

## King Township firefighters are ?fully involved?



Chief Jim Wall named two recipients from each station for the Distinguished Service Award, given to members who distinguish themselves by meritorious achievement and those who demonstrate faithfulness, perseverance and go above and beyond. The recipients included Elliott Antonacci, Frank Figliomeni, Rick Steenhoek, Brad Evans and Allan MacDonald.

### By Mark Pavilons

Guests at the annual King Fire & Emergency Services appreciation dinner left with heads held high, and chests a little inflated with pride. The atmosphere at Nobleton Lakes last week was one of mutual respect and camaraderie for the men and women in uniform, who go way beyond their duties to make King Township a well-rounded community.

It was pointed out time and again that the department literally has hundreds of years of combined service, given the longevity of its dedicated volunteer members. Milestones of 20, 30 and even 45 years of service are commonplace in this elite service.

Fire Chief Jim Wall used the double-entendre of being ?fully involved,? pointing out his members not only offer a valuable service to the Township, but they are totally engaged in the community in this very ?significant calling.?

?Our complement understands exactly what it takes to be a King firefighter,? he said, adding the accolades they received are earned and excellence is a team effort. Members understand it's a privilege to serve in King, ranked as one of the top volunteer services in the province. Firefighters are constantly honing their craft and giving more than 100% is the norm. He read off a long list of services the volunteer provide ? responding to everything from medical calls and car accidents to downed hydro wires and floods. ?If you can name it, our firefighters have responded to it.?

The evening's MC Doug Bolton, in his usual entertaining style, set the tone for the event, while still honouring his peers. ?We're proud of what we do,? he said, noting there's a certain feeling of elation upon returning from a call. Seeing the faces of those they've assisted is almost beyond words. It's all pretty humbling, he said.

King Mayor Steve Pellegrini acknowledged a full council complement, and several staffers were on hand for this prestigious annual

event. He extended his thanks beyond the firefighters themselves, to their spouses and families. "When you respond, so do they," he said. "They understand what you do and how important it is."

This caliber of volunteers is a testament to the department's leadership, he said, noting Chief Wall is one of the finest chiefs in the service. "Leadership is a verb, not a noun," the mayor said.

Both Pellegrini and King CAO Susan Plamondon presented Wall with his 1st Bar for exemplary service and 30 years of service.

Plamondon said every member of KFES is prepared to give their time and experience to the community, which extends into local events and causes. "The community can't appreciate more than what you contribute to their day-to-day lives," she said. "Pride shows day in and day out."

Their involvement in community events and local charities is an important component in making King the wonderful place it is to live, work and play.

Deputy Chief James Arnold said the appreciation dinner is an important event to recognize the efforts of the members, who never seek out praise. He provided the "astounding" results of the constant training "9,025 staff hours of training through 250 classes so far this year. This constant skills upgrading makes the KFES top-notch.

The audience got a chance to hear the views from three very different personnel.

Adam Marcangelo, a relatively new arrival, said he has so many memories and experiences to share about his time here. He's amazed by the vast array of backgrounds and expertise that the firefighters bring to the table. Everyone comes together as a family in a very unique bond. A role in KFES means your life will never be the same, he said.

Neale Nicholas said he knew nothing about firefighting when he signed up, thinking he'd simply be maintaining the station and equipment. His journey has gone to unexpected heights and this "amazing journey" has given him many skills. He thanked his comrades for welcoming him into the fold. The native of Grenada, Nicholas has given back to his home with needed equipment and supplies.

Alf Budweth, a 24-year veteran, said at first, he didn't think he had the "right stuff" and didn't know where his involvement would lead. He continues to learn every day, drawing upon the vast experience of his colleagues. The chiefs he has worked with have all "made me much better."

## **Awards**

The Paul Jackson Memorial Award is given to a 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 Captain Craig Eveson. Eveson, according to his peers, always enters the hall with a great attitude and his perseverance is undeniable. He exemplifies Paul's legacy and offers his assistance without hesitation.

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David Ball was honoured for an amazing 45 years of service. George Veysey was given fond farewells on his retirement.

Earning their awards for 25 years of service were Captain David Budweth, Captain Raymond Fortin and Trevor Storey. For 20 years of service, Captain Ian Bissette and Trevor Storey were honoured. Kevin Banko, Ian Bissette, Anthony Santarsia, Rick Steenhoek

and Jerry Andreana received their 15-year honours. Chad Rowland was recognized for 10 years of service. The five-year volunteers included Babe Antonacci, Elliott Antonacci, Stefano Marcelli, JR Gregg, Brendan Hayes, Neale Nicholas, Shawn Burns and Rudyard Edwards.