

By Danielle Ray

Anthony Pierro and his wife Lori were both sleeping soundly in the early morning hours of Tuesday, December 2, 2014, when their then 6-year-old daughter Victoria woke them and said something no one ever wants to hear – “Daddy, there’s a fire!!!”

“That is something I will never forget,” Anthony said of his daughter’s words.

The fire had started in the garage and quickly spread to the house.

“[Victoria] was woken up by some loud noises and saw that the electric fan in her room had stopped working,” said Anthony. “She realized something was wrong and alerted myself and my wife that there was a fire outside her window.”

The family nearly had to jump out of a second story window to escape the flames.

“We literally had less than what I figure to be 30 seconds to get out,” said Anthony, who added that they had a family emergency plan in place.

As a full-time fire fighter in the town of Swampscott, Anthony knows first-hand that not everyone makes it out of a fire unscathed.

“We were very lucky and fortunate that Victoria kept her cool and alerted us,” he said. “She literally saved our lives.”

Luckily the entire family, including sons Nick, now 17, and Christian, now 14, was able to escape unharmed and they ran down their driveway hoping to get the attention of someone driving by. There was a car stopped in the middle of the road and the woman driving it was calling 9-1-1. As soon as she hung up she ran up to the Pierros and asked if everyone was out of the house. Anthony then realized it was Danielle Murr from the WAAF Hillman Morning Show on her way to work.

The hours after the fire were “pure chaos, my whole world was spinning,” recalls Anthony.

Danielle and Anthony have a mutual friend at the Swampscott Fire Department who, along with some fellow firefighters, contacted Greg Hill at WAAF to reach out for help for the Pierro family. The very next morning after the fire Greg Hill held a fundraiser for the family on air through The Greg Hill Foundation.

Anthony said he has been a long time WAAF and Hillman Morning Show listener, and when he heard about The Greg Hill Foundation fundraiser his initial reaction was that it was “surreal”.

“Once it sunk in that we would be beneficiaries it was a little overwhelming emotionally,” he said. “To go from losing everything we had worked for many years to get, then suddenly having to escape a raging inferno, to having one of the most popular morning shows in New England reaching out to help us - all literally within hours.”

Thousands of dollars in donations came in, and with a match from The Greg Hill Foundation the Pierro family received \$14,559.

“The donations that poured in the day of the fundraiser was something that myself and my wife Lori couldn’t even begin to comprehend,” Anthony said. “It helped us basically get our everyday lives back in order very quickly; since we had nothing it was a ‘Where do we begin’ moment.”

Anthony said the majority of the money went towards purchasing a family mini-van to replace the brand new mini-van that was lost in the fire. This helped the family to be able to get around and purchase necessities such as clothing for the kids, school supplies, and winter boots.

“Transportation was as important as anything else we needed,” said Anthony.

Nick, Christian, and Victoria were “surprised and excited” by the news of The Greg Hill Foundation fundraiser, Anthony said, and they listened to Anthony when he was on the radio the morning of the fundraiser talking about their experience.

“I wanted them to hear how much good there is in this world,” Anthony said. “Complete strangers giving up their hard earned money during the holiday season; it was a great lesson for them and still holds true. As for my wife, she cried happy tears when I told her The Greg Hill Foundation was doing a fundraiser. Again, she saw that people were helping others in a time of crisis.”

Victoria “has been rewarded for her actions”, Anthony said, and a ceremony was held in her honor with the State Fire Marshall and Swampscott Fire Chief in attendance.

“Lots of accolades for, as we call her, ‘Queen Victoria’!” said Anthony.

The family’s recovery over the last two years has been slow and steady. They are in the process of rebuilding their home on the same site; the home that was lost in the fire had been in the family for over 100 years.

“I am the fifth generation Pierro family member to live in the house we lost,” Anthony said, “so there was no question that we were going to rebuild - especially since I have three school age kids.”

Anthony said their experience with The Greg Hill Foundation and extended staff along the entire fundraising and beneficiary process has been incredible.

“Everyone was easy going yet understanding of our circumstances,” he said. “Communications were great; I cannot imagine anyone else doing a better job.”

Being a beneficiary now has brought us into this close group of dedicated people who continually reach out to us for events, parties, and whatever else they can come up with. I think it’s important that people know how much this helped us get back on our feet and move on with our everyday lives.”