



Firehouse Notes

JUNE
2005

Congratulations to St. George Grads

St. George is proud of our members who have taken advantage of the opportunity and worked hard to earn their Associate's Degree in Fire Science from LSU - E.

Firefighters Kim Hartman, Jason Sibley, and Jason Turner are the latest to join the large and growing list of St. George members who are growing professionally through further education.

Congratulations to Family Grads

Rachel Gill, the daughter of District Chief Sammy Gill, graduated from Our Lady of the Lake College with an Associate's Degree in Nursing. Latest word is that Rachel will be working at Baton Rouge General Medical Center.

Brandon Johnson, the son of Captain Oray Johnson, graduated cum laude from Southern University with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology.

Kristen Ledoux, the daughter of Public Information Officer Eldon Ledoux, graduated with honors from Our Lady of the Lake College with an Associate's Degree in Nursing. Kristen has relocated out of state to pursue further career and educational opportunities.

All of us at the St. George Fire Department offer each of these young people congratulations and best wishes for a bright future.

Firefighter's Benevolent Association Idea Drew No Support

Since no one responded to last month's request for interested parties to step up and participate, it can only be concluded that the time isn't right for such an organization to succeed. That doesn't mean it was not worth talking about. Or, that there will not be greater interest in participating in the future. It just means that there is not sufficient interest, at this time, to move forward with the idea.

Welcome Back to Chief Kowal

We are all happy to see District Chief Mike Kowal return to work following successful coronary artery bypass surgery.

Do You Have Anything You'd Like to Share?

Is there a new addition you'd like to introduce to your associates at St. George? A special family event, graduation or wedding? If so, pass it on to the PIO in person, by phone or via E-mail. We'll be happy to put your news in our next issue.

Problems With Insurance Plan Under Review

We have all recently received an E-mail message from Deputy Chief Albert regarding feedback about any problems members have had with the new "high deductible" medical plan.

St. George's administration is aware that some difficulties have been encountered with the Blue Cross medical plan. To best identify all the problem areas and attempt to work out reasonable solutions for each, Chief Tarleton and Chief Albert need your feedback. Please provide as detailed a description of your personal difficulties with any aspect of the plan as well any constructive ideas as to how those problems can be fixed.

Retirement Contribution Crunch is Real

The dramatic increases in the Department's (and virtually all public sector employers') mandated contribution rates to various public employee retirement systems has put a real cash crunch on many fire districts, municipalities, and school boards throughout the state. There is talk of potential layoffs, engine company retirements, and station closures throughout the state.

Fortunately, St. George is not in that posture. This is due to a number of factors, including the growth occurring within our coverage district and the "plan for the worst" philosophy of our leadership. That doesn't mean that we are unaffected, however.

St. George's operating budget is \$7.96M out of a total \$9.24M budget. Of that amount, \$6.74M goes to salaries and benefits. That means that 86% of our spendable dollars are going to pay the cost of the people in the Department. The good news is that people aren't going away. The bad news is we can't afford to add as many new people as we had hoped.