

King firefighters honoured for community service

By Mark Pavilons

We most often encounter them at the worst of times.

If we're lucky, we get to see them at their best, at a community event, or receiving recognition for the work they do.

The highly touted members of the King Fire and Emergency Services were in the limelight last week, at the annual appreciation dinner, held at Nobleton Lakes. The very heart and soul of the service _ the dedicated volunteers ? were proudly showcased with long service honours and prestigious awards.

While praise was abundant, the night was about camaraderie in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

?It's been said that when someone from the public is having their worst day, you people are at your best because you service our community, your neighbours, your friends,??said Mayor Steve Pellegrini. ?You are the epitome of customer service ambassadors for the Township, whether it is as special events, fireworks, checking smoke alarms, as an honour guard. You do us proud and it is my honour to thank each and every one of you.

?You are our friends, our neighbours. You have many of the same worries and dreams. Yet you stand taller than most of us. You are a King firefighter!?

Working well with senior staff is a must for a well oiled emergency service. King CAO?Susan Plamondon offered very heartfelt thanks on behalf of the Township's administration. King Fire has, in Chief Jim Wall, ?a quality guy.? His leadership is reflected in the positive energy and enthusiasm displayed by all members of the service. She lauded them on their professionalism, competence, courage, confidence and empathy.

Deputy Chief James Arnold stressed the men and women who serve couldn't do it without the support of their families.

He summarized some of the 2015 accomplishments of the fire service, that included 17 promotions to lieutenant; four to captain and 21 recruits who completed training. They spent countless hours with training ? 4,772 collectively.

?We're very proud of them,??he said.

Chief Wall was pleased to note the complement grew to 126 from 105 in 2014, with minimal or no cost to the Township. He praised municipal leadership for giving them the staff they require to answer calls and engage in public education. It has had a ?significant impact on public safety.?

King Fire benefits from the latest in technology and Wall noted new electronic tablets will soon be placed in their trucks. Two new trucks are on their way to bolster the fleet.

The chief noted when the three King stations amalgamated in 1999, there was some uncertainty and a vision that was unclear to them. Today, those are gone and the vision is crystal clear. King has a full service modern-day fire department staffed by professionals.

He said the terms ?career??and ?volunteer??firefighters have melted away, and now, under NFPA?standards, if firefighters attain the levels, they are treated the same. King, he said, is the most highly trained and adaptive service in the country.

He's proud in how his members manage the expectations placed on them.

The efforts seem to be paying off. To date, King Fire has responded to some 840 calls, and Wall predicts it will top out at under 1,000 this year. Public education and awareness are helping to bring these numbers down.

The senior command team understands the vision and Chief Wall explained that education and awareness comes first, and putting out fires comes last.

Paul?Jackson?Award

The Paul Jackson Memorial Award is given to a fire department staff member who exemplifies the values, dedication and commitment that was demonstrated by training officer Paul?Jackson, who passed away in 2008. This year's recipient is Rino Maccagnan. He's a ?go-to guy??who works hard to improve the fire service. He exemplifies Paul's legacy and offers his assistance without hesitation. He is definitely here to serve the community.

Distinguished Service

KFES presents the Distinguished Service Award to members of each station who distinguish themselves by a meritorious act or service by going above and beyond. They provide quality service and advance the department's goals and objectives.

This year's recipients were Kevin Ritson, Ray Fortin and James Brown.

Service Awards

Members of the KFES were honoured for their years of service.

One stands out in particular, this year's recipient of 50 years in the service of others.

Chief Wall noted he's likely one of a few chiefs in Ontario who will have the opportunity to present a 50-year service award.

The recipient is Schomberg's Assistant District Fire Chief Bruce Graham. He's been retired for more than a year, but he still pitches in when needed.

The life-long Schomberg resident joined the force in 1965. He worked in his father's garage across the street from the station, so it was a perfect fit. In those early years, they strictly handled fire calls. Being a mechanic, Graham spent many years working on the department's trucks and equipment. He has a fondness for them and remembers each and every one of these beauties. Regarding his career: "It was challenging and very rewarding," he said. "We had a lot of good times. I'd do it all over again."

Long-serving retired captain Terry Phillipps was honoured for his 45 years of service.

He was one of the cornerstones of the Nobleton fire service, and saw it grow in terms of equipment and facilities.

In 1964, they purchased a used ambulance and the Nobleton Firefighters and Ambulance Association was born. The original fire hall was built in the early '60s and a library was added on in the early 1970s.

Firefighters and Lions worked together to finish the upper level of the current station.

Joe Huson was given a fond farewell, marking his retirement, after 28 years of service.

Councillor and firefighter David Boyd was the lone recipient of his 15-year service award.

Receiving honours for 10 years of service were Randy Crane, Dan Cullen, Yvette McHugh, Tim Miller, Randy Shepherd.

Receiving 5-year honours were Flavio Aloe, Kevin Brown, Bradley Chapman, Brian Copithorn, Harry Donatosian, David Duggan, Bradley Evans, Markus Evans, Mario Giovannone, Allan MacDonald, Brian Mitchell, Gaetano Nicolo and Ryan Taylor.

Promotion to captain were Ken Atkinson, Ray Fortin and Ryan Taylor.

Moving up to lieutenant were Flavio Aloe, Benjamin Brown, Brian Copithorn, Randy Crane, Dan Cullen, Bradley Evans, Allan MacDonald, Alex Milani, Brian Mitchell, Gaetano Nicolo and Randy Shepherd.