

CKFR WEEKLY

“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.”

John Dewey



ISSUE: 03/01/2019

CENTRAL KITSAP FIRE & RESCUE

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 1

Battle of the Badges Blood Drive
The Trails in Silverdale
(11AM-5PM)

March 11

BOC Meeting
@ Admin Office (4PM)

March 16

St. Patrick's Day Parade!
Bremerton (6th & Pacific)
KFFBF Event @ Shenanigans
following the parade!
T-Shirts & Glassware for sale!

March 17

**KFFBF Fundraiser at the
Cloverleaf Bar & Grill**
Live Music & Raffle
T-Shirts & Glassware for sale!

kitsap fire fighters
benevolent fund



March 27

CKFR Annual Awards Banquet
@ Kitsap County Presidents' Hall
Doors open at 6PM



Third call for nominations!

Please cast your award nominations on the SurveyMonkey link:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XMGZH3X>

We are accepting nominations for the 2018 year in the following categories:

Career Firefighter of the Year
Staff Employee of the Year
Life-Saving Award
Award of Distinguished Service

Volunteer of the Year
Award of Valor
Unit Citation

Deadline for submissions: Friday, March 8th

BATTLE OF THE BADGES 2019 CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS ...

WE ARE OPEN UNTIL 5 PM AT THE TRAILS IN SILVERDALE!



Higher Education for a Higher Calling

Article Written By: Battalion Chief Greg Platz

What motivates a firefighter, company officer or even future fire chief to invest countless hours, thousands of dollars and additional time away from family to pursue a college education? The answer may seem obvious: education incentive pay, bonus points on resume scoring during promotional testing, or maybe the insistence of a trusted mentor. While any of these may have started someone on the path to taking a few college classes, the real question (and surprising answers) is more aptly written as: What motivates that person to *finish* their college education? Whether it is an Associate's Degree in Fire Science, Bachelor's in Fire Service Administration or Master's in Organizational Leadership, the drive to finish what you started – despite the tremendous sacrifice – most often comes down to a simple desire to be a better firefighter, company officer or fire chief. In other words, by being a student of their profession, they are living proof of what it means to be a professional.

In talking with some of our co-workers (Fire Chief John Oliver, Captain Tom Sullivan and Lieutenant Ryan Madison) who are recent or soon-to-be graduates, it was inspiring and enlightening to learn a bit about their higher education journey. Let's take a deeper look at a few of the people behind those diplomas.

Greg Platz (GP): Chief, you recently earned your Bachelor of Science in Fire Administration from Columbia Southern University. I notice on your diploma that you also graduated *magna cum laude*, which means “with great distinction.” Congratulations on this achievement! You were obviously very dedicated and not only wanted to earn this degree, but did so with excellent grades. But, let's get right down to it. The assumption among line firefighters is that you were highly encouraged to get your degree as a requirement to be CKFR's next Fire Chief. Was that really part of the deal?

John Oliver (JO): Since I had enough credits from various educational institutions to add up to a Bachelor's Degree, I probably could have negotiated the position without getting an actual diploma. But, I really believed it should be a minimum requirement to be a Fire Chief. Plus, if I expected firefighters to pursue education, I wanted to “walk the walk” instead of just say I had equivalency.

GP: Did you have a plan to achieve this goal?

JO: As I said, I always had a goal of getting a Bachelor's Degree. In fact, when I was in high school, I wanted to be an architect and was going to pursue that dream while playing baseball for Lindfield College in Oregon. One thing led to another and I earned an Associate's Degree in Fire Science and got hired by the fire department. Over the next 20 years I continued to work on a Bachelor's, but made the mistake of taking classes from multiple colleges, ultimately with more credits than I needed for a degree. But, to actually get a diploma, I needed to combine all these transcripts and take a block of classes from one institution. After enrolling at Columbia Southern, I made a plan. I dedicated time each day to college classes. I woke up at 4 o'clock every morning to work on school for an hour. I did this 7 days a week. Ask my wife Kathy, she thought I was crazy at the beginning. But it worked. Over 18 months there was a lot of time spent studying, but the first hour



CKFR Fire Chief John Oliver

of every day was devoted to college.

GP: Ryan, you also recently earned an Associate's Degree in Fire Science from Columbia Southern and are now on track to get a Bachelor's Degree in Fire Administration in 2020. What was your plan?

Ryan Madison (RM): My path was definitely not linear. Years ago, I was encouraged by a mentor to start taking college classes after finishing low on the Lieutenant's test. I initially went to Bellevue Community College (BCC) and took Building Construction, Basic English and Strategy/Tactics. Just as I was getting in a routine, the program was cancelled. This knocked me off course for a bit, and I switched to obtaining NFA and IFSAC certifications. Then, Jason Christian turned me onto Columbia Southern, but most of my BCC credits wouldn't transfer, which was frustrating. Thankfully, I got some credit from work experience and certifications. Ultimately, my plan was to simply not give up. It was just too important to me.

GP: Tom, you are nearing the end of your journey to earn a Master's of Arts in Organizational Leadership from Gonzaga University. With a Bachelor's in Law, Societies and Justice from the University of Washington, you probably had a decent idea of the workload you were facing. What was your strategy?

Tom Sullivan (TS): The plan was to finish in 2 years. Some students take longer, but with my son, Connor, born 2 weeks before the program started, I knew I had to push to get this done before our family grew any larger or he demanded more time and attention. The key for me was scheduling, forecasting and communicating with my wife, Sarah. She has provided so much support, there is no way this would have worked without her buy in. My strategy was to be 100% focused on producing school work (reading, researching, participating in online group sessions or writing) or 100% devoted to quality time to my wife and son.

GP: Speaking of family, what effects did you experience?

JO: It certainly took away personal time from my wife. Some days I had to lock myself in my home office. She understood and is very proud of my accomplishment.

RM: My family impact was the big "light bulb" moment for me. Being able to sit and do homework with your kids at 40 years old is amazing. My actions helped reinforce the importance of education and the fact

that it should be a lifelong process. It can also be super humbling, as one of my hardest classes was Math. It's been a long time since I used those skills. I think my kids thought it was funny that I needed to pull up lectures and tutorials online.

GP: Chief, what was your hardest class?

JO: You're going to laugh, but I think one of them was a Fire Administration class . . . actually, the hardest was the History of Western Civilization. The professor was from Loyola with a PhD in History, and he had very high standards. I learned – after the first assignment – that he was looking for way more depth. So, I dug deeper, sweated a bit and ultimately earned an "A" in that class.

GP: Tom, have you had a favorite class so far in this Master's program?

TS: Without a doubt it was Leadership and Hardiness. The curriculum was all about resilience. We studied Holocaust survivors, Mt. Everest expeditions and were able to relate personal experiences with other classmates. The theme was essentially, "Life is hard. But you have to keep going." It was a 16 week class that culminated with everyone climbing to the top of Mount Adams.



CKFR Captain Tom Sullivan (far right) on Mt. Adams summit with Master's Program classmates.

JO: I really enjoyed my Critical Thinking class. It challenged me to think about actual human thought processes and how they compare to social expectations and behaviors. The best part is being able to take what I learned in school and place it into practice at work.

RM: The most beneficial for me has been Building Construction. So much so, that I took it twice! Once at Bellevue and again

from CSU. It is very applicable to what we do every day. It even prompted me to take an Art of Reading Buildings class to learn even more.

GP: Did anyone ever feel as though they wouldn't finish?

TS: I've had one breakdown so far in the process. Connor and Sarah were both sick, the BC test was imminent and I was halfway through a very demanding 15-page project. Thankfully I was able to persevere, solve short term problems and keep the ultimate goal in focus.

RM: My educational journey wasn't a straight line, but I always figured out the next step. I worked on my degree as finances allowed, as I didn't want to take out any loans. It took a bit longer this way, but I never gave up.

JO: I had a few moments when there was so much school work piled on top of regular work that I wanted to quit, or just take a break. But, I had made it a personal goal to finish before I was promoted, and there was a bit of peer pressure from so many people at CKFR working on degrees that I couldn't give up.

GP: Knowing what you know, what advice would you give to others when it comes to higher education?

JO: Save time, energy and money by sitting down with an advisor and making a plan. It just might be easier than you think. You will learn something from any college class, but if you want them to add up to a degree, you need to create an educational plan.

RM: My advice is for each person to determine what is comfortable for their lifestyle. Even if it is one class per quarter. You have to find out what is good for you and your family so you don't get overwhelmed in the process. The other key is to start now. If you never begin, you will never finish. Remember, it may be a humbling experience. The instructors have a job to do, and they will point out your deficiencies. Columbia Southern has A LOT of essay writing, which has translated into better reports and evaluations that I write, with better use of spelling, grammar and description.

TS: It takes discipline to get a degree and it will be uncomfortable. College teaches you how to think and provides an opportunity to work with people that are not like you. Your critical thinking skills and resilience will be challenged. It takes courage to write a tuition check, rather than spending that money on something fun. But, the payoff will outweigh the sacrifice, I guarantee it.



It is clear from this interview that pursuing a college education pays dividends far beyond incentive pay or resume points. The opportunity to apply what you have learned gives you the confidence and knowledge to overcome difficult situations. The improvement in your writing, critical thinking and technical skills serve as a testament to the professional you are and continue to be. Learning should be a lifelong process, especially in the dynamic world of the fire service. And while it may test your resolve and determination . . . as one of my Fire Academy Instructor's often called out on the drill ground, "If it was easy, *anyone* could do it!" So take the challenge and aim higher; you'll be glad you did!

Greg Platz is the A-shift Battalion Chief at CKFR. He has a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Washington (double major in Communication and History) and an Associate's in Fire Science from Bellevue Community College.



Citizen Life-Saving Award Presentations

During the Board meeting on Monday, Chief Oliver recognized the other two citizens (Spencer Uber and Jordan Murray) involved in a life saving effort on January 10. We were honored to have them here with us!

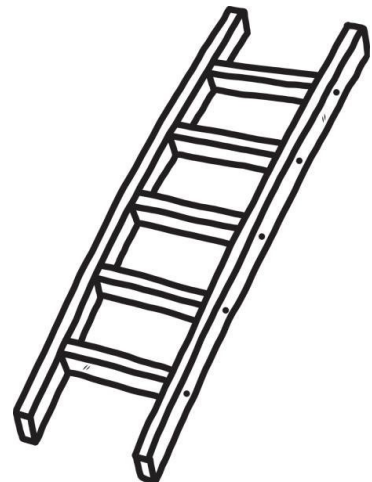
In case you missed the full story: <https://www.kitsapdailynews.com/news/lifesaving-awards-set-for-three-kitsap-county-residents-after-car-fire-rescue/>

This week at CKFR . . .

RIGHT/BELOW: CKFR units were dispatched to the Brownsville Marina for a boat fire in the early hours of February 24, 2019. Crews arrived to two boats and the pier well involved, threatening multiple other boats. The fire was extinguished with major damage to two vessels. CKFR was assisted by Poulsbo Fire's Marine 74 and Bremerton Fire units. The fire cause is under investigation by Kitsap County Fire Marshal's Office.



LEFT: CKFR C-Shift crews drill on ladder rescue systems at Station 56. Crews reviewed evolutions such as exterior leaning ladder, moving ladder, scissor lift and ladder slide.





LEFT: *Slam Dunk!* Previous month's Slam Dunk trophy recipient Medina Crawford passes on the trophy to Pat Busby during this month's Staff meeting. Pat logged over 30 hours on the snow plow at our facilities during the Snowmageddon event. Thank you Pat for all of your hard work and for making the roads and driveways safer for our personnel!



RIGHT/BELOW: FF Jeff Rye with his daughter, Leanna, and her friends on their way to Tolo!



Have something newsworthy to share?
Email Serena Prince
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