



VALDOSTA FIRE
DEPARTMENT

A Department Without Limits

Editor:
Lt. S A Miller

BIRTHDAYS:

BC RONALD SKRINE 06/03

FF BLAKE DAUGHERTY 06/08

FF STANLEY DICKSON 06/15

SGT JOE BRUHL 06/19

ALISA COLLINS 06/26

LT JEFFREY TALLEY 06/28

LT BARRY RICHARDSON 06/30

POINTS OF INTEREST

- Submissions to the newsletter should occur before the 20th of each month
- Feel free to submit photos with your submissions
- 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

CHIEF'S TOPIC OF THE MONTH

Repost from December 2014 edition:

Fri**END**, Boyfri**END**,

Girlfri**END**, Bestfri**END**

Everything has an **END** except, **FAMIL**Y**** => it has (**IL**Y****) **I LOVE YOU**. After reading the message I felt the need to talk about Family this month. Erma Bombeck has a great quote that said "The family, We were a strange little band of characters trudging through life sharing viruses and toothpaste, coveting one another's desserts, hiding shampoo, borrowing money, locking each other out of our rooms, inflicting pain and loving, laughing, defending, and trying to figure out the common thread that bound us all together." Although, we did not grow-up together, most of us have worked together for an extended period. That common thread that bound

us all together is what we know as "firefighters." No one can explain the love we have for being firefighters, other than another firefighter. We laugh with each other during good times and we hug each other during bad times. We often cook for each other, loan money to each other and attend devotional services together. We argue over sporting events and are highly competitive when playing fantasy football. At the end of the day, the facts are, "We Are Family." We are part of the Valdosta Fire Department fam**IL**Y**** that does not end with an **END** but with an **I Love You**. It is time we take a moment to remind our brothers and sisters how much we love them. That powerful four-letter word could mean the world to someone in our VFD family, who is willing to risk their life just to save



Freddie D. Broome, Fire Chief

yours, who is willing to stand-by your side even when you didn't asked them too, who is willing to forget all the hurtful comments because you need a friend. I will start off by telling everyone that I Love You and thank you for your support.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Lt. Ply would like for you to know that the meeting schedule for Firefighters for Christ is as follows:

June 19th, July 17th, Aug 21st, Sept 18th, Oct 16th, Nov 20th, and Dec 18th.

Meeting locations will be announced closer to the meeting dates. Contact Lt. Justin Ply at (229) 630-4047 for additional information.



HIGH SCORE AVERAGE

Congratulations to Battalion Chief Robinson for maintaining the highest GPA in the Wiregrass Valdosta Fire & Rescue EMT Training Program.

ATTA BOY—DONE DID GOOD

Courtney Nelligan-Arroyo, of the Gaurdian Bank (and day sponsor), sends her thanks to Chief Broome for speaking to the Class of 2017 during their Local Governments and Courts Day. “We truly appreciate your time and your service to our AWESOME Community!” and “Thanks again for the bagpipes!! You are awesome!!”

Rebekah O. Matheson, Lowndes High School English Teacher, sends her thanks to Chief Broome for “taking the time to speak with my students. You made such an impact on these kids... It has meant a great deal to them to have such a well-respected and successful members of our community carve out an hour and a half from their busy work day to speak to them.”

Northgate Church of Lowndes County has sent the Valdosta Fire Department a Certificate of Appreciation. They would like us to know that we “are greatly appreciated for [our] service and hard work in keeping our Community safe and in good health. You have dedicated your lives to serving and protecting the people of Valdosta City and Lowndes County and for that we are forever thankful.” – dated April 9th, 2017

Carmen Cates, HSHT Outreach and Program Development Coordinator, and Jessica Carter, Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, send their “sincere gratitude and appreciation for all that you do”.

Larry Hanson, City Manager, and Tim Carroll, Councilman of District 5, send their appreciation and thanks for a job well done, especially for the lives and property saved during a busy week back in April.

QUINQUENNIAL ANNIVERSARIES

Welcome to a new section of The Second Alarm where we are celebrating the time in service accomplishments of our comrades in the Valdosta Fire Department. Pictured below, from left to right, are Lt. Ricky Alderman, BC Johnny Henry, and Lt. Jordan Washington who have all reached their 15 year anniversaries with the Valdosta Fire Department. Robert Gaines, far right, has reached his 5th year anniversary with the department. Congratulations and here’s looking ahead to the years to come.



Berna Hepburn, Human Resources Generalist in the City’s Human Resources Department, sends her thanks to Public Educator Tangela Rowe, and to all the other volunteers for their help during the Employee Appreciation Luncheon. “Thank you for taking time to serve us. The event was successful.”

Congratulations to Damion Moore for graduating from the Great Promise Partnership program, a statewide initiative in which students have the opportunity to gain experience and job-training while also earning a paycheck. Many of you may have met Damion as he interned for the Valdosta Fire Department. While doing his intern work for the fire department, Damion also had to balance his academic and extra-curricular activities. Great job, Damion!



(pictured above are the graduating seniors from the GPP program. Damion is third from the left)

EMPOWERING BUGLES—NOTES ON LEADERSHIP

Overcoming the Organizational Communication Gap

I've been working with people in all levels of organizations for nearly thirty years – from CEO's to middle managers, from frontline employees to first level leaders. And the single most common concern I've heard across all those people, across all those years is: communication in the organization.

I've worked with organizations where it truly is awful, and with organizations where it is relatively good; and so while the problem might be relative; it is a problem as seen by everyone.

We all want to have better communication in our organizations.

There are lots of reasons we feel this way, not the least of which is that communication is hard when there is just two people, so when there are 10, 100 or 100,000 people involved, it can't help but be complex. This article isn't really about the gap – we all agree it exists, and it isn't about explaining why the gap exists either. This article is about what we all can do about it – regardless of our role in the organizations.

For Leaders

Communicate more. If there is a communication gap, this would be a good place to start. Remember that communication of strategies, decisions, information and context is a significant part of your job. Be more conscious about what you need to communicate, then communicate it, and communicate it again.

Communicate in different ways. OK, you sent them an email and you feel like you communicated the message. Do you read all the emails you receive thoroughly? Communicate your message in different media and in different ways. Here's just one example: when was the last time you used a story or example to make your point clearer?

Don't assume they know. Leaders often have mulled a decision for a long time. Once they have made it, they often assume everyone else knows. And sometimes they share something once and expect everyone to see all of the connections to other strategies and plans the way they do. These are both examples of leaders expecting people to read their minds. You hired people to do lots of things, but I'm guessing mind reading wasn't in the job description. Leaders don't mean to make these assumptions, but they do it all the time.

Ask clarifying questions. Since communication is about message sent and message received, you need to make sure it gets received. Ask questions to make sure people understand. Open the lines of communication so people feel comfortable asking questions too. This applies one-on-one and in groups of all sizes. As a leader, you want to be asking questions all the time to ensure improved communication flow.

For Team Members

Ask questions. If you don't feel like you know what is going on, you can either shake your head and complain about "the lack of com-

munication around here" or you can ask questions. If you don't know about something, ask.

Communicate yourself. Guess what? Leaders feel the communication gap too. If you want them to communicate more with you, make sure you aren't perpetuating the problem by being close-lipped yourself, or thinking you don't have time to communicate. Communication is everyone's job in the organization.

Give feedback. When communication has been successful, let people know. When you are unclear, or you received some messages later than you wished, let people know that too. One of the best ways you can improve the communication in your organization is engage in it, and give feedback on how it is going.

For Everyone

Assume positive intent. As a third party to many conversations about organizational communication, I see the assumption of intent as a huge cause of disconnect. If you want better communication with others, assume they are telling the truth. Assume they aren't withholding information for nefarious reasons. Assume that everyone is trying to communicate successfully, even when it doesn't happen. Is that 100% accurate? Maybe not. But if you have "decided" there is ill intention first, it makes the flow of communication harder before it even begins. If you can shift the assumption of intention to a more positive place, organizational communication will improve immediately.

Remember it is hard. When we know something is hard, we work at it and give others a break. Yes, we can hold ourselves to a high standard, and for something this important we should; and yet when we remember it is hard, we will get past the communication misses more easily.

Remember it is everyone's job. Communication requires a sent message that is received and understood. Improving organizational communication is everyone's job, and when everyone realizes that, improvement is possible.

Overcoming the organizational communication gap isn't something for leaders and supervisors to solve – it is a problem that everyone plays a role in so everyone can help improve. If you would like the communication in your organization to improve, read this again. Think about the role you play and how you can do your part to close the gap. When you do, everyone will win.

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HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Health & Wellness: What Does It Mean to Be Fit for the Fire?

by Justin C. Dickstein

It is a well-known fact that the number one killer of firefighters is stress or overexertion causing sudden cardiac death. Clearly something is missing in our preparation to be physically fit to fight fire.

The Indiana University research emphatically states, "The discrepancy between the physical preparedness of firefighters and the high demand of firefighting stands at the center of fire service line-of-duty deaths." Leading that research is Dr. Jim Brown, director of Firefighter Health & Safety Research, who explains, "Development of an effective physical training program begins with the identification of demand levels a job or event presents."¹

There are a variety of factors unique to firefighting that call for specific training and adaptations. Some of the widely studied elements are the weight of our gear and the increase in body temperature. Some of the less discussed, but equally important, factors are the effect that SCBA has on our ability to work and the psychological impacts of our equipment. We must consistently train on these specific components of our profession to drive adaptation.

But what about those of us who not only want to survive on the fireground, but also set the example and excel as aggressive interior firefighters? If you are a tactical athlete and your sport is fighting fire, your training must match that. We can all guess

what would happen if we took a marathon runner and put him or her in bunker gear, strapped them in an SCBA, put a charged 1¾-inch line in their hands and pushed them into a burning house. As great of a runner as they might be, they will be overwhelmed by the task. How about the other end of the spectrum? A powerlifter who bench-presses 500 pounds will find themselves in the same boat as the marathon runner because neither of these athletes have trained for the specific stresses and adaptations that fighting fire requires. A fire athlete must train to be fit for the fire.

Measuring fitness

Every sport has measurements to tell you how well an athlete has performed, or is expected to perform. In firefighting, the most vital measurement may be VO₂ max.

VO₂ max is the maximal oxygen uptake or the maximum volume of oxygen that can be utilized during maximal or exhaustive exercise;

it is considered the best indicator of cardiorespiratory endurance. And it has been shown to be one the best predictors for success for passing the CPAT.² VO₂ max has been consistently identified as an important factor in the association of firefighting demands and physiological requirements.¹

VO₂ max is measured in mL/kg/min, with the minimum level recommended for firefighters, as determined by the IAFF, set at 42 mL/kg/min.³ It has been shown that individuals with VO₂ max values below 33.5 mL/kg/min are unable to complete a standard fire suppression protocol.¹ To directly compare this to other sports, search and rescue is as intense as, or even more intense than, pro football, requiring an energy expenditure of up to 16 METS (metabolic equivalent), which equates to a VO₂ max of 56 mL/kg/min.⁴

Operating in your SCBA might be having a more dramatic effect on your ability to work than you realize. Research has shown that during heavy work, the SCBA greatly reduces maximal exercise performance. Clinical data shows that a full SCBA system lowers VO₂ max by 14.9 percent, with the regulator alone lowering it by 13.1 percent.⁵ To show how significant this 14.9 percent is, let us look at some VO₂ max values common to firefighters.

A sample of paid firefighters was found to have a mean VO₂ max of 40.57 mL/kg/min.¹ When that is reduced 14.9 percent by the SCBA, it gets lowered to 34.52 mL/kg/min—or just 1 mL/kg/min over the minimum required for completing the standard fire suppression

protocol discussed earlier. Further, 75 percent of volunteer firefighters tested were found to have a VO₂ max between 20 and 39 mL/kg/min.¹ That means when their VO₂ max values are adjusted for the SCBA, 75 percent or more of volunteer firefighters do not meet the minimum level to perform a fire suppression protocol.

Physiological reinforces psychological

We have all seen new recruits who are not quite comfortable in their gear; some get claustrophobic the second they don their SCBA. Hopefully with practice and repetition that goes away so the rookie does not lose their dream job, and the department does not lose its investment. But how many of us have also seen the 15- or 20-year firefighter who, after a career of fighting fire, starts pulling their facepiece off and cannot work in an SCBA? Why does that



HEALTH AND WELLNESS—CONTINUED

happen?

With the frequency of fires today, maybe that vet is a year or two older since the last time they really had to go all out in a fire. They are likely a step or two slower. Now the physiological aspects are hitting them harder than ever. In their mind, the job is tougher—it is “for the young guys (or girls).” Once those physiological and psychological effects start reinforcing each other, it is only a matter of time before they become insurmountable and the mask comes off.

While implementing a mandatory physical-ability test for Clearview Fire and Emergency Services in Ontario, Canada, Deputy Chief Roree Payment noted, “Why they failed had nothing to do with the physical element, it actually had everything to do with their confidence in an SCBA.”⁶ A firefighter simply must be able to confidently and calmly work under a variety of added psychological stressors, and that comes through repetition and familiarity.

Practice how you play

Fighting fire is made up of a combination of aerobic and anaerobic demands, combined with extreme heat, added weight, unique cardiorespiratory effects, and psychologically challenging environments. How do we become functionally fit to fight fire, or practice how we play? Most departments simply do not have a high enough volume of structure fires to rely on the job to keep them in shape.

A base layer of strength and cardio conditioning comes first. If you are not there yet, start slowly, master the basics, and begin today. Fitness is your duty. Especially when your life depends on it, even more so when the man or woman going in the fire with you depends on it as well.

Beyond that basic level of fitness, the goals are to increase VO₂ max and mimic the stresses and movements of the fireground as closely as possible. We push, we pull, we crawl, we lift and we drag. These are all movements that are done in burning structures—they just have to be translated into an organized, progressive program. Sandbags and kettlebells are extremely functional tools. Hose drags and dummy drags are direct simulations of things that we do. Anything going up stairs carrying weight will be effective. Tire flips and battle hoses make great stations to rotate a crew through and build camaraderie at the same time. There are several practical programs created by firefighters for firefighters; it is always a good idea to rely on experts to help design your routine. Consistency is the key factor for whatever plan you choose, but you have to keep making progress and moving forward.

An important consideration is how closely to simulate fireground conditions. Should we train in bunker gear? Should we train in SCBAs? Some skills need to be completed in full gear from time to time. It is necessary. We have to work at maximum output for prolonged periods in very specific equipment; there is no way around that. The range of motion and body heat-trapping elements of our PPE can be paralyzing if not prepared for. The SCBA has known physiological and psychological effects that build on each other. As such, there is no option but to train frequently enough in full equipment to be ready to do the job in that gear.

But with all the known cancer risks, is it worth doing regular conditioning in dirty turnouts? What about taking equipment out of ser-

vice to train, and not having it ready to respond? One of the benefits of functional fitness is that it mimics what we do closely enough that it readily translates. And there are a variety of functional simulation tools designed to take the place of that dirty gear. There are sandbags to replicate weight and training regulators to simulate the SCBA breathing sensation. Use old hoses for dragging or get a sledgehammer off the truck. Use what you can, when you can, and weigh the risk vs. reward.

In sum

As the timeless advice from Greek soldier Archilochus states, “We don’t rise to the level of our expectations, we fall to the level of our training.” You simply cannot expect to summon a level of fitness that you have never attained when you and your crew need it the most.

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About the author: Justin C. Dickstein is a captain in the Garland, TX, Fire Department. He has been a frontline officer in responses to both an ISIS-inspired terrorist attack and an EF4 tornado. He has a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from The University of Texas at Austin. He is a co-author of *The Station-Ready Rookie* (PennWell, 2015). He is the creator of the BlastMask training regulator (BlastMask.com).

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH NOMINATIONS

The month of April has produced an embarrassment of riches for the Valdosta Fire Department where it comes to City of Valdosta Employee/ Employees of the Month Nominations. For your perusal and consideration:

Employee of the Month Nomination for Lieutenant Justin Ply

On April 18, 2017 while attending a promotional assessment in Gainesville, Florida, Lt. Ply was sitting at the intersection of I -75 and Newberry Rd when he witnessed a male and female in a heated argument on the side of the roadway. He witnessed the male throwing the female to the ground and pulling his fist back like he was going to punch her. He was yelling profanity at her and threatening to kill her. He then struck her in the head with his right hand. Lt. Ply immediately pulled off of the road to intervene and prevent any further abuse. Lt. Ply told the male not to touch the female again or he would intervene. He immediately called 911 to get law enforcement on the way. The dispatcher advised that they were receiving numerous calls for this incident but no one else stopped to help. The male then became very belligerent with the lady and Lt. Ply; however, he never struck the lady again and eventually left the area on a moped. Shortly after he left the area, a law enforcement helicopter circled the area and continued circling the area until law enforcement personnel arrived. Lt. Ply stayed by the female's side until law enforcement informed him he was clear to leave. Lt. Ply's daring and possibly dangerous intervention prevented any further abuse and possibly saved the female's life.

Employee of the Month Nomination for Chief McMillan

On the morning of April 16, 2017, Chief Boutwell was stopped by a civilian at Enmark on East Park Avenue. The civilian stated that he was unable to start his car. With limited knowledge of auto mechanics, Chief Boutwell called Chief McMillan to see if he had any ideas on assisting the stranded motorist. Chief McMillan promptly reported to the location of the motorist and began diagnosing the mechanical problem. Within a few minutes, he narrowed down the problem to the gentleman's starter. Without hesitation, Chief McMillan crawled under the vehicle and was able to get the car started. The noble efforts of Chief McMillan allowed the citizen to attend his church's Easter Sunday Service. Chief McMillan efforts is a depiction of what the City of Valdosta demonstrates in customer service.

Employee of the Month Nomination for Lieutenant Herpin, Sergeant Isaac Harris, Firefighter Jamie Sapp and Firefighter Nick Bishop

On the evening of April 20, 2017, Valdosta Fire Department responded to a report structure fire at 1316 Ponderosa Drive. The dispatcher informed all responding units that there was possibly a child still inside the apartment. Engine 2 arrived on the scene first and reported heavy smoke from the front door. Engine 2's personnel (Lt. John Herpin, FF. Jamie Sapp, & FF. N. Bishop) entered the structure and heard a child calling for help. Lt. Herpin and his personnel conducted an aggressive search and located the child in a bedroom. The child was immediately rescued and passed through the window to Sgt. Harris. Sgt. Harris utilized his EMT skills to assess the child until EMS assumed all patient care. The child was transported to SGMC for precautionary reason and was later released. These men's actions on the evening of April 20, 2017 exemplify the meaning of America's Bravest and team work by saving the life of 8 of child.

Employee of the Month Nominations for Lieutenant Coppage, Sergeant Darren Williams and Firefighter Justin Howard

On April 20, 2017, the Valdosta Fire Department responded to a reported structure fire at 726 Lausanne Dr. There was smoke and flames visible upon arrival. Truck 1's personnel (Lt. E. Coppage, Sgt. D. Williams, & FF. J. Howard) were assigned ventilation and secondary search operations. While conducting a secondary search, Truck 1's personnel located a dog and quickly remove it from the residence. The dog had obvious signs of mild smoke inhalation. SGMC EMS personnel was on the scene to assist VFD firefighters and immediately came to the aid of the dog. SGMC Paramedics gave the dog some oxygen until he started displaying his normal behavior. The owner transported the dog to a local veterinarian for precautionary reasons. Firefighters strive to save all lives including pets because animals are considered family members too.

GIVE BURNS THE BOOT! 2016 BOOT DRIVE TALLY

Thanks to the Valdosta Fire Department, the citizens of Valdosta, the citizens of Lowndes County, and those passers-by who were kind enough to donate, we helped to raise over \$600k for the Georgia Firefighters Burn Foundation during the 2016 Give Burns the Boot drive. Valdosta alone contributed almost \$10k to that total, placing us 17th out of a total of 51 contributing departments. Great job everyone!

