



BUSINESS NAME

A Department Without Limits

Editor:
Lt. S A Miller

BIRTHDAYS:

FF BENJAMIN BENNETT 08/03

BC JOHNNY HENRY 08/04

RCT AARON BROWN 08/04

FF JUSTIN HOWARD 08/08

FF BRADLEY DONALDSON 08/12

LT MARCUS HAYNES 08/16

SGT CHRIS STEVICK 08/16

WILLIE NEWKIRK 08/18

LT SHELLEY MILLER 08/18

FF LOUIS AUDAIN 08/25

RCT GENNA O'BERIN 08/20

SGT SCOTT GARREN 08/25

FF LUIS RODRIGUEZ 08/28

RCT MARK SCHULTE 08/26

RCT DANIEL CARDER 08/26

CHIEF'S TOPIC OF THE MONTH

I had the pleasure of interacting with our new recruits while we traveled to the Georgia Fire Academy. I had a flashback of 1996, when I was a recruit and had "the same glow of excitement." They are embarking on a journey of excitement while attempting to conquer the fear of the unknown. Some have always aspired to be a Firefighter, while others have accepted a position anticipating it will lead into a promising career.

Joel Osteen once said, "As you begin to live a more positive life, it simply makes sense that you take a look at your dreams and goals to see if you are living in a way that will best allow you to

accomplish them." Joel Osteen.

Our new recruits have taken the necessary steps in fulfilling their dreams and goals of working in our profession. Let's welcome our new recruits to our Valdosta Fire Department Family. Before, we attempt to critique them do not forget that we were all recruits at one time. Always remember that, "Every job is a self-portrait of the person who does it. Autograph yourself, our department, and our community with excellence."



Freddie D. Broome, Fire Chief

Thanks for all the support and commitment in making our department "A Department without Limits."

FAREWELL TO FAMILY



After decades of serving the citizens of Valdosta, Captain Carl Smith has retired from the Valdosta Fire Department. Capt. Smith originally transferred to the Fire Department from the Police Department where he was a detective. Before that, he was one of the first rescue swimmers in the United States Coast Guard.

Capt. Smith's firefighting career spanned over twenty years with him eventually making Sergeant, transferring over to the Training Division where he made Lieutenant, and finally attaining the rank of Captain. During his last few years with the Department, Capt. Smith was instrumental in maintaining the training requirements for our ARFF firefighters and was the primary liaison between the city of Valdosta and the Valdosta/Lowndes County Regional Airport Authority.

Capt. Smith, thank you for your service and your friendship.

ATTA BOY—DONE DID GOOD

Employee of the Month Nominations:

VFD recently had several fires where firefighters were assigned to conduct search and rescue operations for family's pets. On one particular incident, a dog was rescued and required oxygen due to being overwhelmed by smoke. The good news is the dog survived. However, after having several pet related incidents Lt. Talley noticed a service we were not currently providing and saw an opportunity to better serve the citizens of the City of Valdosta. Lt. Talley came across a company called Invisible Fence and found an initiative they are currently working on to provide, free of charge, oxygen masks to use to provide emergency rescue oxygen to pets that have been involved in a fire. It has been estimated that between 40,000 and 150,000 pets die each year in fires, with most succumbing to smoke inhalation. Over a half million pets are affected by home fires every year. Currently, the City of Valdosta Fire Department is not equipped to deal with a crisis of this kind. In the past, when City of Valdosta Firefighters came upon a stricken animal in a residential fire, after rescuing the animal and moving it to fresh air outside the structure, firefighters have had to improvise in an attempt to save the life of the animal. Knowing how important household pets are to the citizens of the City of Valdosta, Lt. Talley took the initiative to research this unique option for our community pets. With the addition of the pet mask, VFD will be able to deliver additional lifesaving services in our community.

We would like to commend the Engine company that responded with our squad on June 20, 2017 to 1150 Statenville Road. This response included a pediatric code pink that was successfully resuscitated pre-hospital. Our crew stated that upon their arrival, VFD members did excellent CPR which contributed to the resuscitation of this child.

Please let your crew how much they are appreciated and their quick and skillful actions contributed to this child's resuscitation. CPR is so very important and when done correctly, makes all the difference in the world. For this child, it saved her life!

KUDOS to this engine company! (We think it was Engine #3, but not 100% sure) [Lieutenant Roe, Corporal Chastain and Firefighter McBride were the crew members on Engine 3.]

-Ronda Owens Vanek, BAS Paramedic

Assistant Chief of Operations and Clinical Training - Mobile Healthcare Service EMS



Group work campers from the Southern Hospitality Work Camp would like to thank the Valdosta Fire Department for supporting the program. [pictured back row: Lt. Scott Watson, Sgt. Jimmie Bacon, FF Lamar Berrian]

"We Salute You!!!" The Southside Library Boosters, Inc. and the Mae Wisenbaker-McMullen Southside Library send their thanks to Chief Freddie Broome and the Valdosta Fire Department "for support and dedication during our 'Silver Anniversary' (1992-2017), 25th Annual Juneteenth Celebration and 25th Year Celebration of Southside Library." - Beverly Richardson-Blake, Ed. D., Chair—Southside Library Booster, Inc.



Congratulations to (L to R) Firefighter Houston, Firefighter Howard, Firefighter Williams and Battalion Chief Robinson for receiving their EMT certification.

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

Here's a few words from our Great Partnership Program participant:

My name is Brandon D. Mathis and I'm a student at Valdosta High School, home of the Wildcats. An announcement was made over the intercom about summer jobs for juniors and seniors. I interviewed for a position at the Valdosta Fire Department and I was chosen. I have always wondered what it would be like to ride in a fire truck with the sirens on while going to save lives or someone's property. It was explained to me the tasks that were involved in the job description. I told myself I could do that, and that was the job for me. I was inspired by the past Chief, J.D. Rice. Sitting in class as he was teaching us, I saw the passion and love he had for his students whether we wanted it or not. I want to thank him for caring. During my orientation I was introduced to Battalion Chief Skrine and he welcomed me and introduced me to some of the other firefighters who also made me feel welcome. My second week on the



job while completing an assigned task, I heard a noise and it was the alarm that a call was coming in. They (the firefighters) looked at me and asked "Man, you coming?" I was excited! While at the scene I was asked by a citizen if [everything] was clear. I turned and looked at the man and told him I'm not the boss. Firefighter Demario said, "See, you have on the shirt and the equipment... people consider you a fireman," and I just laughed. You know people think that firefighters don't do anything but fight fires and go rescue but that's not so. They have to make sure the stations are clean and equipment is ready to go at all times. I've had the experience at the training site where we drip sweat from hard work. From construction to lawn care. I have enjoyed every minute. I have learned a lot

from these guys and they are still training and teaching me. I am so grateful and thankful I got chosen to work with such a great group of dedicated firefighters. I pray that God will keep us safe as we serve the people of Valdosta, Ga.

ATTA BOY—FROM FACEBOOK



Shannon Walsh ▸ Valdosta Fire Department

1 hr · Valdosta · 🌐

Today these men under the command of LT Marcus came by with his crew to service a fire hydrant and I pulled one of the many side and told them that I had a special needs son who had Pyro tendencies the crew immediately got out of the truck and started speaking to my child about fire safety and everything that was associated with it they let them climb all of the truck took pictures with them let them wear their helmets and it was an amazing opportunity for my children. they offered my children a tour of the fire house on Saturday and I can't begin to put into words the love and affection I express for the Man that stopped in front of my house today they were above anything I've ever met in my life and I am truly thankful for them as an active-duty Air Force woman with an active-duty Air Force has been I am extremely grateful for their kind hearts today they did not have to go above and beyond but they did we sent them off with presents from New York City a pizza and some Italian cookies that we hope they share with the firehouse because we cannot express our gratitude to these men thank you and anytime you need anything know that Knights Mill Dr. supports you always.

- shannon

RUMOR MILL

Did the department create a new training position?

Yes, in the new budget an additional training position was approved to help the department meet the growing training demands and to ensure compliance of all ISO and Accreditation training requirements.

Will the training position be filled by an open and competitive assessment?

Yes, there will be a competitive assessment process that is open to internal and external candidates who meet the qualifications for the position.

Will the new training officer position be eligible for future promotions?

Yes, the new Promotional Policy will allow an opportunity for ranked and civilian positions to compete for advancement in the department. As an example, the Accreditation Manager and Fire and Life Safety Educator positions are no longer considered ranked positions. These are considered civilian/non-rank positions. The new policy will allow the Training Officer, Accreditation Manager and Public and Life Safety Educator positions an opportunity to continue to advance within our organization.

LEADERSHIP NOTES

How To Reignite Your Passion For Leadership

Reignite your passion for leading

By Dan Black

Think back on when you first became a leader. How was your passion level for the leadership position? If you were like me, I'm sure your passion for your new role showed brightly through to everyone around you. Now look and see how your passion is today. Do you still have the same fire and passion for the leadership position or do you need to reignite it? I've found some common reasons why a leader would have to reignite their passion for leadership. They include but are not limited to:

- The weight of leadership (past post) takes a toll on you over the years
- The stress and demand of a project or task causes you to burn out
- Personnel problems or issues weigh heavy on your shoulders
- A significant situation or issue happens at home
- You failed in a major leadership role at work

I want to share with you some practical ways to reignite your passion for leadership. Let them help you whenever you need to reignite your passion for leading.

Focus On Your Life-Purpose

The reason you were created, your life purpose, has likely taken you into a leadership position. A large aspect of your life-purpose is fulfilling your leadership calling. Often when you lose passion for your position you have lost focus of your life-purpose. Take time to refocus your attention on your life-purpose and why you wanted to start leading in the first place. If you have not yet figured out your [life-purpose. make sure to spend time to discover it.](#)

“Do you still have the same fire and passion for the leadership position...”

Reprogram Your Mind

Our thinking and thoughts are revealed in our actions and attitudes. If you are noticing you have lost your passion for leadership and/or are having negative actions or attitudes, then you should consider taking some time to reprogram your mind toward the good. I recommend taking 1-3 days to perform a check-up on what you are thinking and telling yourself throughout the day. This will allow you to determine if your self-talk, thoughts, and thinking are leaning toward the bad or negative aspects of your life and leadership role; or if they are taking you toward the good and positive aspects. If they are leaning toward the side you

don't want, you can begin to reprogram your mind.

Take A Break

The inner drive and desire for success often causes leaders to overwork. It's all work and no rest or fun. But the reality is, sooner or later with this type of thinking you will lose your passion for leadership due to burnout. You should intentionally take a day or half a day off of work each week and an annual sabbatical (longer time off). Breaks allow you to rest and have fun which recharges your battery.

Remember The Impact You Make

In the [Four Types of Influence](#) I shared the main types of influence a leader can have. They included, negative, natural, positive, and life changing influence. If you are a leader who uses positive or life changing influence as your main tool for leading then you will be making a huge difference and impact with those you lead. Take time to look back and reflect on the people you have positively impacted through your influence. Remembering you had a small but significant role in your people's lives can reignite your passion for leadership. Never forget you make a huge difference.

“Never forget you make a huge difference.”

Study To Learn About Other Great Leaders

History is full of noteworthy leaders to learn from. If you are finding you are losing your passion for leadership, consider studying to learn about the lives and accomplishments of famous or historical leadership figures. Reading their stories, hearing them present a speech, or meeting with them can inspire you to be an exemplary leader. Let their life, influence, and example reignite your passion for leadership.

About the Author

Dan Black has spent most of his career working with adolescents. He has been a drug & alcohol rehab case manager, a behavior specialist working with children in the foster care, and is currently a supervisor of a team providing care and oversight for children in protective service. He has an Associates degree in Theology and a Bachelors degree in Human Development. His personal experience includes over 5 years of volunteering as a youth leader in a church environment where he lead ministry groups, delivered speeches, mentored teens, lead teams of volunteers, and provided counseling for youth. Dan Black has published two books, [The Leadership Mandate](#) and [The Little Book of Personal Growth](#).

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HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Chief Concerns: Physical Exams: Your Life Depends on It

by Marc S. Bashoor

Way too many times in my career—and I bet in yours—I’ve heard the sorrowful wails at fire/EMS service funerals. It seems there’s often more than one person stressing something along the lines of, “If only I was there, Johnny would still be here today.” But you and I both know that, more than likely, being there at the instance that Johnny went down would have little or no impact on the outcome.

Let’s face it: We are not superhuman; we are fallible human beings, just like the rest of the people whom we serve. We can, however, be there BEFORE Johnny goes down. After all, preparation is a key strategic planning tool.

The “65 percent problem”

What sets us apart from those we serve is that we’re there at the other people’s darkest and most stressful moments, often expected to perform these “superhuman” feats of heroism and utilize breathtaking marvels of modern field paramedicine to “fix it.” The rest of the population does not have that weight on their shoulders; we do.

So it should go without saying that we need to be in “superhuman shape”—and this includes our mental, moral and physical strength—to be able to perform those acts. When we look among our own ranks, though, it doesn’t take long to see one of those not-so-secret dirty little secrets—that our mental, moral and physical strength can be far from superhuman. And as I have stated before, this article has NOTHING to do with being a volunteer or paid firefighter. Those in need don’t make that distinction, and neither will I.

The issues of post-traumatic-stress, substance abuse and suicide have become so pervasive in our midst; however, for the purpose of this article, please allow me to focus on the “65 percent problem.” More specifically, according to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF), 60 to 70 percent of the firefighters who die in the line of duty die from a physical well-being issue, most often one related to cardiovascular health—NOT from the crashes, collapses, burns and scene dramas.

Consider these headlines:

- “Fire chief crashes and dies after experiencing medical emergency en route to call”
- “Lieutenant collapses and dies after training exercise”
- “Firefighter found dead in chair at station when alarm sounds”

“...I’ve heard the sorrowful wails at fire/EMS service funerals.”

- “86-year-old firefighter dies while directing traffic at emergency scene”
- “Veteran firefighter dies after shift”

This is merely a sampling; so many more cross our paths every day.

Medical matters

There are a million issues and excuses of how and why we got here—“here” being a place where our physical well-being, well, sucks—and there is no way to address ALL of those issues directly in one column. So let’s focus mainly on preparing to fix the 65 percent problem as well as preventive steps you can take now to keep from becoming part of that problem.

I’ve written before about diet and exercise as part of the “Our Dirty Little Secrets” article (firehouse.com/12233678). What we have not talked much about is the medical side of our preventative care.

Does your fire/EMS department require an entry physical before allowing an individual to participate in any strenuous activity? *High school sports do.* Let that sink in for a minute. Physicals should be a no-brainer. Remember, we need to be ready to perform “superhuman” tasks at any given moment.

I’m still waiting for a single legitimate excuse to be presented that makes it “OK” to NOT require pre-entry physicals for law enforcement officers, firefighters, EMTs, paramedics AND dispatchers. Yes, dispatchers too. The dispatch job is mentally stressful (I started my career as a dispatcher), and we need to ensure that

“There are a million issues and excuses of how and why we got here...”

the individuals answering these calls and working these radios are “fit enough” (morally, mentally, physically) to handle that pressure. If your argument is money, then you shouldn’t be in this business. The health of your people should not be held hostage by the lack of funding for the most basic of needs.

This is not rocket science, however, the attainment of medical physical standards seems to elude many of our departments. Fortunately, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the

International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and our other sister agencies have done a tremendous amount of work to guide us toward a medical physical protocol.

NFPA 1582: Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments (nfpa.org/1582) outlines an occupational medical program that has PROVEN to reduce risk and save lives. NFPA 1582 should be applicable across the board for our folks—*paid and volunteer*. Like those calling us in need, the standard does not differentiate. I fully recognize that this is not necessarily an easy task, especially for the majority of smaller departments. It is, however, a moral imperative that we must

HEALTH AND WELLNESS—CONTINUED

honor. The IAFC has published a great resource called the “Fire Department’s Guide to Implementing NFPA 1582” (<http://tinyurl.com/IAFC-NFPA1582>), which offers assistance in this arena.

Please, let’s not fight the “standard” versus “law” here either. I consider NFPA 1582 an industry best practice, regardless of whether YOUR department has adopted the standard or not. Sooner or later, it is likely that you or your department will be standing in front of a judge having to defend a wayward decision to NOT implement this standard. NFPA 1582 is NOT “simply an entry physical standard”—a statement I have heard many times and one that many political folks could easily absorb without a little education.

In the Prince George’s County Fire/EMS Department (PGFD), originally driven by union negotiation for paid firefighters, we implemented annual physical requirements many years ago. I don’t believe anyone is delusional about the success of ensuring that EVERYONE completed their annual requirement; however, as chief, I can personally attest to the success of the annual physical requirements. I have laid witness to the personal testimony of multiple PGFD firefighters who are alive today because of issues discovered during our mandated annual physicals.

Our 1582 physicals identified 283 individual abnormalities in personnel—folks who merely showed up for their annual physical. Nearly 120 were cardiac cases, some requiring bypass surgery and ultimately retirement. Pulmonary and hearing issues were also identified, some requiring retirement. Additionally, 154 lab abnormalities were identified, some requiring surgery, medication and/or retirement. These are successes in that they otherwise may have resulted in one of the deadly headlines mentioned above.

PGFD has for years required NFPA 1582 entry physicals for volunteers, similar to the career force. This year, funding has been proposed to provide *annual* physicals for PGFD’s volunteer firefighters as well. With more than 1,500 fit-test certified members, this will be no easy (nor inexpensive) task. While popular with some, the mandate is viewed with weary eyes by others—wary of “the decline of volunteers,” wary of knowing “what we don’t know,” and, yes, wary of individual personal decline (whether mental, moral or physical) that some have suspected but never validated.

Will some folks not make it through the physical process? Yes. Just like on the paid side of the house, some won’t make it. Should there be opportunities for remediation to allow volunteers more opportunities to pass the physical? I believe yes. Implementation of NFPA 1582 should NOT be a tool of discipline, rather it should be a tool of well-being and risk reduction. It is important to understand that some people will NOT pass the physical requirements. This is a demanding profession, so it’s certainly reasonable that not everyone will be up to the physical task.

“Will some folks not make it through the physical process? Yes.”

Flip the narrative

Chiefs, companies/departments, 501(c)(3)s, unions, governments all place themselves in a position of personal and professional legal liability if they allow firefighters to practice in strenuous environments after an individual has failed a physical, and therein lies the rub a lot of folks don’t want to admit. They are indeed afraid of losing people to “a stupid physical” when they’re struggling to get fire trucks and ambulances out the door.

We MUST flip that narrative to ensure that we are able to serve our community when they need us and so we are rightfully afraid of losing one of their own members, instead of playing the game of chances many continue to play today. We must be prepared to make the rescues, and to be able to rescue our own.

“We must be prepared to make the rescues, and to be able to rescue our own.”

This is unpopular, but should that 400-pound firefighter go down, there is little many of us will be able to do to affect their rescue. Further, should 82-year-old members be actively providing service in a strenuous environment? Yes, each of us is different, and some can perform better than others; however, we must take a realistic look at

whether we should allow individuals to continue in active operational service, including driving and operating heavy apparatus, especially with the well-documented lapses in sensory perception and/or response times. As I’ve said before, be the chief your people NEED, which is likely not the same as the one they WANT.

It is important to recognize that NFPA 1582 physicals should not be a “one-and-done” opportunity. Entry physicals and annual physicals thereafter should be a starting point to not only identify what hidden issues may be lurking, but also to provide a personal roadmap to better health. They will also provide a professional roadmap to reduced organizational risk/cost as well as better service to the communities we serve. After all, if WE don’t make it to them, who’s going to help them—and who’s going to rescue us?

About the author: MARC S. BASHOOR joined the fire service in 1981. He recently retired as fire chief of Prince George’s County, MD, Fire/EMS, the largest combination department in North America. His progressive community-based approach led to record hiring and a strategic apparatus replacement plan.

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