



**VALDOSTA FIRE  
DEPARTMENT**

## A Department Without Limits

Editor:  
Lt. S A Miller

### BIRTHDAYS:

<b>SGT ALLEN CARTER</b>	<b>05/06</b>
<b>SGT DARREN WILLIAMS</b>	<b>05/07</b>
<b>CPL MATTHEW DAVIS</b>	<b>05/13</b>
<b>FF BRANDON TEBEDO</b>	<b>05/17</b>
<b>LT TERRY CLARK</b>	<b>05/22</b>
<b>FF JAMIE SAPP</b>	<b>05/26</b>
<b>SGT KEN TAYLOR</b>	<b>05/29</b>
<b>LT MICHAEL WALDEN</b>	<b>05/29</b>
<b>FF NICHOLAS BISHOP</b>	<b>05/31</b>

### CHIEF'S TOPIC OF THE MONTH

I am determined my purpose in life is to serve others. However, if asked my leadership style I would not say I am a servant leader but more of a transformational leader. My leadership philosophy is that my purpose in life is to serve others by inspiring and motivating them to achieve in every field of individuality and professional endeavors. It is imperative that leaders understand they have to continue to empower themselves in order to empower others. The day we stop learning, listening, and growing is the day we stagnate our ability to achieve in every field of individuality and professional endeavors. It is important to remember that we cannot effectively serve and lead a department and community that we do not understand. Over the last three years our department has

initiated transformation programs such as the Recruit School Family and Friends Day, Citizen Fire Academy, Fire Explorer, and Pink Heals that has inspired the department and community to work together while inspiring each other. It is my goal to inspire others and to help them achieve their goals either directly or indirectly. My challenge for you is for you to share your leadership philosophy and use it to empower and lead each other toward success. Ask yourself "What is your leadership style and how can you use them to inspire others?" In the words of Eric Thomas, "Both desire and imagination are stored in the mind of the individual and when stretched, both have the



Freddie D. Broome, Fire Chief

potential to position a person for greatness." Thank you for your support and commitment to continue to make our department, "A Department without Limits."

### MARCH 2017 EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

#### POINTS OF INTEREST

- Submissions to the newsletter should occur before the 20th of each month
- Have a strong opinion about a topic of concern to our fire department? Feel free to submit a piece for review and possible publication in the newsletter



Congratulations to Battalion Chief Johnny Henry and Captain Jeff Thibodeau (pictured above with Chief Broome and Mayor Gayle) for being selected Employees of the month for March 2017.

In December 2016, a mother with an infant child stopped by Station 1 in need of a new car seat, as the one she owned was unsafe for use. She had an 11-hour drive ahead and was not financially able to purchase a new car seat. Chief Henry and Capt. Thibodeau responded quickly to the situation by going to Wal-Mart and purchasing a new car seat with some additional items. Their kindness and generosity put the mother at ease, and she was able to drive the rest of her trip while ensuring her infant child was safely secured in the vehicle.

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

### 5 stresses firefighters deal with that others don't know about

*There is always the chance that something will happen that we have no control over; it's those fears that keep us up at night*

By Michael Morse

We love this job and thank the good fortune that was bestowed upon us that we are firefighters.

And what's not to love? We eat like kings, occasionally get paid to sleep and watch TV, have a home away from home and form friendships like no other. It's as good a life as anybody could expect.

We proudly display our union stickers on our cars, and most of us have a few fire department T-shirts in our wardrobe. The public respects us, and we have earned it. We know this, and believe in ourselves for the most part, but nothing in our lives is absolutely perfect.

There is always the chance that something will happen that we have no control over. And it's those fears that keep us up at night.

Every firefighter holds a few secrets that they typically keep to themselves.

#### 1. The weight of responsibility that we bear is crushing.

Maintaining the illusion of an aloof but invincible know-it-all, can-do firefighter is work. Believe it or not, we do it not for ourselves, but for those who depend on us.

Firefighters are always on duty. There is no down time. The mind is never at rest. People depend on us to know what to do when they don't. There are a million things that could go wrong at any second, and firefighters are expected to perform. We keep this knowledge buried for the most part, but it is always there.

#### 2. We are not born with the knowledge necessary to be good firefighters.

We have the aptitude for the job, but that's not enough. It needs to be nurtured and constantly challenged. There is a word for what needs to be done to ensure competence: training.

And training never ends. It is as constant as breathing. When a skill is learned, it needs to be re-learned at every available moment. There is always something new to perfect, and perfection is elusive. The training is the foundation that everything else depends upon. Having

the skills to perform embedded in you through repetition helps when the real deal comes your way.

#### 3. Fear of failure is the greatest unspoken fear that every firefighter carries with them.

We border on arrogance, saunter through town like we own the place, respond to emergencies with a "can-do" confidence and bask in the glow of public confidence. But in the middle of the night, when there is nobody but you and the thoughts that run through your mind, things are not so clear.

A million scenarios play out before you, and you question whether or not you have what it takes to respond. The what-if game knows no end.

- What if the train that usually rolls through town unnoticed derails, and a toxic cloud of chlorine gas and anhydrous ammonia escapes?
- What if the baby that normally sleeps through the night is found not breathing at three in the morning?
- What if a truck carrying scrap metal takes the Thurber's Avenue curve too quickly and rolls onto a car full of college kids, trapping them, cutting them to shreds, and all you can do is watch them bleed to death while the crane that will free them slowly creeps up Rt. 95?
- What if the kid who decided to hang himself changed his mind at the last second, and you arrived a second too late?
- What if the fire is too hot, and a family of five burns to death 3 feet from where you stand, charged hoseline in hand, unable to get even 1 inch closer, and the echo of their screams is all that is left of them when you finally force the door?

Failure is not an option. There is no "nice try"  in firefighting. There is success and there is failure.

Success is what makes firefighting great. Failure is soul-crushing, confidence stealing, character-destroying misery — it's the greatest unspoken fear that every firefighter carries with them.

#### 4. We live with the knowledge that the risk of developing cancer is extremely high.

Nobody wants to die. The myth that we will die so that others may live is just that, a myth. What we will do is take ridiculous chances at rescuing people — if, and only if, there is a chance we will come out alive. None of the firefighters who die in fires, collapses, accidents or explosions do so willingly. It is an insult to the integrity of life to think otherwise.

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## EMPOWERING BUGLES—NOTES ON LEADERSHIP

### The Most Powerful (And Dangerous) Question in the World

By Kevin Eikenberry

Questions in general can be incredibly powerful, and the right one asked at the right time can change a situation, a relationship and even the world.

But while lots of questions are great, there is one that is simple, universally used, and incredibly powerful – and that power can be for good, or for ill.

It's just one word.

Why?

#### Why it is so Powerful?

- *“Why?” is a question of understanding.* At the root of communication is mutual understanding between those in the communication. When we use the why question, we create space to probe and gain a deeper and better understanding of a situation or perspective.
- *“Why?” is a question of curiosity.* If you want to learn something, the why question points you in that direction. Don't believe me? Look at the best learners in the world, children, and notice how much they use this question.
- *“Why?” is a problem-solving question.* In classic root cause analysis, the approach is to ask the why question repeatedly, until you are past all the symptoms and have identified the root cause of the problem.

Few questions pack the punch and versatility of “Why?”. But like most things in the world, things with great power can be wielded in ways that are less positive and helpful. So it is with the why question.

#### Why it is so Dangerous?

- *“Why?” can feel accusatory.* While kids use the why question to quench their curiosity and speed up their learning, all kids have also heard the why question asked by a parent, and it didn't feel so good. When we hear a question like “Why did you do that?”, even as an adult, it puts us on the defensive.
- *“Why?” can feel like blame is being assigned.* Have you ever been asked the why question and it felt like the other person was blaming you for a situation, even if they clearly had a role in it too? I bet you have, and if so, that why question wasn't doing the powerful things described above, even if that was the intention of the asker.
- *“Why?” can be misinterpreted.* The first two examples already make this point. Someone may not be trying to accuse or blame

you, but if that is how you feel, the barrier to the communication and the other person have already gone up, and the power of the question has been lost or misdirected.

#### How to Channel the Power

While you may not have thought of everything you just read, I am sure you can relate to all of it. Now the important question is how to use this powerful question in positive ways, without the negative side effects?

- *Beware the “naked why”.* One of the ways the question gets misinterpreted is when “Why?” is all that is said. A person finishes their statement and you replay with “Why?” Without context, it can easily feel like a question of accusation or blame.
- *Provide context to “Why?”* When we put some words around the why – or in front of it – we can usually avoid the problems it can cause. Here is an example . . . “I really want to understand more about this situation, why did it go that way?” The “why” is in there, but it is couched in context, and therefore there is less chance for misinterpretation.
- *Remove the you from why questions.* We've all heard the why questions that had you in them – it is pretty hard to not feel blame or accusation when the question is. “Why did you do that?”
- *Using suitable replacements.* As powerful as the why question is, we can ask or say other things that have much of the same power with less of the risk. “Tell me more about that,” or “What is the backstory,” or “And what else?” are all great replacements or additions to your use of the why question.
- *Watch your intonation and inflection.* It is hard to describe this in written text, but you know that “Why?” can be inflected in a way that makes it feel more accusatory. Be careful to avoid that. And if you are feeling like accusing, take a breath (or five) before asking the question at all.

Questions are one of the most powerful tools we have as leaders. Ask this powerful question (the right way) and watch the transformation begin.

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## ATTA BOY—DONE DID GOOD



Congratulations to our newly promoted personnel. Pictured above are Sgt. Chris Stevick, Sgt. Matt Courson, Chief Broome, Lt. Lamont Williams, Lt. Eddie Coppage, and Lt. Shelley Miller.

Beverly R. Blake of the Southside Library Boosters sends her thanks to Assistant Chief Brian Boutwell, Lieutenant Troy Thomas, Lieutenant Charles Phillips, and Firefighter Demario Fields “for the role you played in making the MLK Program a success on April 4<sup>th</sup>!!”

## HEALTH—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

But die we do. Most often it isn't during a daring rescue, where images of a heroic firefighter are flashed across the screens of an adoring public. Most often we die alone, in bed, in agony, pain numbed by morphine, with a few people by our side, the ones that stayed with us during the struggle, when the lights are gone, and the cameras no longer roll.

**We die from cancer.** The things that burn emit toxins that we breathe in long after the fire is out.

- The diesel fumes in the station that no system can capture.
- The million and one chemicals that are created when a car catches fire.
- The asbestos we breathe.
- The dust that settles in our lungs and on our skin.

### 5. The things we see in this profession are worse than you could imagine.

Going to work knowing that there is a very good chance something will happen that will eat away at your soul becomes business as usual. Mentally preparing yourself to face death, disfigurement, madness and disease becomes the norm, while working or not.

It eats away at your humanity, your compassion, and your ability to love freely and without guile. The feeling of impending doom will always be with you, consciously or subconsciously, it matters not;

## EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH NOMINATIONS

The Valdosta Fire Department responded to a structure fire at 807 S. Fry Street on April 9, 2017. The apartment was full of smoke upon arrival. Lieutenant Roe and Firefighter McBride quickly located and removed a semi-conscious patient from the bedroom floor. Once the patient was removed from the apartment, Corporal Chastain provided medical care until EMS arrived on the scene. The occupant was transported to SGMC by EMS for precautionary reasons. The occupant was attempting to evacuate the apartment before being overcome by the smoke.

On Friday, March 24, 2017 Firefighter Carter was traveling on Shiloh Road when he witnessed several people leaving their cars and running towards a vehicle accident involving a car and a tractor trailer. Firefighter Carter parked his vehicle to see if everyone was okay and noticed several citizens attempting to force open a mangled car door in an effort to remove the driver. He immediately utilized his Firefighter and EMT skills to assess the incident for any life safety hazards, stopped the citizens from attempting to force open the door, and was able to convince them that not properly stabilizing the patient could possibly lead to additional injuries. EMS and Lowndes County Fire and Rescue arrived quickly on the scene and were able to stabilize and safely extricate the driver from the vehicle.

what does matter is how you handle it.

The toughest among us are actually not that tough at all, they are simply the healthiest. Those who joke about the dead and make small talk of the mentally unstable are those of us who suffer the most and disguise their hurt with bravado. The rest of us just cope, and get through each day the best we can.

Firefighting is more than a way to make a living. It's a way of life. But nothing in life is free.

Even those who are fortunate enough to have the greatest job in the world know the price we pay, but for the benefit of those we love and those we protect and serve, we keep it to ourselves.

And it's killing us, slowly but surely.

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About the author

Michael Morse is a rescue captain with the Providence Fire Department and the author of Rescuing Providence and Responding. He has worked on engine, ladder and rescue companies during his 21-year career. His current assignment is Rescue Company 5. Michael blogs at RescuingProvidence.com.