

International Women's Day event aims to 'INSPIRE' careers in emergency services

The Central York Fire Services is looking to inspire a new generation of firefighters and emergency responders this Saturday, March 2, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the third-annual INSPIRE event at Station 4-5 on Earl Stewart Drive and St. John's Sideroad.

Held each year to celebrate International Women's Day, the event will feature members of the Central York Fire Services, Ontario Provincial Police, York Regional Police, York Region EMS, and scores of further community groups who will be there to answer questions and, yes, inspire.

In a video released to coincide with INSPIRE, CYFS Captain Tamara Roitman says she did not think about a career in the Fire Services until she was in her 20s and, in fact, was considering a completely un-related area of work.

'We started talking and she convinced me that it was an excellent career of choice,' said Roitman, referring to a conversation she had with a female firefighter with the Toronto Fire Service. 'That started the bug and I was obsessed with it.'

Roitman, a 15-year veteran with fire services, will be on hand at Saturday's event alongside her peers to have the same impact that one woman had on her.

'This started off with inspiring young females to get into the Emergency Services and then we realized, 'Wow, after the first year, this is a community event that's for everybody.' We changed the name in our second year to INSPIRE and that's just what it is ' it's meant to inspire youth to come out, see what the emergency service is all about,' says Chief Fire Prevention Officer Ryan Schell. 'Whether you're in high school, whether you're in college ' my daughter is seven-years-old and loves coming out to the event ' or maybe you don't have a relative in the fire service, maybe you don't have a father, aunt or uncle, this is your opportunity to come out, meet someone, and hopefully connect and see their story and maybe you can see some similarity in your story and your life and we can influence you to come into the emergency services.

'We can show who we are as a fire department. The fire service is for everyone and that is the message we want to get out there. When you have support from a great, great fire chief who has said, 'Yes, go out and show what we can do for everyone here,' it just changes the mindset. If there are any obstacles in the way of the public thinking they might not be able to join the fire services, we're going to break those walls down.'

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter