

**VALDOSTA FIRE
DEPARTMENT**

A Department Without Limits

Editor:
Sgt. S A Miller

BIRTHDAYS:

**LT JOHN
HERPIN** 11/10

**SGT JIMMIE
BACON** 11/11

**SGT CHRIS
SCOTT** 11/13

**RCT SEABRON
WILLIAMS** 11/15

**SGT TREY
COTHRON** 11/22

**FF JEFF
KRAUSHAAR** 11/23

**FF MICHAEL
PENLAND** 11/23

**LT MICHAEL
CRUMP** 11/28

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

I remember while working in Winston-Salem, I received a text around midnight from Battalion Chief Sandy Sheppard that had a picture of Superman and read "Even Superman has to rest!" The next shift that Chief Sheppard worked, I told him, "thank you for caring and checking on me." What Chief Sheppard didn't realize was that his message was encouraging, because I needed to be reminded to take care of myself.

When I moved to Valdosta, I found myself back in the same routine. I was working a lot of late hours and I was really taxing my limits both physically and mentally. One night, Chief Boutwell stopped by the office and asked "how are you doing Chief?" We had a conversation about how Chiefs are so busy trying to take care of everyone else that they often forget to take care of themselves. The sad part is those being taken care of often fail to check on the ones trying to take care of them." Upon leaving one evening, Mrs. Collins told me "Chief, try and enjoy a weekend without working, just try to relax your mind." These conversations and many more are examples of encouraging conversations that reminded me that people do care and I felt a sense of appreciation. Last weekend, I was driving to Elizabeth City, NC, I was alone, driving for 10 hours and feeling a

little down. A song from my playlist started playing and I think I listened to that song about 10 times. One of the stanzas that really spoke to me:

Sometimes you have to encourage yourself

Sometimes you have to speak victory during the test

And no matter how you feel

Speak the word and you will be healed

Speak over yourself, encourage yourself in the Lord- Donald Lawrence and the Tri-City Singers

As the song played, I realized that I really needed to hear those words. Not sure if it was divine intervention or what, but the timing was impeccable. At that moment, I had an epiphany of the importance of learning how to encourage yourself. Although, it is great for others to give you words of encouragement and inspirational messages, all of it will be in vane if you cannot encourage yourself. Our lives are not perfect and we are going to make mistakes. There will even be days when you feel everyone is against you or there seems to be nothing you can do right without someone complaining or getting upset. Those are the days when you



Freddie D. Broome, Fire Chief

have to learn how to encourage yourself because you are not always going to have someone there to encourage you. I can't tell you what works best because it is an individual concept of learning what encourages you. In closing, "Don't let life's challenges discourage you. Some things are just out of your control. Make it work for you! The most painful lessons of the past can teach you how to survive in the present. - Carlos Wallace"

Thank you for your continuous support and encouragement. Our organizational success is because of you, one of my strengths to succeed comes from you, and we are "A Department without Limits" because of you. Be Encouraged!

ATTA BOY—DONE DID GOOD



Congratulations to Lieutenant Justin Ply for being selected as the 2017 Exchange Club of Valdosta Firefighter of the Year. Lt. Ply was chosen for this honor due to his actions back in April of this year when he intervened in a situation where he protected a woman from further abuse on the side of the road in Gainesville, FL.



Congratulations to Lieutenant Jeffrey Talley and Battalion Chief Frank McMillan (not pictured) for pulling an Employee of the Month two-fer. Lt. Talley was honored as September's Employee of the month his work in procuring the pet rescue masks for our fire engines.

BC McMillan was honored as October's Employee of the Month for his actions this past April where he assisted a stranded motorist with his mechanical knowledge.



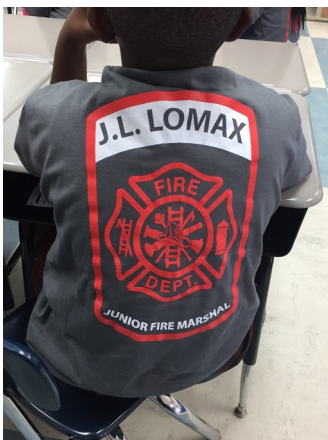
VFD personnel participating in this year's National Walk your Child to School Program.

The family of former Assistant Chief Leighton Sadler send their thanks for all of the Valdosta Fire Department members who attended his funeral service.



These are the shirts the boys helped to purchase for the students in the Jr. Fire Marshal program. They needed help with 6 students shirts and we had a tremendous out pouring from the guys. We just want to thank everyone that gave for this great cause.:

Bennie Kennedy, Alisa Collins, Johnnie Henry, Tangela Rowe, Ken Taylor, Terry Clark, Robert Mercer, Lloyd Cummings, Charles Phillips, James Clinkscales, & Louis Audain



And there were many more whose hearts were in the right place but we had collected in excess. The extra funds will be used to go towards funding their JFM activities this year. Thanks to everyone who gave and whose intentions were there to give also.

EMPOWERING BUGLES—NOTES ON LEADERSHIP

How to Say No Assertively to a Request for Your Time

Learn to communicate your needs with more firmness and less fear. *"The art of leadership is saying no, not saying yes,"* remarked former U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair. *"It is very easy to say yes."* You don't have to be a leader to wrestle with saying no. Regardless of role, responsibility, title, or position, many of us find ourselves wanting to decline a request for our time, but we don't know how to say no assertively.

And yes, you can say no to a request, because a request is not a command. A request is an ask to which we can say "yes", "no" or make a counteroffer, while a command assumes an obligation. However, we often think of requests as commands, sometimes due to the tone in which the request is made, or a power differential, or our fear of the other person's reaction, or even a feeling of indebtedness.

Nevertheless, while we all know that "no" is a complete sentence when it comes to responding to a request, we often wrestle with being too passive (when we want to avoid conflict or hurt feelings), too aggressive (when we worry our needs will be ignored), or even passive-aggressive (when we're feeling manipulated, punished or otherwise concerned that an honest or direct approach won't work). A passive approach to saying no might sound like *"Ok, I'll do it...this time"* when we don't want to do it this time (or at all). Or it could sound like, *"Maybe I can"* when you already know that you can't or don't want to say yes.

An aggressive reaction to a request for our time might range from asking *"Are you deaf? I said no!"* to *"Not in a million years"* or even *"What makes you think I would want to do that?"*

A passive-aggressive response can sound like *"Fine"* (when you're anything but). It can also sound like, *"Do I really have a choice?"* It also shows up as *"I'll get back to you"* and you don't, or *"Yeah, sure, I'll be there"* and then you "forget" to show up.

As much as we don't want to disappoint, hurt or even anger our customers, clients, managers, direct reports, or friends and family, we can be assertive and firm in our no's while being flexible enough to keep the door open for future yeses. This requires us to be clear and honest about our own needs and preferences (to do something else with our time and energy) while honoring the needs and preferences of others (to be heard, to feel appreciated, to stay connected, to avoid shame, to maintain their dignity in the face of rejection, etc.).

Here are 20 ways to say no assertively to a request for your time:

- 1) Oh, I will be so disappointed to miss this! Thank you for asking me.
- 2) While I would love to do that with you/for you, [insert type of priorities] preclude it. I hope you understand.
- 3) I am so flattered that you asked but unfortunately I cannot do that. Can I help you brainstorm someone who might be able to help?
- 4) Normally, I would say yes, but I have already committed to _____.
- 5) Right now, I am saying no to all invitations (on this topic, at this timeframe, etc.). Here's why...
- 6) I need to decline, but I do hope you'll keep me in mind for the future. Would you please reach out again?

- 7) I try very hard not to make commitments I will likely need to cancel, and because of the timing here, I can imagine needing to cancel at the last minute, leaving you in a last-minute scramble to find someone else. Because of that, I need to say no.
- 8) That sounds like a fantastic event/opportunity/cause, and I know that I will be sorry to miss it.
- 9) I cannot attend in person, but I wonder how I can help in some other way. Can we brainstorm ideas?
- 10) Not this time, but thank you for thinking of me.
- 11) I am grateful for the opportunity and for you thinking of me. However, I am totally booked with commitments I made months ago.
- 12) I sit down with my calendar on Sundays. Would you please send me all of the information I need, and I'll let you know on Monday if it works with my whole schedule?
- 13) I love the cause, and I am so glad you thought of me for it, but I simply can't commit right now.
- 14) I can't make a decision right now, and I don't want to hold you up so feel free to ask someone else.
- 15) Not this time, but when's the next opportunity available for something like this?
- 16) If only I had a clone so I could be in two places at once! Unfortunately, I can't make it.
- 17) I am heads-down on a project right now, and won't be coming up for air for the next [insert timeframe]. Can we plan to do something after that?
- 18) When do you need to know by? I ask because if it's in the next {week/month/quarter}, I will need to say no.
- 19) I'm not available, but I know someone who would love to be a part of it. May I connect you?
- 20) Thank you for asking me, and I know you asked me because you thought I'd enjoy it/it would be a good fit for me/opportunity. For the future, I want you to know that this isn't the kind of thing I'm likely to do. However, I would love to tell you what I tend to say to. Can I share that with you?

About the Author:

Deborah Grayson Riegel, MSW, is a coach, speaker and author focused on presentation, communication and leadership skills. She is the CEO and Chief Communication Coach for Talk Support and the Director of Learning at The Boda Group. She teaches Management Communication at Wharton Business School at the University of Pennsylvania and Executive Communication at the Beijing International MBA Program at Peking University, China. She is the author of *Tips of the Tongue: The Nonnative English Speaker's Guide to Mastering Public Speaking*, for global leaders who need to attain the confidence, competence, and cultural comfort of making presentations. She lives in New York with her husband and teenage twins.

First published on Psychology Today (www.psychologytoday.com)

Reprinted with permission from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/speak-easy/201709/how-say-no-assertively-request-your-time>

Published with permission from Deborah Grayson Riegel, MSW. The material is considered under Copyright 2017 Deborah Grayson Riegel, MSW, all rights reserved.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Get your mind and body fit—and reduce fire-fighting stress—with yoga

Starting a yoga program now can help you cope with the stress of being a firefighter

By Leischen Stelter, American Military University

In 2015 and 2016, more firefighters died by their own hand than in the line of duty. The high suicide rate among firefighters, combined with growing awareness of PTSD, has spurred fire service leaders to find ways to help firefighters manage stress.

Exercise is commonly referred to as one of the most effective ways to manage stress. For firefighters, being physically fit is a job requirement. But a yoga class also gives you the tools to reduce stress while making you physically and mentally stronger.

WHY TAKE YOGA?

Yoga can help first responders manage the high-stress job they face.

Olivia Kvitne has taught trauma-sensitive yoga classes for 14 years and to firefighters and EMTs around the country for over 5 years. Her program, *Yoga for First Responders*, was developed while working with the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) to help their firefighters address high levels of cumulative stress that was leading to medical problems.

Kvitne said yoga is not just “good” for firefighters and first responders; it is meant for them. This is because the original and true intents of yoga are to obtain a mastery of the mind and achieve an optimal functioning of the entire being—from the subtle nervous system to the whole physical body.

BENEFITS OF YOGA

Individuals who practice with this purpose are often better able to process stress and convert it into higher levels of performance.

Kvitne said yoga increases your ability to focus and problem-solve, gives you heightened situational awareness and encourages intelligent gut reactions to situations.

People who practice yoga also have the ability to make self-directed biological changes, meaning they can impact the functioning of their brain and nervous system through their own actions.

When stress is trapped in the body and mind and no action is taken to process it, stress causes a depletion of a person’s health. However, when individuals take steps to consistently handle the stress they’re feeling, they can improve their well-being and even become more resilient in the face of adversity.

PRACTICING YOGA

Kvitne said *Yoga For First Responders* targets the specific needs of first responders. The practice focuses primarily on tactical breath work (specific breath-control techniques) to access the nervous

system, physical postures for releasing stress and building mental and physical stability, and concludes with a neurological reset exercise to return the system to a balanced state.

She said it doesn’t take much to start a yoga practice right away. Here is one simple exercise to begin your journey toward reducing stress in your life:

Tactical Breath Work

- **Belly Breathing:** Sit in a chair with a tall, straight spine, no slouching. Place one hand on the low belly area. Inhale slowly through the nose and inflate the belly like a balloon, feeling the belly expand against the hand. Exhale slowly through the nose and feel the belly deflate away from the hand. Continue this a few times, working to make each inhale and exhale slower and deeper and directing the breath into the belly rather than the chest.
- **Add Breath Count:** Continue the belly breathing above (hand can stay on belly or not) while inhaling and exhaling through the nose. As you inhale, count how many seconds it takes to inhale. It will probably be around three to four counts. Pause the breath at the top of the inhale, and then slowly exhale and count how long it takes to exhale. Work on making the exhale longer than the inhale. For example, if you inhale for a count of three, try to extend the length of the exhale for a count of four.
- **Practice the above exercise for 3 minutes at a time.** Breathing through the nose, directing the breath low into the belly, and consciously making the exhale longer than the inhale are the three ingredients needed to press the “calm” button on the nervous system.

Practice this breathing technique and then use it when you are feeling particularly stressed or if you’re having difficulty sleeping. This exercise is simple and subtle, yet the effect on the nervous system can make a huge difference in helping reduce stress.

Yoga is beneficial to first responders as a stress buster, as well as to help hone physical and mental resilience. For more simple and short practices on video, check out these videos on *Yoga for First Responders* (<http://yogafirstresponders.yoga/online-videos>).

About the author:

Leischen Stelter is the editor of *In Public Safety*, an American Military University sponsored website. For the last five years, she has been writing about issues and trends relevant to professionals in law enforcement, fire services, emergency management and national security. Prior to that, she was the managing editor of a business publication for physical security professionals. To contact the author, please send an email to IPSauthor@apus.edu.

Article first published at FireRescue1.com

Reprinted with permission from <https://www.firerescue1.com/fire-products/online-training/articles/240602018-Get-your-mind-and-body-fit-and-reduce-firefighting-stress-with-yoga/>

ATTA BOY—EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH NOMINATIONS

Sgt. Matt Courson

Sgt. Matt Courson graduated last year from the Valdosta Fire Rescue EMT program offered through Wiregrass. After completing the EMT program, he immediately entered the Wiregrass EMT-A program. His reason for joining the EMT-A program was to receive a higher level of medical training affording him the opportunity to teach medical classes to VFD personnel. After receiving his EMT-A certification, Sgt. Courson immediately started teaching EMR (Emergency Medical Responder) training during the recruit schools. He has also started teaching EMR training to VFD employees to help them meet their annual required training hours and serves as a tutor for VFD employees working towards their EMT National Registry Certification. Also, Sgt. Courson has never requested any monetary compensation to attend the advanced training or to teach in the recruit school, train current firefighters or serve as a tutor. He has saved the city money by volunteering to teach and train VFD personnel on his days off. He has often told Chief Broome, "He does not expect anything in return for teaching on his days off, he just wants to be able to help the department achieve its overall mission!" Sgt. Courson is recommended for his outstanding teamwork and commitment to making the City of Valdosta, "A City without Limits."

Lt. Derrick Willis

Lt. Derrick Willis is one of the hardest working "behind the scenes" employees in the City of Valdosta. He is always the "go to person" when anyone needs assistance getting donations, food, bikes, etc. Recently in preparation for Hurricane Irma, he partnered with local businesses to make sure that he had snacks, water, Gatorade, etc. available for the firefighters. In addition to preparing for the firefighters, when he heard the Department was opening up the Fire Administration side as a "Place of Comfort" for families, he went to stock the break with refreshments for the family members. Once the storm made its presence in Valdosta in between assisting with responding to smaller incidents, Lt. Willis went to the City Hall Annex and picked up food and took it upon himself to deliver the lunch bags to all the firefighters while they were on the scene working on various emergency incidents. Not only does Lt. Willis provide excellent internal customer service, but he also provides excellent external customer service. Recently he was made aware of a Facebook post where a citizen was asking for help to replace a bike for a student that ride their bike to school. The bike was beyond repair. Several people were offering to make donations, however, Lt. Willis took it upon himself to contact one of the local businesses, which donated a bike to help the student continue to have transportation to school. Lt. Willis is recommended for his outstanding customer service, and his willingness exemplify excellent internal and external customer service while representing the City of Valdosta.

FIRST QUINQUENNIAL ANNIVERSARY



Congratulations to Corporals Blake Daugherty, Carlton Couch, and Lloyd Cummings for reaching their first quinquennial anniversary, five years with the Valdosta Fire Department!

ATTA BOY—FROM THE FACEBOOK

Some Firefighters from Station #2 (I believe) came to my daughter's preschool today. The preschool is Christ Episcopal Preschool. All 4 of the gentlemen that came were wonderful and very informative. It is so important that children their age become accustomed to seeing firefighters in uniform and dressed out in full gear so that they aren't afraid if an emergency happens. Thank you all so much for everything you do and for taking time out of your day to teach our children about your jobs. I am a substitute teacher at this preschool and I can tell you, with certainty, that Fire Safety Week is one of the favorite and most exciting weeks of the school year for these kids. As a very small token of appreciation for everything you do for us all; I am sending a few photos that I have taken. The first two are from today. The rest are from years prior. I hope you enjoy them as much as I enjoyed taking them.

Again, THANK YOU SO MUCH!

Ashley Drazdowski



Lowndes Coastal Plains Charter High School 1 hr · 🌐

Hayden was awarded a bicycle tonight in recognition of his completion of an entire course in only two weeks! "With the support of my mentor and teacher, I was able to come in, focus, and knock out an entire class in two weeks," he said. "It is a really good feeling to do that!"

His teacher, Ms. Gaston, added, "Students will work super hard when they feel a teacher is willing to invest in them and go the extra mile. I'm so proud of Hayden. He has shown what hard work and perseverance can do!"

A special thanks to Valdosta Fire Department for their donation of the bike! Hayden is thrilled to have it, and we appreciate their support.



Members of the Valdosta Fire Department hosted the Citizens Against Violence Children's Day Program today at Station 1.



Laps Daycare added 4 new photos. 5 hrs · Valdosta, GA · 🌐

Thanks You Valdosta Fire Department!! ❤️ ❤️



UPCOMING EVENTS



The Valdosta Fire Department is hosting the Second Annual Firefighter’s Ball on November 11, 2017, to give the community a night of food and fun, and to raise money for the work of Pink Heals Valdosta/South Georgia, a local VFD initiative that provides care to citizens in a variety of ways.

The ball will take place from 7 p.m. - 10 p.m., at the James H. Rainwater Conference Center, located at 1 Meeting Place in Valdosta, Ga.

This adult-only event, is open to the public and will include a buffet style dinner, music from a local DJ, dancing, a cash bar and more. The attire is semi-formal dress.

Individual tickets are \$35. Tables of 10 are also available for purchase.

The South Georgia Chapter of Firefighters for Christ is hosting a tailgate party. We will be at Grassy Pond on November 4th from 12-until. Please bring a side dish. Families are welcome. There is a \$5 fee to get into the park (Grassy Pond rules).

The City of Valdosta is making the holiday season special for persons with developmental disabilities and behavioral health needs who reside at the Parkwood Developmental Center. On Wednesday, Dec. 6, at 10 a.m., Mayor John Gayle, VFD Fire Chief Freddie Broome and members of the Valdosta Fire Department will deliver gifts to the 117 patients—ages 7 to 73—who reside at the facility, as part of the annual Mayor’s Christmas Motorcade.

Monetary donations are also welcomed and will be used to purchase uncollected items on the list. Unwrapped donations and checks made payable to the Valdosta Fire Department may be accepted through Tuesday, Dec. 5, at the Fire Department’s Administrative Office, located at 106 S. Oak Street. Additional drop boxes for non-monetary donations are located on the first floor of the Valdosta City Hall and the Valdosta City Hall Annex.

It’s time again for the Stocked Cart Race. We have a new location and a new corporate sponsor this year: Lowes. It will be November 4th at the Lowes side parking lot behind Zaxbys with check in at 9 AM and racing at 10 AM.

FACEBOOK—CONTINUED

Thank you Karen Gaskins Teems for supporting VFD and all first responders.

