departments, local businesses, and community leaders, with special acknowledgment to the Tucson Fire Department—whose contributions to the Foundation have exceeded those of any other agency.

Although not a career firefighter, Daniel holds State of Arizona certifications as a firefighter, fire inspector, and Jaws of Life instructor, along with dozens of other manufacturer, technical, and industry-specific credentials. He is the qualifying party for United Fire's contractor licenses. Daniel founded the Arizona Firefighter of the Year Award in 1994 and became the first non-fire department individual inducted into the Arizona Fire Service Hall of Fame. He was also the first honorary member of the Arizona Fire Marshals Association.

As President and CEO of United Fire Equipment Company—established in 1968 and acquired by his family in 1977—Daniel has helped build Arizona's oldest full-service fire equipment distributor. From humble beginnings (starting "at the bottom" sweeping floors), Daniel worked his way to the top and now leads a company that serves more than 6,000 customers statewide. United Fire specializes in PPE, uniforms, SCBAs, compressors, portable extinguishers, and fixed fire suppression systems—serving fire departments, industrial facilities, military bases, utilities, commercial properties, restaurants, and retailers. This broad reach has allowed Daniel to support all walks of life in their fire protection efforts and to help ensure firefighters are well-equipped to protect their communities.

Daniel's civic impact is equally impressive. As longtime President of the North Fourth Avenue Merchants Association (FAMA), he has worked tirelessly to sustain and revitalize Tucson's historic Fourth Avenue. His leadership helped designate the area as a Historic District and led to the formation of the Fourth Avenue Foundation. Over the years, Daniel has helped secure over $500,000 in grants, preserved the beloved bi-annual Fourth Avenue Street Fairs—now generating $25 to $50 million in annual economic impact—and ensured that the event continues to fund local marketing and support for the merchants of Fourth Avenue. The fair is widely cherished and recognized as one of the top 100 festivals in the country.

Daniel especially valued his time on the LAF Board for the camaraderie and collaboration with passionate firefighter board members—and their families. Fundraising events, like the annual dance, brought people together in a shared mission. Today, while only a few of the original board members remain, Daniel is proud to still be involved and honored that the truck continues to serve fallen firefighters across Arizona. He credits the current board and volunteers for doing an outstanding job maintaining the truck and continuing the mission. Their dedication, compassion, and commitment are what keeps the Last Alarm Foundation thriving.

LAF is deeply grateful to Daniel for his vision, leadership, and unwavering support. His example reminds us that honoring the fire service is not just tradition—it's a responsibility that continues across generations.