

Our Fire Department
By Madison Rawnsley

"The town of Cumberland would not be the same without the hard work, dedication and professionalism of its local fire department. In our small and tight knit community, it's these unsung heroes who help to maintain its homeostasis.

I have witnessed first hand how the response of the fire department can mean the difference between life and death for Cumberland citizens. I am lucky enough to have learned the ins and outs of the department from a young age through my family connections and what it means to be a fire fighter, paramedic or EMT in all aspects of one's life. These qualities and characteristics that these people embody are a model for how everyone should be in their everyday lives. These men and women put their own lives on the line for us without hesitation, and do their best to help us during our times of need.

The amount of training and time that the members put into their job, based on Cumberland and its characteristics from its geography to its inhabitants is something that most people don't often realize, but it is what brings a lot more meaning to the department and its value to the town. Each training drill is planned very carefully around a common or potential incident that could happen in Cumberland or a surrounding town. For example, being a town with coastal property and several small bodies of freshwater, the department does water rescue training in order to be prepared for a water related emergency and be there for those in need.

The natural trust that firefighters bring to a community adds to the trust amongst each other. Cumberland has that sense of safety and protection, and this is due largely to our fire department. Being right in the center of town, the fire department is seen as a town symbol, even more so now with the recent architectural improvements. They are involved in almost every aspect of the community. From the state championship parades and the Memorial Day Parade, to hosting birthday parties and doing fire safety and prevention in the elementary schools, and hosting an annual open house. This involvement does not go unnoticed, and means a lot to those of Cumberland.

I will end my discussion with several examples of just how much the fire department means to the citizens of Cumberland. For a classmate of mine on a day in 2006, their house had just been inspected earlier that morning for possible chimney problems. The inspection company left finding no evidence of danger within the chimney, but that, however, was not the case. Just before everyone had left the house for the day, there was an awful noise that came from the chimney which became what the fire department later discovered as a chimney fire. With the quick action of the mother coupled with the quick response of the fire department, in the end there was very little damage to a home that could have very well burned to the ground. To this family, the fire department means the saving of their house and personal belongings. Without the quick action of the department, their lives would not be the same as they are today in that they would be living in a new house, potentially in a different town, with new things filling its interior.

For my family, we had experienced a true scare when my less than one year old baby sister crawled onto and fell down several steps on our staircase. While my mother was in the shower, I had gone into my sister's room to say goodbye to her before I left for school. By accident I didn't latch the door completely shut, and she was able to crawl out of her room

and find the stairs. She crawled down a few and as my mom came out of her room found that she was beginning to fall down the last few. Panicked, we called the fire department and immediately an ambulance was in route to help my sister. The EMTs were extremely knowledgeable and compassionate for helping my sister. We were so lucky that she had nothing more than a few bruises from the fall, but the reassurance from the fire department and the quick response made one of the scariest situations for my family a lot less nerve racking.

While this town has a lot of wonderful people, resources, and organizations to thank for maintaining such an amazing community, the Cumberland Fire department is one that is often left unthanked for their incredible work they do and the safety and comfort they bring to us. Our first responders mean saving our lives, our homes, all of our personal items and being there for us during some of the hardest and some of the happiest times in our lives.

June 2018