

Camas-Washougal Fire Department Newsletter

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Camas-Washougal SAFER hires start this week

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Fire Chief

Ron Schumacher

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Camas-Washougal Fire Department is excited to have its three new SAFER Grant hires coming on board at the fire station this week. The three new recruits come from diverse backgrounds and will be great additions to the department.

Eric Bridges was born in Los Angeles but spent most of his life growing up in Vancouver. He moved to Las Vegas at the age of 25 to attend paramedic school. It was there that he met his wife, who was attending medical school. Eric returned to the Pacific Northwest when his wife started her residency at OHSU and shortly thereafter he landed at North Country EMS as a Division Chief. Eric enjoys several hobbies outside of work. He's rebuilding a '65 Mustang, he's a private pilot, and he enjoys outdoor activities like hiking and camping.

Katie Linton was raised in rural Douglas County, Oregon. Her exposure to the fire service started at a young age as her father was a volunteer firefighter. In high school Katie enjoyed being an exchange student in New Zealand and eventually went to Oregon State University where she earned a bachelor's degree in animal science and later her doctor of veterinary medicine. She's been practicing as a veterinarian for the last five years. A couple of years ago she started volunteering at her local fire department and discovered a new passion and career path. When she's not working, Katie enjoys spending time with friends and family in outdoor activities like hiking, camping, fishing, and snowboarding.

Matt Baldwin is a native resident of Camas and grew up in Fern Prairie. After graduating from Camas High School he received his bachelor's degree from Multnomah University and moved overseas to work with youth in Eastern Europe. He's worked as a youth pastor in Camas and also spent the last six years as a paraprofessional in the Camas School District working with special education students. After getting married, Matt and his wife moved to their home in Camas where he's been a volunteer firefighter/EMT with the Camas-Washougal Fire Department for the past two and a half years.

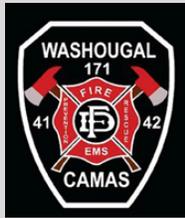
Our Mission:
To provide the highest quality service to our community through the protection and preservation of life and property



Crews return from Taylor Bridge Fire

Four Camas-Washougal Fire Department personnel recently returned from the massive Taylor Bridge Fire in Cle Elum, Washington. Firefighters Butch Steigmann, Chris Kassel, Adam Strobeck, and Rick Nieto spent over a week helping with the mitigation efforts. They were among the 1,000 firefighters that labored for nearly two weeks to contain the difficult fire which burned over 23,000 acres and destroyed 61 homes and 35 outbuildings. Thousands more local residents were displaced during evacuation efforts to keep them safe until the fire was contained.





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Chief Free selected for EFO

Division Chief of EMS Cliff Free has recently received word of his acceptance in to the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program (EFO) in Emmitsburg, Maryland. The EFO is the fire academy's four year graduate level leadership program for senior fire officers. Chief Free will spend two weeks a year for the next four years studying at the fire academy. Each class is followed up by an extensive research paper that the student must author and submit for review. CWFD Fire Chief Nick Swinhart will be completing his fourth year in the EFO program in November of 2012.

9/11 Ceremony Set

On September 11, the Camas-Washougal Fire Department will once again be holding a short ceremony to remember the lives lost during the terrorist attacks of 2001. The ceremony will commence at 8:00 am in front of the Camas City Hall. September 11, 2001 represented the single largest loss of life in our nation's fire and emergency medical services. We commemorate the day to remember the selfless acts of courage our brother and sister firefighters demonstrated and to pay tribute to the ultimate sacrifices they made.

Note from Chief Swinhart: There is substantial discussion going on nationally right now concerning the "federalizing" of the volunteer fire service. There are many people in support of the idea, but just as many who are opposed. What follows is an article from Fire Chief Magazine from a person who is against such federal intervention in the volunteer fire service. Given Camas-Washougal's large contingent of volunteer firefighters, the article seems very appropriate.

The idea of federalizing the volunteer fire service by putting it under AmeriCorps is only valuable because it generates thoughts and ideas to possibly help recruit more volunteers for the fire service. The best thing the federal government ever did was develop the FIRE Grants to help needy departments come up with a strategic plan and legitimate budget to fill a justified shortfall in their equipment or operations. FEMA guidance and NIMS have been good programs to help standardize and organize departments that have never worked beyond a small, local level or applied best practice organizational methods to their departments. These have been good things.

Recruiting is not something the feds can really help with because it is an individual, motivational, local emphasis area that seems to require the personal touch and tailoring at the local high-school and community level. The promise of scholarships basically sends kids away from the department, so that seems self-defeating — although meritorious.

The all-volunteer district departments in our county pay for all firefighting classes through Level I and II certification, and on through advanced and specialty courses, and instructor qualification at the local community colleges and other state colleges. This qualifies the individual nationally for a paid position on most paid departments in the three state surrounding area. During the time that it takes a few years to attain those levels and certification, we have individuals who are motivated and focused on fire service education and experience on our departments. Some will go on to a paid department if they can find a job. Many will stay in the area as volunteers and work at other jobs. This seems to be the continuing recruitment success we have had.

Volunteer service is largely a family, passed-down inspiration. We are trying to reach high-school kids with a junior program, but there are only a few that show any real interest to commit the time required. The schools are now rewarding some volunteer public service hours for experience and grade credit, which helps introduce some students to the fire service. I recommend this highly, as it develops a culture of giving time and effort to others, no matter what discipline they decide to join.

As you also know, the rewards of serving on a volunteer fire department are primarily internal. There are education and training challenges, equipment and vehicle operations, and many levels of danger and adrenaline jolts that motivate and inspire our recruits, as well as keep the old tigers involved. There are very few tangible rewards to service. A T-Shirt, a ball cap, a jacket with patches and an occasional plaque are about the extent of the external rewards. Being an integral part of a motivated and successful team, accomplishing an effective fire attack and save, and working together for charities and providing significant or disaster public service to our friend and families is the greatest reward and motivator to our members.

The feds can offer money, which is always needed, but motivation for recruiting and retention can only be rewarded at the local level by the individual departments to meet the needs and aspirations of new members, and make it worth the sacrifice of their valuable and limited free time. We always welcome new ideas and programs to help us make that happen, but I don't know that a federal program can do that effectively. It's a tough nut to crack.

Capt. Steve Baumgartner is the training officer for the Murphy (N.C.) Fire Department. Is also is the assistant fire marshal for Cherokee County.