

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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October 26, 2018



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

SUFFOLK, VA (October 26, 2018) The Suffolk Fire & Rescue Department's Awards and Recognition Ceremony honored members of the Department and citizens in addition to officially promoting ten Officers during the event on Thursday, October 25, 2018 at the Hilton Garden Inn – Suffolk Riverfront. The promotees and honorees are detailed as follows:

#### **Battalion Chief Barney Howard**

Chief Howard joined the Suffolk Fire Department in February 1991. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in July 1996 and to the rank of Captain in August 2001. He was promoted to the rank of Battalion Chief in May 2018. Chief Howard has received numerous certifications from the Virginia Department of Fire Programs and also held the certification of Cardiac Technician practicing from 1992 to 2007. Chief Howard was awarded Firefighter of the Year in February 2000 and received the Medal of Merit in May 2001.

#### **Battalion Chief Demitri Wilson**

Chief Wilson joined Suffolk Fire & Rescue in 1999. He was promoted to Lieutenant in 2005, and Captain in 2012. He was promoted to Battalion Chief in March 2018. He was awarded the Medal of Merit in 2016 and was recently named the 2017 Firefighter

of the Year. Chief Wilson is the Battalion Chief in charge of the Technical Rescue Team. Chief Wilson holds numerous certifications from the Virginia Department of Fire Programs, including Heavy Tactical Rescue Technician in multiple disciplines and a Rope Rescue Instructor. He earned his Associates Degree in Fire Science in 2010 from Tidewater Community College.

### **Captain Roy Barry**

Captain Barry joined Suffolk Fire & Rescue in September of 2003. He continued to work on his degree while working for the Fire Department, and received his Bachelor's from Old Dominion University in 2004.

### **Captain Nate Boyd**

Captain Boyd joined Suffolk Fire & Rescue in September of 2002. He was promoted to Lieutenant in 2009. He is a graduate of Norfolk State University and has completed the Safety Through Leadership program at the University of Richmond.

### **Captain Raphael Brown**

Captain Brown joined Suffolk Fire & Rescue in September of 1997. He was previously promoted to Lieutenant in April of 2009. He is a 2004 graduate of the Hampton Roads Fire Officer Command School as well as a 2015 graduate of the Virginia Fire Officer Academy. During his career he has attained two degrees: an Associates in Fire Science and a Bachelor's of Science in Fire Administration from Columbia Southern University.

### **Lieutenant Derrick Felton**

Lieutenant Felton joined Suffolk Fire & Rescue in June of 2000. He holds an Associate's Degree in Culinary Arts from the Culinary Institute of Virginia.

### **Lieutenant Robert Hodges**

Lieutenant Hodges joined Suffolk Fire & Rescue in March of 2009. He obtained his paramedic certification in 2011 and earned a Career Studies Certificate in Critical Care Medicine from Tidewater Community College in 2013.

### **Lieutenant Eric Thompson**

Lieutenant Thompson joined Suffolk Fire & Rescue on March 1, 2007. He achieved the level of Paramedic in March of 2014.

### **Lieutenant Jeremy Drake**

Lieutenant Drake is a Veteran of the United States Marine Corps and joined the ranks of Suffolk Fire & Rescue in March of 2009. He earned an Associate's of Applied Science in Fire Science degree in 2016 from Tidewater Community College.

### **Lieutenant Marc Triplett**

Lieutenant Triplett joined Suffolk Fire & Rescue in April of 2000. He has been a National Registered Paramedic since 1998. He received a degree in Fire Science from Tidewater Community College in 2014, and a Bachelor's Degree in Health Sciences Management from Old Dominion University in 2017.

### **Firefighter of the Year Award – Battalion Chief Demetri Wilson**

Chief Wilson is being presented with the Firefighter of the Year Award. Chief Wilson has been with Suffolk Fire & Rescue since 1999. Since the day he walked in the door, he has been a highly self-motivated professional that strives for excellence in all he does. He was instrumental in getting the Department's Technical Rescue program off the ground, and since being promoted to Battalion Chief now manages the Technical Rescue program and is taking it to the next level. Chief Wilson is dedicated to his profession and this organization. He gladly welcomes any opportunity to serve the citizens of this great City.

### **Paramedic of the Year Award - Lieutenant Jeffery Matthews**

Lieutenant Matthews has been with Suffolk Fire & Rescue since 2009. Lieutenant Matthews has a positive and uplifting personality. He treats everyone with respect and dignity. He has an amazing work ethic and always has a smile on his face. Every shift, Lt. Matthews can be found at other Stations conducting training, checking in on medic

crews or following up with patient care needs. Lt. Matthews has a can-do attitude and is a pleasure to be around.

### **Citizen Appreciation Award – Birdsong Peanuts**

The Suffolk Department of Fire & Rescue recognized Birdsong Peanuts for their invaluable assistance in allowing Fire Department Technical Rescue Teams from throughout Virginia and the surrounding states to utilize one of their main peanut storage silos for the 2017 Rescue Challenge held during the week of May 1<sup>st</sup> thru May 4<sup>th</sup> 2017. The Rescue Challenge is a high-level multi-discipline training event where rescue teams participate in different complex scenarios throughout a 4-day period with limited guidelines and little to no interference. The knowledge and experience gained from this event helps rescuers hone their skills and better prepare for incidents they may encounter in the future by maintaining the highest degree of preparedness for such an event. Birdsong Peanuts should be commended for dedicating one of their peanut silos during their very busy production time, and being more than accommodating in assisting our members with numerous functions required to make the Rescue Challenge a success.

### **Appreciation Award – Suffolk Department of Public Works**

The Suffolk Department of Fire & Rescue would like to also recognize the Suffolk Department of Public Works for their assistance during the 2017 Rescue Challenge. During the event Fire Department Technical Rescue Teams from throughout Virginia and the surrounding states utilized their Transportation Division site for the 2017 Rescue Challenge. Public Works should be commended for not only dedicating their site, but also assisting with setting up the scenario multiple times throughout the week. The Suffolk Department of Fire & Rescue would like to recognize Brinkley's Wrecker Services, located at 108 Dill Road. During the week of May 1<sup>st</sup> thru May 4<sup>th</sup> 2017, Brinkley's Wrecker Service provided several vehicles for use in the 2017 Rescue Challenge. Brinkley's Wrecker Services should be commended for not only providing the vehicles utilized in the scenario, but also transporting the vehicles to and from the site, including a large farm tractor which was the focal point of the scenario.

### **Certificate of Meritorious Conduct (Civilian Award) – Sta’sha Waterfield**

Sta’sha Waterfield, a graduate of Lakeland High School and at the time of this incident a rising sophomore in college, used her skills as an EMT obtained from the Pruden Center to assist in an early morning crash that occurred right in front of her while she was operating her vehicle on Whaleyville Boulevard. The vehicle involved in the wreck had left the roadway and hit a power pole and was occupied by two individuals. Ms. Waterfield was able to get both occupants out of the road and further back into the grass, which turned out to be a good thing as minutes later a tractor trailer came by and hit the power lines that had been damaged during the crash sending sparks everywhere. Suffolk Police retrieved Ms. Waterfield’s keys and wallet, but unfortunately she was unable to drive her car until all the power lines were cleared later that morning. Within eyesight of her residence, Ms. Waterfield was able to walk home. “I feel blessed that I was able to help them. I was the only person on the road besides this car, and if I wasn’t there, who knows who would have helped them. God placed me there because he knew I could help these people.”

### **Citizen Appreciation Award – Randy Vick**

Randy Vick has been instrumental to the success of Suffolk Fire & Rescue through his involvement with the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) and his previous work as the Safety Officer for Obici Hospital. Randy, now retired, has always been a supporter of Suffolk Fire & Rescue through his many relationships with our members, ensuring that our Department was prepared for any emergencies. He was the subject matter expert of anything related to Obici, and served as a trusted aide to the Incident Commander for any calls that occurred there. He oversaw the transition from the old hospital to the Godwin Boulevard site and allowed all members to attend vital pre-incident planning visits. Throughout his distinguished career, Randy truly served the citizens through his actions and ensured that our Department was prepared through training. His personal connections and work ethic perfectly matched our Department’s values of Shared Accountability, Shared Responsibility and Shared Success.

### **Certificate of Meritorious Conduct Award (Civilian Award) - Trent Pruett**

In the early morning hours of October 12, 2017, this young teen awoke to the smell of smoke in his home. He quickly assisted his mother and carried his small niece out of the residence, which was filling with heavy smoke, and escorted them to a safe area away from the house. Due to a thick blanket of fog, visibility was difficult. Trent guided Engine 8 to the house, told them that all occupants were out and that the fire was in the kitchen. The quick actions and calm demeanor of this young man was the reason for a positive outcome to this event.

### **Certificate of Meritorious Conduct Award (Civilian Award) – Kyle Clemente**

On December 18, 2015, a fire broke out in the garage of the Clemente's home. Upon discovering the fire, Kyle Clemente, a teenager using training that he obtained through the City of Suffolk Fire Department's Junior Fire Fighter Camp, proceeded to the room directly above the fire to save his younger brother. He then was able to exit the structure safely with his brother and move to the spot in the front yard predetermined by his family. Through his bravery and selflessness he protected the well-being of his younger sibling. The ability and willingness to put his own safety at risk to save the life of his younger brother and use of the knowledge he gained through his training demonstrates Kyle's true bravery.

### **Certificate of Meritorious Conduct Award – Chris Asbell**

On May 19, 2017, Suffolk Fire & Rescue personnel responded to a rare and complex Technical Rescue incident. A man was cutting down a tree and became wedged between the cut portion of the tree and the bottom section approximately 25 feet above the ground. Firefighters knew that a crane would be required to remove the top section of the tree in order to remove the patient. Chris Asbell, a co-owner of Schadel Sheet Metal and at that time a Suffolk Firefighter, was off-duty at the time and spoke with Battalion 1 and offered to bring his company's crane to assist. Once he arrived on scene, firefighters and Chris coordinated efforts to safely remove the top of the tree to allow the removal of the patient. The efforts of Chris and the crane owned by Schadel Sheet Metal had a direct impact on a positive outcome from this incident.

Chris has since retired from Suffolk Fire & Rescue, but he will always be a part of our family. We know that he and his company will always be there to assist our Department and our citizens.

### **Certificates of Commendation**

Dr. Philip Leavy was recognized for his dedicated service to Suffolk Fire & Rescue

Dr. Leavey was the Medical Director for Suffolk Fire & Rescue for 9 years. Suffolk Fire & Rescue operated under Dr. Leavy's medical license, EMS guidance and direction for those 9 years.

Retired Interim Chief Ed Taylor was recognized for his dedicated service to Suffolk Fire & Rescue. Chief Taylor had been retired From Suffolk Fire & Rescue for about 5 years when our Fire Chief retired. Our City Manager called Chief Taylor and asked if he would consider coming back to be the interim Fire Chief for a short period of time. After checking with his wife, as she was the decision maker in this matter, he was able to let the City Manager know that she gave her approval. Chief Taylor stepped in after a 5-year hiatus, and it was like he had never left. When our new Fire Chief was hired, Chief Taylor stayed on for a period of time to ensure a smooth transition.

Fire Medic Richard Ward was recognized for his patient care during the incident that occurred on May 19, 2017 when crews responded to a call of a person stuck in a tree. Upon arrival, a man was found pinned in a tree approximately 25 feet off the ground. A crane was needed to lift the tree off the patient. During this lengthy process, Fire Medic Ward provided patient care from a ground ladder. While keeping the patient calm, he was able to obtain an IV to administer fluids and medications if needed. FM Ward used his training in technical rescue and advanced life support to help make this call a success. His professional and calm demeanor during a very unusual circumstance was in keeping with the values and mission of Suffolk Fire & Rescue.

Master Firefighter Andy Kitchen was recognized for his integral role in making the 2017 Rescue Challenge a successful event. The Rescue Challenge is a high-level

multi-discipline training event where Fire Department Technical Rescue Teams throughout Virginia and the surrounding states participate in different complex scenarios throughout a 4-day period with limited guidelines and little to no interference. The knowledge and experience gained from this event helps rescuers hone their skills and better prepare for incidents they may encounter in the future by maintaining the highest degree of preparedness for such an event. Suffolk Fire was tasked with developing two scenarios for the event, and Andy more than willingly accepted the major responsibility of creating one of the scenarios. Master Firefighter Kitchen dedicated countless hours and months of planning, on and off duty, into developing a very complex scenario that would challenge some of the most highly skilled and experienced rescue technicians throughout the state. Andy was also the lead facilitator for the entirety of the event.

Lieutenant Robert Hodges and Firefighter Cole Hylton were presented with Certificates of Commendation due to their quick actions on the morning of July 23<sup>rd</sup>, when Cole asked Robert if he would give him a ride to his vehicle repair shop to pick up his truck. As they traveled eastbound on Route 58 Cole suddenly shouted, "Pull over! Pull over!" He quickly explained that he was pretty sure he had just seen a car behind some trees in the right side ditch with a person's hand visible through the side window glass. Cole immediately exited the vehicle and began sprinting back up the road towards the accident, while simultaneously calling Dispatch. After arriving at the vehicle, he established communication with the disoriented driver and determined the door was pinned shut and would require the use of extrication tools to get her out. He checked for any immediate hazards and found none. Cole relayed all information to Dispatch and requested the appropriate resources based on his scene size-up. Cole climbed into the back seat to hold C-spine and began assessing the patient with Robert's assistance. He comforted the patient by telling her that help was on the way. Robert flagged down the incoming units and gave all information obtained by Cole to Medic 3's ALS provider and Ladder 3's Officer.

Lieutenant Bradford Saunders, Todd Helmick, Lucas Weaver, Captain Nick Savage, Firefighter Cole Hylton, James Schmeling, Dave Devine, Rick Ward, Captain Braxton Sweat, Jeff Jochens and Michael Joseph are being recognized with the **Certificate of Commendation a Unit Citation**. On May 19, 2017, Suffolk Fire & Rescue personnel responded to an incident that was very rare and would put to test many years of training. A man was cutting down a tree and became wedged between the cut portion of the tree and the bottom section approximately 25 feet above the ground. The crews of Rescue 1, Engine 2, Ladder 3 and Medic 1 had to perform a Technical Rescue like they had never seen before. A crane was brought to the scene to lift the large portion of the tree off of the patient. Crews rigged a lowering system for the patient and the cut portion of the tree. While performing this rescue, the Incident Commander made the difficult decision to stop all operations due to a heavy thunderstorm and lightning passing over the incident which could have been hazardous to all. Frustrated at having to cease operations, crews immediately refocused on the incident and reviewed their plan of operation until they were allowed to continue. Once the tree was removed, the patient was lowered to the ground and transported to the hospital. All crews assigned to this incident performed at an exceptional level. Due to the direct and extreme efforts of these particular companies, the patient survived this incident.

Cliff Carr, Shawn Moore, Ben Lane, Alvin Lee, William Gardner and Ronald Smith are being presented with the **Certificate of Commendation a Unit Citation**. On December 29, 2017, Suffolk Fire & Rescue was dispatched to a reported structure fire. Additional comments from the Dispatcher indicated that occupants may be trapped in the burning residence. The crews of Engine 7 and Medic 7 remained focused. The tanker assigned to their Station was out of service and they took a spare Engine with them for additional water. This had been discussed during their shift before this call was ever received. Engine 7 arrived on scene and reported heavy smoke showing and fire venting from the left rear corner. Engine 7's crew knew that an elderly person lived at this residence and neighbors reported that nobody was seen leaving the structure. They entered the front of the house to perform a search as they worked on

extinguishing the fire. They located the occupant and removed him from the structure. Medic 7 immediately began life saving efforts while Engine 7 knocked down the fire. This crew of six completed all of this prior to the arrival of the next unit 12 minutes later. Unfortunately, the elderly occupant succumbed to his injuries, but these two crews provided exemplary service.

Captain Eric Mathews, Travis Williford, Robert Barrett, Lieutenant Jeremy Drake, David Legg, Steve Jurnigan, Michael D. Turner, William Brown, Douglas Carter, Paul Matteson and Amy Dunn-Brown are being presented the **Certificate of Commendation a Unit Citation**. On May 28, 2017, Suffolk Fire & Rescue was dispatched to a residential structure fire in the area of East Washington and 6<sup>th</sup> Street. Additional information provided by the Dispatcher noted that there were multiple victims trapped within the structure. Medic 3A -- returning from a previous call -- arrived on the scene first. Medic 3A advised heavy fire involvement and a victim had exited the structure's second story window and was trapped on the front porch roof. Without hesitation and under extreme fire conditions, Engine 3, Ladder 3, Rescue 1 and Medic 3A all worked together to make the rescue of the trapped occupant successful. Without the combined effort and teamwork of these individuals, the outcome for the occupant would have been different.

Jason Belaire, Rick Ward, Troy Munday Michael Turner and Captain James Deitz are being presented the **Certificate of Commendation a Unit Citation**. The call was dispatched for a man down outside. E-4 was first on scene and found a male in cardiac arrest with a bystander performing CPR; they assumed compressions and Medic 1 arrived shortly afterward. The male was in full arrest, required ACLS protocols and defibrillation. The crew was calm and controlled during the entire event, obtained ROSC and a 12 lead which showed the patient had a STEMI. They felt it was in the best interest of the patient to fly him to Sentara Norfolk General Hospital. Due to the tenacity of the ALS provider and the fantastic BLS skills of the crew, the male in question was later discharged from the hospital, briefly went to a rehab facility and is home working in his yard again today.

Scott Docteur and Doug Darden are being presented the **Certificate of Commendation a Unit Citation**. On June 25, 2017, they responded to a citizen who was in cardiac arrest. Crews found the patient with no pulse and no respirations. Due to their efforts in recognizing and treating this patient, prior to transport the patient had a pulse and was speaking and answering questions. The patient was transported to Sentara Obici Hospital for a hospital stay and then discharged to home.

Daniel Pelzel, Robert Short, Kyle Hehl, Blake Jennings, Steve Jurnigan, Teresa Monroe\_are being presented the **Certificate of Commendation a Unit Citation**. On July 27, 2017, they responded to a citizen who was unresponsive and with a weak pulse. Upon arrival crews quickly moved the patient to the medic for further assessment where they found the patient was hypoglycemic, at which time the patient then went into cardiac arrest. Crews immediately began providing care. Due to their efforts crews were able to restore a pulse, and furthermore by performing a 12 lead EKG diagnosed a STEMI. The difficult yet correct decision to transport this patient to a cath lab at Maryview was decided. This patient was admitted to Maryview and then discharged at a later date.

Colt Pulley, Dereck Felton, Braxton Sweat, Melany Gray and Jeff Matthews\_are being presented the **Certificate of Commendation a Unit Citation**. On June 18, 2017, they responded to a citizen who was complaining of shortness of breath. En route to the residence the citizen collapsed and went into cardiac arrest. Upon arrival the crews provided care and resuscitated the patient, restoring a pulse prior to transporting the patient to Sentara Obici Hospital. The patient was admitted and eventually discharged to a skilled nursing facility. The efforts of this crew were instrumental in saving a life.

Emanuel Franco, Mat Allemand, Les Stickles, Corey Stephens, Cole Hylton and Teresa Monroe\_are being presented the **Certificate of Commendation a Unit Citation**. On September 16, 2017, they responded to a citizen with an altered mental status. Upon arrival crews found the patient pulseless and apneic. Crews immediately

began providing care and moved the patient to the medic for transport. Due to their efforts, crews were able to restore a pulse prior to arriving at Sentara Obici Hospital, where the patient was admitted and later discharged to a skilled nursing facility. The efforts of this crew were instrumental in saving a life.

Philip Thompson, Richard Turner, Nate Boyd, John Oliver, Chris Pociask, and David English\_are being presented the **Certificate of Commendation a Unit Citation**. On August 14, 2017, they responded to a citizen who was unresponsive. Crews found a patient who was in hospice with no DNR surrounded by family. Crews assessed the patient and during assessment the patient went into cardiac arrest. After the crews moved the patient to the ambulance the patient lost pulses and stopped breathing. Through their actions the crew was able to restore a pulse prior to arriving at Sentra Obici Hospital. The patient was admitted and later discharged to his residence.

Bryan Grasser, Mark Johnson, David Bell, Steven Speight, Brandon Williamson, Brian Moody, Teresa Monroe and Nathan Folden are being presented the **Certificate of Commendation a Unit Citation**. On December 27, 2017, they responded to a citizen who was complaining of difficulty breathing. Upon arrival crews found the patient pulseless and apneic. Crews immediately began providing care while also working with the family who were understandably upset. Due to their efforts, crews were able to restore a pulse in the residence. Once they obtained a pulse they quickly moved the patient to the medic for transport to Sentara Obici Hospital, where the patient was admitted and then discharged to a skilled nursing facility.

Brian Moody, Trevor Duke, Braxton Sweat, John Carr, Ricky Blake, and Dustin Hummer\_are being presented the **Certificate of Commendation a Unit Citation**. On June 27, 2017, they responded to a citizen who was in cardiac arrest at a dialysis center. CPR was started by staff prior to arrival. The crews delivered care and were able to restore a pulse upon arrival at Sentara Obici Hospital. The patient was admitted and then discharged to a skilled nursing facility.

### **Fire Chiefs Award of Excellence – Martha Wheeler**

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. This year's Chief's Award is presented to a civilian member of our family who has been instrumental in the successes and daily operations of Suffolk Fire & Rescue for many years. This employee is known for offering a friendly reception to others, kind words of encouragement, an impeccable attention to detail, a strong desire for "things to be done right", and the ability to keep things in order for the good of the Department and the City. Affectionately known as "Miss Martha", she has been described as "the glue that holds the Department together". Everyone knows -- if you need something, "see Miss Martha". Miss Martha joined the City of Suffolk in 1982, and joined Suffolk Fire & Rescue in 1991. Since that time she has faithfully served as Executive Secretary for four Fire Chiefs and two Interim Fire Chiefs. Her professionalism, execution of her duties, and simply serving as an example to others through her conduct have all contributed directly to the successes of our organization.

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