DONATED PET MASKS SAVES FURRY RESIDENTS
CFD partners with Invisible Fence of Columbus to equip engines city-wide with life-saving devices. Page 3

CFD TESTING NEW MEDIC TRUCK PLATFORM
Research & Development placed 4 Ford F550 Medic Units in service for extended evaluation. Page 12

GET FUNCTIONAL! : Physical Performance Training Program for Firefighters
Fire Captains David Joseph (right) and Steven Eblin participate in the Physical Performance Program at the Columbus Fire Training Academy. Photo by James Miller
As we begin 2019, I want to recognize all the hard work and contributions our great men and women of the Columbus Division of Fire make day in and day out. Your efforts and professionalism are greatly appreciated and have not gone unnoticed.

“Better today than yesterday and better tomorrow than today”

When I began my tenure as Fire Chief, I laid out several goals and expectations to move this Division forward. In sum, each of these goals/expectations focused on this Division being “better today than yesterday and better tomorrow than today.” Without surprise, each of you have done your part in making this Division better than it has ever been, and I expect it to continue to get better as we move into 2019. Every accomplishment, successful run, and positive interaction with the public could not be done without each and every one of our members doing their part, as well as working together as a team.

Accountability & Professionalism

In order to achieve the success this Division continues to enjoy, each member must be accountable for their actions while performing with the professionalism the public expects. Every day, we owe it to the public to always ask for the best from ourselves and our fellow members. This was exemplified in 2018. While taking 164,156 calls for service, the Division of Fire only had 65 sustained complaints, a 0.04% complaint rate. In addition to the calls for service, we completed 920 fire investigations, 30,000 fire inspections, 1,916 civilians were taught CPR, and many other public relation events. Therefore, the complaint rate is even lower when we take into account these additional contacts with the public. You are to be commended on the professionalism you show the public on a daily basis.

Doing More With Less

We continued to implement and improve on procedures within the Division in 2018, including the P/B EMS system, extrication ladders, run card changes, rescue training, fire inspections, and others. These changes have been successful because of the dedication that our members continue to bring to work every day.

I understand that many of our companies are overworked and being tasked with more responsibilities without adding more resources. I appreciate your efforts and promise that I am doing everything I can to help ease these workloads. My office continuously requests an increase in staffing and hiring, looks for areas of improvement, and monitors the workload of every company. I know that this situation is far from perfect, but I also recognize everyone’s hard work in getting the work done.

Again, I want to let each of you know how much I appreciate your continuous efforts, dedication, and the professionalism you show every day. I look forward to working with you to make the Columbus Division of Fire “better today than yesterday and better tomorrow than today.”

Sincerely,

Kevin O’Connor
Fire Chief
Donated Pet Oxygen Masks Put to Good Use

Columbus Fire Recruit Jalen Richardson (left) and Firefighters William Greenwalt and Scott Waddell work to revive two dogs and a cat retrieved from a North Westmoor Avenue home after a neighbor spotted smoke and called 911 on the morning of Jan. 3, 2019. A third dog and three additional cats were rescued unharmed from the two story residence. No one was home when the fire broke out on the second floor. A family member transported the pets to a nearby animal hospital after firefighters revived the animals, who were overcome with smoke when they were found. Columbus fire engines carry pet specific oxygen masks, courtesy of a generous donation of masks from Invisible Fence of Columbus.

Chris Serrott of Columbus Invisible Fence (left) demonstrates fitting Tess, a Cavalier King Charles owned by Chris and his wife Teresa. The Serrotts and Invisible Fence donated 18 pet oxygen mask kits to be carried by Division of Fire engine companies on Thursday, Nov. 15, 2018.

Deputy Fire Chief Scott Strahan accepted the kits at Fire Station 3 on Greenlawn Avenue, home to the Division’s arson and explosives K9 members, who will also carry the three mask kits. Invisible Fence donated 40 of the kits in 2011. The new kits will replace masks damaged over the years of use.
The Division of Fire Research & Innovation Office is currently gathering feedback from EMT and paramedics on four new Ford F550 EMS transport vehicles now in service at Stations 6, 15, 17 & 23. The stations are all dual medic firehouses, chosen to place the new medics in service along-side the traditional International transport vehicles in use since 2004.

The ideal originated by the R & I staff to allow medics to operate both the Ford and International 4300 units while running on the same streets for a side-by-side comparison of utility, safety and comfort. Of the five additional medics delivered in 2018, Medics 10, 18 and 19 are Fords and Medics 4 and 29 are Internationals. The evaluation period of both performance and maintenance costs will run through 2019 and beyond.

Columbus Fire was using Ford F350’s up until about 2004. The EMS Transport Vehicle Committee, IAFF Local 67 and city’s Fleet Management Division decided to start buying “Heavy Duty” International medic vehicles instead of “Standard Duty” Fords.

This was a trend in EMS throughout the country at the time. The International chassis is a larger, more robust vehicle compared to the Ford 350. The International featured heavy duty suspension, steering and long lasting air brakes designed for continual stop and go traffic common to dense urban geography. The change was justified due to increasing run volume and rising maintenance costs of the Ford medic units.

In the intervening years, many improvements and innovations have been made to the Ford F-550 platform. Suspension is improved with a liquid spring design while hydraulic brakes were introduced to the line for improved for heavy service, and air bags were added to improve crash safety. Many large metro departments began moving to these types of lighter chassis.

**Research & Development Evaluates New Medic**
In 2017, the EMS Transport Vehicle Committee received approval from Chief Kevin O’Connor to poll the membership about considering alternative designs for the Division’s medic units. A Horton Ford F550 was made available to the Research & Innovation for a preliminary evaluation.

The committee received and reviewed hundreds of comments from medics operating the evaluation unit, which found members were open to the Ford for its improved ride quality and enhanced safety provided by the in-cab air bag systems. The lower cab seat height was also viewed as a feature that would lessen the wear & tear of knee joints for career medics and EMTs. The replies, both pro and con, were weighed and the data indicated the uniformed personnel saw a need for enhanced and updated transport vehicles.

The committee recommended, and Chief O’Connor approved splitting the Division’s planned purchase of eight new medic units between the International 4300 chassis and the Ford F550 chassis to further evaluate the reliability, down time and total cost to operate both Medic. Although the International 4300 equipped to the committee’s standard comes at a 10 percent cost premium over the Ford F550, the long term cost to operate and maintain the vehicle is unknown, accounting for the long evaluation period recommended by the R & I team. In the near future, members working on the new medics will be asked for their opinions and feedback as field evaluations continue. Fleet maintenance will also be a deciding factor in what direction the Division takes in the long term.

The side M9’s and rear M6’s double as scene lights reducing the number of lights needed.

With the use of the Stryker cot system, a new rear bumper was designed by R & I and adopted by Horton. It gets rid of the flip up section and passes all safety criteria. It is now widely used across the country and around the world by Horton customers, known as “The Columbus Bumper.”

Significant Ford F550 features include:

The front bumper was chosen for safety and a suitable mounting platform for lighting and other vital equipment.

The light bar was removed from the cab roof and Whelen M9’s were mounted on the front patient compartment.

The patient compartment was slightly redesigned to fit both chassis.

“The initial feedback from the street has been very positive, which is very gratifying to our team. We are always trying to improve our specs each time we buy vehicles based on feedback from the membership.”

Firefighter Doug Wortman, Research & Development

“With the use of the Stryker cot system, a new rear bumper was designed by R & I and adopted by Horton. It gets rid of the flip up section and passes all safety criteria. It is now widely used across the country and around the world by Horton customers, known as “The Columbus Bumper.”

Firefighter Doug Wortman, project specialist with the Research & Innovation Department.

Medics Continued Next Page
Medics Continued

“We are also very lucky to have a company like Horton in our back yard as they are always willing to work with us on whatever we need. I know they take pride in our vehicles because many of the employees who build them live in their running districts. Whenever I am at the factory, I am asked numerous times about where these medic units are going, knowing that our EMS crews often service the neighborhoods of the Horton employees,” said Wortman.

The EMS Transport Vehicle Committee includes Captains William Griffith and Scott Sanders, Firefighter Doug Wortman of the Research & Innovation Department, as well as Firefighters Scott Benjamin, Brian Bigham, Sean Malone, Ryan Moody and Jared Saling.

The committee would like to thank Horton Emergency Vehicles of Grove City, Ohio for assisting in the evaluation process.

2018 Research & Innovation Apparatus Pipeline

Medics Received
International Medic 6
International Medic 15
International Medic 17
International Medic 23
International Medic 4
International Medic 29
Ford Medic 806
Ford Medic 815
Ford Medic 817
Ford Medic 823

Engines Received
Sutphen Engine 1
Sutphen Engine 2
Sutphen Engine 9
Sutphen Engine 25

2019 Deliverables
Pierce Ladder 8
Pierce Ladder 28
Sutphen Engine 6
Sutphen Engine 21
Sutphen Engine 22
## MEDIC CHASSIS FACT SHEET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>International 4300</th>
<th>Ford F550</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engine</td>
<td>Cummins 6.7 ISB</td>
<td>Ford 6.7 Power Stroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>260hp 660lbft torque</td>
<td>330hp 750lbft torque</td>
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<tr>
<td>B10 life</td>
<td>50k miles</td>
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<td>Transmission</td>
<td>Allison 2200 EVS</td>
<td>Ford Torqshift</td>
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<td>GVWR</td>
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<td>Engine Access</td>
<td>Tilt Nose Hood</td>
<td>Hood/Remove Cab</td>
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<td>Front axle</td>
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<td>Front suspension</td>
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<td>Coil springs 7000lb</td>
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<td>15”x4” air/drum 20 sq in chambers</td>
<td>15.39” hydraulic/rotors 68.8 sq in lining</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhaust</td>
<td>Vertical right rear cab exit</td>
<td>Horizontal right body exit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhaust brake</td>
<td>Turbo restrictor 3 position switch</td>
<td>Turbo restrictor on/off switch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chassis lube</td>
<td>Vogle 16 point with KFU pump</td>
<td>Manual zerk fittings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wheelbase</td>
<td>175”</td>
<td>193”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Front bumper to back of cab</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turning radius</td>
<td>24’10”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Length (bumper to bumper)</td>
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<td>26’5”</td>
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<td>Weight (chassis)</td>
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<td>Ford power/heated</td>
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<td>Siren</td>
<td>(2) Whelen 295SLSA1</td>
<td>(1) Whelen 295SLSA1</td>
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<td>Air horns</td>
<td>(2) Grover 25” air horns</td>
<td>(2) 10” Buell trumpet &amp; 12v auxiliary compressor/tank</td>
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<td>Paint option</td>
<td>Custom Red</td>
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<td>60 month 250k miles*</td>
<td>36 months 36k miles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warranty transmission</td>
<td>60 months unlimited miles*</td>
<td>60 months 60k miles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warranty engine</td>
<td>84 month 250k miles*</td>
<td>60 months 100k miles</td>
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* Extended warranty/service contract
Columbus Fire Captains David Joseph (right) and Steven Eblin alternate pulling weighted sleds and carrying kettle weights during a supervised workout designed to increase stamina and strengthen core muscle groups at the Fire Training Academy.

James Miller/Division of Fire
The physical fitness staff at the Columbus Fire Academy have designed a 60-minute workout for firefighters who wish to improve their overall strength and endurance. The supervised, group work-outs are open to all firefighters, with morning and afternoon sessions open Monday through Friday.

“The Physical Performance Program was designed to improve the health and wellness of our members,” said Firefighter Shane Brintlinger.

“The program is intended to keep firefighters physically prepared to do their jobs and to resist injury,” said Brintlinger, a certified fitness trainer and former power lifter.

Many of the new participants are mid-career firefighters wishing to improve their overall fitness. Some have just returned from light duty and several have a history of injury.

“A lot of our exercises are intended to prevent injury in the first place. Our goal is to get everyone to a safe level of functioning. But the larger goal is put firefighters on a lifestyle path that not just serve them well in their careers, but allow for better lives when their careers are over. About a third of our participants are closer to retirement than the beginning of their careers. We want them to enjoy those years, too,” said Brintlinger.

Brintlinger, along with Firefighter Brian Smith, conduct physical training for new recruits each morning. The Physical Performance Program differs from the recruits’ regimen in that it starts with an assessment which defines a baseline as a starting point for each individual.

“The first three to five workouts are closely supervised. Mostly it’s to learn the terminology and to understand proper technique for each exercise,” Brintlinger said.

Each participant is evaluated on their current or past injury history, their beginning range of motion and load or resistance levels appropriate for their individual abilities. Good technique is emphasized. Even something as simple as the kettle swing, now a staple of cross-training fitness routines, requires good technique. Brintlinger lists the four ways he sees them performed.

“There’s the wrong way, the unsafe way, the safe way, and finally there’s the technically proficient way of performing them. That’s the goal for maximizing your workout period,” Brintlinger said.

Participants pulled weighted sleds and walked circuits carrying kettle weights, called a Farmers Walk, after a short warm-up, then rotated to pull-ups on rings.

“It’s all low tech and high safety. And everything we do is scalable. We can adjust the exercise, the resistance or the repetitions to fit everybody’s abilities,” said Brintlinger.

“The beautiful thing is we’re not trying to be world-class weight lifters,” said Brintlinger, who explained his classes’ focus on three areas of exercise; aerobic, high intensity and strength building.

“The kettle bell swing can be one or all three of these focus areas, depending on the weight and the number of repetitions. We combine the swings with the sled drag to create a circuit. You are getting an aerobic workout even if you don’t realize it,” said Brintlinger.

The emphasis is on continuous movement and full body exercises designed to strengthen core muscle groups instead of lifting weights simply to isolate and bulk up certain muscles. The program utilizes dumbbells, resistance bands and sand bags and stresses large, compound movements to replicate the function of firefighting tasks. The functional fitness approach is relatively new to the fitness culture. And the equipment used, all new thanks to a generous donation from CME Federal Credit Union in 2017, is decidedly old school.

“We are taking a modern approach, using 100 year-old knowledge. The new rowers and Aerodyne stationary bikes have really been around for 60 to 100 years. And nothing’s more low tech than dumbbells,” said Brintlinger.

Only a handful of fire departments nationwide are providing this type of pro-active fitness program, but Brintlinger sees on-going functional fitness in the same light as continuous, career-long training.

Performance Continued Next Page
Performance Continued

“If you look at line-of-duty deaths, we have reduced all areas with policy driven tactics and approach. Now the number one cause of LOD deaths is cardiovascular disease. And that’s something we have within our power to control the most,” said Brintlinger.

Of the 60 U.S. firefighters who died in the line of duty in 2017, sudden cardiac arrest accounted for nearly half of them, according to a report published by National Fire Protection Association Journal. A total of 17 firefighters died on the fireground, the second lowest in the past 40 years.

Brintlinger credits the support of Training Bureau Assistant Chief Jeffery Happ for supporting the development of the Physical Performance Program.

“We spend so much of our professional lives training, teaching and caring for the residents of our community. In our downtime, we have responsibilities to our families, so it’s hard to find time to care for ourselves, both mentally and physically,” said Happ, who is a regular participant in the Physical Performance Program.

Happ says that first responders have the added risk factors of the near non-stop alarms of a busy firehouse, and the resulting roller coaster surges in adrenaline and other stress related hormones that are a body’s natural response to potentially dangerous or urgent situations. Even suiting up and racing to what turns out to be a false alarm gets the heart pumping.

Adrenaline increases heart-rate, elevates your blood pressure and boosts energy supplies as part of our body’s...
hard-wired response to stress. But studies have shown that constant waves of stress responses can, over time, result in sleep problems, depression, anxiety and even heart disease.

Regular exercise is one way to prepare your body and calm your mind to help manage stress, said Happ, who has advocated for expanded exercise opportunities for the civilian workforce as well as the uniformed members.

“We know that healthier people are more alert and more productive. So it’s a good investment in time,” said Happ.

“We’ve just got to find the time to do it.”

Brintlinger would like to expand the Physical Performance Program into the Division’s fire houses by training firefighters at the Training Academy, who can return to their home stations and share what they’ve learned. He would define the program’s success by providing his brothers and sisters the tools to be better physically prepared for their careers and life after firefighting.

“What’s the point of working 30 years if you are broken before retiring,” asked Brintlinger.

“We’d like you to retire the way you were hired.”

CFD Performance and Wellness Initiative

Mission: To improve the performance, health and wellness of all employees of the Columbus Division of Fire.

Why: Cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, PTSD, depression, anxiety, exhaustion, addiction, burnout, fatigue, sedentary lifestyle, injuries, and relationship strain are only a few of the problems firefighters face daily while on the job. Exercise and slight changes in nutrition have been proven to improve every one of the above afflictions by an exponential amount. We want out members to have a healthy career with reduced chances of injury and disease, and we want them to live long and enjoy the retirement they worked so hard to obtain.

How: Firefighters rarely work alone. We work in teams and physical training should be no different. Physical performance training should be completed in teams and involve all the elements of physical performance (cardiorespiratory endurance, strength, stamina, flexibility, power, speed, coordination, agility, accuracy and balance). The needs of Olympic Athletes and our grandparents (and everyone in between) differ only by degree, not kind. Functional training is essentially training for normal daily living and elicits a strong neuroendocrine (mind-body) response that has helped people become stronger, faster, more resilient, and to recover quicker. We need to elicit the same response for our members.

• Training will take place in the gym at the Training Academy M-F at designated times (see the calendar below)
• Training will include a standardized warm up, a specific warm up, the workout, and a cool down, and will be completed in an hour or less
• Training will cover all the above noted domains of fitness, as put forth by the ACSM
• Training will be functional and primitive in nature and include weights, bodyweight resistance, ‘cardio’ equipment, medicine balls, gymnastic rings, pull up bars, and much more.

Calendar: Monday – Friday
- 0730 – 0900: Gym closed for use by Recruit Training
- 0900 – 1000: 1st Morning Group Session + open gym time
- 1000 – 1100: Open Gym
- 1100 – 1200: Morning Group Session
- 1200 – 1300: Lunch Break/open gym. No trainers available
- 1300 – 1400: Afternoon Group Session
- 1400 – 0730: Open Gym

THIS IS A NON-MANDATORY PROGRAM AVAILABLE TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT
It’s not every day that you’ll see sidewalk chalk and an inflatable jump house in use at the Columbus Fire Training Academy.

But on Family Day, recruits bring their spouses or significant others for an evening cook-out and informal group discussions covering the culture of firefighting as a profession. The idea is to prepare the cadets and their loved ones for the inevitable stresses first responders must endure and how those pressures can effect relationships and family life.

The after-hours gathering is hosted by the Columbus Fire training staff veterans and their wives, who know a thing or two about adapting to a work schedule that prizes around the clock service over sleep.

For the 40 recruits of the 107th Fire Academy Class that started in June, Family Night was led by Lisa Callander, a social worker who is the director of the city’s Employee Assistance Program, and Fire Captain Aaron Shonkwiler and his wife Carly Shonkwiler.

The origins of family day began over 20 years ago, recalls Callander, who said she attended the first one along with her 3-year-old son, now 26. Callander has a master’s degree in social work and specializes in both marriage & family counseling as well as chemical dependency counseling.

“It used to be a picnic, and Sparky attended for the kids. It was geared toward children, and an orientation for firefighters,” Callander said. The program lapsed for a while, but re-introduced into the Fire Training Academy by Lt. J.D. Vasbinder and his wife Sharon.

The program has been directed towards couples, though children were once again invited last August, in an effort to make it truly a “Family Night” at the suggestion Lt. Mark Dollison of the training staff.

“We restarted the program because now many of the fire recruits have children, so we decide to invite them and provide some kid’s activities and some child care.
for their parents, so it generated a lot of good discussions,” said Callander.

The goals for the sessions is to educate the families and better equip them to deal with the stressors of firefighting, explained Callander, including the accumulative effects of treating horrific trauma and the regular sleep deprivation associated with working a 24 hour shift.

“We train our recruits to do difficult jobs. Why not train the recruits and their spouses on how to deal with the stressors and tensions that come with the job. It’s just an extension of recruit training,” said Callander.

Columbus Fire Training Academy Captain Aaron Shonkwiler and his wife Carly addressed the group of recruits and their spouses, offering their experiences after 12 years as a fire family.

The couple became engaged just after Aaron graduated from the academy in 2006, and now have four daughters; Harper is eight, Remy, 6, Elle, 5 and Quinn is 3 years old. Aaron was assigned to Station 8 for most of his career, then assigned to Engine 6 as a lieutenant. All high volume assignments at busy fire houses. Carly taught middle school until the birth of their third child.

“I taught middle school reading at Columbus Afrocentric College. It was fun. I taught part-time, so it was 10:30 to 2:30, so it wasn’t so bad. Except he’d have to come home after being up all night on the medic and take care of the kids,” said Carly.

“Lisa Callander talked about issues that might arise with the fire recruits; the things they experience on the job, stresses and how they could use the city’s Employee Assistance Program to their advantage and then kind of what that looks like at home for the spouses so they can recognize a problem,” said Carly.

“I helped out with and just kind of expanded on that and what my personal experience has been. And just kind of how I dealt with it and other kind of tips and tricks.”

Strategies for balancing work, family time and sleep deprivation.

“The worst days are when you come home and she’s got a whole day planned,” said Aaron.

“We’re going to do something all day like a kids birthday party for instance. You come home exhausted and there’s like this long list of to dos. ‘Hey you gotta mow the grass, you gotta clean the house or stain the deck.’ She picks a project, and then we’re going to go to an event and be surrounded by 40 screaming kids and all of these family members and relatives. It sounds like a blast and everyone is so excited,” said Aaron.

“You’re like the grumpy Grinch that has no desire to do anything. You’re trying to put on a brave face for the family, for her and the kids. But all you want to do is either go to sleep or scream at half of these people that are in your house,” said Aaron.

Balancing Work, Family & Sleep

“I think eventually we found out that I have to let him rest,” said Carly.

“He found out the time length he needed to rest. At minimum, a 15-minute cat nap can get him through some of the day, but usually it has to be two hours,” said Carly.

See Family Night, next page.
Family Night continued

“If it’s less, he just wakes up even grumpier than he was. Now I just say ‘okay, go sleep for two hours.’ So you kind of compromise,” said Carly.

“Sometimes, it’s not just the lack of sleep; it’s just the stress in general,” said Aaron.

“She had to learn when I come home, you can’t really tell me, ‘hey the swing set’s broken you need to fix it’ as soon as I cross the threshold. I’m stressed, so you have some timing. There’s an ebb and flow to the day, and that alone goes a long way. Even if you can’t sleep, even if it’s a busy day there’s no time for sleep, get over it. You’ve still got to have that kind of gentle reintroduction. As a firemen, it’s hard because we’re in a job of service so then sometimes you forget when you come home and you’re real job of service begins, which is to your family. It’s hard because you’re like I just want to stop helping other people for just a second and there’s no gap. There’s often no time for that, so that’s tough.”

Much of the evening was spent discussing signs of stress, and communication strategies for couples. The talk also touched on divorce and suicide, both of which are more common among police and firefighters.

“We talked about our stressors, recognition of the stressors, the signs and triggers. We preach it highly at the academy, obviously EAP puts the emphasis on communication amongst the spouses. And marital stability. If you have that sound marriage at home it’s going to make your life at work way easier. Both for the spouse and for the firefighter. So, I know Carly brings in the book “Honor and Commitment” and talks about that and we give them a couple of other resources. It’s all about having that stable home life, that rock foundation when you’re at home so that you can actually survive a career here and they can actually survive you going through a career here,” said Aaron.

Internalizing emotional trauma can manifest itself as behavior changes like mood swings, sleeplessness or reliance on alcohol or drugs to cope with disturbing thought patterns. First responders often choose to silently endure rather than burden a loved one with their problems.

“That’s part of the communication barrier. A lot of times, firefighters don’t necessarily have to tell their spouses what they went through on a particularly bad run, but they have to share their feelings about it or how they’re processing it or not processing it with someone. I mean Aaron wouldn’t tell me a lot of things I’m sure because he didn’t want to burden me and that’s okay. But at least I know he’s talking to the other men and women at his station that also went through it. So he’s still has an outlet. If he needs me, he can express his feelings to me. But he doesn’t have to tell me about the run if he doesn’t want to and that’s okay,” said Carly.
Knowing the symptoms of ongoing distress is the key.

“The two main things we stress are communication and education. So if a firefighter doesn’t recognize that he’s getting stressed out, burnt out, or depressed, he won’t actively do something to fix it. That’s going to affect your job performance and obviously, the marriage. And the same from the spouse’s standpoint. If she doesn’t know those signs and symptoms, problems can go on unresolved. If some thing’s not right, she has to have the courage to say ‘Hey some thing’s not right, you’re stressed, you’re acting goofy, you’re not sleeping at night.’ You might not recognize it, but your spouse often will. I think those are the big contributors to the high divorce rate among police, fire and military. So education and communication is a big part of our Family Night presentation,” said Aaron.

“Which brings me back to the book I use for the presentation, Honor and Commitment by Lauren Mercer,” said Carly.

“The author’s husband is Dan Mercer, a firefighter in Whitehall. It’s basically the story of a single mom with a son. Lauren met Dan, ended up getting married and had three kids pretty quickly. They got just got to the point where they were asking themselves ‘what did we get ourselves into’. He had the stress of trying to get promoted while working in a busy fire house. He also had these new kids and learning how to be a step dad. She’s on the other side of it trying to figure out how to help him. Nothing really is working so she starts disconnecting from him. Each chapter is based on a subject, both from her perspective and from the firefighters’ point of view. She also included some pretty famous firefighters speaking about their experiences and coping strategies. At the end are questions that you can discuss back and forth. Some of these questions I didn’t really think to ask. It helped hearing from another wife who had similar stressors that I could relate to,” said Carly.

It takes both partners to make a first responder family run smoothly, added Callander.

“Firefighters don’t get a free pass, they have a responsibility to help their spouses understand the stress. That’s why we talk to the recruits. I talk about normalizing coping skills. I remind them it’s important to give themselves spaces, psychologically, to re-adjust to their family lives,” said Callander, who points out that dispatchers share the tension and psychological dangers of their counterparts on the streets.

“The reality is general citizens don’t know what it’s like to run into a burning building, or drive up on to a shooting scene. If we can reduce family tension, we have more intact, focused firefighters on the street,” said Callander.

“And that’s the whole point again of the family night,” said Aaron.

“Family night is meant to bring the spouses and recruits to up to speed on issues we’ve all faced. It’s also meant to mirror Saturday night pizza nights at the firehouse. Saturday nights are always pizza nights. You make the pizzas from scratch, the families come in and the kids get to decorate the pies. You’re there as a family and a community. We preach nonstop that we are a family here. We are a brother and sisterhood, so in order to pound that point home, we have family night at the academy. It kind of just ties it all in together real nice.” 

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Santa's Arrival on a Fire Engine Still Thrills Firefighter Families

Who wears a red suit and arrives on a fire engine with a sack of gifts for expectant kids? Santa does, of course. Tim Eaken from the Division’s payroll office has been playing the role of St. Nick for almost 30 years. This year, he’ll visit 29 fire stations throughout the city and townships, plus a few churches and Boy Scout and Cub Scout troops. He’s got appearances scheduled almost daily, including on Christmas Day when he’ll visit yet another fire station where crews are working the holiday and family members often stop by for Santa’s visit.

“I usually arrive on an engine. But it’s pretty cool coming in on a ladder. You just have to remember to duck your head,” said Eaken, who along with his wife supplies candy canes and M&M’s to the kids’ he’s watched grow up over the years.

The parents provide the appropriate wrapped gifts for Santa to distribute from his bag, so
he always seems to have the right gift for each child eagerly awaiting his dramatic arrival each year.

Eaken joined the Division of Fire in 1993 back when the administration offices were housed in a warehouse on Greenlawn Avenue. He works in the payroll office for 2-unit uniform personnel, where he seems to know all 465 firefighters (and their families) that he has responsibility for.

With his curly silver locks, long beard and jolly waistline, Eaken makes a pretty convincing Santa. His face actually glows red after climbing into and out of an engine cab with his sack of toys. Kids seem to be attracted to his outgoing personality. But he's careful not to go over the top.

"The first time I played Santa was in 1989. My grandmother was very ill at Mt. Carmel Hospital for the holidays. I really wanted to do something to cheer her up. I knew someone with a Santa suit, so I showed up as Santa for a visit. She loved it," said Eaken.

"When I was leaving her room, a woman stopped me and asked if I'd stop in her father's room, so I did. Then on the elevator ride down to the lobby, a lady asked me if I'd attend an AA meeting which was about to begin at the facility. I really didn't think I could do that, though." recalled Eaken.

Eaken has played Santa ever since. For firefighters who work their assigned duty days through the holidays, Eaken's Santa visit to the fire stations has become a welcomed tradition.

"It's just a lot of fun for me. I love the kids' reaction when I pull up. And I know it means a lot to the fire families," said Eaken.

Five-year-old Daniel Worth could barely contain himself when Santa arrived at Station 3 last Tuesday. He and his sister Lily ran to greet Santa as he climbed down from Engine 3 with his sack of goodies. Lily, now 4 years old, leaped into Santa's arms.

"Daniel has grown up in fire stations," said his mom, Kristi Worth. Kristi is married to Firefighter Daniel Worth, who is assigned to Station 3. Kristi was pregnant with Lily when she brought her son to see Santa arrive at the station.

"Daniel is a grown up in fire stations," said his mom, Kristi Worth. Kristi is married to Firefighter Daniel Worth, who is assigned to Station 3. Kristi was pregnant with Lily when she brought her son to see Santa arrive at the station.

"It's a nice tradition for our family to come here while Daniel is working and see Santa together with the kids," Worth said.

Eaken loves the challenge of winning over the shy kids.

"I make it my objective to warm to the kids who scared of Santa," said Eaken, who uses his gentle voice and the universal currency of candy to soothe a crying or reluctant child.

"I've seen a lot of these kids grow up. They know me as Santa, but sometimes I'll run into them out in the community. Most of them don't make the connection. But once I had a kid stop me in the grocery store and say 'hey mom, there goes Santa'. I just put my finger to my lips and winked and walk on," said Eaken.

"Some of the kids reach a certain age, about middle school, when they decide 'I'm too old for this Santa stuff'. But once they get to be 14 or 15, they play along and still sit on my lap. They don't want to ruin it for the younger kids. That's pretty sweet."

Eaken is approaching 30 years with the city, and plans to retire in the coming year. But he says he'll continue to don the red suit every December.

"I don't think I could ever quit. They are counting on me. Besides, it makes the season go by so fast. And it reminds you what the season is really about."
The Columbus Division of Fire will upgrade the Rapid Key Entry System (Knox) over the next nine months. The upgrade will allow the Division of Fire to incorporate the Knox electronic key system (eKey) within the City of Columbus. The eKey will provide a higher degree of security, increase tracking of key use, and the ability to operate Knox products located in other cities and townships, as approved by the Knox System Coordinator.

The rapid key entry system has really taken off in the City. At first, we were not sure how it was going to be accepted by the business community. However, once the word got out and the benefits were realized, businesses were all too eager to install them. As one owner stated, “They are a heck of a lot cheaper than repairing a door.” Of course, the main benefit is speed of entry, especially on EMS runs.

You have all seen the videos, so I am not going to bore you with stuff you already know or have seen. What I would like to do is just talk about a few points so you are updated on where we are and where we are going. At the time this article was written, we have 560 addresses who ordered boxes. 285 of those boxes are locked and operational.

The new style key secures will start to get switched over very soon. The benefit with the new style electronic key is multi-jurisdictional use. Other fire departments are talking to Knox about upgrading their boxes as well. With our mutual aid agreements, this will only help access buildings quicker and easier.

Something we are very excited about is a grant that we received. We will be receiving a thousand home Knox boxes. We are partnering with The Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging with this endeavor. The boxes will be the door hanger model and allow us rapid access. If you have ever responded to a medical patient who cannot answer the door, you know the frustrations of trying to get into the house. While they are in Columbus at a few addresses now, they will be popping up more and more.

So where is this all going? We are currently updating the City fire code and part of the update is having all commercial properties participate with the Rapid Key Entry System. State code already gives us the requirements to have a key box for fire department to use, but we will give a three year time-line to comply. This will give property owners time to adjust and comply. There will be updates on the new requirements when it occurs.

I have had many Division members contact me about Knox boxes for certain properties. Whether it is a family member who needs a home box, or a commercial property that they respond to a lot, every little bit helps. One example is station 22 contacted...
2018 Winter Command Post – Thank You Notes

Firefighters and Training Staff,

I want to say thank you to those who worked to put on the Get Fire Ready Event this past Saturday. The whole experience was amazing and incredibly helpful. The schedule ran smooth, the rotational stations were top-notch and the firefighters/instructors were welcoming, helpful and encouraging. I’m grateful that I was able to attend this event and look forward to relentlessly pursuing a career in the fire service. Finally, as always thanks for everything you do day in and day out to serve the citizens of your community.

Sincerely,

William Harris

Columbus Firefighters –

Thank you so much for coming to speak at Maize Manor UMC’s ‘Everyday Heroes’ event on Aug. 24th. We’re excited that our kids were able to learn more about the work you do for our community. (Plus, the fire truck was super cool!)

Thanks again,

Pastor Ryan & Marielyn Grace

Dear Chief Martin,

On November 19, 2018 early in the morning, I called 911 because my toddler and my baby had locked me out of the house. Engine 29 responded to my call. As they pulled up, four firefighters piled out of the truck to help with the situation. Within minutes they had my door open, with my toddler smiling on the other side they were calm and helpful and kind.

I am sure that run that day did not mean much to them considering all that they do, but it meant everything to me and I am sorry to say that I was so flustered at the time, I don’t remember if I thanked them. Please extend my thanks to each of them. I am grateful, not only for their help with my situation but for all that they do for the community.

Thank you so much!

Karie, Ellie (the perpetrator) and baby sister Dani

*Crew members who assisted on this run were Lt. Richard White, FF Jeff Ross, FF Tom Traikovich and FF Robin Arruda

In closing, remember that the Rapid Key Entry System is more than just a Knox box at the front door. It is rapid access to the entire site. This includes boxes for entry to the building and riser room, key switches and padlocks for gate entry, elevator boxes for elevator emergencies and cabinets for hazardous material sites. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at ext. 7-5635.
Do you have a strong desire to serve your community? Think you have what it takes to join our TEAM?

Columbus Firefighter • EMT Career Benefits:
- Starting Pay $50,440 Annually
- 100% College Tuition Reimbursement
- 24 Hours On/48 Hours Off Work Schedule
- Paid Vacation & Sick Leave
- Health, Life, Vision, Dental & Prescription Insurance

Minimum Application Requirements:
- 17 1/2 Years of Age To Apply
- Valid Drivers License
- U.S. Citizen
- High School Diploma or GED
- Strong Desire to Learn, Grow & Serve

Text JoinCFD to 474747

Visit www.columbus.gov/BecomeaCFDfirefighter or call CFD Recruiting at 614-645-6387 for information on upcoming test preparation events.