JeS© to the NEWS

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BACKSTOPPERS

A policeman is slain by an armed robber in a holdup attempt. A fireman is buried by flaming rubble when a build ing collapses. Unfortunately, these all-too-frequent occur rences in our cities bring an untimely death to a brave man and leave a woman widowed and small children fatherless. After the headlines fade away and the eulogies are spoken, e-these grief-stricken families forgotten?

Not in St. Louis, where they can depend on the help of the Backstoppers, a group of public-spirited leaders in business, labor and the professions organized solely to bene fit widows and children of policemen and firefighters killed in the line of duty.

Within 24 hours of the death-in-the-line-Df-duty of a policeman, fireman or state trooper, a Backstopper calls on the widow and gives her a check for $2,000.with no strings attached. Subsequent aid varies according to the specific needs of the family.

The **widow** is invited to submit all outstanding bills, including mortgages, car payments, and doctor bills. The Backstoppers are usually able to pay all the bills and take over the mortgage payments on an annual basis until completely paid.

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In the 15-year history of the St. Louis Backstoppers, the Club has assumed the existing debts of 23 police officers and 17 firefighters killed in the line of duty. The funds distributed come almost exclusively from the annual dues of the civic-minded members who believe in its work. The Club has no office, no paid employees, and all its administrative costs are donated.

The Backstoppers of St. Louis don't take the credit for originating the idea. They are quick to say t.hat they copied the idea of their club from a si*ilar organization in Detroit, called the Hundred Club.

The Backstoppers and the Hundred·Club are good models for any community large enough to have policemen or firefighters killed in the line of duty, and would be happy to send information to any city wanting to start a similar club. They are not, however, looking for a national organizatioμ. It just isn't that kind of a club.

Quite apart from the good work the B ckstoppers do, it is refreshing to know that, in this modern and mechanized age, there is an organization of individuals who practice genuine personal charity without an office, a salaried staff, fund raising appeals, mail-order campaigns, national conventions, newsletters, computerized pledge cards, or press releases, and with 100 percent of the donations going straight to the benefi ciaries without any of the red tape and red ink that are suf focating most governmental and many private charitable organi zations.

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