



FIRE DEPARTMENT CONNECTION

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

59 Stations and Counting

JFRD's 59th station is just over a month old, and the department's 60th station is a work in progress.

In late June, Interim Director/Fire Chief Keith Powers joined elected officials in opening Station 73 at Cecil Commerce Center. A few days earlier, Powers grabbed a golden shovel and broke ground on the soil where Station 61 will stand early next year off of Old Middleburg Road South in the Argyle/Oakleaf community.

Station 73 is already improving response times in its territory, and Station 61 will do the same when it opens early next year. Both stations are also a game changer for ISO ratings in the southwestern quadrant of Jacksonville. Because of Fire Station 73, the approximate 3,200 homes and

75 businesses within 5 road miles of the station that previously held an ISO Class 10 rating are now a Class 1. When 61 opens, it will have the same effect for about 5,700 homes and 100 businesses within 5 road miles. Class 1 is the best possible rating and often means less expensive property insurance premiums, according to Skip Starling, director of the National Fire Services Office.

"Going from an ISO Class 10 to a Class 1 is the biggest change that can occur," Starling said. "Typically, it is a 50 percent savings or more in insurance premiums."

Station 73's site also includes the city's backup 9-1-1 center, which is still under construction and expected to open in a few months.



(L-R) Council Members Randy White and Aaron Bowman join Interim Director/Fire Chief Keith Powers and Capt. Kenny Keene in officially opening Fire Station 73 on June 28 at the Cecil Commerce Center. Three days prior, JFRD broke ground on Fire Station 61 off of Old Middleburg Road South.

Chief's Corner

Our department has published a variety of newsletters over several decades.

In the early '70s, we had "Smoke Signals." It was produced on a typewriter, printed on legal-sized, light-blue paper and stapled in the left corner. The lead story in November 1970, one of the few issues we have archived, was Station 41's transition from a volunteer station to paid. "Smoke Signals" also offered simple wisdom with brief footnotes like "Your neighbors' windows look a great deal better when you wash your own."

Fast forward to December 2006, when the Training Academy staff launched the "On Scene" newsletter. With a large photo dominating almost every cover, it resembled a magazine. For 12 years, the publication covered several milestones in our department, including the introduction of the Professional Growth and Development Plan, some very challenging budgetary times, and our first Sea of Blue Fallen Firefighter Memorial March. "On Scene" also featured JFRD's history, like our department's birth in 1886, and how our specialty teams like USAR and HazMat formed.

Now we publish "Fire Department Connection," which, like "On Scene," is archived at MyJFRD.com. It's interesting to page through different issues and remember developments and moments involving you and your coworkers. Some of the best stories evolve from suggestions offered by the field. And since "Fire Department Connection" is about you, it makes sense for you to submit ideas. Please keep sending them. You are helping to preserve our history, to recognize accomplishments, and to create a record of events that influenced your career and shaped our department into the best fire and rescue service it can be.

Keith Powers
Interim Director/Fire Chief



Major Marine Makeover

Station 40's crew tackled a project like no other. They restored the old Marine 23, a 16-year-old vessel that functioned as a spare for the last several years.

Yes, the before and after photos of the boat are impressive. And so was the team effort of Station 40.

"I didn't expect it to look as good as it did. I was blown away," said Fire 8's Battalion Chief Trace Barrow, describing the makeover of one of JFRD's older vessels.

It all started when the new Marine 39 arrived this past year. Having a new boat in service allowed an opportunity for another boat – the seasoned spare known as Marine 23. Barrow placed it in service at Station 40.

Despite some corrosion and its classic red exterior seriously faded, the 16-year-old, 30-foot boat still handled well and could easily respond to calls in the St. Johns River. It would also come in handy when the larger Jake Godbold fireboat at Station 40 was undergoing maintenance.

Engine 40's Eng. Art Frazier also saw potential in the boat and figured a new coat of paint would be a great start.



When the boat came out of the water, and the crew removed the rub rails, they discovered more corrosion. "It was just looking real bad," he said.

Soon, Frazier and others assigned to 40 began pondering more extensive work. Fortunately, many of the firefighters had mission-specific talents to offer. What followed was a four-month project involving what Frazier described as using the "collective knowledge" of the crew. Frazier is a carpenter and has been around boats most of his life. Lt. Jason Gray had worked in a body shop as a teenager, and Eng. Bobby Ray had outside ex-

perience operating boats, and he knew many sources for ordering specialty parts.

The notion of repainting had become part of a much bigger plan. "Nobody wanted to cut corners," Barrow said.

And more people got involved. Engine 40's Capt. Pete Ironside supported the project throughout, Barrow said, and Rescue 40's Lt. Steven Lauer and Eng. Phil Pfarr along with Firefighter Aaron Gray also contributed. Barrow also contacted Chief of Services Richard Reichard and TAC Support's David Tucker for assistance with purchasing paint and some of the specialty parts. Even the valves in the fire suppression system were replaced.

Along the way, if the crew was uncertain about next steps, Frazier said they researched the information online. The end result is dramatic, though it's really not the end, according to Frazier who said the rear deck still needs some tweaking.

Rutkowski 'Always Wanted to be Number One'

Whether he was playing a game of darts with his wife or facing the threat of cancer, Capt. David Rutkowski committed to winning the game, the battle, and the challenge.

"He didn't know what 'give up' meant," said his father, Guy Wolfe.

Carol Rutkowski may have understood that better than anyone. She met Rutkowski when they were attending Andrew Jackson High School. They married in 1982, and Carol soon learned about her husband's passion for persistence, no matter the situation. For example, he was willing to stay up into the wee hours of the morning to ensure that he prevailed in a marathon competition of darts with his bride.

"He never wanted to lose at anything," she said. "He always wanted to be number one."

When Rescue 50's captain was diagnosed with cancer a few years ago,



Capt. David Rutkowski

he focused on surviving and working. "He was very positive about it," Carol Rutkowski said. "I think he really wanted to believe he could beat this."

When Rutkowski realized he couldn't beat the odds, he still reported to work. He spent his final workdays at Tactical Support, and it wasn't a desk job.

"He said, 'Chief, give me something to do ... I want something to do,'" recalled Chief of Services Richard Reichard. "The guy worked his tail off every single day."

Rutkowski was born in 1960 in Oklahoma. When the family moved to Virginia, Rutkowski's father began taking his 5-year-old son to a fire station in Bristol. Rutkowski befriended the station captain, visiting him three times a week, according to Wolfe. But it would be several decades before Rutkowski entered the fire service. He was influenced to join by his wife's father, JFRD Retiree Rick Ricketson, also a captain in rescue. Rutkowski came on the job in 1997. He was 59 years old when he passed away on May 21.



Captain David Rutkowski met his wife Carol (above) in their high school days at Andrew Jackson. They married in the early 1980s, and Rutkowski joined JFRD in 1997. His last field assignment was Rescue 50. Despite his terminal illness, he worked at TAC Support as long as possible.

Flag Day at Local 122



Station 4 assisted with Local 122's super-sized display for Flag Day on June 14. The United States Marine Corps and Navy color guards from Naval Station Kings Bay also participated. Heavy Rescue 4's Eng. Kyle Eastburn (above) helped secure the flag on the old training tower at Local 122 on Stockton Street.

Station 21 Trains JSO's Mobile Field Force

They train for and are equipped to respond to some of the most unusual scenarios: potential civil unrest, organized vandalism, looting. And this special JSO team, known as the Mobile Field Force, gains some of its expertise from JFRD's Hazardous Materials Team.

"Every year, JFRD spends an entire day training us," said JSO Officer Mark Muchowicz. "Their knowledge, expertise, and professionalism is superb."

Last month, HazMat 21's Eng. Shawn Fallon helped teach the course, which offers procedures for safely handling unknown powders and liquids and the latest information on weapons of mass destruction. Muchowicz said JFRD has also offered training on emergency trauma medicine and the various fire extinguishers used in the fire service.

Muchowicz added one of the most memorable learning experiences was

about the T2 chemical plant explosion and the subsequent fire. The multiple-alarm incident occurred in December 2007 in North Jacksonville off of Faye Road. It resulted in four civilian fatalities, each of them employees working at the plant. Most of the information and wisdom about the incident, Muchowicz said, came from retired Director/Fire Chief Kurt Wilson when Wilson was Tower Ladder-21's captain.

DUVAL WRECKING CREW TO REPRESENT JFRD IN GLOBAL EXTRICATION CONTEST

When you figure the distance from Jacksonville to La Rochelle, France, you'll get an idea just how far the Duval Wrecking Crew is willing to go to test its extrication skills among the world's best technical rescue teams.

In September, the group of accomplished JFRD firefighters will board a plane, traverse the Atlantic Ocean, land in London after 8 hours aloft, get on a train, and some 4,300 miles later, they will arrive in eastern France for the World Rescue Challenge. Hosted by the World Rescue Organisation (WRO) since 1999, the international

competition involves dozens of fire and rescue departments and public safety agencies.

This year, the competitors represent 17 countries and five continents, according to Cameron Black, WRO secretary. The competition includes a variety of vehicle extrication and trauma response scenarios.

Jacksonville's team includes Squad 12's Capt. Colin Aguilar and Eng. Mike Matos, Ladder 7's Capt. Chris Lewis, Squad 14's Lt. Jason Jones, Engine 44's Lt. John Ledford, Squad

63's Eng. Revis Coltrane, and Heavy Rescue 4's Eng. Freddy Mejia-Ortiz.

Matos said the team is steadily training on "every type of scenario possible." They will also focus on scene management, precise coordination among team members, and devising backup plans if their initial extrication techniques fail. WRO invited the Duval Wrecking Crew to the Paris competition after the team won the North American Vehicle Rescue Association (NAVRA) competition last year. The team prevailed in the national contest in only its second try.

Recruit Class 219 Handles the Heat



Clockwise from top left: Recruits (L-R) John Burger and Patrick Bowen learn from Ladder 44's Eng. Joe Brittain before continuing their drill at the Training Academy's burn building. Recruit Grayson Knight recovers after his time in the burn building. (L-R) Danielle Butler and Gerrika Bazell are on their way to cool off as well. Temperatures reached the mid-90s during the July 17 session and conditions were also humid. There are 41 recruits in the class which will graduate in late August.