



Mayor's Monthly Newsletter

Written by Mayor Rod Erskine

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A Salute To Our Jersey Village Fire Department

On Saturday, March 1st, I was privileged to participate in the Jersey Village Fire Department's awards banquet. This is an annual gathering to celebrate the past year's department milestones and individual accomplishments. As usual, it was a gala event attended by the members and their significant others.

Staff wise, our Fire Department is a team made up of a mix of full and part time city employees, and volunteer members. There are 61 members - 28 city employees, including our eight dispatchers and administrative assistant, plus 35 volunteers - with over 436 total years of experience among them.

If you spend any time around our Fire Department, you will feel a strong sense of camaraderie - of them being a part of team, and taking pride in their department. Visit the station at any time, everything is clean, or being cleaned, squared away, or being squared away. Any of you who have ever been lucky enough to be on a team where things just "click", will recognize the pride these men and women enjoy in being part of something special. While a great deal of credit goes to Chief Mark Bitz and his officers, this is an achievement that requires buy-in from the top of the organization all the way to its newest member.

Through their public relations efforts, the Fire Department has done a great job of establishing themselves as a part of our community rather than a service provider. At their annual open house, they put the "big toys" out for display, take people for rides, set cars on fire and put them out, and bring in the Life Flight helicopter, to both entertain and inform the residents. They participate in our city events like the Spring Fling and Fall Frolic. They run the Citizen's Fire Academy that many of you have attended and we all know who gives Santa Claus a ride around the neighborhood on Christmas Eve.

Among the accomplishments recognized at the banquet was the department's 60th anniversary, celebrated with a slideshow of vintage photos from their past history. And the 9/11 artifact that was presented to the JVFD by Congressman John Culberson (with some help from Frank Maher) was placed in an amazing display located in the department lobby that was crafted and donated by our neighbors at Sparkle Sign Company. This is the origin of the red and blue lights you see when you drive past the department's building on Jersey Drive after dark - please stop by and see it if you have a chance. Curtis Haverty wrote yet another successful grant application that resulted in needed equipment for the department. These are just a few of the accomplishments from last year.

In closing, the department responded to over a 1000 calls last year to help others, and we cannot ever forget the risky environment they work in on our behalf. That was never more apparent than on May 31 of last year when one of the members, Robert Beebe, lost his life in the line of duty while serving others. The banquet program included a special tribute to his memory, and we were honored that his mother and sister were able to be with us.

Please join me in a salute to our Jersey Village Fire Department!

Until next month.

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