RREACT ALUMNI GROUP ASSISTS THOSE IN RECOVERY

Opioid Response Team & Former Patients Help Their Own Amid Pandemic. *Page 12*

COLUMBUS FIRE JOINS STATE FIRE MARSHALL ON PSA

Interim Fire Chief & State Fire Marshall collaborate on fireworks safety video message. *Page 18*

The Columbus Division of Fire Newsletter

THE COMMAND POST

Summer • 2020

New Leadership: Assistant Fire Chief Jeffrey Happ Takes Helm as Interim Fire Chief on May 27, 2020

Columbus Fire Training Bureau Assistant Chief Jeffrey Happ addresses parents and students at the Columbus Downtown High School. *Page 2*

This Issue: Four Physicians Join EMS Fellowship Program at CFD • Firefighter's Line Of Duty Death Honored 150 Years Later • CFD Medics Save Puppy After Apparent Opioid Overdose • Second Fire Cadet Class Begins

2020

OFFICE OF THE FIRE CHIEF

SUMMER • 2020

As I move into the role as the Interim Fire Chief I constantly remind myself that I am not alone in this journey but that I'm surrounded by some of the best professional firefighters in the country. This reminder has been present daily as was apparent on my first day when the community erupted into protests and civil unrest over the tragic death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. The men and women of the Columbus Division of Fire stepped up immediately staffing up the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), re-positioning resources, and responding appropriately to numerous calls for service. All of this was accomplished even while we have been working tiredly to respond to the world pandemic created by the COVID-19 coronavirus.

Since the moment that I was notified that I would become the Interim Fire Chief and throughout my career, I have always had the safety, wellbeing, and success of the women and men that were under my charge as my primary concern. These beliefs and values have been ingrained in me from an early age and were developed through my participation in team sports. I relished in the accomplishments of strong teamwork and realized the value of great leadership and coaching. These characteristics and attributes translated perfectly into the fire services and have been on full display throughout my career.

As a new company officer my goal was to create a team culture and rely upon the strengths of each firefighter on my crew. When I became the commander of the Arson unit, it was the veteran investigators who were the stars of the team. I had to learn from them how the team worked and how I could best support the success of the unit.

Moving to the position of Battalion Chief presented even greater challenges as the size of my team grew and the time I had available for each individual station was divided. The next step was to the Assistant Chief of the Training Bureau which once again presented new and different challenges in creating a team culture as I had to manage multiple teams that had different goals and focuses from recruit training, company training, and EMS training to name a few. The success of this team would not be judged solely on how they worked together and

Interim Fire Chief Jeffrey Happ

accomplished goals, but also has a profound impact on every member of the department to make sure that they are trained to the highest level.

Throughout my career my goals have always been primarily focused on the success of my teams and that will always be my main focus until the day I retire. I do have one major personal goal remaining and that is to become the next Fire Chief of this great division. I cannot accomplish this goal alone and must rely on your support, my teammates to make that possible. I will be there with our TEAM every step of the way, providing the leadership and support that will be required to achieve this goal. I will rely heavily on my executive staff and company officers to provide the professionalism and expertise expected and demanded of the Columbus Division of Fire.

These expectations will also fall on every member of the Division, uniformed as well as civilians. They are expectations of not only how we respond to the residents we serve but how we treat each other as teammates. This division has been built upon the great people who have served before us and who serve it now. I am greatly humbled to be the Interim Fire Chief but even more excited about the possibilities of what you can accomplish, the division can accomplish, and the City can accomplish if we all dedicate ourselves to being the best teammates and best versions of ourselves.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey Happ
Interim Fire Chief

Welcome to the Columbus Division of Fire Command Post. This newsletter focuses on the fire services industry, how we affect the greater community and what we need to do to refine our skills as fire service professionals.

Our mission is to research and write articles that are insightful, interesting, helpful and inspiring. If there is something you feel that we should cover, then let us know. We hope that you enjoy what you read.

Send letters to the editor, story ideas, digital photos or upcoming events to piofire@columbus.gov.

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THE CITY OF COLUMBUS
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DIVISION OF FIRE

Second Class of Columbus Fire Cadets Begin Training in August

Columbus Director of Public Safety Ned Pettus Jr., Ph.D. and interim Fire Chief Jeffrey Happ and the training staff formally welcomed 20 new Fire Cadets into the program now in its second year at the Columbus Fire Training Academy.

Every two years, hundreds of applicants apply to become Fire Recruits for the City of Columbus, with many of those applicants coming from other fire and EMS departments. The purpose of the Cadet program is to introduce the fire service as a career choice to non-traditional and minority residents, according to Director Pettus, who rose through the ranks at Columbus Fire to become the first African-American Fire Chief employed by the City of Columbus in 2002.

Participants in the two-year Fire Cadet Program, which began with 20 student interns in April of 2019, will earn widely accepted credentials, including Fire Fighter I and II, Emergency Medical Technician Basic, Healthcare provider CPR AHA certification, AHA First Aid training, National Incident Management System (NIMS) 100, 700 and HAZ-MAT Technician Certification. Graduating from the Fire Cadet program does not guarantee a career with the Division of Fire, however. Cadets must also apply to become a Columbus Fire Recruit through the Civil Service Commission and successfully complete the 34-week Columbus Fire Training Academy requirements before becoming a Columbus Firefighter/EMT.

The Fire Cadet class includes Caleb Andrick, Mara Caldwell, Jaylin Carter, Nya Cason, Canon Choumphonkeokiengkai, Mackenzie Conley, Malik Eaton, Kenneth Freeman, Brandon Johnson, LaEisha Jones, Neptune Jones Jr., Sydney Musoni, River Oates, Ricardo Partida, Aaliyah Reed, Shayla Reid, Trenton Walton, Tysean Whitehead and Isaiah Young.

Aaron Peaks and Tiffany Thompson, who started with this Cadet class last year, successfully completed the Fire Civil Service examinations, are now full members of the Columbus Fire 110th Fire Recruit Class which began in December, 2019. Recruits Peaks and Thomas addressed the new Cadets today, and graduated in August to become Columbus Firefighters.

Firefighters Earn Annual SOR Fire Safety Awards

Photos top: Lt. Willie Loper (right) and Firefighter Kyle Hunt display their 2020 SOR Fire Safety Awards at Fire Station 2. *Photo next page top, submitted:* Captain Richard Biancone received his 2020 SOR Fire Safety Award during his July, 2020 retirement party. *Next page bottom:* Loper and Hunt's 2020 SOR Fire Safety Award Medals.

Columbus Fire Lt. William Loper of the Fire Prevention Bureau, Firefighter Kyle Hunt and Capt. Richard Biancone were the recipients of the 2020 Sons of the Revolution Fire Safety Awards. The following excerpts are from their nomination letters .

Lt. Loper, affectionately called Lt. Willie by most, has worked diligently throughout his 20+ year career with the Columbus Fire Department (CFD) to improve the safety for all those that work, live, and visit our great community.

First responders have also benefited by his numerous instructional videos, his work in implementing the Rapid Key Entry System (Knox Box) used throughout the City, and his assurance of Fire Code compliance involving major renovation and construction projects. Under Lt. Loper's leadership, the Plans Review Section processed more than 1,450 site plans and 1,650 fire and sprinkler alarm plans in the past year – a legacy that will provide greater safety for decades to come.

William Loper grew up in Erie Pennsylvania and graduated from St. Luke High school. After high school, he attended the Community College of Allegheny and the University of New Haven. Then on October 31, 1999, Lt. Loper was hired as a Columbus Firefighter.

After completing training, he was assigned to Station 22 in May of 2000 where he remained for ten years until transferring to Station 26. He moved to Station 23 in December 2011 and was promoted to Fire Lieutenant in 2013. Lt. Loper transfered to the Fire Prevention Bureau in December 2014 where he has remained for the past five years using his previous experiences to provide valuable insight regarding contemporary life-safety systems and the development of impairment plans when they are rendered temporarily out-of-service due to scheduled maintenance and/or emergency repair.

In addition to his many professional contributions, Lt. Loper is always quick to provide a laugh, making the work environment more enjoyable for all and his entertaining teaching style is one that garners the attention of all students. He is a consummate professional and

is a well-deserving recipient of the Sons of the Revolution Fire Safety Award.

Lt. Loper has been married to his wife Amy for 12 years. Their house is blessed with four dogs who keep them on their toes. Amy and Willie met on eHarmony in December of 2006. Three weeks later, they were engaged. They have traveled the world together and cannot wait to see what tomorrow brings.

Firefighter Kyle Hunt and his teammates at Station 2 received a run of a person hit by a train at Mound and Starling Streets last year. It turned out the incident was actually on the bridge overlooking the Scioto River. When FF Kyle Hunt arrived with other fire personnel, he carefully walked the slats of the train tracks to get to the victim who was still alive trapped under the train.

Hunt crawled under the train but couldn't remove the victim as they were stuck. He put his own safety aside, crawling up against the victim to ascertain how to free her. Another firefighter was on the other side of the train, calling out directions on where Hunt was to cut to get the victim's foot free from the train. Covered in the victim's blood, following directions from his fellow firefighter, FF Hunt was able to amputate the foot of the victim, freeing her and getting her to waiting medics who rushed her to the hospital.

Kyle Hunt represents the heroes of the Division who go above and beyond to provide lifesaving service to the residents of Columbus. The actions he took is of no surprise to anyone who has worked with him. His motto is if he sees it needs done then he jumps in and does it to the best of his ability. Hunt has earned the respect of his officers. For this reason, Hunt was nominated to the Sons of the Revolution for EMS Award.

Kyle Hunt joined the Division of Fire in December of 2016. He has a fiancé, Rita, and a son, Brayden who is 10 years old. Kyle served in the United States Marine Corp as a platoon commander from 2001 to 2014.

Captain Richard Biancone responded to a house fire on Alpine Drive. Upon arrival fire crews were confronted with a well involved fire on the 1st floor of the house. It was confirmed upon the initial search that there was one person still trapped. Captain Richard Biancone entered the bedroom from inside the structure, found the victim, and moved her to an awaiting firefighter outside the window. Together they rescued the victim, removing her out the front bedroom window to awaiting paramedics. Due to the heroic efforts of Captain Biancone, the victim survived her injuries. Captain Richard Biancone was awarded the Bronze Maltese at the CFD Awards Banquet November 7, 2019, which was the highest award given.

Captain Biancone grew up in the Northland area of Columbus, Ohio and graduated from DeSales High School. He joined Columbus Fire in 1987, promoted to Lieutenant in 1994, and then Captain in 1997. Biancone has worked at Station 24 since 1997. During his off hours, Captain Biancone enjoys cooking and woodworking. Captain Biancone is married, has two children and two grandsons. Richard retired in July of 2020.

MARK NEWMAN 1825-1870

Columbus Firefighters & Police Honor First Line of Duty Death 150 Years After Columbus Woolen Factory Fire

Story & Photos by Battalion Chief Steve Martin

On a slow rising hill in a wooded area of Greenlawn Cemetery, a group of people gathered to witness a quiet dedication of a headstone being placed at a grave that had gone 150 years without.

The solemn gathering wore masks and maintained a respectful distance due to the ongoing pandemic.

For the last eight years, Firefighter Chris Klein has made it his mission to research Columbus Division of Fire members who died in the line of duty. While researching the details of Mark Newman's death, he made a visit to Greenlawn Cemetery to visit Mark's grave site and noticed the obvious absence of any kind of grave marker other than cemetery markers. He wanted to fix this and started what would become a six year journey.

Mark B. Newman, is recognized as the first Columbus firefighter to have died in the line of duty. On August 4, 1870, while fighting a large fire at the Columbus Woolen Factory, a wall collapsed, killing him. He left behind a disabled wife, who was pregnant at the time, as well as one other child. The newspaper indicated that there would be a solicitation of funds to raise money for the family.

The family had no money for a headstone at the time of his burial.

At the time of the fire, Newman was employed as a foreman in the buggy seat manufacture of Comstock & Booth. According to the newspaper article, he was recently in charge of the Third Street Engine House and also "for a time member of the Police Force..."

Division of Police historians were able to find documentation of him being paid by the city in 1866 and 1868. In addition to being in charge of the fire station, Newman was known for his talent in running a steam pumper. He was one of the first people to learn to operate one as they slowly began to take over for the hand pumps and bucket brigades.

In 2018, a committee to purchase a headstone was formed that included Klein, Firefighter Stephen Cox and Firefighter Doug Wortman, among others. William Hall, a retired Columbus Firefighter and at the time, President of the Central Ohio Fire Museum was also involved and gave insight to questions of how the fire department operated in the 1800's. The committee met several times and set up a plan to work on funding the project.

A Go-Fund-Me on-line account was established by Cox and the goal of $5,000 was actually surpassed by almost another thousand. Cox worked with Randy Rogers, President of the Greenlawn Cemetery Association, to plan an era-appropriate monument that would be permitted in that part of the cemetery.

The money collected was channeled

Photos top: A combined honor guard representing Columbus Police Department and the Columbus Division of Fire stand ready to ring the final "end of job" bell at the conclusion of Mark Newman's memorial service at Greenlawn Cemetery. Newman was once a member of the City's police and Fire Departments.

to the Columbus Firefighters Foundation, which then made the purchase.

Rogers is part of an organization called the Columbus Landmarks Foundation. Their mission is to save Columbus' architectural heritage, and part of that is to preserve and restore the cemetery grounds. The Landmarks Foundation paid for Newman's headstone foundation and installation. A special thank you goes out to them.

Some of the people gathered were Newman's descendants, who learned of the event from Klein and Cox who raced out to family members. They were assisted in their detective work by Ancestry.com and the cemetery. Newman's great-great niece, Mary Harper was there with her kids Chris Watts, Patty Perrigo and James Harper, great-great-great nieces and nephew. Cindy Hawthorne, a 3-G niece, attended as well as Mark Allen and Linda Toland, Mary Harper's cousins, also great-great grandchildren of Newman. Ironically, many of the family would come to visit and place flowers on the grave of their mother and grandmother, Inez Allen, never knowing that Inez's grandfather, grandmother, mother and aunt were buried ten feet away.

The ceremony for the dedication included Division of Fire Chaplain Jason Salyers opening with a verse from the Bible and a short explanation of who Newman was and how he died. Cox then lifted a black shroud to unveil the granite stone. This was followed by an Honor Guard Bell Service. Captain Alex Sundberg read a short explanation of how the ringing of a bell becomes part of the fabric of a firefighter's life, the order and pace of the rings mimicking Morse code.

The ringing of 3-3-3 is known as the end of a job and was solemnly rung out on a chrome bell at the site. The bell was sounded by Honor Guard member Lauren D. Smith III. Standing next to him were Columbus Division of Police Honor Guard members Hauenstein and Mason.

Captain Aaron Shonkwiler wrapped up the event by playing "Amazing Grace" on the bagpipes.

Cox wanted to make sure that everyone who donated money was thanked.

"This could not have happened without the generosity of so many people," said Cox.

Any money that was not spent will be retained by the Firefighters Foundation and will be used to maintain the Firefighters Memorial site at Marconi Boulevard and Gay Street, where Newman's name is the first on a list of those making the ultimate sacrifice, Cox explained.

Newman was at one time in charge of the Third Street Engine House, which was later known as Station 3. In the 1960's, Station 3 was combined with Station 2 and the double house was located at the corner of Fulton Street and Fourth Street until the stations were again separated. In September of 2013, ground was broken on the current Station 3, at 222 Greenlawn Avenue, only a two and a half mile drive straight down the road from his resting place.

MARK NEWMAN 1825-1870

Photos *(top)* The decedents of fallen firefighter Mark Newman who attended the unveiling of a donated grave stone included great-great niece Mary Harper and her children Chris Watts, Patty Perrigo and James Harper along with great-great-great nieces and a nephew. Cindy Hawthorne, a 3-G niece, attended as well as Mark Allen and Linda Toland, Mary Harper's cousins who are also great-great grandchildren of Newman. ***Battalion Chief Steve Martin/Division of Fire***

Photo top: Columbus Fire EMS Fellowship Physicians are, from left, Michael Kozlowski, DO, Travis Sharkey, MD, Columbus Fire Medical Director Robert Lowe, MD, Natalie Ferretti, MD, and Janine Curcio, DO.

EMS Fellowship Training Program Expands

The Columbus Division of Fire is pleased to welcome four physicians into the EMS Fellowship Training Program administered through the Division's Fire Training Bureau.

Physicians Janine Curcio, DO, Natalie Ferretti, MD, Michael Kozlowski, DO, and Travis Sharkey, MD, began their Division orientation on Wednesday, July 8, 2020.

The program provides training in the clinical provision of care in the out-of-hospital environment and the administrative aspects of EMS systems, including education, supervision, administration, quality oversight, systems of care, and State and National Regulatory aspects of EMS service.

EMS Fellows are licensed physicians who have completed residency specialty training. This year's Fellows are all emergency medicine trained physicians.

They have elected to do additional sub-specialty training in EMS. The Fellowship lasts one year and involves many different experiences and exposures to the varied roles and care models of EMS. The Fellows will spend one day a week at Columbus Fire and will be acting as assistants to Columbus Fire Medical Director Dr. Robert Lowe.

They will have experiences in the Columbus Fire Training Bureau Medic School, Continuing Education Instruction, Continuous Quality Improvement initiatives, protocol development, and Medical Direction Projects. The physicians will regularly spend time in the field riding along with Division Paramedics and Emergency Medical Technician personnel to observe and serve as a resource.

Last year, Columbus Fire medical personnel responded to 133,357 calls for service, which represents 80 percent of all fire department calls city-wide.

Janine E. Curcio, DO, served as a Naval Flight Officer for eight years after graduating from the Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. Dr. Curcio graduated from Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine and recently completed a four year emergency medicine residency at Doctor's Hospital.

"I'm here at Columbus Fire mainly for the opportunity to work for a large city based fire organization to learn more about pre-hospital care. My goal is to someday become the medical director of a fire based EMS agency," said Dr. Curcio

Natalie A. Ferretti, MD, originally from West Virginia, moved to Columbus in 2017 to complete an emergency medicine residency at The Ohio State University.

EMS Fellowship continued on page 19

Fire Medics' Quick Action Save Puppy From Opioid Overdose

Columbus Fire Lieutenant John Wisenbarger was working his shift at Station 10 in Franklinton last Friday night when he heard someone frantically pounding the station's bay door and pleading for help at around 11:30 p.m.

Wisenbarger went to the door and found local resident April Speakman carrying what appeared to be a child wrapped in a blanket. He quickly told her to run to the medic bay where a Tactical Emergency Medical Service (TEMS) medic truck was housed and manned by medics John Hagan and Mike Canter that evening.

As Speakman entered the bay the crews were relieved to see that what they thought to be a child was in fact a puppy. Fire personnel rushed her and the puppy into the Medic truck and began their assessment. She told the medics that she had taken her puppy, which she calls Elo, out to the backyard on Rogers Avenue where he had found a piece of plastic lying on the ground near the alley. She took the scrap from the puppy's mouth and didn't think anything of it at first, but shortly realized something was very wrong.

"I brought him in and sat him on the couch with his bone, and he started acting strange. He just passed out, went totally limp. He was hardly breathing, so I gathered him up and ran over to Grandma's Pizza across the street where I have friends," Speakman said.

"My friends splashed water on him, which revived him for an instant, but he went limp again. His breathing had stopped and his tongue was hanging out of his mouth. I was frantic. I gathered him up and rushed out the door. I could see Fire Station 10 from where I stood on the street, so I ran over there as fast as I could."

> "I'm just so grateful that the medics didn't hesitate when they saw that Elo was a puppy. Many people make a big distinction between animals and humans when it comes to care."
>
> April Speakman

Speakman has only lived on Rogers a few months, but she grew up in the Franklinton neighborhood. She knew from a rough childhood that the neighborhood fire station was a safe place for kids.

"The puppy had respiratory depression, or shallow infrequent breaths," said Columbus Fire Medic John Hagan, who, along with Medic Mike Canter treated the dog.

"Puppies typically have a respiratory rate roughly double that of humans. They also breathe faster during hot weather to maintain a homeostatic temperature because they don't have the ability to sweat like we do. The puppy's pupils were also non-reactive and somewhat constricted considering the time of night. Given the symptoms and the fact the puppy was non-responsive to both verbal and physical stimuli, these are classic signs of an opioid overdose," said Hagan.

The TEMS medics had received some Police K9 training previously and knew the overdose reversal drug Narcan was safe and effective for dogs, but they debated the proper administration.

Collectively the crew decided to administer the drug via a pediatric nebulizer mask due to the puppy's tiny facial anatomy and small nostrils. The medics also administered oxygen due to the potential of the puppy becoming hypoxic, which causes damage at the tissue level from lack of oxygen.

After about four minutes the puppy was becoming responsive. Elo's respiratory drive began to improve. He soon opened his eyes and began spontaneously looking around.

The Medics took some time to observe the puppy's improving symptoms. When the puppy began to play with the crew, everyone was relieved. Hagan and Canter suggested that Speakman immediately follow up with a 24 hour emergency veterinary service to insure that the puppy did not have any lingering issues.

Hagan texted Speakman the next day to hear how the puppy was doing. Speakman responded that Elo was doing great. She said the puppy seems to be aware something bad happened, but the event had strengthened the bond between the two.

"I'm just so grateful that the medics didn't hesitate when they saw that Elo was a puppy. Many people make a big distinction between animals and humans when it comes to care. John and Mike simply brought us into the truck and immediately started treating him," said Speakman.

"I was pretty sure at one point that night that little Elo was completely gone. But the medics showed so much compassion. They first thought I had a baby in my arms, but you couldn't tell they were treating an animal," said Speakman.

"I appreciate what they did more than they'll ever know."

Speakman wants to pass on the message that people need to be aware that with the current drug epidemic, it is more important than ever to watch what kids and pets are getting into. Columbus Fire EMS crews responded to 349 emergency calls in June where Narcan was given to reverse a suspected opioid overdose. The Franklin County Coroner's office announced that overdose deaths rose 49% the first two months of 2020 over last year. Many of the overdoses are linked to street drugs laced with fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine. Even a small amount of dust can be dangerous.

"I've lived here all my life, and I'm glad that Franklinton is finally turning around, but we are still in a high drug abuse area with a lot of abandoned houses in the neighborhood. I'm still scared to let Elo out. I guess I've become an over protective mother. I adopted Elo because of my own health issues, I have limited vision now and I need a service dog."

"He's my protector," said Speakman.

Speakman says she knows why she instinctively ran to the fire station when she was in a crisis; it stems from her childhood growing up in Franklinton.

"My father could be a violent man."

"When my family was fighting, I remember a firefighter we called Fat Jack, from the original Station 10. He would take us into the fire station and give us a pop from the machine and just sat with us. I remember thinking that pop machine with its perfect bottles was the most beautiful thing in the world," said Speakman.

"The fire station was always my safe place."

Photo opposite page: Columbus Fire paramedics John Hagan and Mike Canter are reunited with Elo and April Speakman two weeks after the Station 10 medics treated the 12 week-old puppy for an opioid overdose. *Photo top left*: John Hagan demonstrates pediatric nebulizer mask he use to administer the opioid overdose reversing drug Narcan to a 12-week old puppy. *Photos top*: A distraught April Speakman holds Elo as Station 10 medics treat her unresponsive dog Elo on July 10, 2020.

Samantha DeLong poses for a photo on move-in day at her new south-side apartment along with her crew of RREACT Alumni volunteers. The modest four room apartment was DeLong's first after nine years adrift due to opioid addiction. *Photo below*: Samantha DeLong and her sponsor Kate Pishotti. *James Miller/Division of Fire*

Members of Opioid Addiction Recovery Group Offers Peer Support

At the age of 32, Samantha DeLong moved into her first apartment in May.

During nine years of opioid addiction, DeLong has lived in cars, trucks and motels. She has bounced from a friend's basement to a women's shelter and to her grandmother's house.

She now has a place of her own she shares with her fiancé Chris Clay, also in recovery, and constant companion Hank, a one-year-old Pit Bull Terrier.

DeLong credits the Columbus Division of Fire's RREACT (addiction crisis response team) for helping her down the road of recovery. She has achieved 397 days of sober living, in part from the efforts of RREACT social worker Amy Zimmerman, her recovery sponsor Kate Pishotti. She also credits the RREACT alumni support group of about 20 active members who offer advice and encouragement during regulars meets.

The alumni group of opioid abusers assisted into treatment by the RREACT team began meeting in the fall of 2019. Indoor face-to-face meetings are now mostly suspended because of the corona virus pandemic.

"Oh, it really felt unbelievable," said DeLong on move in day.

DeLong and Clay moved their donated furnishings and kitchenware into the modest one-bedroom apartment that backs up to an expansive rail-yard on a dead end street in May. A few alumni friends and some RREACT staff volunteers helped carry a sofa set and some lamps into the first floor unit. The couple's bed was on loan from a friend. The couple's dog Hank

greeted every helper who gathered to lift boxes and spirits on a rainy, overcast day.

At one point not long ago, DeLong was living in a truck before it got impounded. She stayed in a homeless shelter before her sister gave her car. She lived in it for a year and half before it caught fire in January.

"Everything I owned went up in smoke."

A year later, DeLong is taking some first tentative steps to rebuilding her life.

"This apartment is so much nicer. I love nature, love the country. We only hear the trains out back, but that takes some getting used to," said DeLong standing beneath a canopy of mature trees arched overhead.

"The horns pretty much blow into our bedroom window. On our first night, we were watching a movie and when the train went by, the whole building shook, the walls vibrate. If the building wasn't concrete..,"DeLong's thought trails off.

It took a long time to find a landlord willing to rent to someone living on a fast-food worker's income. DeLong's fiancé, now a manager at a McDonald's restaurant, has a felony conviction which also burdened the couple's search for an apartment. A stimulus check from the federal government provided the deposit and first month's rent.

"We needed everything. All we owned was our own clothes. Even our bed was borrowed," said DeLong.

Signing the lease on the apartment was a major milestone for DeLong. It is her third serious attempt at sobriety.

"The last time, it took me three months to get clean, and only six months to relapse. I was devastated, out of work and my out-patient center closed suddenly. What I found I needed was counseling and groups, not more medicine," said DeLong.

DeLong began her latest recovery effort a year ago when her uncle, a former Columbus firefighter, connected her to the Division's RREACT team of medics, social workers, case managers and police officers. Social workers embedded in the team helped her secure a bed at the Maryhaven Addiction Stabilization Center on South High Street for three weeks of inpatient detoxification and intense counseling.

When DeLong's outpatient treatment center closed abruptly in October, she found a "home" with the RREACT Alumni group, and hasn't missed a meeting since.

The genesis of the RREACT Alumni group began with a conversation between case manager Amy Zimmerman and Kerry Gibson in the Fall of 2019. Gibson was just beginning his treatment for opioid addiction. He wanted a way to give back to people who he says saved his life.

Since its inception, the group has hosted organizing meetings, planned a holiday "Friendsgiving Dinner" at Thanksgiving and organized a group visit to a senior living facility where alumni distributed homemade cookies and flower arrangements on Valentines' Day. *Continued next page*

RREACT team volunteers and alumni members carry donated household items into Samantha DeLong's new apartment on a chilly May afternoon. An on-line request for unwanted furniture and housewares to stock DeLong's new home resulted in an overwhelming response by well-wishers who wished to help Sam begin a new life. *(Photo left)* Sam DeLong and her sponsor Kate Pishotti. *James Miller/Division of Fire Public Information Office*

RReact Alumni members and their friends gather at an outdoor shelter on the grounds of the Columbus Fire Training Academy to play bingo and to re-connect with one another. *Photo right*: Troy Urbano, RReact Team Public Services Liaison, calls the numbers for bingo. *James Miller/Division of Fire Public Information Office*

RREACT Alumni Continued

That was before the pandemic ended most group gatherings.

"I absolutely love being in the Alumni," said DeLong during a break from carrying boxes.

"I honestly think of them as angels. I would not have made it to 397 days of sobriety without their help and support. So now I just want to give back. Everybody made it seem like it was doable, but unless you've got money, it's tough. I can't be the only one who has asked for help," said DeLong.

Before the pandemic, DeLong regularly attended AA meetings whenever she could work around a six day-a-week work schedule.

She says the Alumni group are people in recovery who have been helped by the RREACT team, just like herself. They have provided an extended family who have endured similar experiences.

Participating in group activities has booster her confidence.

"I don't speak up a lot , even one on one. I get nervous. I shake and can feel paranoid. It's like stage fright for me. But I've been working with Kate on all that," said DeLong.

Kate Pishotti works in the Mayor Andrew Ginther's office and is 21 years sober. She is DeLong's sponsor, a role that is part mentor, part confessor, but mostly a sympathetic friend that helps people "work the steps" of the Alcoholics Anonymous 12 Steps Program.

"My role in Sam's early sobriety is to help her guide them through whatever struggles she might come across, learning ropes of sobriety," said Pishotti.

The 12 steps of AA are usually navigated with the help of a sponsor, and include admitting being powerless over alcohol or drugs, beginning a fearless self-inventory of character flaws, making amends to people you've

hurt and seeking a kind of spiritual awakening that can help bolster people in recovery.
The final step involves carrying a message of hope to others struggling with addiction.

"She's doing really good, has made a lot of progress in sobriety. She's made a lot of good choices, gotten a job and place to live. She's now started to help other people and that's the most important thing," said Pishotti.

"Samantha is being active in the RREACT Alumni group. The whole reason for AA to help the next sick and suffering alcoholic. Just the fact that she's active in the group let's people know there's a way out of addiction. It's huge just to be an example, especially with heroin addiction, I think people feel especially helpless. To show a way out is huge," said Pishotti.

"I've sponsored people on and off over the years, I've been sober 21 years. Some people have stayed sober, some haven't. But you keep trying. At the end of the day, I find they've helped me more than I've helped them," said Pishotti.

Beginning in April 2020, Division medics administered the overdose reversal drug Narcan (naloxone) to patients 273 times, a 21 percent over the previous year. In May, 364 Narcan doses were administered, a 46 percent increase over 2019, followed by an eight percent increase in June.

The spike in Narcan doses roughly corresponds to the state-wide shutdown of businesses, worship services and, most critically for people struggling with addiction, group meetings like Alcohol Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. Social workers embedded with the Division's RREACT team began seeing more patients relapse in the absence of face-to-face group support meetings that many people struggling with addiction see as a lifeline of peer support. That support is critical for many in their daily struggle to remain sober. RREACT team members now rely on heavily on phone, text and video connections to remain connected to their clients. Printed information sheets detailing recovery services are also left at addresses given to by overdose patients.

During the summer months of June, July & August, the RREACT team's 22 members sought out 695 overdose patients, which resulted in 250 personal contacts. Sixty six of those people were assisted into treatment. Daily or weekly contacts via phone, text or information packets grew to 632 during the pandemic's locked down summer months. The RREACT team is managing 109 active clients at the end of August.

For people who choose to, there are still plenty of on-line group meetings as well, according to Pishotti.

"Alcoholics and addicts are people who will get what they want if they want it. There's still plenty of sobriety out there to get," said Pishotti.

Pishotti is a frequent participant in the RREACT alumni Facebook page.
(*Continued Next Page*)

RREACT Alumni continued from page 15

The Facebook page has become a de facto message board and check-in location for those who have created strong bounds and a network of mutual support. The RREACT Alumni Facebook group has grown to 138 members.

Kerry Gibson is 15 months sober and is an active member of the alumni group. He took some time off work to lend a hand and a strong back during DeLong's move in day in May. Gibson says the value of by being in a peer support group can't be overstated.

"We talk about it all the time. It's important to show people we can have fun being sober," said Gibson.

"I look forward to the events, even if it's just to help someone move into an apartment, because it's about helping each other out. That's what being sober is about for me. These people have done a lot for me, and nobody understands, nobody supports you like these folks who are also in recovery," said Gibson.

Gibson admits the pandemic and the resulting shut down has been a challenge; group meetings are irregular at best. But he's relied on technology to remain connected. A phone call to a sponsor or even a text message is to someone in crisis can be a lifeline.

"I think about people who managed to get sober before cellphones, before the Internet. If they could do it, why not me?"

For Pishotti, being a sponsor and participating the group is part of her effort to live the 12th Step, to carry the message of hope forward.

"RREACT and the alumni group is my favorite part of my job, to intersect with sobriety. I love the fact that I get to see miracles happen, not as closely as the people who do the daily work, but I'd give up a paycheck just for the chance to watch those miracles happen. That's what the sobriety stuff is all about," said Pishotti.

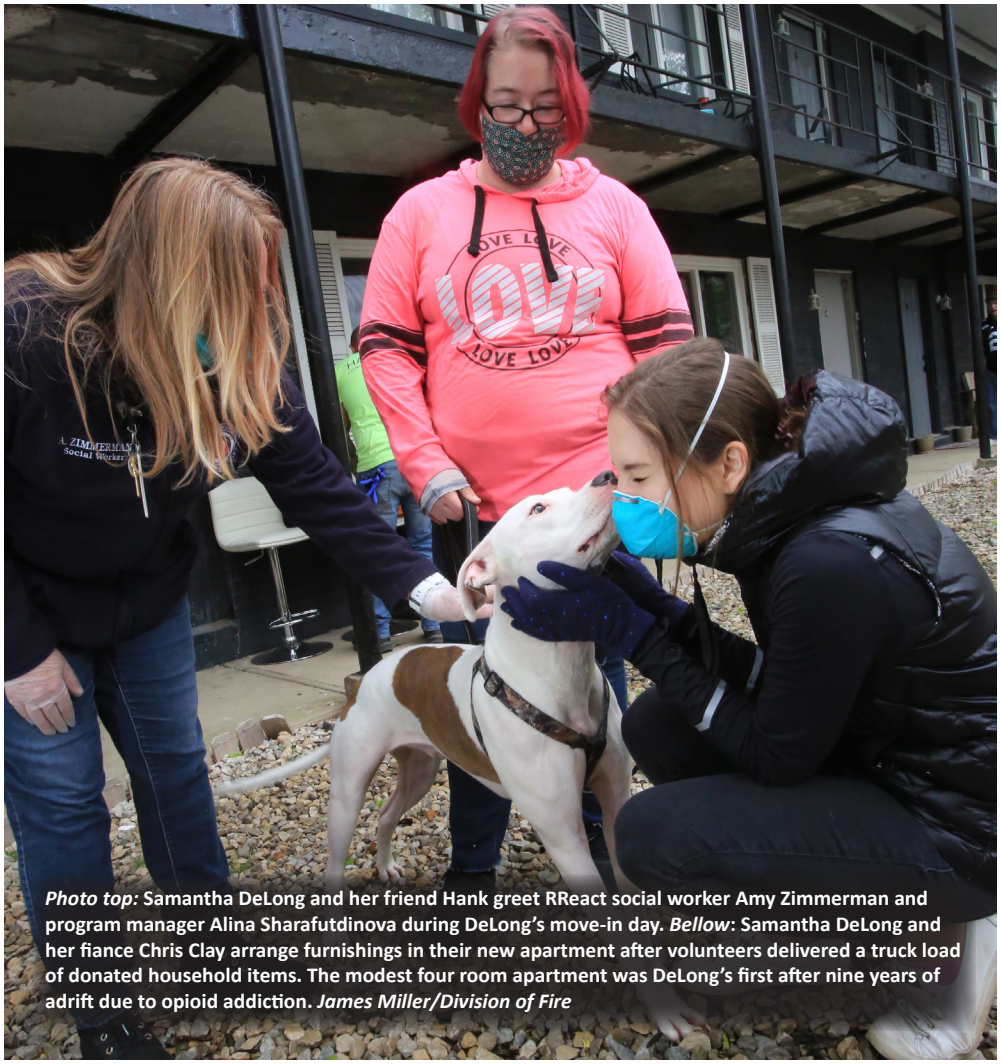

Photo top: **Samantha DeLong and her friend Hank greet RReact social worker Amy Zimmerman and program manager Alina Sharafutdinova during DeLong's move-in day.** ***Bellow:*** **Samantha DeLong and her fiance Chris Clay arrange furnishings in their new apartment after volunteers delivered a truck load of donated household items. The modest four room apartment was DeLong's first after nine years of adrift due to opioid addiction.** ***James Miller/Division of Fire***

GRATITUDE

To The Fire Chief and the Columbus Division of Fire Emergency Services Bureau:

I wish to send a heartfelt message of thanks to the entire fleet of first responders and their efforts spent fighting the large structure fire at 1101 / 1115 Hudson St. in the Linden area early Monday morning.

My family and I own the building that was destroyed, we were on-scene within 30 minutes of CFD's arrival, and watched as the battle unfolded through dawn. Even today, more than 24 hours later, CFD is still responding to hot spots.

While saddened that our facility is a total loss, we are grateful that no one was injured in the efforts, and wanted to commend the professionalism of every member of CFD Emergency Services that we encountered, including rank and file firefighters, lieutenants and battalion chiefs. As we approached and thanked individuals for their actions yesterday morning, nearly every member expressed their condolences to us personally, as if we had just lost a member of the family.

That building was a member of the family, to us and the community. It was an original structure of Linden dating to the 1920s. It was expanded in the 1960's and housed an auto parts store that served thousands of local residents for over 40 years.

My family purchased the property in 2004 to start a new automotive business venture there. We outgrew the building and moved to a larger Linden location a few years ago, but retained ownership and rented to new businesses who continued to provide goods and services to the neighborhood. This building was not just a collection of bricks and boards; - it was much more than that.

Thank you once again for your department's professionalism and service during this crisis. We look forward to rebuilding these addresses and continuing to serve Linden once again. The community deserves nothing less.

Matthew Brannon and Family, Owners
1101 / 1115 Hudson St.

Columbus Fire Partners with State Fire Marshall to Promote Fireworks Safety Ahead of Holiday Weekend

Newly appointed interim Columbus Fire Chief Jeffrey Happ teamed up with State Fire Marshall Kevin Reardon at the State Fire Academy to video tape a public service message about fireworks safety ahead of the July 4th weekend. The State of Ohio was experiencing record sales of fireworks by mid-summer.

"Every year, we see serious injuries and property destruction caused by illegal use of fireworks. We'd like to remind everyone the only legal fireworks that may be displayed in Ohio are those that Snake, Smoke, Snap and Sparkle," said Reardon.

Chief Happ described safety tips for individuals displaying fireworks:

• Only use sparklers, smokes and snakes outside

• Keep sparklers at arm's length away from your face and body, and stay six feet away from other people

• Do not run, throw or hand a lit sparkler to someone else

• Douse used sparklers in a bucket of water. The bamboo or wires remain hot enough to start a fire even after the sparks are done

"Sparklers burn at 2,000 degrees and account for 25% of emergency department visits for fireworks injuries. Close adult supervision is a must for children under the age of 12," said Reardon.

The State of Ohio and the City of Columbus Department of Public Safety agreed to partner to produce the public service announcement which was shared state-wide on several social media platforms.

Reardon graduated from the Columbus Fire Academy in 1981 as a 23 year-old recruit and retired in 2013 as a Battalion Chief. During his service to Columbus, Reardon served at Station 24 in the Northland area and later at Station 2 assigned to Ladder 2 alongside Firefighter Greg Paxton who would rise to the rank of Fire Chief in 2015.

As a Lieutenant, Reardon help start the Division's Juvenile Fire Setter Program in the mid-80s.

"We had a period of a lot of house fires. What we learned was that kids in the 5 to 10 years-of-age range were very curious about fire, and were accidentally starting structure fires," said Reardon.

"Sometimes we could trace the fascination with fires as an attention getting strategy for some kids. Sometimes it was just some kids acting out because of other issues in the home, like abuse or neglect, so I was very proud to help with this intervention program."

The program has grown into a full-time program coordinator and several firefighters trained in intervention who are assigned to 48-hour duty at various fire stations throughout the city. As the program has grown, services have been expanded to receive referrals from Franklin County Courts, Franklin County Children Services, Mental Health Organizations, Columbus Fire Arson Bureau, and other community agencies with concentration in the Columbus Public Schools.

Reardon retired from Columbus Fire in 2013 as a Battalion Chief serving as the Division's top Safety Officer (SO1).

"When I first started as SO1, we struggled to get the uniformed ranks to buy into firefighter safety. Firefighters can be a stubborn lot, and sometimes believe they know everything there is to know," said Reardon.

"Safety Officers were once viewed as 'one of those people who were looking to get you into trouble', but I'm glad to say those attitudes began to change for the better once we were able to show that protecting the health and safety of our staff was our only priority," said Reardon.

Reardon was named the State Fire Marshall in June of 2020, but he credits his early days as a Ladder man and the senior staff he has worked under for much of his knowledge of the fire service.

"What I learned was you can never stop learning. You've got to make it a life-long habit. What I see now that I didn't appreciate earlier in my career is that your career goes fast, so enjoy and respect your co-workers and honor your craft," said Reardon.

"At the end of the day, that's all we have to hang onto."

EMS Fellowship Continued from page 9

"I've come to the EMS Fellowship at Columbus Fire because I'd like to learn the operational side of pre-hospital medicine and add that knowledge to my career in emergency medicine," said Dr. Ferretti.

Michael Seth Kozlowski, DO, started his EMS undergraduate studies at the University of Pittsburgh where he earned a Paramedic degree before becoming a physician's assistant in emergency medicine for several years. Dr. Kozlowski returned to medical school at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine and completed his residence in emergency medicine at Grand Strand Medical Center in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

"I'm very excited to come to the Columbus Division of Fire to contribute back to pre-hospital medicine and what it gave to me, which was a lot of exciting times and helped to jump start my career in medicine," said Dr. Kozlowski.

Travis P. Sharkey, MD is from Northeast Ohio and attended The Ohio State University for undergrad through MD and PhD. Dr. Sharkey completed his residence in emergency medicine.

"I'm coming to Columbus Division of Fire as part of my EMS Fellowship in order to work with people who bring me my patients. I'd like to see what we can do to improve the experience from both sides," said Dr. Sharkey.

Photos *(top left)* Retired Columbus Fire Battalion Chief Kevin Reardon and Interim Columbus Fire Chief Jeffrey Happ pose in front of The Ohio Fire Service Mural at the State Fire Academy after a public service video shoot in June. The painting by Ohio artist Charles Platt was commissioned in 1978 and hangs in the lobby of the administration offices on the academy's far east-side campus. Interim Chief Jeffrey Happ Happ is a 27-year Columbus Division of Fire veteran who was last assigned to oversee the Fire Training Academy. He became a firefighter in 1993 and worked his way through the ranks serving as a battalion chief, captain and lieutenant. He is also a Certified Ohio Peace Officer Trainer for Homeland Security in bombs, explosives and incendiary devices. He is a 1988 graduate of Miami University.
James Miller/Division of Fire

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