

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 24, 2011



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SUFFOLK FIRE & RESCUE HONORS THEIR OWN

SUFFOLK, Virginia (February 24, 2011) – Continuing their time-honored tradition of recognizing a Firefighter and Paramedic of the Year, Suffolk Fire & Rescue has recently bestowed these honors on two respected members of their firefighting family – Captain Thomas W. “Buck” Johnson, and Paramedic Rainey Cross.

Captain Johnson is assigned to Station #7 in Holland, and has served the Suffolk community for almost 34 years. In fact, his family has been a member of the department for three generations now, starting with his father, who was a volunteer in the late ‘50s and ‘60s.

A lifelong resident of Suffolk, Johnson’s many certifications and designations could paper the walls in his home, if Julie - his wife of 30 years, would let him. Many of these certificates were required, but countless others he achieved because of his love of the job. That same love of his job also prompted him to become the unofficial “historian” of Suffolk Fire & Rescue. While a rookie firefighter in the late ‘70s, Buck’s fascination with Suffolk’s rich history was ignited when he was cleaning a closet and discovered old hand-written logs from the early 1900’s laying on the floor. He asked if he could preserve these irreplaceable mementos, and from that moment on, if an item had any historical value, you’d hear, “Give it to Buck; he’ll take care of it.”

Johnson advised the most rewarding piece of firefighting history he's discovered was the prized 1928 American LaFrance Metropolitan Fire Engine now on display at the lobby museum of the King's Fork Public Safety Building. Stored for decades in a metal shed after it was out of service, he and other volunteers spent countless hours restoring the gleaming engine to its former glory. Trophy cases along the walls in the station, located at 300 King's Fork Road, depict the department's history from 1884 to the present – all thanks to the dedication of Captain Johnson. In fact, Johnson states that, "One of the best parts of my career has been trying to preserve the history of the Department." In nominating Johnson for this honor, Battalion Chief William Edwards said, "Captain Johnson was nominated for his willingness to take on large and difficult tasks for the betterment of the City and the Fire Department throughout his long career."

Receiving the "Paramedic of the Year" designation, Rainey Cross is also a Suffolk native. Graduating from Nansemond-Suffolk Academy, Cross attended the College of William & Mary on a Tennis Scholarship. In fact, her love of the sport is still evident as she is the Special Olympics Tennis Coach for the local area.

Cross has been a member of the Department since 2003, and became the Emergency Medical Services Training Officer in July 2008. Working from the King's Fork Public Safety Building, her responsibilities include training and maintaining Continuing Education for over 200 members of the Department, initial training for new recruits, and CPR recertifications. In addition, she is a member of the TEMS Region Educational Committee, as well as a liaison for the Tidewater Community College Paramedic Class, an American Red Cross CPR Instructor, a Nationally Registered Paramedic, and ALS Coordinator for Suffolk Fire & Rescue. When asked why she chose this profession, Ms. Cross stated, "I wanted a profession where I could serve the community where I was born and raised. I enjoy helping people, and there is no better career than one that you go home each day feeling that you have made a difference in someone's life."

When asked about these selections, Chief Mark Outlaw advised, “Both are well deserving of this recognition. Captain Johnson has committed his life to protecting our City and preserving our history. Through his dedication and craftsmanship, priceless pieces of Suffolk’s past have been preserved for future generations to enjoy. Rainey Cross is dedicated to the training and safety of our members. A positive attitude and pleasant personality are her strong attributes in carrying out her mission.”

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