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FROM THE CHIEF

As Chief of the Jeffersonville Fire Department, I have the distinct pleasure of managing some of the most dedicated and trained professionals within our state. Everyday, I am excited to come to work knowing I am part of something bigger than myself. We are a family at Jeffersonville Fire Department. Our personnel are dedicated to their craft, their crewmates, and the citizens of our great city.

For 150 years, our firefighters have stood on the front lines protecting our city. Although our equipment, facilities, and number of personnel have changed, the dedication of our firefighters remains the same. We will always put our citizens first and find the solutions to solve any problems we encounter. Finding a way to win is one tradition that will never change.

Please join us as Jeffersonville Fire Department celebrates this historic milestone. We take this time to honor those who came before us and paved the way to what our department has now become. We cherish our past and are excited about our future.

As the city continues to grow, the department will grow as well. The services that we provide will expand and match the needs of our citizens. Our future is bright. The love and support we receive from this community is overwhelming. We will never stop striving to provide our community with the best prepared personnel and equipment available.

Respectfully,
Shawn L. Grant
Chief, Jeffersonville Fire Department

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ON THE COVER

JEFFERSONVILLE FIREFIGHTER PAUL FINCH HOLDS AN ANTIQUE FIRE SUPPRESSION BULB. READ ABOUT THE JFD AND THE CHANGES OVER THE PAST 150 YEARS. PHOTO BY BILL HANSON



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Sheriff Jamey Noel

A firefighter is spraying water from a hose onto a green lawn. In the background, a fire truck is visible, and a car with its lights on is parked on a street. The scene is set during sunset or sunrise, with a warm orange glow in the sky.

JEFF FIREFIGHTERS HAVE

ANSWERED THE CALL

FOR 150 YEARS

BY CAROL BAKER DAWSON

FIREFIGHTER ISAIAH MIDDLETON



One day, the Jeffersonville Fire Department (JFD) employees are getting involved in a local elementary school's "Bee Walk," to encourage the community to grow more flowers for pollen to help increase the local bee population. The next day, JFD employees are teaming up with Norton Children's Hospital to host a class on how to safely install child safety seats.

In between their many community activities, the JFD employees save lives, and they have been doing this since 1871. The JFD has provided necessary fire rescue services for 150 years, and the City of Jeffersonville is honoring those who have served along with those who currently serve as firefighters and administrators of the JFD.

With approximately 63,000 residents in a 30-square-mile area, the JFD has five fire stations throughout Jeffersonville. From fighting the 2004 extensive fire that tore through seven historical commercial buildings in downtown Jeffersonville to putting out a brush fire, the JPD firefighters are on the job.

In 1801 the city of Jeffersonville was formed. From that date until 1871, fires were typically extinguished by members in the community through bucket brigades. It took Jeffersonville 70 years to form a fire department.

The JFD includes full-time, professional firefighters who are members of International Association of Firefighters Local 558. Duties include fire suppression, heavy rescue, non-transport emergency medical care, HAZMAT response, and responding to water rescue emergencies.



"These men and women have promised to run into whatever dangerous situation comes up and risk their lives to save someone else's; they show up for every shift committed to that promise."

MAYOR MIKE MOORE
CITY OF JEFFERSONVILLE

Fire Chief Shawn Grant describes the men and women of the JFD as highly educated and motivated employees who are thoughtful people. He added, "Every employee here is incredibly motivated to help their community."

Mayor Mike Moore affirmed, "The JFD is a unique group ... different backgrounds, ages, education and ambitions. The one thing they all have in common is what is most admirable about them — they chose to be firefighters. These men and women have promised to run into whatever dangerous situation comes up and risk their lives to save someone else's; they show up for every shift committed to that promise. I have a ton of respect for these firefighters. It's easy to take for granted the things that deserve our gratitude the most and I hope no one takes JFD for granted."

Being a Jeffersonville firefighter requires multiple outstanding qualities in order to propel the men and women beyond fear to face extraordinary challenges head-on. They are our neighbors, our family, our friends, and the child down the street who used to play with our sons and daughters.

When the alarm sounds in the firehouses across Jeffersonville JFD stations, firefighters' hearts beat faster and adrenaline starts pumping as they race to protect lives and property. These firefighters are the individuals who place the lives of others above their own and many have physical and/or mental scars to prove their self-sacrifice.

"Because of the work our JFD firefighters put in — and the level of professionalism they have — we have become a premiere fire

department in the Hoosier state," Moore said. "I hope the department continues on that path for the next 150 years."

As part of the 150th celebration, Chief Grant has arranged for professional videos to be recorded and shared with the public through JFD social media. The videos will recognize the lives of the firefighters and staff, with the first one being the women of JFD.

Grant explained, "We want to show who we are and how we represent the community." Other videos planned are recognizing Father's Day, Mother's Day, Black History, and more. The JFD's website is: <https://cityofjeff.net/fire> and social media accounts are found on the site.

The men and women of the JFD have served our community exceptionally well for 150 years, sometimes without acknowledgment or accolades. The Jeffersonville community recognizes these brave firefighters as the heroes they are and for the service they provide during some of our darkest hours.



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HONORING THE PAST, ENSURING THE FUTURE

BY APRILE RICKERT

Prior to the official start of the Jeffersonville Fire Department in July 1871, it was volunteers with the "bucket brigade" who helped protect the city from fires.

Starting around the 1830s, these residents would have strategically placed equipment — buckets and ladders — around the city, "and then if there was a fire somewhere, the volunteers would go to that area and get the buckets and ladders and put the fire out," former Jeffersonville Fire Chief Charles (Mike) Smith said. In the 1870s, following the Great

Chicago Fire that destroyed blocks and blocks of the wooden buildings there, Jeffersonville leaders decided it was time to establish a more structured, better equipped, faster responding, paid, professional department.

Although there have been a lot of changes in the past century and-a-half — everything from technology and staffing to fire service practices — at its core remains the same philosophy — local people working to make their city a safer place.

EQUIPMENT EVOLUTION

Today's huge fire trucks, outfitted with tools needed for various situations, evolved out of the different types of trucks early firefighters used.

"Back then, the firetrucks were either drawn by horses or pulled by the firefighters," Smith said. "You had a hose truck that carried the fire hose, a ladder truck that carried ladders, and they had a steamer."

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This was basically a big cylinder under which a fire was lit to produce steam, which pressurized the water aimed at burning structures.

In the early 1920s, Jeff Fire became mechanized, investing in two American LaFrance chain drive, gas-powered fire trucks. A few years later, the department got a Seagrave fire truck Smith said is known as "Old 500," for its ability to pump 500 gallons of water a minute, "which was a lot of water back then."

Before the 911 emergency service line, people needing help from the fire department would call directly, with a department member staffing the phone in the "watch room." And until a few years ago, firefighters used "box books" to navigate to the location, before GPS was widespread.

The thick books — still carried on trucks in case of a power outage — list every street in the city on its own page, and include locations of fire hydrants.

"So if they call out 'box 231,' you'd open it up to 231 and sure enough there's the layout of the street you're looking for, with the hydrants," Battalion Chief Richard VanGilder said.



FIREHOUSE IN 1953



GROUP FROM 1970



JEFF FIRE DEPARTMENT RESPONDED TO A STRUCTURE FIRE AT 505 E. 9TH STREET ON JULY 17, 1968



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CHANGES IN FIRE SERVICE

VanGilder, who started in 1994, has seen a lot of evolution within the department during his time there. Staffing has doubled and training has expanded even more than that. In some cases, practices that were used for years have been modernized at the national level and adopted by local departments.

"We used to do pretty much standard 'vertical ventilation,' with a structure fire," VanGilder said. "[That's] where you cut a hole in the roof and take a pike pole and punch a hole in the ceiling...you have some place for all that heat and smoke to go.

"That was the standard for literally 125, 130 years." But now, he said, the National Institute of Standards and Technology Fire Research Division "figured out that we were basically creating a chimney and we were in the middle of it."



The first fire house was built in downtown Jeffersonville at the corner of Court and Spring streets, and it was still in operation in the 1960s when VanGilder's former battalion chief worked there.

"So you could imagine...we had a building that was built in the 1800s and still in service in the 1960s," VanGilder said. "He would tell me stories about how in the winter, the building was so loose and the windows were so leaky, he would wake up in the morning with snow in his bed."

That station was razed before the end of the 1960s, with a new station built at Eighth and Wall streets, which served as the headquarters for years. The newest station at 2204 E. 10th Street is now the headquarters, with three other stations currently in use — at 2006 Allison Lane, 5311 E. 10th Street and 1603 Truckers Blvd.

THE FUTURE OF FIREFIGHTING

Jeffersonville Fire Chief Shawn Grant said he's ready to help lead the department into the needs of the future. As the city expands, especially toward the River Ridge Commerce Center and new residential areas, there's more need for growth.

"There's a couple things I'd like to see happen," he said. "I'd like to add an additional nine firefighters, staff another station at the River Ridge area and also build a new station downtown," he said. "It's a 1958 building and it's kind of close quarters for my guys."

He also wants to get another fire truck in service on the other side of the roundabouts on 10th Street, near River Ridge.

"We make a lot of runs out there and there's a lot of people being influxed into the city that's a part of

the workforce there," he said. "We're providing fire service now, but as they grow we want to grow with them."

Grant said what he'd like to see in a new fire house is an open concept space — a place for firefighters to gather.

"The fire service is a little different," he said. "It's not your usual 9-to-5 job; it's more of a family atmosphere here. I just want to make it to where they're comfortable. When these guys are happy they give good service. I like to make sure these guys are happy."

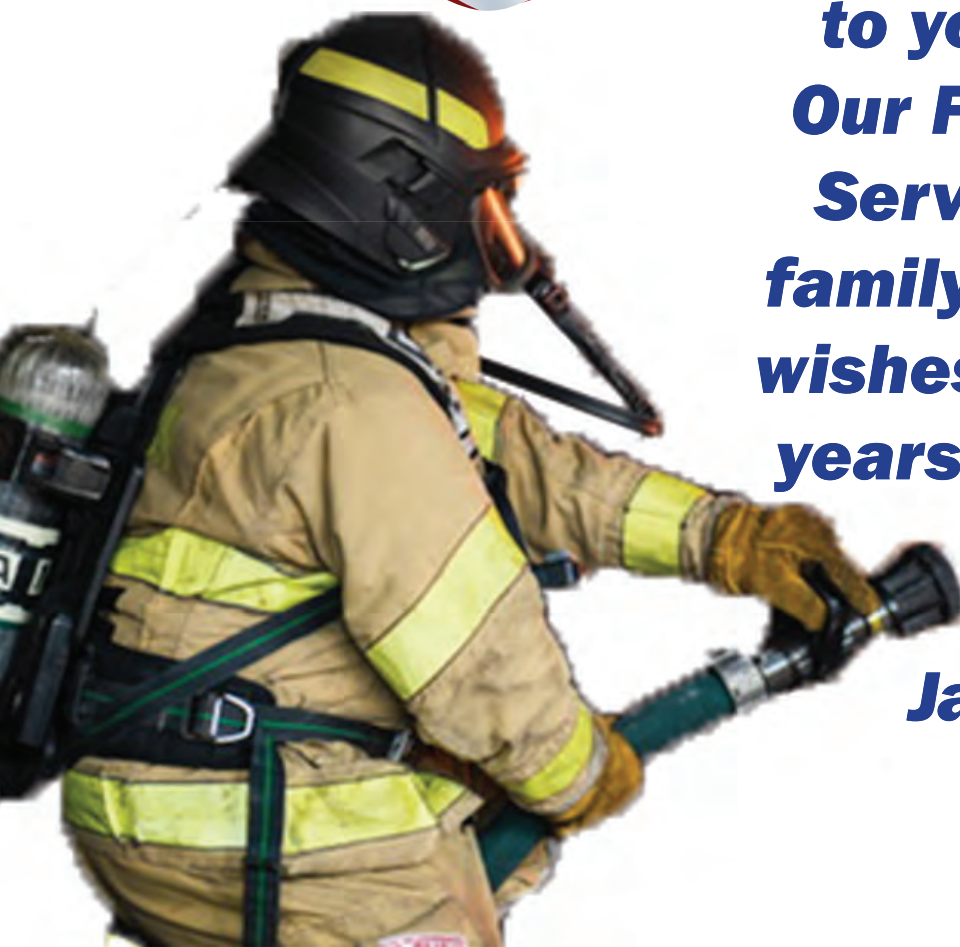
Grant, who came from a family line of public service with several members in the police department, said his 25 years so far have flown by, "and I'm kind of pumped to see what the future brings," he said. "I always tell myself, 'I want to leave this place a little better than I got it.'"





***“Congratulations to
the Jeffersonville Fire
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years of service! What
a rich history you
have of dedication
to your community.
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family thanks you and
wishes you many more
years of unparalleled
success.”***

***Jay and Linda
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FIREFIGHTER TRAINING

NEVER STOPS

BY DANIEL SUDDEATH

Firefighters can't control many of the circumstances and situations that arise when they're responding to a call.

But in the heat of the moment, when their actions could literally save lives, firefighters can rely on one consistent factor — their training.

The Jeffersonville Fire Department has a goal of 20 hours of training monthly for each firefighter. That might not all be under the umbrella of the department's training unit, as individual companies often will focus training on specific parts of the job they feel need emphasis.

But whether it's being conducted at the company level, or through organized classes and sessions, training is one of the most important parts of a firefighter's job.

CAPT. DAVID KASKIE UTILIZES A TOWER AT THE JEFFERSONVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS FOR TRAINING EXERCISES.

"We have so many different things that we are responsible for and so many types of calls for service that we have to take," said Josh Thompson, training coordinator for the Jeffersonville Fire Department.

"We have to be honed-in with our skills. When somebody picks up the phone and dials 911, they expect somebody competent to show up and help them or take care of their problem, and the best way to be proficient at this job is to do constant training."

Thompson — who has been on the Jeffersonville department for almost 11 years with 23 years total service as a firefighter — said there are several different levels and types of training.

New recruits hired by the department go through a seven-week academy where they learn basic firefighting skills and policies. They complete the necessary classes to be certified as a firefighter through the state.

"Beyond that, we do monthly company-level training where we bring the entire department, or each individual engine or ladder company, in to do a specific type of training," Thompson said.

"That would include anything from ice rescue to road rescue to confined-space firefighting as well as water rescue, hazardous materials and emergency medical training."



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"When somebody picks up the phone and dials 911, they expect somebody competent to show up and help them or take care of their problem, and the best way to be proficient at this job is to do constant training."

JOSH THOMPSON, TRAINING COORDINATOR
JEFFERSONVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

The department's training division also offers promotional certification classes. Firefighters can complete those sessions to meet requirements for promotion within the JFD.

Jeffersonville coordinates training with other departments in the area.

"We try to keep an open dialogue — an open door for training within this region, so that it's not all put on one department to do on their own," Thompson said.

In June, JFD brought in a group from Florida for a week to conduct aerial operators classes. Those sessions focused on aerial and ladder apparatus responses.

**The men and women of the
Jeffersonville Police Department
would like to congratulate
the Jeffersonville Fire Department
on their 150 years
of dedicated service
to the City of Jeffersonville
and our residents.**



The majority of JFD training occurs at the department headquarters where the city has a training tower and a live-fire facility to work with for instruction.

Uncertainty will always be a part of firefighters' work, but Thompson said training gives them confidence when responding to a call.

"We can't predict the type of incident that we will encounter, but if we have a basic general knowledge of how to operate within a specific type of incident, the more we'll be prepared, and the better we'll perform," he said.



THE JEFFERSONVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT TRAINS TO DEAL WITH A VARIETY OF SITUATIONS, COMPLETING 20 HOURS OF TRAINING PER FIREFIGHTER EACH MONTH.

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WATER & FIRE

JEFF FIRE'S WATER RESCUE TEAM READY FOR CHALLENGES

BY JEROD CLAPP

Especially as the weather warms up, calls for help on the Ohio River become more frequent. Sometimes, it's just a boater whose boat engine gives out, or it could be something more serious.

Either way, Sgt. Michael Osborne on Jeffersonville Fire Department's Water Rescue team said boaters are surprised when they see JFD headed toward them when they're experiencing trouble.

"A lot of people don't think about that until they have to call 911

and there's an emergency on the water," Osborne said. "Then they see us come out and they think 'Oh, the fire department does that, too.' The general public just doesn't think about that kind of stuff."

The department has had dedicated boats ready for years, it's first one coming in about 13 years ago. Capt. Chad Ogden said most JFD firefighters have had at least some training for water rescue. The team members change based on the day, or even by the shift, but when Ogden started training as a

firefighter about 13 years ago, he didn't realize how much it would become a part of his job.

"Really, when you start training to be a firefighter in the beginning, you don't realize how much we're asked to do across the board for so many different things," Ogden said. "It's not just firefighting, it's not just medical runs, there's a lot of training we need to go through because we never know what we're going to be called on to do that day."

ABOVE: MEMBERS OF THE JEFFERSONVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT WATER RESCUE TEAM AT WORK ON THE OHIO RIVER. NEWS AND TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO.

He said that even varies on the water rescue team — which he's been a part of for about eight years. He said every day he's on the water is a good one.

"I feel at home and love being on the water," Ogden said. "At the same time, I'm able to be out in the sunshine on beautiful days and provide a service to citizens that may need it."

A LOVE OF THE WATER

The Ohio River was a big part of Osborne's childhood. Growing up, he said he explored it with friends, getting to know where the sandbars were, learning how to navigate without electronics and finding good fishing spots.

He said that serves him well when he's on the crew any given day. When a call comes in and a boater's not sure where they are, Osborne said he's used to taking vague descriptions of areas from callers and pinpointing where help is needed.

"It's one of the disciplines of our job that I enjoy doing," he said. "It's good to be a part of it. You see all your friends out there and they respect you from a professional standpoint. The river changes every day and it's a demon. Even the most experienced people may get caught up one day. But I enjoy being out on the water and having a change of pace on the job."

For Ogden, the love of the water is much the same. He said growing up, he always had a boat and got to enjoy spending days out fishing or cruising.

"I've lived on the Ohio River my entire life and I've always been a boat owner," Ogden said. "When we had the opportunity to have a fire boat to provide a service to the citizens of Jeff, it was something I was definitely interested in. When I'm on duty for the day, I'm not only in charge of engine 45, but also fireboat 40. We're always ready to respond to any kind of emergency."

Thank You JFD for 150 Years of Service!



DEMANDS OF THE JOB

Those emergencies can vary quite a bit, too.

Mike McCutcheon, division chief with the fire department, said the water rescue team makes about 25-30 runs annually. Ogden said the types of calls range from fires to stranded boaters, and sometimes more serious calls.

"I don't think people know what water rescue entails," Ogden said. "It's not just the Ohio River, it can be from flash flooding. We've had rescues from burst water lines, ice rescue, and more. We all have to be able and ready to respond for any of those water rescues."

Some of those calls can also be something more familiar to fire

departments – driftwood or boats occasionally catch fire, and they go out to help put them out. But according to Osborne, a fire on the water is a lot different from a fire in a structure on land.

"It's kind of hard to go out and train on a boat fire," he said. "You can't just go out and set a boat on fire and tell the guys to put it out. We like to train by maybe throwing a ring out in the river and keeping your stream on that, but even that doesn't exactly prepare you for the real thing."

But that consistent training – partially funded through grants – is what keeps the Water Rescue team's skills sharp, Osborne said. Retired Coast Guard and Indiana Department of Natural Resources officers help make sure Jeffersonville firefighters are prepared, no matter what.



"It's not just the Ohio River, it can be from flash flooding.

We've had rescues from burst water lines, ice rescue, and more. We all have to be able and ready to respond for any of those water rescues."

CAPTAIN CHAD OGDEN

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Osborne and his team responded to a call of a boat fire in the summer of 2020 that the Louisville Fire Department needed help with extinguishing. Because of all kinds of factors, he said it was a challenge, but it ended as well as it could have.

"It was a windy day with current, and you're trying to hit a floating object that's drifting," Osborne recalled. "Other than that, it was a smooth run. Our training kicked in and we all worked well together with Louisville. The boat burned up, but nobody got hurt and everyone worked well together."

Ogden said he's had his fair share of challenging calls, too, but thankfully, nothing that was completely tragic. He said boats running out of fuel or otherwise losing power are the most common call. He said that's especially dangerous when the boat is near the dam.

Ogden recalled when JFD Water

Rescue got a call during the Ohio River Bridges Project, when a group of workers had their boat go into the lower pool of the dam. He said that's especially dangerous, but their training worked out for them that day.

"That's generally not the case for someone going over the dam," Ogden said. "The toughest part of the job for me is the unknown. Sometimes, we don't truly know what we're being asked to do. Sometimes you get a report of someone in the water and depending on the conditions, it's hard to see them."

BEFORE THEY'RE NEEDED

Ogden said he loves his job, and Osborne said water rescue is one of his favorite parts of being a firefighter.

Osborne noted, though, there are some simple tips everyone can keep in mind to prevent the need for a water rescue call.

If you're on the river, he said make sure your boat's in good shape before you launch it.

"Get your boat serviced every year, make sure your safety equipment is up to date," Osborne said. "All your lighting, make sure it's all up to date... There are guys out here who are trained to work on boats and that's who I'd trust. That way, you can get out on the water and have a relaxing day where you don't have to see us."

He said when it comes to flash flooding, it's pretty simple — if you're not sure about water depth, don't chance it.

"Turn around, don't drown," Osborne said. "If water's on the roadway and you don't think you can get through, turn around. I can assure you there's more than one way home. It may not be the common way you go, but it might be the safe way that day."

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POLICE CHIEF KENNY KAVANAUGH, LEFT, AND FIRE CHIEF SHAWN GRANT DISPLAY HISTORIC PHOTOS OF THEIR FATHERS WHILE KICKING BACK IN GRANT'S OFFICE RECENTLY.

BORN AND BRED TO SERVE

JFD and JPD chiefs talk about family links to public safety

BY JEROD CLAPP

Legacies mean something different to every family, but for the heads of Jeffersonville Police and Fire departments, that legacy is one of service.

Shawn Grant, Jeffersonville Fire Chief, and Kenny Kavanaugh, Jeffersonville Police Chief, both chose careers in public safety. But they also have fathers who did the same, and they both worked for each other's departments.

Grant's father, Marvin, retired as a major with Jeffersonville Police after about 20 years of service. Kavanaugh's father, Les, was the first black firefighter at the Jeffersonville Fire Department, sworn in during December 1965 and retired 27 years.

Both men said growing up, they were instilled with a sense of duty to help others, which ultimately led to their career choices.

"It's about serving and helping people, and that's what you do," Kavanaugh said. "I recall that, carrying that from my father and my grandfather."

For Grant, he said seeing his family and his father take pride in helping others made him want to join public service, even as early as 9 or 10 years old.

"I knew that I had it in me to do," Grant said. "I've got family members that are police officers, my brother is a corrections officer in Clark County. I knew I had a hankering for it. I'd go down to the firehouse on Walnut street and hang out there. Had a liking for what they were doing."

MARVIN GRANT

For 20 years, he served Jeffersonville Police in different capacities. Shawn Grant said his dad, Marvin, inspired him, supported him and helped him follow in his footsteps.

Growing up, Shawn said Jeffersonville was always kind of a small town, so everyone knew his dad was a police officer. Watching him go out on calls and come back with stories. He said it always felt like public service was going to be a part of his life.

"I'd always talk about this and my mom always had these aspirations for me to be a firefighter," Shawn said. "Public safety was in my family, everything we did was centered around public safety."

He said Marvin served as a detective, a squad leader, and retired as a major in 1990 or 1991. He died in 2011.

While public safety wasn't where he began his career, he said it was always on his mind. He said seeing his dad in uniform always caught his attention, and he thought policing might be his career, too.

"You know, you're in your 20s and things just seem cool to you," Shawn said. "I thought 'man, that's something I'd want to try.'"



FIRE CHIEF SHAWN GRANT

After working as a welder at Jeffboat following high school, Shawn told his dad he wanted to join the police force, but Marvin had other advice for him.

"I told him 'I think going to try something different,' and I was going to apply for the police department," Shawn said. "He turned around in his chair and he said 'no, you want to be a fireman,' and now I've been here 25 years. It's been a long, hard road, but a very rewarding one."

Another incident at Jeffboat helped solidify his dad's advice in his mind — a fire broke out at work and the Jeffersonville Fire Department responded. He said when he saw the fire truck whip around the

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JEFFERSONVILLE POLICE CHIEF KENNY KAVANAUGH

corner and firefighters get to work without hesitation, he was sold.

"I never will forget this and it kind of sealed the deal for me," Shawn said. "Captain (Steve) Case got off that truck with the hose and went into that building that was fully-involved like it was nothing. I was like, 'Wow, that is cool,' and that kind of sparked my interest for the fire department."

Shawn said he showed an interest in public service pretty early on in life and his father always served as a mentor to him, and that's part of the reason he thinks public service runs in families.

"I think it's almost like a lifestyle," Shawn said. "It's that aspect of helping people, caring about your neighbor. It's something that



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you're either in it or you're not. I really do believe it's something that's bred in you. I'd watch my dad go out of the house at 1 or 2 in the morning, going to a call when he was a detective back in the day. It's just a calling. It just becomes a part of who you are and your family."

LES KAVANAUGH

Kenny said his father, Les, always had a hand in public service. He was a Navy veteran, and involved in local Little League teams, but he also served three terms as a school board member. Kenny said he remembered one night when some of those duties ran into each other.

A dry cleaning and laundry business caught fire close to their home when Kenny was about 10 years old, sometimes in the 1980s. Les arrived home after a school board meeting to find the nearby business burning. "I recall seeing him pull up and seeing the fire," "He was in his suit and tie, then he popped the trunk of his car and put his gear on. I can recall seeing that working structure fire was full of black smoke."

He also said that call hit something else close to home, and not just because it was down the street from them.

He said he witnessed his father's bravery, but also experienced fear.

"There was no hesitation that I can recall," Kenny said. "Seeing him and others go into that, I was scared, nervous to see my dad doing that. "

But he said it's amazing to him to see that building, located at the corner of Crestview Court and Eighth Street, is still there because of firefighters, including his father.

"As you see, the building is still standing," Kenny said. "There was some damage, but it was not a total loss."

He said his father's dedication to the job was obvious.

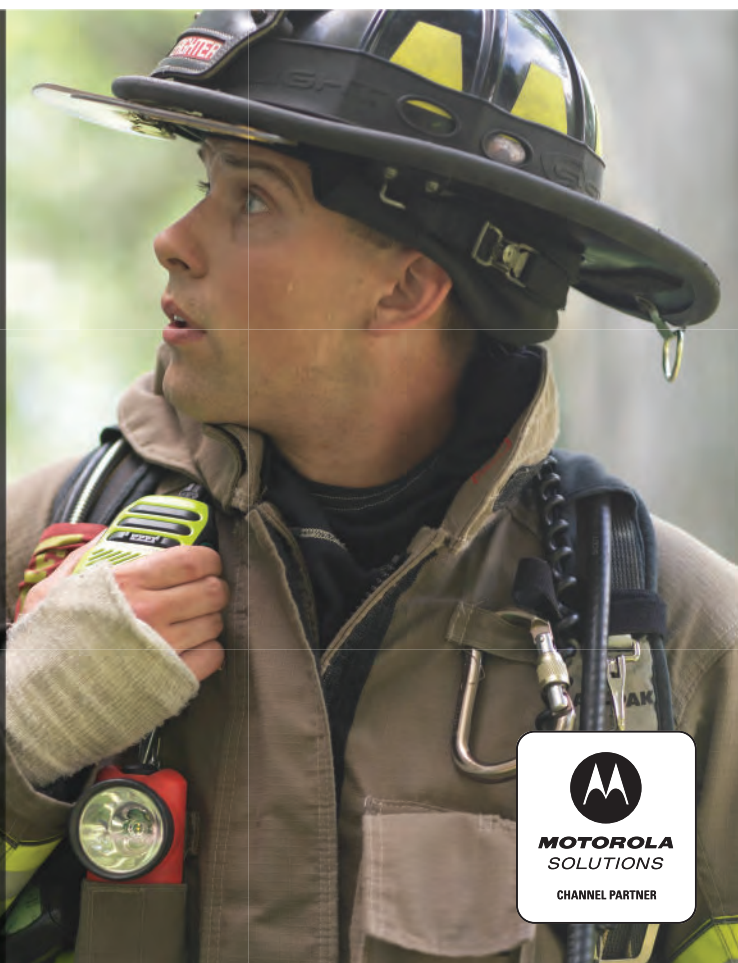
"[There] was also the phone ringing in the middle of the night," Kenny said. "It wasn't uncommon for the phone to ring in the middle of the night, and he was out in three or four minutes. We'd hear the car start and he'd be out the door."

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SHAWN GRANT, FIRE CHIEF
JEFFERSONVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

That's something Kenny began to resonate with during his work at JPD. He said he's had days run long, spend about an hour at home, then get right back at it. He said it's days like that you joke with the team and hope you get more sleep the next night, but it's something public safety officials take in stride.

If an officer or firefighter spends their vacation time at home, Kenny noted, they're still likely to jump in on a call when they're needed.

"Unless you leave the city, things are going to happen or occur when you're on vacation," he said. "But if you're here inside the city, you're going to help, you're not going to say 'Hey, I'm on vacation.'"

Kenny started talking to his dad about his aspiration to join public service when he was about to finish high school. He said he thought about joining the military, but he started college, then joined Clark County Corrections. Though he didn't finish school at that time, he said his father was proud.

"My father at the time, I recall sharing with him at the time and he got emotional," Kenny said. "That is something memorable, starting that next step when I was in corrections and entering into patrol."

Last year, Kenny finished his degree, and he said it gives him a better understanding of his role as chief. But his dad had something to add.

"My dad, he told me one night, 'I tried to tell you that [you needed to finish school] about 20 years ago, but you didn't want to listen,'" Kenny said. "I laughed and I said you know what, you're right. But he told me he was proud of me for finishing and achieving that educational goal."

Kenny said the spouses and significant others of public safety officers have a lot to deal with in the family with the constant hours, pagers and phones ringing, and more, but they provide constant support at home. He said there were times his mother, Theresa, was driven "nuts" by it, but she was steadfast in her support.

Kenny said his upbringing and his father's work with public service taught him a lot about his position as chief, too. He said with that environment at home, it helped prepare him for his role at JPD.

"We understand this really well prior to taking our oaths," Kenny said. "My father, my grandfather, [they taught me] that commitment and what you commit yourself to, you fulfill your commitments, all the time. Those examples of leadership, those examples of integrity to your commitment and responsibilities, being accountable to your oath, that is what you do and how you do it."

Congrats JFD!



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GRANT AND KAVANAUGH ARE PROUD TO FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THEIR FATHERS AS THEY SERVE JEFFERSONVILLE RESIDENTS. PHOTO BY BILL HANSON

CONTINUING THE LEGACY

Shawn said he respects the work Kenny does every day and understands the demands leadership roles can have on a person. He said as leaders, he and Kenny have to take care of their officers and firefighters.

"He's the policeman's policeman and I feel like I'm the fireman's fireman," Shawn said. "I really feel like we were bred to do what we do."

Both men have children who are interested in careers in public safety, or are actively doing the work. Kenny said his son, Jaylan, is on JPD as well. He said he's proud of his son.

"Someone said to [my wife, Lanae] 'so your son's a police officer and your husband's a police officer?' And she said 'Yes, and I'm going to go gray a lot quicker,'" Kenny said.

Shawn's daughter, Mackenzie, 14, wants to be a nurse, and his son, Shawn Jr., wants to be a state trooper. He said he's proud to see their interest in that kind of work, and he loves the idea that they'll feel the same pride he does.


"Every day, we go someplace that we help people," Shawn said. "We mitigate problems. I tell you, after you do so, there's no better feeling than when you come back to this station to know 'I made a difference, I helped someone and made their day better.'"



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WES AND WILLIAM
DAVIS RESPONDED TO
A SEMITRAILER FIRE ON
WILLIAM'S LAST DAY
ON THE DEPARTMENT
ON FEB. 3, 2016. PHOTO
PROVIDED BY JFD

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

Davis follows father's footsteps on fire department

BY DANIEL SUDDEATH

It would have been a normal run on most any other day. A semitrailer was on fire, and William Davis was one of the firefighters who responded to that call on Feb. 3, 2016.

But this wasn't a typical day.

Joining the Jeffersonville Fire Department at the age of 21, Davis had served the city for 40 years. This was to be his last run, an experience certainly worth commemorating, but one made extra special by the firefighter who responded alongside Davis.

Davis' legacy didn't smolder when the final flame of his career was doused. It carries on today in the form of his son, Wes Davis, who has been a member of the JFD for 14 years. And in a unique moment, they both were called to the truck fire on that winter day.

"It really does make me proud and he's doing a good job," said William of Wes.

"I'm kind of old school. It's changed quite a bit, so he's learning a whole lot more than I ever learned."

Wes Davis is a lieutenant with the department. He started with Jeffersonville in June 2007.

"I always looked up to him and wanted to follow in his footsteps and wanted to be able to help people at the same time," Wes said of his childhood memories of his father.

It was the blaze that gutted half the block at 300 Spring St. in Jeffersonville in 2004 that solidified his decision to follow his father's lead and become a firefighter.

Wes recalled how hard his father and others worked in responding to the blaze, and the then-teenager knew

he wanted to help others.

Wes has cousins and an uncle who are firefighters in other communities. Though fire-fighting runs in the family, Wes said his parents never pressured him to follow in his father's footsteps.

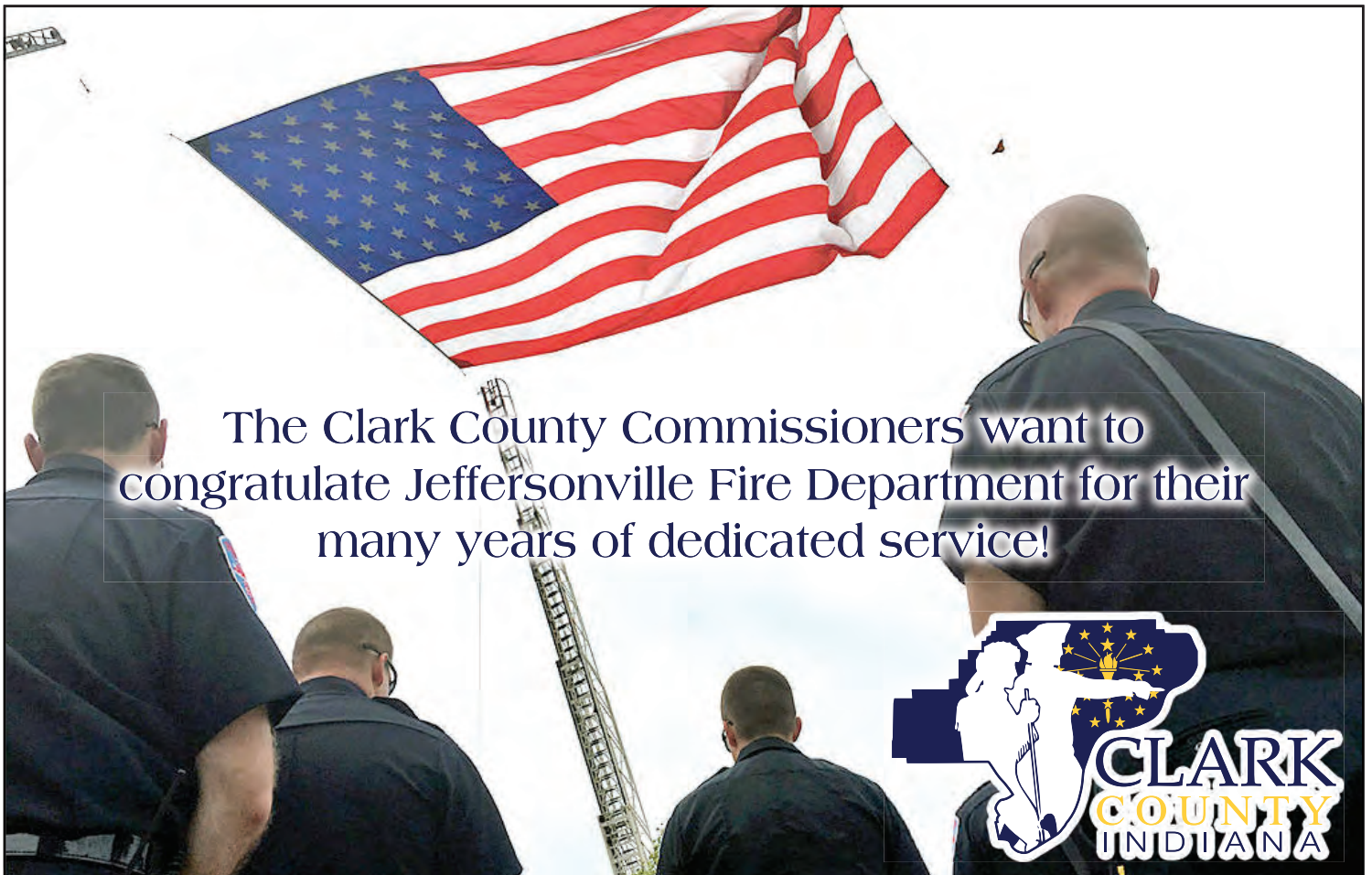
William said the job is demanding for multiple reasons.



"To be a good firefighter, you really have to love doing the job, because it's difficult. A lot of times you're away from your family and you run into situations where you're trying to get into something everyone else is trying to get out of."

WILLIAM DAVIS

JEFFERSONVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT



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That was a part of the job that required Wes to adjust his mindset. He was drawn to the profession out of respect and admiration, but he quickly realized firefighters deal with tragedy on a regular basis.

"You always see the good stuff on TV, being able to go and help someone. Before you get hired, that's kind of the persona you believe," Wes said. "And you are there to help people, but at the same time, they don't call you because they're having their best day ever."

Wes and William were able to work for about nine years together on the department. They were never housed in the same location, but they often responded to the same calls.

"At that point it was more of we were coworkers. It wasn't so much father and son. But we definitely had some good times together," Wes said.

Like his son, William also had childhood dreams of being a firefighter. He was born in New Albany but was raised in Jeffersonville, and said serving his community was a dream come true.

"Of course it's grown quite a bit in the 40 years I was on. It was such a small, close-knit community," William said. "It's still pretty close-knit, but just a little larger now."

Father and son acknowledged the reverence they hold for the department, especially as it celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2021.

"It's a very integral part of the community," William said. "They're always there for the community, and always looking out for the good of the community."

Wes shared similar thoughts about the history of the JFD.

"It makes me very proud just to be a part of the department in general, just the sacrifice of the guys before me and the guys that I work with have given the department," he said.



WILLIAM DAVIS
RETIRED FROM THE
JEFFERSONVILLE FIRE
DEPARTMENT AFTER
40 YEARS OF SERVICE.
PHOTO BY NEWS AND
TRIBUNE

"It makes me very proud just to be a part of the department in general, just the sacrifice of the guys before me and the guys that I work with have given the department."

WES DAVIS

JEFFERSONVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT



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TRAILBLAZERS

*These women
held their own
— and more*

**BY
CAROL BAKER
DAWSON**

Sitting outside a local Jeffersonville ice cream shop, a young boy stops devouring ice cream to shriek in delight as a fire truck pulls up with three firefighters. The child yells, "Look, there are three firemen coming out of the fire truck!" His grandmother corrects him saying, "No, they are called firefighters."

The boy questioned, "Isn't that what I said?" The grandmother took the time to give a diversity lesson by advising the child he had just called a female firefighter a fire-man. The child seemed to understand as he ran up to meet Capt. Pam Blanchard, the second woman firefighter hired by the JFD. Blanchard was hired on April 21, 1994, and plans to retire in two years.

It has been a struggle for the City of Jeffersonville to obtain women applicants to enter the firefighting ranks. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, women make up 51% of the U.S. workforce; however, only 4.4% are in the field of firefighting, despite changes brought on by the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

To qualify for consideration as a firefighter, applications are accepted, and those who score the highest are interviewed. Applicants must pass a rigorous physical (Candidate Physical Ability Test) and mental test at the time of consideration. There are no adjustments made for any applicant. If hired, the applicant receives training in-house at the JFD Fire Academy before being assigned to a crew. There are initiatives being considered at this time to increase interest in firefighting positions for women.

Marvena Allen was the first female firefighter to be hired into the JFD. Allen was unavailable to be interviewed; however, Blanchard, and recently retired Lt. Shannon Watterson sat down in the JFD headquarters to talk about their

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journey and to encourage other women to consider firefighting as a career choice.

Both Blanchard and Watterson wanted to make clear they have loved being firefighters. Each has a passion to serve the community.

Watterson indicated she was a bit lost when she retired after working in protected service her entire career. These firefighters also want other women to know they are welcome at JFD – but they need to have the fortitude, determination, intelligence and strength to take on the challenge of being a firefighter.

Blanchard previously worked as a waitress before several firefighter friends encouraged her to apply for a firefighter position. “I was always a bit of a tomboy, so I thought, what the hell, I’ll give it a try,” she said.

Blanchard was determined to rise to the top of the applicant list. To become stronger, she would put a firehose across her shoulders and run around her back yard until she was exhausted and could barely walk. Then, she pushed herself further by running several miles, climbing up and down steps while wearing ankle and wrist weights, and then rowing a boat until she had no more to give. In time, she became stronger and ready to be tested.

Women were new to the JFD, and Blanchard feels she was tested just a little bit more than the men when she was being considered, because the officials wanted to ensure women could do the job.

Both women spoke of the family dynamics of being on a firefighting team, while also

discussing the challenges they faced by being small women in a male-dominated field with strength and power being a major part of the job. However, they feel they are equals and the other firefighters know they can trust them to fully do the job.

Watterson started out working at the JFD being single without children and at the time of retirement was married with two kids. She and Blanchard both recalled the earlier days when there were no uniforms to fit women, especially pregnant women. There also was a breastfeeding learning curve for the department. However, the leaders of the JFD learned through experiencing firsts throughout their careers and the women believe those concerns are no longer an issue.

Watterson, whose background includes being a paramedic before working for the fire department, says she was always cared about and treated as an equal. While Blanchard agrees, she recalls a memory from early in her career and explained, “I was training elementary school children in the old survival house when a young boy came up to me and said, “Hey, you are a woman! My daddy said you shouldn’t be doing this job.” She knew then the stereotyping could make her job more difficult.

Both firefighters told multiple stories about situations they found to be humorous, and both easily laughed at those memories, including the time Blanchard had to make a fire run in the middle of dying her hair. However, when the question was asked about their worst fire run, they became quiet and somber.

Because both women are mothers, their worst runs involved children who didn't survive the trauma. Both women had tears in their eyes as they recounted the sadness they felt after some of their traumatic runs. Those are the times when they take advantage of counseling offered by the JFD and realize they don't always have control over the events that take place on their watch.

Watterson and Blanchard want women to know the job as a firefighter may not be for everyone, but for those who are interested in a career that is challenging, yet overwhelmingly rewarding, they should consider firefighting.

"Women should know there are limitless possibilities to promote into other jobs within the JFD, such as fire inspection, investigations, training

and more," Blanchard said. The women of the JFD, along with their male counterparts, are devoted to being where they need to be during difficult and traumatic times for the people of Jeffersonville.

But Blanchard, Watterson and the third female firefighter, Allen, have crossed the hard line while using their wit, strength, knowledge, fortitude and perseverance to create a wide path for women to follow.

Fire Chief Shawn Grant wants to increase the diversity of the fire department and is reviewing several projects to accomplish this goal. Grant has plans to form a diversity committee to work with the City Human Relations Department to assist in targeting recruitment efforts for women and minorities.



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UNIQUE RESCUES

BY APRILE RICKERT

In April 2015, Jeffersonville firefighters Capt. Rusty Hall and Rex Caldwell went to the scene of a huge fire that had ripped through Bridgepointe Apartments on Ewing Lane the previous day. They were just doing a follow-up, a final day-after walkthrough.

As they went room-to-room through one charred unit, one so badly damaged that the roof was burned away, they noticed cat food but no cat. As they lifted a mattress from a bed frame, Hall had to look twice to understand what he was seeing. Under the bed was a tiny 2-week-old kitten, eyes barely open, his mouth and nose covered with soot.

"I looked under and I thought at first it was a stuffed animal or a little toy," Hall said. "As i turned around it looked like it moved. It was the only little bitty kitten, all by itself. Little bitty old fur ball, it's like 'how did that thing survive all this?'"

The kitten, later named Miracle, was taken outside for emergency care. Staff at the Jeffersonville Animal Shelter cared for the kitty until it was deemed healthy enough to go home, and firefighter Caldwell adopted him.

"That's how it got that name, it's a miracle that it survived," Hall said, adding that to this day he doesn't know how the kitten survived the fire.

"We still just look at each other and go 'what can you say?' he said. "You just can't find words or emotions. We just happened to be put in the right place at the right moment to find that kitten and make things good."

While this situation was really unique and special, firefighters are often called to help rescue animals. Due to their ladders, Sgt. Justin Ames said they get lots of calls for cats stuck in trees. But as long as the cat is not in danger, it's a situation they go into with caution, asking the owner to first try to leave food

near the tree in hopes of coaxing it down.

"We generally will give it a few days before we put a firefighter at risk going up on a ladder to get a cat," Ames said. "It's probably one of the more dangerous things we could do.

"You're in a tree and you're grabbing this animal that's going to go crazy on you and claw you and bite you because it's scared, and then you've got to balance that with climbing down a ladder."

In 2019, Lt. Brandon Hopf was part of the crew that spent more than an hour trying to gain the trust of a rare Macaw, which had escaped and was posted up in a tree on Spruce Street.

"We were trying to dangle a toy from a pike pole and every time we got close to it, it would just fly in a different direction," Hopf said. "There was just no way to get this little bird."

When the bird went to a taller tree, the firefighters considered using the aerial ladder, which can reach 100 feet in the air. In the end, they used a tower truck, which has a bucket two firefighters can more securely stand on.

Firefighters also have rescued dogs that got swept into a drainage basin from flood waters — that involved lowering a police officer into the area where the dogs were. And then there's the baby ducks who get trapped in sewers.

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JEFFERSONVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT SGT. JUSTIN AMES WASHES A DOG RESCUED FROM A DRAINAGE DITCH IN HIGHLAND DOG PARK IN 2018.

"Typically a walker will be walking past and hear them in there," Ames said. "And who do you call? Well you call the fire department. People don't know who else to call so they call us and we kind of just go and figure it out."

"There's a lot of common sense required in our job, a lot of mechanical ability as well to figure things out."

Ames said he's fixed a toilet before — the caller was worried that it would keep overflowing and reach the electrical system. On a recent call, Hopf said he responded to a house where a woman's doorbell would not stop chiming. They took apart the old-style bell to make sure there was no hazard.

"She was afraid that there was an electrical issue, that it would catch fire, so we had to go and rule out whether it was going to catch fire or not," Ames said.

But if their job requires extensive training in fire and rescue and a lot of common sense to help fix everyday issues, being a good firefighter also takes a lot of heart.

Although he doesn't necessarily think of it as a "rescue," Battalion Chief Richard VanGilder recalls the many visits he and his crew made to the home of an older Jeffersonville couple. The man, who was in his 90s, would often slip out of bed or need other assistance.

"He wasn't invalid, but he was close, and the only thing that allowed him to live at home was the help other people could provide him," VanGilder said, adding that he and his crew went almost daily. "They wouldn't even call 911 anymore, they would call us and because we were able to go over and [help him] and kept him and his wife living together until he died."

For him, it wasn't a question of whether to help or not.

"We put ourselves in that position," he said. "If that were our parent, what would we want from the local fire department?"



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Firefighters leave behind

'EMOTIONAL MARKERS'

in close-knit community

BY CAROL BAKER DAWSON

There are obvious physical risks JFD firefighters make, but often the public forgets about the mental scars. Jeffersonville is considered a small town with close-knit neighborhoods. Firefighters often make runs on people they love and care about, sometimes with considerable grief.

Every firefighter has a story about his or her worst run; the call that turns them on their heels and melts their fortitude into a puddle of angst and tears.

In 2018, Sgt. Justin Ames (Ames) shared his worst run with a local television station in order to bring attention to the Post Traumatic Stress that can be experienced by firefighters across the nation. He wanted other firefighters to know it is all right to speak openly about tragedies they have encountered and to seek counseling when needed.

On Mother's Day 2010, Ames heard the call across the speaker state the run was on a 54-year-old woman, unconscious and unresponsive and then came the address and he knew the run was for his mother. Despite knowing he should not make the run, Ames felt he had no other choice.

"I knew my mother would be thinking, my son is coming to help me," he said.

Ames made the run with Capt. Pam Blanchard, who realized it was Ames' mom's house as soon as they arrived. She recalled smoke had engulfed the home. They rushed to bedroom to find Ames' mother. He scooped his mother up into his arms and ran out of the building.

Ames explains, "I went inside and went to work; it's my job. I took an oath to the city of Jeffersonville and our citizens and that day the run just happened to be my mom."

Ames' mother could not be revived; she had passed away from a heart attack. Ames said he never dreamed he would get a call for his own mother — on Mother's Day. Often firefighters cope with difficult times by joking with one another about things completely non-related to the trauma they might have experienced. But this time, there was no laughter. Ames broke down and cried as his mother was driven to the hospital.

Many firefighters have bad days, but Ames began having too many consecutive bad days. His stress started impacting his personal life — his family.



RETIRED DEPUTY CHIEF JOE LEE

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"As firefighters we are taught to put a smile on our face and go help the public, that is our job, and we love our jobs," he said. "It is the best job in the world, but when we take the trauma home to the ones we love, they suffer also."

Firefighters are often apprehensive about getting help with mental distress because of the stigma they fear may be attached to it. Ames knew he needed help when he was driving with his children by the area where his mother passed away and he felt overwhelming grief.

"Most of us have these emotional markers all over the city. When we see that area, we remember. I remembered,

and that day I sought help for my grief," he said.

Ames tells his story because he wants firefighters to know it is OK to cry and to talk to one another, as well as counselors.

"We are tasked with service to others, and I can't imagine doing anything else. The heart of the firefighter comes out for the people we encounter in trouble. We see them at their worst moments and that can take a toll," Ames said. "To combat the trauma, firefighters often go beyond our jobs by doing good deeds to turn around the sadness of the people involved, and in turn it helps us cope."

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Firefighters excel in Olympics-style international sporting events

BY BROOKE MCAFFEE

Firefighters with the Jeffersonville Fire Department have proven their athletic skills over the past decade as they compete with first responders from around the world.

Since 2011, it has been a tradition for Jeffersonville firefighters to compete in the biennial World Police and Fire Games, an international, Olympics-style sporting event open to police officers, firefighters and EMS personnel.

Athletes from the Jeffersonville Fire Department have won many medals over the years, including some top honors in the international competition. Local firefighters have participated in the multi-sport competition in New York City, Fairfax, Va. and Los Angeles, as well as the Canadian-American Police and Fire Games in Pennsylvania.

Josh Stith, a lieutenant with the Jeffersonville Fire Department, is among the local firefighters who have competed in the World Games. He has been feted in numerous events.

Stith wrestled in high school and later coached wrestling at Jeffersonville High School. Along with fellow firefighter Jason Wiesenauer, he decided to participate in the 2011 World Police and Fire Games in New York City.

In the 2011 games, Stith won gold in freestyle wrestling and bronze in Greco-Roman wrestling.

"I never wrestled in college, but there were a lot of college wrestlers and people from different countries who were pretty good," Stith said. "If I had looked them up before I wrestled,



ABOVE:
JEFFERSONVILLE
FIREFIGHTERS
CAMERON WOLFE AND
JOSH STITH SHOW
THE MEDALS THEY
WON AT THE 2017
WORLD POLICE AND
FIRE GAMES IN LOS
ANGELES.



LEFT:
JEFFERSONVILLE
FIREFIGHTER JOSH
STITH HAS WON
MEDALS AT MULTIPLE
WORLD POLICE AND
FIRE GAMES.

they probably would have beat me, because I would have been nervous. But I got to mix it up with them before I realized I was not bad."

Stith said the games are an opportunity for the firefighters to represent the Jeffersonville community.

"The main thing is to show people who we are — if we win, we win gracefully, and if we lose, we lose with dignity," he said. "You make friends along the way and get the word out about our city."

At the 2017 games in Los Angeles, Stith received silver in Greco-Roman wrestling and submission grappling and bronze in freestyle wrestling.

A bracket for the Los Angeles competition showed his name and the city of Jeffersonville listed with international competitors from Sweden, Peru, Iran and Germany, he said.

"It thought it was really cool," Stith said. "You just really soak up and live in the moment and enjoy it and meet people you will never have a chance to meet again."

The 2021 event was postponed due to the pandemic, but the next World Police and Fire Games is scheduled to take place next year in Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Stith said Jeff Fire intends to send at least two to three firefighters to the 2022 event.

City firefighter Cameron Wolfe won gold in the 2017 World Police and Fire Games in L.A. in bench pressing and push-pull events.

He also received a gold medal for bench pressing in the 2015 competition in Fairfax, Va.

"It's just an incredible experience — just getting to compete at that level in our profession," he said. "It's basically like the Olympics for first responders. Seeing that many athletes from all over the world, not just the United States — it was a pretty impressive thing to be a part of."

Jeffersonville firefighter Jason Wiesenauer has taken part in several competitions. He trained for

the triathlon for the New York City games in 2011, but the event was canceled due to weather. Although Wiesenauer didn't get to compete, he showed up to support Stith.

Wiesenauer did win gold in a triathlon at the Canadian-American games in 2013, and he competed in a mountain biking event at the Fairfax games in 2015, which was the last tournament he attended.

"I did not do so great [in Fairfax] but I had a blast," he said. "I was much older and a little more out of shape than when I first started competed, but it was a lot of fun."

Competing in the games allows Jeffersonville firefighters to set an example, Wiesenauer said. They are focused on doing their best and putting "Jeffersonville on the map, whether we win or not."

"I know on a personal level for both Josh and I, mostly what we wanted was to lead the department in physical fitness, and it is really about taking what we love and trying to be an example — not just in Jeffersonville, but representing Jeffersonville well on the world stage."



FAR LEFT: JOSH STITH COMPETES IN A WRESTLING MATCH AT THE 2015 WORLD POLICE AND FIRE GAMES IN FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA.

LEFT: FIREFIGHTERS JASON WIESENAUER, JOSH STITH AND NICK STONE EARNED MEDALS AT THE 2015 CANADIAN-AMERICAN POLICE AND FIRE GAMES IN PENNSYLVANIA.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

COMES NATURALLY TO FIREFIGHTERS

BY CAROL BAKER DAWSON

SGT. ANTONIO VEALS HANDS OUT SAFETY MATERIALS TO CHILDREN IN THE COMMUNITY

Community service comes naturally to JFD firefighters, on and off the clock. The men and women of the JFD want the community to understand what they do and how citizens can protect themselves. Here are some of the community activities in which they engage...

PROPER INSTALLMENT OF CHILD CAR SEATS

Any parent or grandparent who has had to install a car seat could likely attest to the difficulty of the installation. There are hooks, straps, and anchors that would rival those found on a boat. Then there is the need to know where to install the seat and whether the seat should be positioned facing backward or forward.

Norton Healthcare in Louisville recently worked with the JFD firefighters on the proper installation and positioning of child restraining seats. In turn, the JFD now provides instruction for free to the citizens of Jeffersonville.

Sgt. Justin Ames explained, "The purpose of the training is to ensure your child is properly restrained to better protect that child if there is a crash. We enjoy working with our community in this manner."

Jeffersonville citizens can come by the JFD Headquarters any Thursday from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. to be sure your child's seat is installed properly. The JFD headquarters is located at 2204 E. 10th St.

D CREW - WORKING WITH STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

D Crew was created when the Greater Clark County Schools administration reached out to the JFD to work with a group of special needs students from Jeffersonville

High School. The purpose of this program is for the students to understand the work firefighters do, learn work skills and teamwork, and build self-confidence.

Sgt. Justin Ames has worked with the program since its inception. He said the program has a special place in the hearts of the firefighters who work with the students of D Crew, adding that the firefighters connect easily to the participants and enjoy watching their progress through the school year.

Ames explained that many of the children in the D Crew program are initially shy and a bit reserved; however, after a few weeks, they are excited to come to the firehouse. He added, "These kids begin exhibiting social and teamwork skills after working with our firefighters. It is awesome to watch them grow and the know this program is making a positive impact. Actually, our firefighters seem to get as much enjoyment from the program as the kids."





Ames indicated the D Crew program goes straight to the JFD firefighter's hearts. There are often runs to help individuals with disabilities and this assists the firefighters to better understand how to deal with each person's differences.

Whitney Stevens, a self-contained special education teacher, also directs the Clark County's CHOICE program, which involves Jeffersonville High School freshmen and sophomore students with intellectual disabilities. The goal for the program is connect with sources outside of school in order to teach the students skills that will benefit them in employment and independent living. The D Crew is an important component of the program.

Stevens indicated the most important thing the children on the D Crew learn is teamwork. Ames begins the program by talking about how important it is for the JFD to work as a team. The students are given many team-building activities during their participation in the program, including raising and checking ladders, testing and rolling up hoses, cleaning the fire trucks, and inspecting lights and oxygen tanks.

Stevens explained the D Crew are also taught about fire safety and the JFD brings an ambulance and EMS crew by to speak to the students. She added, "We sometimes have a student or two each year that initially do not seem interested in joining the D crew. I recall one student who would not talk to Sgt. Ames. By the end of the program, this student wanted to work at the fire department with Sgt. Ames! The firefighters work well with the students."

At the end of the program, the JFD hosts a D Crew celebration, where students can enjoy a catered lunch and receive their certificates for completing the program.



TOP PHOTO, SGT. JUSTIN AMES TALKS WITH STUDENTS; BOTTOM PHOTO, LEFT TO RIGHT, FIREFIGHTER CAMERON WOLFE, FOUR MEMBERS OF A LOCAL SCOUT TROOP, SGT. DANTE COOPE AND FIREFIGHTER PAUL FINCH



MEMBERS OF D-CREW, WHO ARE STUDENTS AT JEFFERSONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL, PRACTICE WITH THE FIRE HOSE.

Stevens said, "It's touching to see our firefighters take time out of their very busy profession to tend to our students and give them the best experience possible!"

Because of COVID-19, the program was suspended in 2020-2021, and it is unclear when the connection will continue, but the JFD firefighters involved are eager to meet the new group of students who will be their D Crew.

THUNDER OVER LOUISVILLE SAFETY

The JFD works closely with multiple agencies and government offices during the planning phase and execution of Thunder Over Louisville, the premier air show and fireworks display leading into the celebrations for the Kentucky Derby.

In the past, Amir Mousavi, former Safety Risk Manager for the City of Jeffersonville, coordinated the management and implementation of processes to keep residents, businesses and Thunder participants safe throughout the day of the event.

Mousavi explained that the JFD staff, along with several agencies, are responsible to ensure the safety of all attendees. They are accountable for medical emergencies as well as potential issues relating to hazardous materials, all the while continuing to perform their regular duties of responding to emergency calls.

Mousavi emphasized that the event is unique to any other event in the U.S. in that Thunder has the largest

number of participants (600,000 to a million on both sides of the river) for an event located in a small space in one day. The logistics and coordination efforts for the event are monumental.

Mike McCutcheon, firefighter and deputy operations of Thunder, coordinates with the Jeffersonville Police Department to ensure a safe Thunder experience for all involved. McCutcheon explained the coordination begins with many other agencies months in advance of the event, along with coordinating operations with the City of Louisville and its supporting agencies.

"Our Fire Marshall Department is responsible for inspecting all businesses in the vicinity of the event to



SGT. LORENZO DELK COLLECTS DONATIONS DURING THE ANNUAL WHAS CRUSADE FOR CHILDREN DRIVE.

verify that these businesses are in compliance with all fire safety code requirements and not a threat to the event participants," McCutcheon said. "The day of the event, we are responsible for setting out barricades in coordination with the Jeffersonville Police Department, conducting inspections of every vendor, and coordinating with the safety task force to respond to all safety needs of the public."

CRUSADE FOR CHILDREN FUNDRAISING

Soon after he became a JFD firefighter, Sgt. Michael Osborne asked to be assigned the role of Crusade coordinator, and he plans to continue his efforts coordinating activities for the JFD firefighters to raise money for the WHAS Crusade for Children campaign. The Crusade funds agencies, schools and hospitals to better the lives of special needs children.

Osborne and firefighter Andy Conlen work together to plan how the department will raise funds for the Crusade campaign. The fundraising begins two weeks before the Crusade, which is the first week in June.

The JFD firefighters are strong supporters of the Crusade; however, in 2020, COVID-19 made it impossible to collect money on the streets and organize events to bring in charitable donations, while the need for the funds was more important than at any other time. Street collections are the department's primary method of fundraising.

Conlen created a video appealing to community members to continue their donations and explaining how they could do so through the JFD. While many stepped up, the response was not what they had hoped. The video plea brought in approximately \$15,000, less than half of normal donations.

The past year was extremely difficult for many people, but the firefighters are hoping the Jeffersonville community will be able to come through for the children this year. The JFD collects funds for the Crusade year-round. Donations can be dropped off at any fire station or the JFD headquarters and it will be included in the next campaign.

CHILD OUTREACH THROUGH READ ACROSS AMERICA, FIRE SAFETY CLASSES

The JFD participates in the Read Across America program. Read Across America is an initiative on reading created by the National Education Association. One part of the project is National Read Across America Day, an observance held on the school day closest to March 2, the birthday of Dr. Seuss.

Last year, COVID-19 caused the schools to be closed; however, the JFD didn't want that to keep them

from reading to the students. With their iPhones, firefighters recorded videos of themselves reading various books for the children. Sgt. Justin Ames (Ames) explained the firefighters always enjoy interacting with the school children, even when it has to be through a video.

Any JFD firefighters are asked to come to the schools, they try to include fire safety training. They want the children to see what they look like in their uniforms, and they sometimes bring full gear. This is done to teach students to not be afraid if firefighters have to enter their homes and to not hide.

"We do things like teach them how to crawl toward us and how they should get out of the home instead of hiding, which is often what children will do when they are afraid,"

Ames said. "The more they know about fire safety means more lives can be saved."

Teaching children fire safety is a primary objective for Fire Chief Shawn Grant. In the past, there was a "Survive Alive" house that was used to teach young children how to respond in a house fire. However, after moving to the new fire headquarters, the house has not been rebuilt.

Grant has a short-term objective to create a mobile "Survive Alive" house for firefighters to take to the schools. He said, "Right now, protecting our children is heavy on my mind. We want to do more to ensure our children know what to do when confronted with a fire. We can do more. We want them safe."

As time permits, the JFD will come to local schools to read, give a fire safety presentation, or just to meet the students. School administrators can call the JFD to set up an appointment. 812-283-6633.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

For several years, the JFD have been joining hands with the Jeffersonville Police Department and the Jeffersonville Neighborhood Leadership Alliance in a National Night Out program. The program is typically held the first Tuesday in August.

Residents across America, including Jeffersonville, not only get to meet Jeffersonville police officers and firefighters, but they also have the opportunity to get to know others who live in their community.

Congratulations on your 150th Anniversary, Jeffersonville Fire Department!



Thank you for your service.
Rita Fleming, State Representative, District 71

Paid for by Rita Fleming

Firefighters bring their fire trucks into the neighborhoods, give out fire hats and fire safety books to children, help with grilling hamburgers and hot dogs, assist with games while greeting the community, and have even been known to join in the fun of a slip and slide.

Deborah Henderson, past chairperson of the Jeffersonville Neighborhood Leadership Alliance, said the benefits of the National Night Out event is twofold — helping forge relationships between both neighbors and law enforcement and building relationships within the community to create safer neighborhoods.

"With police officers and firefighters being around," Henderson said, "potential barriers between our public servants and the people they serve can be diminished. They are seen not as an entity but as human beings. It brings out the best in neighborhoods. Strong neighborhoods make a strong city."

ONE OF US: RED FIREFIGHTER HATS FOR KIDS

The tradition of the JFD firefighters carrying child-sized, bright red firefighter hats aboard their trucks was started many years ago and the current firefighters have no plans to stop. The firefighters enjoy watching the faces of children light up when they are handed a hat.

Some firefighters even carry several hats when grocery shopping and hand them out. Sgt. Justin Ames said it is difficult to express just how much the firefighters enjoy watching the reactions of children who are excited about the firefighting profession. Firefighters get as much out of giving out the hats as the children do, he said.

PANDEMIC ACTION PLAN COMPREHENSIVE, EFFECTIVE

When the Shelter-in-Place order was issued for Southern Indiana and everyone was told to stay put, the firefighters and other first responders continued to work and risk their own health to ensure the safety of their community.



TOP PHOTO, CAPT. PAM BLANCHARD; BOTTOM PHOTO, LEFT TO RIGHT, FIREFIGHTERS JOSEPH DONAHUE, WILLIAM MEZA AND CHRIS MOORE WITH CAPT. PAM BLANCHARD

The first day Shawn Grant was on the job as the new fire chief, the Pandemic Shelter-in-Place order took effect and the safety of the JFD firefighters was his first priority. Grant and his administration quickly put together an incident action plan, implemented protocol for Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), followed mask mandates, allowed no visitors to the fire houses, conducted daily temperature checks, decontaminated everything in the firehouses, installed new ventilation systems throughout each fire station, etc.

As a result of these efforts, the firefighters were able to continue their work, with no known cases of COVID-19 in the JFD.

Fire service, safety the focus of Fire Union Local 558



SGT. JOE HURT

BY BROOKE MCAFEE

Sgt. Joe Hurt, Jeffersonville firefighter and local fire union president, said the mission of the Jeffersonville Fire Union Local 558 hasn't changed since it was formed in 1938.

"The point of the union originally was to get better working conditions, better wages, better staffing and better equipment," he said. "Honestly, that's still the mission today. We negotiate with the city council, and with the city and union working together, I can honestly say we're one of the premier fire departments in the state."

Hurt is also a registered emergency room nurse and the sixth district vice president for the Professional Fire Fighters Union of Indiana.

Currently, Hurt has worked with the Jeffersonville Fire Department for 10 years, seven of which he has served as the union president. He has been pleased to see a number of staffing improvements during that time, including the increase in ladder truck crews to a minimum of four firefighters per truck from three firefighters.

"Everyone is in a group of twos, so you basically get a whole other crew doing a different task," Hurt said. "Three would have to stick together

because we're not going to send one guy by himself."

The increase of minimum staffing per fire engine to three firefighters is another accomplishment Hurt says supports the safety of both firefighters and those they are working to protect.

"One guy can stay at the pump to get water for the two other guys, and we make sure we're always putting two people going into a building, so you don't have the dangerous situation where only one is going," he said.

Charles (Mike) Smith, a former Jeffersonville fire chief who helps maintain a lot of the department's oral history, said that when Jeffersonville got its union charter, it was to help improve both the conditions and benefits for firefighters, and improve the service provided to the city.

"They wanted to mechanize, they wanted to get strong leadership, they wanted to hire additional firefighter...they wanted to do all that," he said.

Plus, having a union to negotiate better benefits helped public service

agencies such as police and fire departments compete with other industries for workers.

"Back in the early days, you had GE, you had Ford Motor Company, you had all the distilleries in Louisville," he said. "Well, they couldn't compete with that so they offered 20-year pensions, stuff like that. That was the intent — to give good benefits and better pay to hire quality people.

"It's not just the union," he added. "It's everybody working together to try to make things better and more competitive."

Looking to the future, Hurt's focus is preparing for growth in the city and updating information on the department's run volume and population density in the community.

"The union is on the front of that with state and local leaders, and we have to figure out what the staffing needs to look like moving forward," Hurt said. "With the growth of the city, we'll have to grow our fire department, and it's not always easy figuring out where we need people, where we need the apparatus.

"The big thing is keeping up the staffing for the safety of firefighters and also service for the citizens."



ALEXANDER KNERR



ANDREW CONLEN



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LUKAS COWARD



LUKE COLLINS



MARCUS RENN



MARK DAUGHERTY



MATT MCDOWELL



MATTHEW MILLS



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QUINONES



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TRAVIS SHARP



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