



FIRE DEPARTMENT CONNECTION

For and About the Employees of the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department

Coach Ike's Camp Packs a Punch and Much More

Four days after this year's Guns 'n' Hoses, Ike Davis was still coaching.

The score was FOP 7; IAFF 6. Though his team was gracious, some of the social media chatter needed to reflect the higher road of competition. An empathetic and encouraging text from Coach Isaac to his team got the messaging on the right path.

Davis has been the lead trainer for Guns 'n' Hoses for more than half of event's 20 years. Alongside JFRD retiree Dewitt Cooper and Lt. Ron Langdon (Ladder 44), Davis coaches firefighters who are interested in boxing and perhaps earning a spot

Legendary Leadership

on the annual event's fight card. Davis never guarantees a fight, but those who commit to his process say they achieve self-improvement and discover perspec-

tive that extends well beyond the gym and into their lives and work.

"Coach Ike's motivational speeches get you through training. That also goes home with you. You take it to the streets. You become more confident in anything you do. You know you can accomplish anything," said Firefighter Gabriela Talavera from Ladder 154. She competed in her first Guns 'n' Hoses in April.

Continued on page 2

JFRD Retiree Ike Davis, lead trainer for Guns 'n' Hoses, celebrates with Firefighter Jamie Dunlap immediately following her third consecutive victory in the annual amateur boxing event between police and firefighters on April 21. Dunlap and other students of Davis' training say his teachings are empowering in the gym, the boxing ring and in life, long after fight night. In Guns 'n' Hoses' 20-year history, the firefighters have claimed 11 event titles to the police team's 7. Two years ended in a draw.



Chief's Corner

In this issue of Fire Department Connection, we recognize a remarkable mentor in our department. Ike Davis, through his longstanding commitment to Guns 'n' Hoses, shows us how an officer's rank is not a prerequisite for effective leadership. Davis was an engineer when he retired last summer, but his approach continues to demonstrate that sincerely caring for others and having a willingness to make things better is an effective combination to encourage and strengthen others. In retirement, he continues to mentor, coach and make a difference in our members. Where are you in that equation? It's never too late to invest in others in our department.

We also share the story of Fire Station 36 in our Station Spotlight feature. The crews are to be commended for all their hard work and dedication to turning the station around. It remains a work in progress, but the comments from one captain about leadership ring very true.

April 8-14 was a special week in Fire Communications. These professionals celebrated, and many of you joined in the festivities, National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week. Many of us understand the basics of Fire Communications, but consider these statistics. In 2017, JFRD's communications officers and supervisors were responsible for 4,533,519 radio transmissions and 360,000 phone calls. That is an unbelievable workload on a small, tight-knit group of professionals whom I like to call our "tip-of-the-spear."

In closing, the Fire Department Connection is looking for contributors. If you'd like to share a thought, recent call, or share your wisdom with others on a subject you're familiar with, please feel free to reach out. As always, thank you for what you do.

Kurt Wilson
Chief of Department

Davis: ‘Most people never reach their potential. That’s sad.’

Continued from page 1.

That confidence doesn’t come immediately or easily, and it requires a sincere commitment to Davis’ training program. Battalion Chief Jack Griggs decided to compete in 2007. When he first approached Davis, he was not regularly exercising. Then he invested about four months in training under Davis. Fire 4’s Griggs had never worked out so hard in his life.

In his late 30s as a contestant that year, Griggs prevailed in his fight with a very aggressive technique, twice knocking his opponent to the mat and earning IAFF its first victory of the evening. Today, Griggs remains committed to fitness, he cherishes the experience of learning from Davis, and he says he feels young.

“Ike took an uncoordinated, middle-aged guy and turned him into something I’m not,” said Griggs. “To this day, I have a lot of confidence. Ike inspires you in what he does.”

“A lot of Ike’s conditioning is about boxing conditioning,” said three-time winner Lt. Michael Soto (Engine 31) who last fought in 2008.

A decade later, he says he still learns techniques from Davis.

The initial push from Davis is plenty of cardio workouts. That prepares his students for the months of high-speed, high-repetition drills that lead to mastery of basic boxing techniques. Over time, as competency emerges, Davis and his committed students find encouragement in each other’s progress and become immersed in the camaraderie and discipline of self-improvement.

“They are discovering things about themselves that they didn’t know,” Davis said. “They are overcoming hurdles. That’s a huge confidence builder.”

Marine 39’s Lt. Steve Piotrowski and his five Guns ‘n’ Hoses champion’s belts are a testament.

“The only reason I looked good in the ring is because of Ike. I didn’t know I was capable of doing it,” Piotrowski said. “He can see your potential.”

Langdon, who helps Davis during training, agrees and said that Davis has a talent for predicting a student’s tendencies, strengths and deficiencies. That helps with coaching during training and also matching opponents in a fair fight.

“Ike spends an enormous amount of time studying the fighters,” Langdon said.

Davis’ watchful eye has focused upon Langdon, too. In his fighting days, Langdon was once concerned about an opponent that was considerably taller and broader in stature.

“Ike told me ‘This guy’s a lot bigger than you, but you’re a better fighter and you can beat him,’” Langdon recalled.

Davis’ encouragement became Langdon’s win. That faith, and positive result, is good for the fighter and the team.



Davis is surrounded by his students at the weigh-in event for the 20th Guns ‘n’ Hoses. Their skills, acquired under Davis’ training and teaching, earned them a fight in this year’s April 21 event.

“It’s a joy to see a person rise to a level of achievement that they did not foresee,” said Cooper, who estimates more than 400 firefighters have trained with Davis and him.

Davis has produced multiple contenders who have earned multiple victories, and many of them had zero boxing experience. As a group, the firefighters hold the lead with 11 wins

in Guns ‘n’ Hoses. They credit Davis’ method and leadership with giving them the confidence to step into the ring and the skills to prevail against their opponent in front of thousands of people.

“You’ve got to have the confidence and not worry about what the other guy is going to do. If you don’t have the confidence, you’re gonna get run over,” said Rescue 26’s Lt. Jimmy Sparks, who’s won three of his five fights in Guns ‘n’ Hoses.

But victory isn’t the end all, be all. Davis says he wants his fighters entering the ring healthy and stepping out healthy. Cooper added that “Win or lose, if you step in the ring, you have already achieved.”

Then there’s the bigger picture about the training and the confidence and where it can lead.

“Most people never reach their potential. That’s sad,” Davis said. “I try to encourage everybody. I tell them ‘You’ve got to follow your dreams. You know who you are. You know where you are. Every damn day you got to get after it.’”

Station Transformation

Right now, Engine 36's Capt. Brandon Smith is tucked away somewhere, studying for an upcoming chief's test.

He doesn't have to worry about his station, though. Smith and a couple of captains before him have been setting an example that's motivated those assigned to Fire Station 36 to keep one of JFRD's older facilities in fine condition.

"I think it takes a captain saying, 'OK, this is what we're going to do today,'" said Engine 36's Lt. David Baumgardner.

Baumgardner has been at 36 for nearly three-and-a-half years. He has seen, and contributed to, numerous improvements recently initiated by Smith, and previously by Capt. Joe Burns (now at Rescue 57) and Capt. Frank Patterson (now at Ladder 44). Rescue 36's Capt. Justin Morris is also part

of the momentum.

Burns arrived in the summer of 2014 and focused on air conditioning, plumbing issues, converting the old kitchen into an EMS storage area, exterior painting, and recliners. He even brought in a couple of his own recliners while he waited for Facilities Manager Gary Daly to acquire some new ones. In fact, Burns gives Daly most of the credit for the station's improvement.

"If you tell Gary your needs, and work with him, and follow up with him, you can get things fixed," Burns said. "He's not able to visit every station and assess your needs. He has all the stations to deal with. As the station captain, it's your job to keep him informed."

Patterson also arrived at Station 36 in 2014 and said Burns "already had the ball



rolling." Patterson worked on removing and replacing the old carpet as well as landscaping and pressure washing.

What impressed Burns was the momentum.

"The whole team was working together. Anything that I asked them to do, they did," said Burns. "If you have leadership that cares at a station, the crews will bend over backwards to keep it up."

That momentum has continued with Smith, Baumgardner and members of 36. Their efforts have included interior painting, replacing electrical outlets and switches, stripping and waxing the floors and hanging photos of the current crew at structure fires and other incidents. They're about to refinish the kitchen table and give the station exterior a fresh coat of paint.

While Smith is studying, Baumgardner is continuing to champion the ongoing improvements at 36. He said there are four new firefighters assigned to the station, and they are learning the valuable lesson of taking pride in where they work. Baumgardner said he is imparting a philosophy he learned from his stepfather.

"He said 'If you do a little bit all of the time, you won't have to do all of it some of the time,'" Baumgardner said.



There are elements of Station 36's past still intact, but for several years, the officers have continued to carry out a variety of upgrades and improvements indoors and out.

Parade Duty

Rescue 71, Engine 55 (far right photo), Ladder 30 and HazMat 7 participated in the annual Opening of the Beaches Parade on April 29 in Jacksonville Beach. In addition to showcasing apparatus, their duty included, for a few minutes before the parade, assisting a woman whose keys were locked inside a car. Inside right photo: Ladder 30's Eng. Arley Baker and Firefighter Ben Owens (Engine 18) helped as did (not pictured) Capt. Todd Hardin (Ladder 30) and Lt. Pat Riley (Engine 7).



National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week

Fire Communications observed Public Safety Telecommunicators Week April 8-14. They hosted an open house for family members and field personnel, a carnival-themed day complete with snow-cones and cotton candy, a dress-like-your-favorite super hero day and many more fun activities. *Photos clockwise from top right: Fire Communications Training Administrator Monique Jackson shows Rescue 19's Eng. Doug Richmond and Engine 11's Capt. Jeremy Seger the calls in progress; the daughters of Fire Communications Officer Larry Hinton and Fire Rescue District Chief of Communications Catherine Cyrus enjoy cotton candy and plenty of balloons in the call center; Fire Communications Officer Kevin Perryman displays his passion for mysterious super hero Batman while taking calls.*



Engine 9, Ladder 9 Prepare Sulzbacher Village for May 24 Opening



Members of Fire Station 9 and JFRD Headquarters joined JSO and members of local military for a furniture build-out day in late April at the Sulzbacher Village at 44th and Pearl streets. The 65-unit facility will provide permanent housing for homeless single women as well as homeless single- and two-parent families.

Photo left: Firefighter Rob Perez (Engine 9) assembles a bedframe for a studio apartment. Photo right: Eng. Tyler Phillips (Engine 9) and Assistant Chief of Rescue Jake Blanton assemble the base of a day bed.

