

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **SUFFOLK FIRE & RESCUE AWARDS AND RECOGNITION CEREMONY**

SUFFOLK, VA (November 17, 2021) The Suffolk Fire & Rescue Department's Awards and Recognition Ceremony honored members of the Department in addition to officially promoting five Lieutenants, three Captains, and two Battalion Chiefs during the event on Thursday, November 4, 2021, at the Hilton Garden Inn – Suffolk Riverfront. The promotees and honorees are detailed as follows:

#### **Battalion Chief Christopher D. Cornwell**

Battalion Chief Cornwell has been a part of the Suffolk Fire & Rescue family since June of 2000. He was previously a founding member of our Marine Team and now serves as the Battalion Chief responsible for the Fire Marshal's Office.

#### **Battalion Chief Nicholas W. Savage**

Battalion Chief Savage has been a part of the Suffolk Fire & Rescue family since 2004. He was a founding member of the Technical Rescue team and currently serves as Battalion Chief, Strategic Planning and Accreditation.

### **Captain Christopher K. Hehl**

Captain Hehl has been a part of the Suffolk Fire & Rescue family since 2006. He is part of the SCBA team and the newly appointed Captain in charge of Rescue 1. Captain Hehl is assigned to Rescue 1 on B shift.

### **Captain Steven D. Speight**

Captain Speight has been a part of the Suffolk Fire & Rescue family since 2006. He is transitioning into the lead for the SCBA program. Captain Speight is assigned to Engine 3 on B shift.

### **Captain Jeffrey W. Matthews**

Captain Matthews has been a part of the Suffolk Fire & Rescue family since 2009. He is a strong advocate for our EMS system, and works tirelessly to make improvements to that system every day. Captain Matthews is assigned to EMS 2 on C shift. He is also a Nightingale medic, and we are also very proud of him for that accomplishment.

### **Lieutenant Lucas D. Weaver**

Lieutenant Weaver has been a part of the Suffolk Fire & Rescue family since 2001. He is a strong advocate for our employees with his involvement in our Health and Wellness Committee. Lucas is assigned to Safety 1 at Station 6 B shift.

### **Lieutenant Ryan H. Bugg**

Lieutenant Bugg has been a part of the Suffolk Fire & Rescue family since 2008. He recently achieved the status of Paramedic, which is no easy task, and is currently assigned to our Marine Team at Station 9 A shift.

### **Lieutenant Daniel W. Everett**

Lieutenant Everett has been a part of the Suffolk Fire & Rescue family since 2009. He serves on our Apparatus Committee and plays a large role in the design of our fire apparatus. He currently serves as the Lieutenant on Engine 25 C shift.

### **Lieutenant Wayland A. Drake**

Lieutenant Drake has been a part of the Suffolk Fire & Rescue family since 2011. He is a valued member of the Technical Rescue Team and a backup to EMS 1. Lieutenant Drake now serves on Ladder 3 on C shift.

### **Lieutenant Bryan E. Grasser**

Lieutenant Grasser has been a part of the Suffolk Fire & Rescue family since 2017. He was one of our instructors that was instrumental in the training of our last Recruit Academy. Lieutenant Grasser now serves on Engine 2 on B shift.

### **Firefighter of the Year Award - Lieutenant Lucas Weaver**

Lieutenant Weaver joined Suffolk Fire & Rescue in 2001. He completed his Associates of Occupational Safety and Health Degree and became the Chairperson of the Department's Health and Safety Committee in 2015. He has been a member of the Technical Rescue Team and has attained Technician level. Lieutenant Weaver received the Department's Medal of Merit for his work with the Health & Safety Committee and the implementation of the cancer preventive initiative. He continues to make great strides in improving health and wellness for Suffolk Fire & Rescue.

### **Paramedic of the Year Award – Amy Dunn Brown**

Fire/Medic Amy Dunn Brown joined Suffolk Fire & Rescue in 2011. She assists with training other Advanced Life Support providers to maintain their certifications and demonstrates confidence and compassion when treating patients while displaying a positive attitude. She coordinated the Department's MDA Fill the Boot Campaign for two years, assisted with Project Life Saver clients, and is a Pediatric Advanced Life Support Instructor. She is a leader in her field, earning respect for her clinical knowledge, compassionate care, and sound ethical decision making.

### **Officer of the Year Award – Captain Leon (Bubba) Ratliff**

Captain Ratliff is being presented with the Officer of the Year award.

Captain Ratliff joined Suffolk Fire & Rescue in 1998 after spending two years as a Suffolk Police Officer. In addition to Captain Ratliff's responsibilities as the Department's Training Captain, he has also directed eleven Recruit Academies, including a Joint Academy with Portsmouth Fire & Emergency Medical Services. Further, he works towards bringing National Fire and Virginia Department of Fire Programs training courses to the Department, and is assigned to managing the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Operations personnel and the City during this unprecedented pandemic. Captain Ratliff's priorities and mindset have always focused on the men and women that he serves, along with the community he is sworn to protect.

### **Medals of Valor Award, Medals of Honor Award, and Certificates of Commendation**

On September 20, 2020, Suffolk Fire & Rescue was called to assist Isle of Wight County with search and rescue efforts in the town of Smithfield due to flash flooding. While on scene and assisting several Smithfield residents to safety, Suffolk Fire assets were directed to respond to another location in Smithfield for a person trapped in a pickup truck on a bridge by quickly rising, fast moving water. Crews were able to perform a highly dangerous and difficult operation in one the most extreme and challenging environments, treading through very turbulent, unforgiving swift water to rescue the elderly male from a deadly situation. The courage displayed by all involved, risking their own personal safety in commission of saving a life, was without a doubt the truest measure of bravery.

Medal of Valor Awards were presented to Jeremy Gould, George Best, and Corey Powell, and Medal of Honor Awards were presented to Lt. Travis Saunders, Craig Steele, Michael Joseph, Daniel Viejo, Todd Helmick, and Certificates of Commendations were presented to Capt. Braxton Sweat, David Dickens, Battalion Chief Steve Johnson, and Battalion Chief John D. Wilson.

### **Medals of Honor Award – Master Medic Manuel Franco and Firefighter Corey Stephens**

On Saturday March 20, 2021, multiple units were dispatched to a vehicle accident in the area of Portsmouth Boulevard/Route 58. Reports were received while responding of a single vehicle in the water with multiple citizens jumping into the water and people trapped in the vehicle. Without regard for their own safety, Master Medic Franco and Firefighter Stephens jumped into the water to make a rescue. What makes this an extraordinary rescue is the fact that they were able to use the hydraulic spreaders to free the patient only by feel due to the lack of visibility in the murky water.

### **Certificate of Commendation a Unit Citation**

On March 20, 2021, the City of Suffolk Fire & Rescue received a call that would change some lives forever. This call would not only change the lives of some Firefighters, but also citizens and bystanders. It was for a single vehicle accident on Route 58. Based on the Dispatchers' comments, it quickly became apparent that this was not going to be a routine motor vehicle crash. Dispatch notified responding units that the vehicle was submerged in water, there were multiple entrapped patients, there was a possible amputation, and that there were several motorists in the water trying to help. This crew of firefighters and officers instantly went into rescue mode. Crews worked together flawlessly to perform strategies and tactics which ultimately saved someone's life.

Officers and their crews that were presented with a Certificate of Commendation a Unit Citation included Battalion Chief John D. Wilson, Battalion Chief Barney Howard, John Oliver, David Russell, Lt. Derrick Felton, Travis Lancaster, Ashton Felts, Lt. Eric Thompson, James Schmeling, Capt. Brian Bunting, Capt. Roy Barry, Greg Temme, Ashleigh Oszust, Robert Grants, Lt. Travis Saunders, Todd Helmick, David Devine, Robert Young III, and Capt. Rapheal Brown.

### *Certificate of Commendation - Firefighter David Keller*

On the morning of May 5, 2021, Medic 7 was dispatched to a priority 2 medical call for a female who had been injured. The injured patient had two small children, and since they had just moved here two weeks prior, and with the husband at work, she had no one to care for her children. Firefighter Keller went above and

beyond by changing diapers, changed the boys into clean clothes, made bottles, and calmed the desperate, distraught mother while providing her with a sense of relief.

*Certificate of Commendation – Master Firefighter Steve Jurnigan*

On the evening of May 2, 2021, Steve Jurnigan was off duty and returning home from a fishing trip on Route 258 in Southampton County. While traveling down the road, he noticed what may have been a brush fire in the woods a distance off the roadway. Upon investigation of the incident, he found a 3-wheeled motorcycle, often referred to as a "slingshot", had lost control, leaving the roadway, and ejecting the driver. The injured occupant had been lying in the woods for an extended time and due to injuries, was unable to move or call for help. In order to signal for assistance, the victim had lit his coat on fire which, in turn, ignited the brush fire that Master Firefighter Jurnigan had noticed. While making the 911 call to Southampton County, he also utilized his own fire extinguisher to keep flames from impinging on the patient and prevent further spread as much as reasonably possible – all of this while still being able to perform a basic patient assessment.

**Certificate of Commendation**

On May 26, 2021, Station 8 was dispatched to a cardiac arrest, and crews arrived to find bystander CPR being performed. Crew performed CPR, applied Lucas device, and delivered four shocks, secured airway with intubation, delivered the needed medications, and arranged for Nightingale air transport. This crew worked as a seamless unit despite it being a mixed bag of fill-ins from other Stations and shifts. An outsider watching this would have never guessed that this crew didn't work together every day. The patient was recently released from a rehab facility. Officers and their crews being presented with a Certificate of Commendation included Lucas Roberts, Jerome Freeman, Lt. Derrick Felton, Christopher Thomas, Joseph Edwards, and Scott Docteur.

### **Certificate of Meritorious Conduct a Civilian Award**

On May 26, 2021, Mr. Tim Sherman was visiting with family when one of his family members came in stating he was not feeling well and was going to go get into the shower. The family heard him collapse and he was found to be in cardiac arrest, Mr. Sherman had recently graduated from a Police Academy and had taken a CPR class. He performed CPR for at least 10 minutes until the arrival of first units, and they took over. His quick reaction and high quality CPR made the difference in the outcome for his family member.

### **Certificate of Commendation**

On March 2, 2021, Engine 1 and Medic 1 responded to an emergency for a priority one chest pain call. The patient was having severe chest pain radiating to his neck, left arm, and back. Units quickly assessed the patient and determined that the patient was having a significant cardiac event. The rapid recognition, treatment, and transporting to the appropriate facility was crucial to the positive outcome of the patient. The patient was discharged home on March 3, 2021. The statement of "strong work on the part of the crew" was made by the receiving hospital. The team work and high level of patient care rendered was outstanding. Those Officers and their crews receiving a Certificate of Commendation include Lt. Lucas Weaver, Matthew Wendle, Bryce Thomasson, Lt. Durand Coltrane, and Dwight Leidy.

### **Certificate of Commendation**

On March 1, 2021, Battalion 1, Engine 1, Medic 1, EMS 1, and Safety 1 responded for a priority 1 pediatric gunshot wound. The units arrived to a very chaotic scene with many bystanders and family members of the patient standing around. The pediatric patient had a gunshot wound to the lower back. Battalion 1 and Engine 1's Officer worked together and established the command structure. Safety 1 ensured that the units had a safe working area to provide care. Medic 1A and Engine 1 personnel provided ALS patient care and transported the patient to Sentara Obici Hospital's

landing zone for Nightingale transport. Outstanding patient care allowed the juvenile a great opportunity to be able to walk. Those Officers and their crews receiving a Certificate of Commendation include Battalion Chief John D. Wilson, Travis Lancaster, Lt. Lucas Weaver, Matthew Wendle, Bryce Thomasson, Lt. Durand Coltrane, Dwight Leidy, Lt. Eric Thompson, and Capt. Raphael Brown.

### **Certificate of Commendation**

On January 2, 2021, Engine 1, EMS 1, and Medic 1 responded to an unresponsive/possible cardiac arrest of a 17-month old male. The patient was unresponsive and in respiratory distress. The patient appeared to be on the verge of respiratory arrest. Police Officers on scene found multiple pill bottles on scene. The crews did not know what the patient had taken. Units worked together and provided outstanding patient care. Medic 3 transported the patient with Engine 1 crew members onboard to Sentara Obici Hospital. Upon arrival at the hospital, the patient became responsive and began crying. It was awesome! The crews were made up of multiple shift personnel, senior personnel, as well very new personnel. The scene was very chaotic and presented many challenges from the age of the patient, to gaining access to the patient. Every member played an integral part in producing the great outcome. Officers and their crew receiving a Certificate of Commendation include Lt. Durand Coltrane, Jason Yost, Raquel Wheby, Robert Hayes, Paul Matteson, and Lt. Eric Thompson.

### **Certificate of Commendation**

Suffolk Fire & Rescue recognized the need to replace our aging self-contained breathing apparatus which were rapidly approaching their end of usable service life. Our SCBA team, with the valued input from our Department members, was tasked with selecting a breathing apparatus that would address needed critical life safety issues and significantly enhance the safety of our firefighters. During this past year, the SCBA team dedicated countless hours to research and evaluation to identify a breathing apparatus that would address those needs and provide a state of the art air pack for years to come. With the

selection of our new MSA G1 breathing apparatus, the SCBA team was then tasked with training and implementation. This arduous task again required countless hours to ensure our members were highly proficient and skilled in every aspect of operation for our new G1 breathing apparatus. Through the commitment and dedication of our SCBA team, our members now have a breathing apparatus that will have a positive impact on firefighter survivability, victim survivability, and fire ground operations. Officers and their crews receiving a Certificate of Commendation include Lt. Jeremy Drake, Lt. Matthew Allemand, Ryan West, Mike D. Turner, Robert Hayes, David Russell, Paul Matteson, James Schmeling, Captain Kyle Hehl, Joseph Holland, Lt. Richard Ward, and Battalion Chief John D. Wilson.

### **2021 Fire Chief's Award of Excellence**

The Fire Chief's Award of Excellence is presented each year to a member of the Suffolk Fire & Rescue family in recognition of their continued dedication, perseverance, professionalism, and commitment to the values, goals, and success of the Department of Fire & Rescue. All personnel of the Department, sworn and civilian, are eligible for consideration.

Chief Michael Barakey noted the following in his remarks:

"The last time we were together in this venue, I recognized Deputy Chief Ted Adams for his 35 years of leadership and dedication to both the organization and the men and women who serve the organization. I would like to ask Chief Adams to assist me with this presentation, as he is in essence, handing over the award.

This year's Fire Chief's Award of Excellence is presented to a civilian member of our family who has been instrumental in the successes of Suffolk Fire & Rescue for 16 years. This year's award winner is known for always being available to offer council, direction, wisdom, a laugh or two, and most importantly – his heart and ear.

At this time, I would like to ask Mrs. Darlene Lancaster to please come forward.

Our Chaplain, Allen “Chap” Lancaster, was called home on August 13, 2021. On that day, Suffolk Fire & Rescue lost a true hero and leader. With Chaplain Lancaster’s passing, we have a void in our hearts. Chaplain Lancaster ministered to not only the men and women of Suffolk Fire & Rescue, Chaplain Lancaster served our Country and ministered as a Commander in the United States Navy until his retirement in 2001.

Upon moving to the City in 2003, Chaplain Lancaster, with distinction and honor, ministered to us, responding to fire scenes and horrific crash scenes to provide for our well-being and the citizens affected by the incident for 16 years.

As Darlene Lancaster stands before you, to receive the Fire Chief’s Award of Excellence in her husband’s honor, I would like to ask Chaplain Lancaster’s daughter and sons, Tracy, Taz, and Travis, and grandson Austin to stand, as they continue to serve the City of Suffolk as their father and grandfather did. Let’s say thank you for their service.

Everyone who knew Chaplain Lancaster knew his humor and ability to not only minister, but to make us laugh. This is a quote from the last message Chaplain Lancaster sent to me and Chief Adams: ‘Chaplain’s Words to Suffolk’s Finest: Please excuse my last article for the Department. I did not realize that the story was used sometime back in the Phoenix magazine. Gray hair makes a foggy brain. Not sure what a bald head can do, but we can watch the Deputy. LOL In any event, I will send another article very soon. Remember, if no one else loves you, I do. God bless! Chaplain.’

Darlene, Tracy, Taz, Travis, and Austin, Cathy, Candice, and Steve, and our Chaplain’s 6 other grandsons and 1 granddaughter, it is my honor and pleasure to present the 2021 Fire Chief’s Award of Excellence to you, in honor of Chaplain Lancaster.

Before I hand you his award, I will close with a prayer Chaplain Lancaster sent to Chief Adams and I in the spring: 'Our Gracious Heavenly Father, thank you for all you do for us each day and so often do not take time to praise you. We take life for granted and fail to realize it is a gift from you. Help us not to take life for granted or your grace and mercy to pardon when we call upon you. Be with all firefighters that they may know you are near to all who call upon you. I pray these things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Until I see you or write again, remember you have a Chaplain who cares. Chaplain Lancaster.' "

This was a most appropriate prayer and final award of the evening to end a wonderful Suffolk Fire & Rescue Awards & Recognition Ceremony.

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