

Honoring Our Heroes: Seattle #4 Sponsors City of Seattle Fire Department Annual Awards Luncheon

Totem Report May 10, 2017

By Jeanne McKnight



The first clue that Wednesday's meeting at the Seattle Sheraton wasn't going to be "just another Rotary meeting" was the big red fire truck parked out front of the hotel. The second: all the uniformed men and women taking their seats alongside members of Seattle #4—the men and women put their lives on the line for all of us day in and day out. The third, of course, was the early start. If you didn't read the memo and got there late, then you missed an incredible performance of the Seattle Fire Department (SFD) Pipe and Drum Band as they marched in to the huge (and packed) room, followed by the Honor Guard for a Presentation of Colors. Emcee honors were shared by **President-elect Mark Wright** and SFD Deputy Chief, Tom Walsh—one of

the leaders of the Awards Committee, President of the Chiefs' Union Local 2898, and (as we would learn later in the program) an awards winner himself.

After calling the meeting to order, **President-elect Mark Wright** called SFD Chaplain, Joel Ingebritson, to the podium to give the Invocation. Following the Chaplain, Seattle Mayor Ed Murray gave a few remarks, acknowledging SFD **Chief Harold G. Scoggins** for his leadership; he thanked both Rotary and the SPD. **Chief Scoggins** then welcomed guests and introduced Seattle Firefighters Union (IAFF) Local 27 Executive Board member, Tyson DePoe, who talked briefly.



Prior to taking a short break to enjoy lunch, **President-elect Mark** and Tom Walsh recognized the Military Reservists in SFD "who regularly train and deploy." The three who were named include Captain David Pagan from Ladder 8, who will be leaving SFD for a one-year deployment with the Navy in June; Lieutenant Chris Carter from Engine 16, who will also be leaving in June for a two-year deployment with the Navy; and Firefighter Brian Blackwood from Engine 28, who is also getting ready for a 90-day deployment with the Navy.



After lunch, **President-elect Mark** invited Woodland Park Zoo President and CEO, **Alejandro Grajal**, to the stage to acknowledge the Seattle Fire Department—some 14 trucks and firefighters whose job it was on December 15, 2016, to move 182 exotic animals to safety when a two-alarm fire broke out at the Woodland Park Zoo: "Moving things like poisonous cobras and crocodiles from one part of the zoo to another." While two firefighters were injured and several turtles did not survive the fire, most did,

thanks to the heroes that braved the winter cold to answer the call.

Community Service Awards were next on the agenda.

President-elect Mark acknowledged two organizations for their support of the “Toys for Tots” program run by the Marine Corps Reserve: Penske Truck Leasing, and Stor-House Self Storage. Representing Penske Truck Leasing were Branch Rental Manager Qihang Zhang, Manager Bakkalcha Mohammed, and Representative Rekya Wheeler, who “generously provided reliable trucks for toy pick-up and delivery, collected toys in their lobby, and advertised the toy drive.” He then recognized Ajit Gill and Jose Huerta from Stor-House Self Storage, the company providing space to store the toys. “This service to our community, providing toys, hope, and joy for less fortunate children in the holiday season, would not be possible without your partnership and contributions,” he said, as **Chief Scoggins** presented the awards.



Tom Walsh then recognized Firefighter/Paramedic, Patti Mann, for her “dedicated community service to the Burn Unit at Harborview Medical Center and the Washington State Council of Firefighters Burn Foundation,” noting that Patti serves as the 11th District Foundation Board Member and selflessly extends “caring and compassionate service to burn survivors.” In presenting the award to Patti Mann, **Chief Scoggins** added that Patti also takes care of the paramedics who have cared for burn victims.



Although the next honoree was not able to attend the luncheon, Tom Walsh mentioned Firefighter Mike Washington for his dedicated community service with [Team Rubicon](#), a Veteran-led disaster response organization. “Mike has deployed eight times to disaster areas, serves as Director of Field Operations for Team Rubicon in the Northwest Region, and was awarded ‘Veteran of the Year’ by Team Rubicon. Mike’s selfless contributions have inspired and led other Team Rubicon military veterans in service to those whose lives were devastated from disaster,” he said, adding, “Mike is also a team lead and a key member of the SFD’s Critical Incident Stress Management Team that helps firefighters manage the stresses of the profession.”

Administrative Awards were announced next. The first award was “for Fire Department units or work groups that performed with a degree of excellence or proficiency that sets the unit apart.” Deputy Chief Brian Hastings, Battalion Chief Brady O’Brien, Battalion Chief Matt Rogers, Captain Duncan Jewell, Captain Melissa Kennedy, Lieutenant Mark Frazier, Lieutenant Tim Frank, Lieutenant Toby Graves, and Firefighter John Gorman were awarded for working to update the SPD’s High-Rise Plan, as well as for developing the Command Sheet and Standard Operating Guidelines.

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Awards were then given for Rescue One members who were recognized for their efforts with the Dive Rescue Program. Firefighter Chuck Boehmer, Firefighter Paul Guerra, Firefighter Aaron Horwitz and Firefighter Jesse Radomski were recognized.

President-elect Mark then recognized members of the Uniform Work Group, who helped evaluate existing uniforms and updating the department's uniform policies: Deputy Chief Brian Hastings, Deputy Chief Tom Walsh, Lieutenant Jon Goins, Lieutenant Bridget Humphrey, Sheila Kelly, Firefighter Denny Kimball, Firefighter Rich Milligan and Firefighter Matt Runte.

Next, the Engineering Plan Review Section of the Fire Prevention Division were recognized for performing their work with a high degree of proficiency: Rich Richardson, James Clancy, Roland Falb, George Goodall, Dustin Hansen and Dan Sully completed detailed engineering reviews of architectural plans and fire protection system designs to ensure that buildings are constructed with essential fire and life safety systems.

Awards were then presented to Captain Mike Greene, Captain Matt Numair, Lieutenant Bridget Humphrey, Clarence Chapman, Patricia Durbin, Sundae Garner, Paul Kiminki, Sal McGowan, and Steve Skylstad, along with David Durham, Pat Freeburg, Mike Jump, Wilbur Lee, Mauricio Mondragon, Pedro Nunez, Jess Russell, Evan Scott, Brandon Watkins, and Bill Yamamoto, who assisted with the conversion of all self-contained breathing apparatus to a newer version.

The next award, announced by Tom Walsh and presented by Chief Scoggins, went to several units for their courageous response to a natural gas explosion in Greenwood in March 9, 2016: Battalion 5 Chief Tamalyn Nigretto, Engine 21 with Lieutenant Ed Newell and Firefighters Nathan Buck, Joey Haugen and Jeff Markoff, Ladder 5 with Lieutenant Charlie Meyer and Firefighters Mike Camlin, Jeff Markoff, Richard Martell and Steve Roberts.

“While operating at a building with a reported gas leak, these firefighters were caught in an explosion that destroyed buildings in the immediate location, blew out windows of buildings in surrounding blocks, and was heard 15 miles away,” said Walsh. “They were hit by the concussive force of the explosion, and many of them were knocked to the ground as debris fell around them. Immediately after the blast, the firefighters checked on each other, ensured all were accounted for and despite some injuries, continued to mitigate the incident until relieved of duty and transported to Harborview Medical Center.”

Chief Scoggins then presented awards to all recipients of eight commendations as Walsh spoke of the actions that led to their recognition:

Lieutenant Ed Newell received a commendation for his efforts during the natural gas incident in Greenwood. Along with the initial responding crews, he was injured by the blast from the catastrophic explosion, yet, demonstrated professionalism and a cool head by re-establishing



command, identifying incident priorities, and providing focused and calm radio communications. Lieutenant Newell ensured that all members were accounted for and provided direction to incoming units.

Firefighter Taylor Hughes and Firefighter Matthew Martin were commended for their actions on June 5, 2016. While responding to an emergency, Hughes and Martin were waved down by individuals near the address they were dispatched to. The residents had limited English proficiency, and when the firefighters arrived, they found a young man assaulting an elderly woman. Despite the highly volatile situation, they immediately intervened and restrained the combative individual until Seattle Police arrived.

Firefighter Cliff Uyeno received a commendation for his quick actions on November 5, 2016 when he discovered an intruder in the east bunk rooms of Fire Station 24. Uyeno cornered and restrained the individual until Seattle Police arrived.

Paramedics Gene Goodner and Shellie Nicklos were next commended for their work in obtaining their Senior EMS Instructor certification and restarting the department's Emergency Medical Technician school program in 2016. (There are only five Senior EMS Instructors total in the county, we learned.) Not only did Goodner and Nicklos obtain their certifications, but they also contributed to building the department's program and facilitated the first graduating class of new EMTs in more than 15 years.

Firefighter Tom Burke received a commendation for his actions on June 4, 2016 while he was out hiking with his family in rural Snohomish County. During that hike, he ran into two exhausted hikers who had been carrying one of their sons after he had experienced two grand mal seizures. Burke and his brother not only sent the rest of their families ahead so they could help evaluate the situation, but then carried the patient the remaining mile to the trailhead.

Firefighter Amina Saleh was commended for her efforts while traveling to Jordan. On November 3, 2016, Saleh witnessed a man collapse on an escalator in the Frankfurt Airport in Germany. She helped move the man from the escalator, found he had no pulse or respirations and quickly began performing CPR, providing continuous chest compressions and administering one shock with an AED to resuscitate him. When local EMS personnel arrived, she continued assisting with ventilation and preparing the patient for transport.

Firefighter/Dispatcher Hilton Almond Junior and Firefighter/Dispatcher Jennifer Bessler received a commendation for their efforts to improve dispatching of responses on or near the water. Given the fact that marine responses are unique, challenging, and complex, Almond and Bessler worked for more than a year, engaging in formal and informal meetings and conversations with several different groups within the Department to improve responses to these incidents.

Firefighters Chase Adamich and Andy Pomeroy were commended for their actions off-shift in Port Angeles. While competing at a Crossfit competition, they noticed another competitor collapse. After verifying that 911 had been called, they checked and found the individual was not breathing and did not have a pulse. Along with a Port Angeles Fire Department Lieutenant, they began CPR and administered one shock from an AED. The man started breathing and regained consciousness.

Other key awards included the following:

Distinguished Service Award

Photographer John Odegard received the Distinguished Service Award for his efforts to photographically document SFD's response at emergency scenes.

Maltese Cross

Firefighter Joey Haugen (not present) received the second highest award for actions performed under hazardous conditions. The Maltese Cross is awarded to recognize a member for meritorious actions performed under hazardous conditions that are beyond the call of duty and at great personal risk. Haugen saved the life of a shark attack victim near Kihei, Maui, in 2016, commandeering a paddleboard until he got to the victim who was struggling in the water about 30 yards offshore. Seeing blood in the water, Haugen realized that it was a shark attack and not a drowning. He pulled the victim onto the paddleboard and got her to safety and medical attention, saving her life.

Chief Scoggins then handed out Employees of the Year Awards for 2016:

The Customer Service Award went to Roxanna Johnson for her "great customer service."

The award for Employee of the Year was given to non-uniform member, Doug Coulbert.

Miki Mann received the award for Firefighter of the Year.

The award for Officer of the Year went to Lieutenant Jon Kimball.



The award for Chief of the Year went to co-emcee, Deputy Chief Tom Walsh. According to **President-elect Mark**, "In much the same way that company officers support their crews, Chiefs are responsible for ensuring that their members, battalions and divisions are prepared for whatever comes their way."

The Lifetime Achievement Award was then presented to Battalion Chief Mike Nakamichi, a 45-year veteran of the SFD.

In an emotional presentation, the next award was given posthumously to Donnie Chin who was fatally shot in July 2015 as he sped toward the scene of gunfire. The award was accepted by his sister, Connie Chin Magorty, on his behalf.

In presenting the award, **Chief Scoggins** highlighted the character of Donnie Chin: "This year's Compassionate Service Award is given, posthumously, to Donald G Chin, known by the community and our crews as Donnie. Back in 1968, Donnie formed the International District Emergency Center because, at the time, police and fire department response times were slower than needed. Donnie learned first aid and then trained others. He monitored police radios and then headed to the scene, providing his services free of charge. Donnie responded to thousands of emergencies – medical and emotional traumas; fires, shootings, assaults, car accidents and power outages. He trained local social service agencies on emergency medical assistance and

security issues. Throughout the years, he earned the respect of both Seattle Police and Seattle Fire for his invaluable assistance to the community. Donnie was the heart and soul of the International District. A beloved son, brother, cousin, mentor, surrogate father and uncle, he will continue to be remembered for his selfless devotion to the community, humble nature, sense of humor, generous heart and love of children.” A standing ovation followed.

Next, Rotary 4 Member **David Levine** presented a \$1,000 check to **Chief Scoggins**—proceeds from last year’s luncheon—to the SPD to support the agency’s fire prevention efforts. The meeting ended on time with a benediction from Chaplain Ingebritson.