

Central York Firefighters recognized for long service, excellence



The Central York Fire Services came together to celebrate excellence on Thursday night as they hosted their annual Recognition Ceremony.

The evening, which was hosted at the Central York Fire Services' (CYFS) Ian Laing Headquarters off Earl Stewart Drive, was a time to recognize long-time service to the community, the people who have worked behind the scenes to ensure success, and salute new hires as they begin their journeys on the force.

"This event is one of my favourites because it gives us the opportunity to pause and recognize the professionalism, honour and integrity that define our team," said CYFS Chief Rocco Volpe. "Tonight, we celebrate many important milestones - welcoming new staff who have joined our ranks, bringing fresh energy and ideas, recognizing those stepping into leadership roles through promotions, ready to guide and inspire others, honouring our long-service members receiving Provincial and Federal awards - a testament to years of commitment, and this year we've added something new: recognizing our community partners. These are the people and organizations who stand beside us, making our work possible and amplifying our impact."

Thursday's ceremony was attended by local MPs Sandra Cobena and Costas Menegakis, each of whom shared personal stories of how they have been impacted by fire personnel in their lives, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Newmarket Mayor John Taylor and Councillor Kelly Broome, who serves as Chair of the Joint Council Committee overseeing CYFS on behalf of Aurora and Newmarket, while video messages were sent by MPP Michael Parsa and Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas.

"Beyond the medals and milestones, we also recognize the personal sacrifices that you make every day," said Cobena. "Firefighters miss time with family - sometimes birthdays, sometimes holidays, and other special occasions - answering the call to help others in need. You carry the weight of difficulty, heartbreaking calls, and willingly put yourself in harm's way to protect others' lives and property.

"Your dedication, professionalism, and compassion extend far beyond the fire hall, touching families, neighbours, and the wider community in ways that are immeasurable."

Added Menegakis: "Firefighting is not a career; it's a calling. It's a sense of duty, and that is what brave men and women in this room, and in firefighting services in our great cities and provinces do every day. They have that calling that when they go to work their families know that they are at risk. They know they are at risk, but they come, they put on their uniform bravely, ready, willing, and able to go out and keep us and our community safe. It's your dedication that goes beyond just the emergency calls - everything else that you do in the community, where we see you everywhere as leaders, as an example to all of us, and particularly to young people, those seven-year-old boys and girls walking around looking at firefighters as the heroes, because that's what you really are."

you're the walking heroes in our communities today.?

Those recognized on Thursday evening were:

NEW HIRES

Lorianne Zwicker (Deputy Fire Chief)

Duane Kettlewell (Training Officer)

David Mosquera (Administrative Assistant)

20 YEAR ? FEDERAL EXEMPLARY SERVICE MEDAL

Tim Tustin (Captain)

David Boucher (Acting Captain)

Justin Cooper (Acting Captain)

James O'Dell (Acting Captain)

Colin Graham (Firefighter)

Brian Millar (Firefighter)

Andrea Ball (Administrative Assistant)

25 YEAR PROVINCIAL LONG SERVICE MEDAL

Michael Joy (Acting Platoon Chief)

Jeff Rempel (Acting Platoon Chief)

Will Buckindale (Captain)

Simon Day (Captain)

Corey Huigenbos (Captain)

Brant Dealy (Acting Captain)

Matthew McKendry (Firefighter)

30 YEAR ? FEDERAL EXEMPLARY SERVICE BAR & PROVINCIAL LONG SERVICE BAR

Daniel Waters (Deputy Fire Chief)

Thomas Hunter (Acting Platoon Chief)

Alexander Patrick (Acting Platoon Chief)

Paul Horton (Captain)

Jason Shepstone (Captain)

Allen Cook (Firefighter)

Jonathan Healy (Firefighter)

35 YEAR ? PROVINCIAL LONG SERVICE BAR

William Lorimer (Platoon Chief)

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Cedar Beach Resort

Carcone's Auto Recycling

Call2Recycle

Firehouse Subs

Milwaukee Tools

The Jim Allen Award, which was established by the CYFS in 2018 to recognize those who have made a ?significant interest to the development of CYFS personnel and demonstrated exceptional dedication to training and education? was presented virtually to Captain Andrew Burdette who ?always goes above and beyond? in his role.

?Serving as a go-to resource for technical inquiries and complex challenges, whether the issue involves power tools, compressors, pumps or apparatuses, his depth of knowledge and willingness to assist are unmatched,? said the CYFS. ?Beyond his technical expertise, Captain Burdette is an outstanding educator who fosters confidence and curiosity in others. His nominators shared the following remarks: ?Central York is very lucky to have an individual like him, who is kind and welcoming to everyone.' Another mentioned. ?He is an incredible instructor who pushes you to ask questions, even when you may not feel comfortable.' Finally, someone said, ?His passion and personality will be incredibly missed when he retires.'

?This recognition celebrates not only his skills and knowledge, but also the positive impact he has made on his colleagues and the organization as a whole: skills, knowledge and attitude.?

Burdette, who was on vacation at the time of the ceremony, said in a video message he was ?shocked? at his win, but honoured to be presented with an award bearing the name of Allen who ?provided training for members of Aurora and Central York.?

A special honour ? the King Charles III Coronation Medal ? was additionally presented by MPP Gallagher Murphy to Chief Volpe.

?His vision, integrity and dedication have strengthened our emergency preparedness and inspired every member of CYFS,? said Gallagher Murphy, who also presented a Coronation Emblem pin to Zwicker. ?I would like to personally recognize the values that Chief Volpe possesses that made me want to recognize him. Above and beyond what I have noted, he is present when he is needed. Even when he is not needed, he is wanted and he is present, both physically and there in the moment. And when I say that, anytime I wanted to speak with Chief Volpe, whether it was just a chat, or speak about important community initiatives, he is there, he is

focused, and he takes action. I think of the support of York Pride, to the support of the United Way, to the support of community barbecues. He is there, he is fully present ? with a smile, willing to help, willing to listen and willing to act.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter