

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact:

Diana L. Klink
757.514.4104
757.359.1845

Tim Kelley
757.514.4103
757.871.3039

SUFFOLK FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT PROMOTES TWO AND HONORS FIREFIGHTER AND PARAMEDIC OF THE YEAR

SUFFOLK, VA (March 6, 2014) The Suffolk Fire & Rescue Department has proven to be a public safety division that believes in recognizing its own when they are found to be deserving of accolades. On Thursday, March 6, 2014, Fire Chief Cedric D. Scott and the Suffolk Fire & Rescue Department saw the promotion of two personnel as well as the naming of the Firefighter of the Year and Paramedic of the Year honors.

James N. Dickens was promoted to the rank of Deputy Fire Chief. Deputy Chief Dickens has been with the City of Suffolk for 15 years and is a graduate of Old Dominion University. He is an Emergency Medical Technician – Enhanced, Certified Fire Official and has completed numerous training classes including Fire Instructor II, Fire Officer II, and Law Enforcement Officer. He has served as firefighter, engineer, field incident technician, and most recently served as the City's Fire Marshal/Fire Code Official from 2007 until his promotion to Deputy Fire Chief. He is a 2007 graduate of the Suffolk Leadership Academy and is a member of the Virginia Fire Prevention Association, International Association of Arson Investigators, Tidewater Regional Arson Panel, and the International Code Council. Deputy Chief Dickens was named Suffolk Fire & Rescue's Firefighter of the Year in 2007. Chief Dickens and his

wife Tracey have been married for almost 10 years and have two daughters, Logan and Madison.

Chief Scott noted, "It is a great honor to have selected James Dickens as Deputy Fire Chief. His professionalism, education, training, and attention to detail, combined with his understanding of the challenges facing our organization, are critical to the department's ability to accomplish its goals and vision. Chief Dickens possesses the necessary skills to be successful in his new position and is a team player that is dedicated to the idea of service over self."

William T. Kessinger, Sr. was promoted to the rank of Battalion Chief. Battalion Chief Kessinger is a third generation firefighter. Kessinger started his career as a volunteer with the Chuckatuck Volunteer Fire Department following in the footsteps of his grandfather and father who were also Volunteer Firefighters in Chuckatuck. He has been with the City of Suffolk for 14 years and is a graduate of Old Dominion University. He is an Emergency Medical Technician – Enhanced, and has completed the following training: Fire Officer (I-IV), National Fire Academy Strategies and Tactics, and Fire Instructor II. Battalion Chief Kessinger also completed the Suffolk Leadership Academy in 2008 and holds the distinguished title of being an Eagle Scout.

In 1999, he was the Southside Regional Fire Academy Class 20 Valedictorian. While serving as a Captain, Kessinger and his crew at Station 6 received the 2013 Lifesaving Award from the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce. He has been married to Erin Coppola Kessinger for 10 years this year and they have three boys, William Thomas Kessinger, Jr. "Will" (7), Jackson James Kessinger (4), and Carter Mills Kessinger (2).

Chief Scott said "I am very excited that William Kessinger, Sr. has been promoted to Battalion Chief. His dedication to the fire service is a true testament of his desire to serve others. His calm demeanor, professionalism, and commitment to excellence

make him an excellent choice to provide leadership to our fire and emergency service employees. I look forward to working with him for many years to come.”

Daniel J. Pelzel was named the Paramedic of the Year. Pelzel was nominated for the award by Firefighter/Paramedic Colt Pulley. Pulley’s nomination noted that Pelzel always shows up with a positive attitude and his peers constantly notice his team-oriented approach. Pulley further stated that Daniel’s knowledge in the medical field is exceptional and he constantly shares his knowledge with students and his co-workers on a daily basis.

David Dickens was named the Firefighter of the Year. Dickens was nominated for the award by Firefighter/Paramedic Terry Davenport. Davenport’s nomination noted that Dickens has impressed him for his unrelenting positivity and willingness to learn. Davenport noted that Dickens embodies the ideals we should all strive for as firefighters. It is a rewarding and never-ending cycle. His enduring positivity perpetually creates opportunities for him to learn and better himself, therefore directly and positively affecting our community.

Chief Scott reflected on both of the award winners saying, “I am very proud of Daniel and David. They are true examples of the quality of public servants present within our organization. Their commitment to saving lives and protecting property is unparalleled and worthy of this award and recognition. I am honored to acknowledge their accomplishments.”

During the ceremony the volunteer organizations that have served the community, many for decades and generations of families, were also recognized for their unwavering commitment, including the Chuckatuck Volunteer Fire Department, Driver Volunteer Fire Department, Holland Volunteer Fire Department, Nansemond-Suffolk Volunteer Rescue Squad and the Whaleyville Volunteer Fire Department.

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