



FULLY INVOLVED

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE MEN AND WOMEN OF TAMPA FIRE RESCUE

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“Now off duty”

TFR Comms Manager Margaret Hamrick retires



Margaret Hamrick, center left, with current and former dispatchers and colleagues at her retirement luncheon April 1. Photo by Jason A. Penny

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Tampa Fire Rescue Communications Manager Margaret Hamrick retired after nearly 29 years of service April 3. Current and former colleagues gathered at The Spaghetti Warehouse April 1 in Ybor City to recognize Hamrick's service to the City of Tampa. Fire Chief Tom Forward presented Hamrick with a commemorative plaque and recounted her leadership as she made the Tampa Fire Rescue communications Division one of the best dispatch units in the country.

“Margaret is the best of the best,” Forward said following the event. “She has been a key player in the overall success of Tampa Fire Rescue. The citizens of Tampa can sleep safely due to the program that she and her team have created. She is a true professional

and she will be missed,” Forward said.

Hamrick was first hired on May 5, 1986 and was one of the first civilian dispatchers to hold a position in the signal division. Dispatchers had traditionally been sworn firefighters. Hamrick rose through the ranks and after the last Communications Division Chief retired, Hamrick was appointed to lead the division in February 2002.

“I worked with Margaret for 25 years,” said Hamrick's successor and current Communications Manager Chris Mygrant. “She provided a lot of words of wisdom throughout the years and I will forever be grateful. She will be missed and I wish her nothing but the best.”

Communications supervisor Cheryl Richter echoed that sentiment.

Hamrick, 3



From the Chief: *The Responsible Decision*

It is very important that issues and matters involving and concerning Tampa Fire Rescue and members of our department be clearly communicated from the top of the organization down to the lowest echelon and vice versa for similar matters originating from the field up. Each member of this department



has value and deserves to be treated as such. All members must understand how the chain of command works and must be assured that when they air a concern or energize an effort that the chain supports that effort to the point of resolution; or at the very least, to the point that two-way communication between the sender and the receiver provides clarity relating to the issue of concern. Communication is paramount to the health and fitness of any program or organization, and it is almost certain that when there is any riff or uneasiness within the camp it can be traced back to a breakdown or breach in communication.

Tampa Fire Rescue is made up of a very diverse and multi-generational workforce whose members all have varying communication patterns and mediums. Not all of our modes reflect the same expressions. We have to make certain that in our daily intermingling that the message we are intent on conveying is clearly understood by our audience. This is not always easy to assess, so we must sometimes provide greater effort in making certain that our communication is clearly understood.

My greatest concern is and has always been, to ensure and provide for our workforce the most fit and healthy working environment that I can in adherence with our budget and the resources afforded this department while providing the high-

est standard of service delivery to which our community has become accustomed. The personnel assigned the various functions and stations out on the street each and every day, making contact with our customers, are truly the face of Tampa Fire Rescue and I am truly proud of your service and your commitment to excellence. If at any time any of you have issues of concern and have exhausted your chain of command and are still uncertain of a resolution, please do not hesitate to contact my office if you feel that I can be of greater assistance concerning the matter in question. I need each and every one of you operating at full capacity 24/7 as you never get a second opportunity to make a first impression. Any issue of concern that prevents you from being your best on the job impacts the whole job and every member of Tampa Fire Rescue.

I believe we come to this earth with a 70-year warranty. However, as we grow closer to the end of our seventh decade, the manufacturer gives most of us some extra time. I'm only 55, but have negotiated a second warranty. The currency I exchanged for this renewed Life Warranty was the promise to stay fit spiritually, mentally, and physically; to be kind to people, including myself, and to constantly continue to grow. We have to manage our present and create our future simultaneously, and sometimes it seems like everything is turned upside down. It's as if we must operate under a new set of rules. But one rule never changes: true gold is found in the way we treat other human beings. The buck stops here! None of us know how long we will be on this magnificent journey we call life. I've found that it's all about living with the passion of making every day count to provide for a better tomorrow. It's about jumping for joy at the simple, unforgettable moments that life brings us. Life is not about waiting for the extraordinary moments, it's about living with an extraordinary attitude.

As you read the following passage, *The Buck Stops Here* by Andy Andrews, consider placing yourself in the writer's shoes:

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- Tampa Fire Rescue Chief:** Chief Tom Forward
- Public Information Officer:** Jason A. Penny
- Contributors:** Chief Jason Dougherty
Capt. Troy Jones
Margarita Chapman

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Keeping fit to fight

By Captain Troy Jones

Tampa Fire Rescue recently completed the first of two physical fitness incentives for 2015 at the Training Division. Overall, 431 personnel participated in the incentive and took advantage of the opportunity to earn bonus annual leave hours. But the intention of the program goes far beyond the fiscal rewards associated with it. The city initially implemented the program as a reminder to the firefighters of Tampa that our profession is inherently physical and to insure that we maintain our fitness levels in an effort to meet these demands whenever we are called upon to do so.

A recent study by the IAFF showed that more than 45 percent of line of duty firefighter fatalities are due to sudden cardiac arrest. In fact, in a recent study by Harvard University, it was discovered that firefighters were 100 times more likely to suffer cardiac arrest than were other professions. Thirty-two percent of fatalities attributed to cardiac arrest happened while firefighters were engaged in fireground operations, although less than five percent of firefighters' time is spent engaged in these type activities. The study attributed these statistics to high levels of mental and physical stress as well as increased exposure to CO.

These sobering statistics should encourage all of us to take a look at how we prepare ourselves physically for fire-fighting. In addition to decreasing chances of cardiac events, maintaining suitable levels of physical fitness also has been shown to reduce the chances of other diseases such as hypertension, coronary artery disease, diabetes and cancer. Studies have also shown that being physically fit also leads to higher quality of life, better mental health, and better overall well



being.

So how do we get where we want to be? We all know that we should exercise more and eat right, but the real key is consistency. If you were to take an axe and chop at an oak tree a thousand times in a thousand different places, nothing is going to happen. But if you take that axe and hit the tree in the same place a thousand times, you are going to bring that tree down. It's okay to start small, you can adopt a healthier diet for one or two meals a week or walk two or three times a week. As long as you are consistent, you are going to see progress. Small progress is still progress. As long as there is consistency, the improvements will come.

So if you are not where you want to be, that's okay. The goal of the Peer Fitness Team is that tomorrow you are closer than you were yesterday. The Peer Fitness Team is comprised of ACE certified personnel trainers and the department has made this training available to you, all you have to do is get started. So we hope to see all of our brothers and sisters in September for the next physical incentive. So until then be safe and remember: "A river cuts through rock not because of its power but because of its persistence."

Hamrick

"Regardless of the circumstances I could count on Margaret to guide me down the right path and the proper course of action to be taken. Her vast job experience and knowledge will be missed," said Richter. "Her heels clicking down the dispatch hallway will forever echo in my head," she added.

Although retired from the City of Tampa, Hamrick will continue her career as the communications manager for Hillsborough County Fire Rescue.

Tampa Fire Chief Tom Forward presents a plaque to Margaret Hamrick commending her for her many years of service to the City of Tampa. Photo by Jason A. Penny



Chief's Column: The buck stops here

Continued from Page 2

From this moment forward, I will accept responsibility for my past...Never again will I blame my parents, my spouse, my boss, or employees for my present situation. Neither my education or lack of one, my genetics, or the circumstantial ebb and flow of everyday life will affect my future in a negative way...The buck stops here. I accept responsibility for my past. I am responsible for my success. I am where I am today—mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally, and financially—because of decisions I have made. My decisions have always been governed by my thinking...My thoughts will be constructive, never destructive. My mind will live in the solutions of the future. It will not dwell in the problems of the past. I will seek the association of those who are working and striving to bring about positive changes in the world. I will never seek comfort by associating with those who have decided to be comfortable.

When faced with the opportunity to make decisions, I will make one. I understand that God did not put in me the ability to always make right decisions. He did, however, put in me the ability to make a decision and then make it right. The rise

and fall of my emotional tide will not deter me from my course. When I make a decision, I will stand behind it. My energy will go into making the decision...

In the future, when I am tempted to ask the question, "Why me?", I will immediately counter with the answer: "Why not me?" Challenges are a gift, an opportunity to learn. Problems are the common thread running through the lives of great men and women. In times of adversity, I will not have a problem to deal with, I will have a choice to make. My thoughts will be clear. I will make the right choice. Adversity is preparation for greatness. I will accept the preparation. Why me? Why not me? I will be prepared for something great!

I accept responsibility for my past. I control my thoughts, I control my emotions. I am responsible for my success.

I remain extremely proud of each of you for your continued sacrifice and dedication to duty.

Stay safe out there and I will see you soon...

ARFF team named Chili Champs



(ARFF-2B), Driver-Engineer Mike Carter (ARFF-3B), Captain Gary May (ARFF-1B), and Paramedic Sergio Leon (Rescue 8B). This was their first time competing in this event and they won not only first place in the Firefighter class, but was ultimately named the Overall Chili Champions out of the 42 teams that participated that evening.



ARFF Division put together a team to represent Tampa Firefighters at the Pinellas Park Firefighter's 16th Annual Chili Blaze chili cooking competition. The event is held each year to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association. The team, Cigar City Chili Company shown at left, consisted of, from left to right, Driver-Engineer Mike Diaz

In God's hands above ground - Anything is possible.

By Margarita Chapman

Every 90 minutes someone is diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) – every 90 minutes someone dies of ALS. A true fact, a sad reality, a death sentence. ALS takes your breath away... Literally.

I remember clearly the day my husband Eric was diagnosed with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. It was September 19, 2011 and as we left the doctor's office in silence and got into the car, he looked over and says to me, "Don't cry, I am Blessed to have ALS." I turned to look at him as my tears rolled down my cheeks and my first thought was to punch him, but I hugged him instead.

ALS has changed our lives and forced us to reconstruct our plans for the future. Our beginning was like any others', filled with fear of the unknown, guesstimating what the future would be like, look like, trying to mentally prepare for the changes that were coming. We were exhausted, frightened and simply hopeful.

Eric and his brothers Jackie, Charles, Benjamin, Bruce, and sister Valerie all were raised in Sulphur Springs. A close knit family, Eric being the baby of the bunch. The Chapman crew spent their childhood and most of their teen years play-

he is a hero in his own right— U.S. Army veteran, a fighter



Engine 11 leads the group walking for ALS awareness through Springhill Park in Sulphur Springs. *Photo courtesy the Chapman Family*



From left, Margarita Chapman, Eric Chapman, Matt June, and Jackie June. *Photo by Jackie Chapman*

ing sports, gathering with friends, and barbecuing in Springhill Park. This is the reason why it was important for Eric to make an impact by raising awareness of ALS in his community by hosting the event in the very park which held many of his happy childhood memories.

Raising awareness is imperative to Eric, to his mind and spirit— you see, he may be trapped in his body, but his mind is busy with ideas and suggestions. His spirit is overflowing with motivation, inspiration and faith. Eric is courageous. Eric is kind. Eric is the most positive paralyzed individual you will ever meet. He is grateful. And because of this he has enriched the quality of his life as no other can. He believes in miracles.

Eric has found a kindred spirit in a fellow ALS Warrior—

for our freedom, Matt June. The two met when Eric attended his first ALS support group meeting. Upon that first encounter a bond, a solid friendship was born of truths, laughter, trust and a knowing that is kept between their silences.

The 1st Annual ALS Awareness Eric Chapman Day event #IWALKFORERIC was a great success. The talk of the hour and till this day is about the generosity, professionalism, kindness and honor the firefighters displayed at the walk. We, the Chapman Champions, were escorted by a big red beautiful shield of a fire engine. The horns blew and the sirens rang as we were led in class around the entire block of Springhill Park. We were blessed and honored to have the guidance of: District Fire Chief – Charles Chapman, Acting Captain Henry Williams, Acting Driver Engineer Steven Stevens, The Blaze Controller Firefighter Mathew Pompei, and the City of Tampa Fire Rescue. You guys ROCK!

In closing I would like to take a moment and share some of Eric's life lessons from the years living with ALS:

Forgive. Choose happiness. Love unconditionally. Smile from the inside out. Embrace life. Never allow anger to rob you of precious moments. Enjoy the sweet and sour of life. Laugh at everything/Cry when sad. Breathe. Simply breathe and believe in miracles.

District Chief Charles Chapman contributed to this story. Eric Chapman is his brother.

ARFF Live Fire Training Facility receives upgrade

Last month the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority (HCAA) provided the ARFF division a new restroom facility, permanent lighting, and a hydrant. This upgrade provides a safer environment for hosting Live Fossil Fuel Fires for TFR personnel.

Federal Aviation Regulation Part 139 mandates that all 37 assigned members of Tampa International Airport’s ARFF Division and 53 alternates, must participate in a live fire training exercise at least once per year. To satisfy this requirement, the ARFF Division conducts live fire training exercises using jet fuel. By using jet fuel, the training is designed to provide the most realistic environment that ARFF personnel may encounter during a real life scenario.

These real-life exercises include ARFF vehicle operations as well as handline evolutions. ARFF personnel take full advantage of these “hot” drills to hone their skills in:

- Incident Size-Up
- Incident Command System
- Emergency Communications
- Offensive and Defensive Vehicle Positioning
- Firefighter Safety

Other airports that send their ARFF firefighters to TPA for live fire training include Orlando, St. Petersburg/Clearwater, Lakeland, Sarasota/Bradenton, Fort Myers and Naples.



Above: A new hydrant and permanent lighting were installed by the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority to provide greater safety for firefighters participating in live fire training at the facility.



Left: Workers place a new restroom facility on a slab at the ARFF Live Fire Training Facility.

Are you ready for departure?

The Tampa International Airport 5K Runway Fun Run benefiting United Way Suncoast is Saturday, April 25.

Register Today!

<http://www.tampaairport.com/tpa-5k-runway-fun-run-2015>



Training Division Update— The six ingredients for success

By Training Chief Jason Dougherty

Tampa Fire Rescue celebrates 120 years of service to the City of Tampa next month on May 10. Over the years techniques, tactics, equipment, resources, and faces have changed but one thing that has remained consistent is that Tampa Fire is one of the most well-respected and progressive departments in the country. The members that have made up Tampa Fire Rescue over the years have helped earn us the praise and recognition from our brothers and sisters across the country. During my time at the Training Division, I have had the unique opportunity to attend a variety of classes, symposia, assessment centers, and fire conferences as well as interact with fire service leaders around the country. In so doing I have seen for myself just how great our department and people are. From our Fire Chief who has supported every endeavor that the Training Division has pursued to the most junior firefighter, the passion for our job is unquestionable. This directly relates to the fitness of our Training Division.

The Training Division is unique in the fact that it interacts with every member of the fire department from the most senior person to the students attending the fire academy. For the department to operate at full capacity, the Training Division must provide the best dish available using the finest 6 ingredients: education, experience, ability to relate, passion, expectations and, lastly, humility. **Education.** Knowledge about the class you are teaching. The knowledge must be acquired from studying and performing the particular topic. This takes time and dedication, and demonstrates dedication to the profession.

Experience. This adds to the credibility of the institution as well as the individual instructors. There is no substitute for experience. It is critical to intertwine education and experience.

Ability to Relate. In order to share your knowledge and education

you must be able to relate to those you are teaching. Having the ability to illustrate your knowledge and experience to a particular audience is essential in the fire service.

Passion. The drive, dedication, and devotion to your particular craft is what sets a career in the fire service apart from any other career. This passion must be the foundation of every class provided.

Expectations. These are goals that are not only attainable, but they also must be measurable. This ensures that the organization is running like a well-oiled machine.

Humility. Firefighting is a selfless job. You take an oath to risk your life for another. This same personality trait must be presented by the Training Division. Nobody likes a “know it all” and the fire service is ever changing where no one person will ever have all the answers.

Our Training Division is one of the busiest and well respected Training Divisions in the country. Under the direction of Fire Chief Tom Forward, three part-time Fire Training Specialists were hired to help provide In-Service Training for our firefighters. These instructors have provided the 6 essential ingredients I mentioned earlier. Combine this with our Training Officer, more than 40 part-time, sworn Tampa Fire instructors that help with In-Service Training, Fire Academy, CERT, Medical classes, Recruit Classes, Airport Live Fire Burns, and Friends of Tampa Firefighters classes, the total number of student seats filled this past year hit a record high of over 6,000. An astounding 98,000 hours of instruction have been delivered using the 6 ingredients to a healthy Training Division. The members of our great department continue to allow us to develop and earn the reputation as one of the premier training organizations in the country.

Taco Bus supports Fallen Firefighters Memorial



Representatives from local restaurant chain Taco Bus presented a check for \$559 to Fire Chief Tom Forward March 20. Cristalyn Stokes, Director of Customer Acquisition (center) and Jonathan Kilmer, Director of Operations, made the donation to the Friends of Tampa Firefighters to support the Tampa Fallen Firefighters Memorial fund.

Taco Bus ran a promotion during the month of February donating a portion of the proceeds from every sale of their 2 1/2-pound burrito “El Jefe” to Friends of Tampa Firefighters. Taco Bus supports Tampa Bay area first responders by making donations each month. The Tampa Fallen Firefighters Memorial dedication ceremony will be held Monday, May 11.