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november/december 2024 • vol. 15, no. 6

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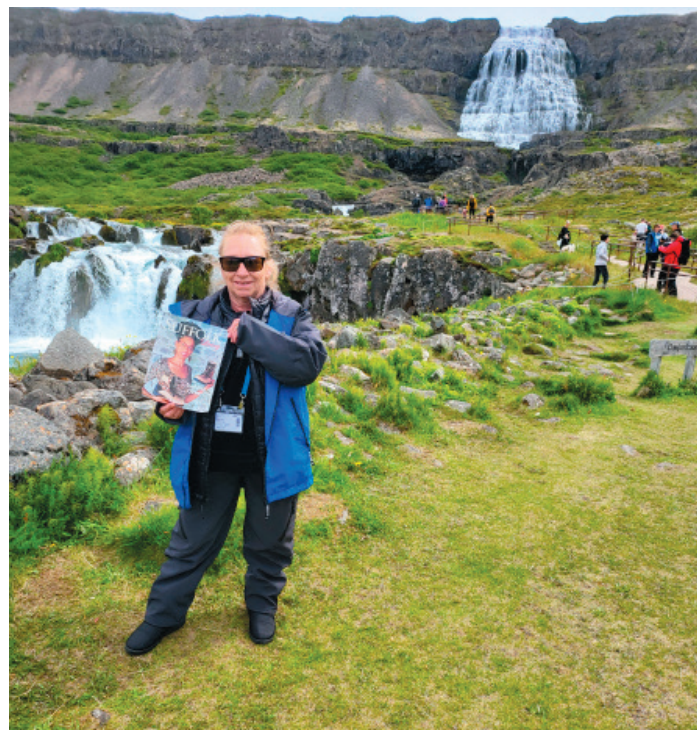
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FEATURE

Recruits undergo multiple styles of training to become members of the Suffolk Fire Department. Take a look at some recent training.

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Nonprofit STAR Haven provides support in the way of Coats and cookies to Suffolk residents.



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Hard to Reach Rescue

The fire department training goes beyond fire and smoke. Learn more about the special rescue teams.

ON THE COVER



Photo by Jen Jaqua
Veteran firefighters trained recruits as part of a live fire training exercise.

publisher's note

Season of Caring

The days have gotten shorter, the nights longer, and for some reason 4 p.m. feels like mid-night. The time change always reminds me that the holidays are near. Family, friends and good food — dressing the turkey and decorating the tree. As we prepare for the holiday season I'm reminded about those who spend the holidays in service to their community and away from their families. Firefighters are among those in our community that fit into that category.

Day in and day out our firefighters put their lives on the line to respond and serve those in need and sacrifice time with family, even on the holidays to do so. It's a challenging job, one that takes heart and grit and in this edition of Suffolk Living we've been granted a behind the scenes look at the training new recruits at our very own Suffolk Fire Department go through. Follow along with us on page 12 where we go with the recruits from interview to technical training to become firefighters.

As with every holiday season in Coastal Virginia, the weather is getting cooler. While the mercury drops a little more each day on the thermometer, it's time to pull out the winter coats. Not everyone in our community may have a coat to break out of the closet, and that's where the team of non-profit STAR Haven steps in to help. Flip to page 10 and learn more about their Coats and Cookies giveaway, featured In The News.

The holidays typically never lack in the fun department, and neither do the happenings you can see on page 18-21 in our Suffolk scenes in this edition. We hope you'll enjoy photos from the Mutt Strut, Walk Out of Darkness, Suffolk Peanut Festival and more.

As we usher in the holiday season, gathering with our families, we remind you to take a moment to appreciate our men and women in public service who may be apart from theirs. While we enjoy coco, colder weather, and maybe even a few reindeer games, we encourage you to remember those who are less fortunate. And no matter how you choose to celebrate the holiday season, we hope that you are safe and merry! Happy Holidays.



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where am I?

In each edition the Suffolk Living staff provides a challenge of sorts, testing how much of Suffolk you really know. We photograph some location in Suffolk that is readily accessible and open to the public, and see if you can tell us where it is.

If you know where this photo was taken, submit your answer, along with your name and contact information to news@suffolklivingmag.com. If you're right, you will be entered for a chance to win a \$25 gift card.

So, if you know where this is, let us know. If you're right, you could be a winner.

Go out and enjoy Suffolk!





what to do

Hole Park, featuring a short environmental workshop for all ages at the waterfront dock at 9 a.m. and a work day at the demonstration filter garden from 9:30-11:30 a.m. For more information on how to get involved, visit www.CleanMyRivers.com or follow us on social media.

SUNDAY, NOV. 17

The Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Suffolk will celebrate its 145th Year Church Anniversary at 3 p.m. The Rev. Morris Allmond, Sr and Healing Chapel Baptist Church will bring the message. You are cordially invited to come and share in this spiritual celebration. The Rev. Dr. L Stephon Johnson, Pastor.

Celebrating Churchs 52nd Anniversary and Honoring Our Founder Bishop Archie Timmons, Jr at 2:30 p.m. Guest Speaker Apostle Joyce W. Brown In God We Trust Phase II Church, Suffolk, VA. Located at Greater Virginia Carolina Temple Holiness Church 5500 Carolina Rd., Suffolk Apostle Dr. Laura G. Timmons, Senior Pastor.

TUESDAY, NOV. 19

The Hollywood Jericho Civic League

meets every third Tuesday of each month. A meeting is scheduled at Sixth Street Baptist Church, Goodman Street, Suffolk at 7 p.m. Special guests will be in attendance. New Residents are welcome to attend. Information: 757-539-3590 or 757-805-7660.

THURSDAY, NOV. 21

Business Leader Apprenticeship Event will be held at The Suffolk Workforce Development Center, 157 N. Main St., Suite D 2nd Floor. For more information regarding the event call 757-514-7730

SATURDAY, NOV. 23

Riddick's Folly will host an American Girl Program with Lila Monetti who is the doll of the year. Lila sets a goal in gymnastics to make the Xcel Gold team. We are giving a Lila Monetti doll away. Located at Riddick's Folly House Museum 510 North Main Street. Two programs 10 a.m. & 11:30 a.m. Twenty girls per program ages 6-12 and must be accompanied by an adult. Donations are welcome. For more information, please call: 757-934-0822 E-mail: rfcurator@verizon.net or riddicksfolly@verizon.net

The Copper Piano Presents Dueling Pianos 7 p.m. Two talented musicians share the stage, engaging audiences in a musical journey of singing, clapping, and dancing to your favorites. You create the music with your personal requests. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Dinner is served beginning at 7 p.m. Performance begins at 8:15 p.m. VIP Dinner Package – \$80/per person Includes: Dinner Buffet, 2 Drink Tickets, VIP Seating Near Performers, Snack Basket of Charcuterie Board for Table General Admission – \$65.00/per person Includes: Dinner Buffet, 1 Drink Ticket, General Admission Seating. For Group Reservations for table of 6 or more table of 8 – please call 757-923-0003 https://suffolkcenter.org/performances_events/dueling-pianos-cocktail-party/

TUESDAY, NOV. 26

Active Adults Come Paint With Us! 11 a.m. at the Suffolk Workforce Development Center located at 157 N. Main St., Suite D, 2nd Floor. For more information contact 757-574-7730

what to do

Send us your news

To submit your calendar or news item, simply email it to: news@suffolklivingmag.com

FRIDAY, NOV. 22

Suffolk Parks & Recreation is proud to kickoff its holiday season with the annual Grand Illumination event at 6 p.m. at The Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts, 110 W. Finney Ave. in Suffolk. After the countdown to light the area, you will enjoy seasonal music and complimentary horse-drawn carriage rides. The fun continues inside with holiday-themed activities, a puppet show, and a meet and greet with Santa Claus! Food and beverages will be available from Arts Kitchen. For more information, contact Suffolk Parks & Recreation at 757-514-7250, or sslate@suffolkva.us.

SATURDAY, NOV. 16

Bosley Artist Market, a luxury holiday shopping experience at the Suffolk Art Gallery November 16, from 11 - 5 p.m. featuring 17 local small businesses and

artists selling quality handmade items perfect for the holiday season. There will be wine and mimosas for purchase as well as a food truck on location for lunch. Here's our website link for your information: www.suffolkartleague.com/bosley-artist-market.html

The Suffolk Nature Project will officially launch with a rick-off event at Sleepy



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Submitted photos

STAR Haven brings Coats and Cookies to Suffolk Library

Story by James W. Robinson

Saturday, Oct. 19 saw Suffolk nonprofit STAR Haven collaborate with Suffolk Public Library for another round of Coats and Cookies for the community. Their Coats and Cookies Giveaway held at Morgan Memorial Library saw many residents come out to get bundled with delicious sweets as the weather begins to drop. Event stats saw 106 coats, 58 pairs of gloves, 6 hats and 4 scarfs with 64 people signed in.

STAR Haven Founding Member Terri Hill called the giveaway a “great success.”

“We saw a strong need in the community, especially for children’s coats, which were in

short supply. We’re planning another event in December and would love more children’s coat donations,” Hill said. “Thank you, Suffolk, for your incredible support! If you’d like to help, please consider donating children’s coats for our next giveaway.”

STAR Haven President and Founding Member Kianna Boone reflected on the event.

“From the time the library unlocked its doors, it was evident that the community need was great due to the number of citizens that poured in. Within the first five minutes we had 17 families signed in for a request,” Boone said. “Both

Suffolk Public Libraries for the benefit of STAR Haven Inc., will continue to accept donations of winter coats and clothes for citizens of Suffolk in need on an ongoing basis during [the] 2024 winter season. Collection boxes will be located inside of the library.”

Boone continued.

“We thank the community as a whole for coming together and showing the love to our citizens that are in much need,” she said. “Please continue to follow both Suffolk Public Library and Star Haven on Facebook for upcoming events.”



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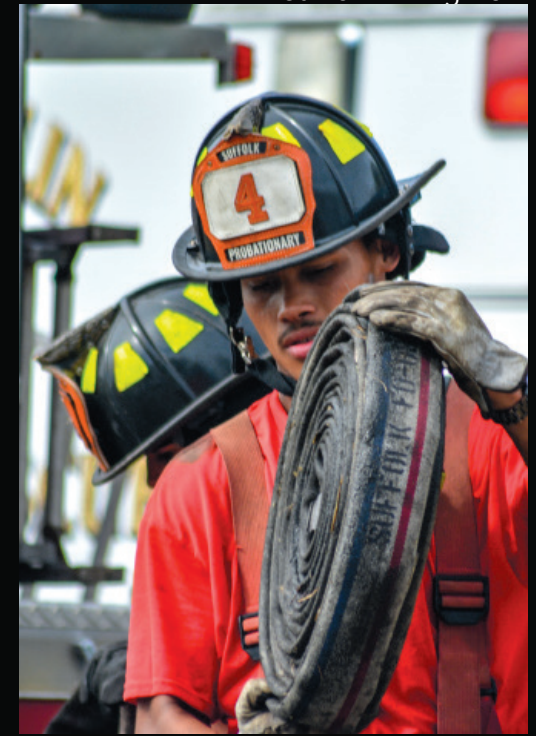
Story by James W. Robinson
Photos by Jen Jaqua

Suffolk Fire and Rescue provided a look at how our future firefighters train to serve city residents while also detailing outside of the norm duties that go beyond the smoke and flames.

In two separate interviews, one on Oct. 30 and another on Nov. 1, Battalion Chief Christopher Hehl, Firefighter Recruit Abigail Gilliam and Community Risk Reduction Coordinator Katie Russell as well as Assistant Chief John Demitri Wilson had a chance to discuss both the training that goes on within SFR's Fire Academy as well as the department's special Technical Rescue Team, which handles unique situations and rescues.



Training at the Fire Academy



Following a behind the scenes look at recruits using their learned skills to put out a fire and rescue a test dummy, Hale detailed that the academy lasts approximately a year long with “about five and a half to six months” of EMT at a training center on Market St., and another five and a half to six months of fire training. 19 recruits worked on their fire training with 12 recruits doing their EMT training.

“So [during] that six month period, they’ll literally swap locations. So those 12 and those 19 don’t necessarily interact, they’re basically two different academy classes...but they’ll graduate at the same time, in theory,” Hehl said. “So we’ll graduate 31 recruits [in] August of 2025, which is about the same time that we’re going to cut the ribbon on our new burn building. So, we’re excited about that.”

With the Fire Academy being the first step for aspiring firefighters, Gilliam detailed the process of what recruits need to do once they decide to start their firefighting journey.

“So we go through an interview process. We also go through the CPAT [Candidate Physical Ability Test], which is a physical test as well, and then a set of panel interviews as well as academic tests as well,” Gilliam said. “So it’s a long process to get in, and then you’re within the academy, which is what we’re doing right now, going through our

Firefighter I certification. So this was our first burns for Firefighter I.”

With burn training held in the City of Franklin, which saw recruits practicing to force entry, put out a fire and safely rescue a test dummy, Hehl detailed the different aspects that recruits learn in their training and combining those into practice.

“...In anything we do, it’s crawl, walk, run, right? So for the last three and a half months, respectively, this group has gone from the very basics, the history of the fire service, communications, how to put their gear on properly, how to stretch hose lines, how to manage nozzles, how to throw ground ladders, how to force entry into a door that’s locked. So how to gain access,” Hehl said. “So today is a culmination of all of those basic processes. So they don’t have to do anything outside of the scope which their job performance [requires]. So really today, they’re just putting it all together for the first time, and being in an environment that has a lot of fire, which produces smoke, and they’re feeling some heat.”

Likewise, Hehl detailed that recruits meet at their main fire school base, St. Julien’s Creek Annex in Chesapeake for further training routines as well.

“And they meet and muster up every morning and go through their equipment checks,” he said. “They do PT every morning to make

sure they’re meeting the physical standards. They generally have a quiz or some form of a test. So they may maintain our academic standards. And then from there, whatever discipline it is, we’ll do lecture. Always precedes practical evolutions – crawl, walk, run, right? So then, then we’ll start applying it with more stressors, if you will.”

Along with Franklin for burn building training, Hehl says they share resources and facilities throughout the Hampton Roads region, with recruits going to Virginia Beach for their Fire II burns. After the academy and graduating with Firefighter I certification, recruits would advance to learning Firefighter II techniques, such as driver pump operator, rope rescue, vehicle rescue and more. Along with noting that aspiring firefighters must be 18+ adults to apply, Russell detailed what they need to know once they start their journey.

“They should know that they’re going to push themselves beyond what they think that they can actually accomplish,” Russell said. “But they are supported by a crew here of the training staff that is really going to support them and teach them, and then they’re also going to build relationships within the fire academy that last throughout the rest of your career. And that’s a big thing.”

Hard to reach rescue

On the Technical Rescue Team, Wilson detailed how they handle specialized incidents that Suffolk residents don't see on a regular basis. Members are trained in rope rescue, trench rescue, water rescue, confined space rescue, vehicle rescue as well as structural collapse rescue. Wilson provided details on structural collapses.

"You've seen the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and multiple collapses due to natural disasters. You see that, there takes a special type of training to understand the dynamics of a building collapse and how we're going to access those victims for removal," Wilson said. "So again, we have people in that class just this week who are learning those requisite skills in order to remove people from those type of incidents."

Wilson says that many members are also a part of the Virginia Task Force as well, the ESF9 Urban Search and Rescue Team, which are activated internationally and nationally for man-made or national disaster incidents.

"As you see, there were many of us that just recently came back from Hurricane Helene and the destruction that that presented to assist in any way possible," Wilson said. "...we talk about the Urban Search and Rescue side of it, is trying to



City of Suffolk photos



locate victims whether it be a collapsed home, or building or water rescues, but it's also a humanitarian effort in that too. Because it was more than just doing the rescues, it was checking on people [to] see how they're doing, what we could offer, handing out water or donations and just assisting the public in any way we can. So, that was huge."

Large animal rescues are another aspect of the team's work, with horses seeing rescues as well as a camel being rescued by the team in Windsor. Wilson says when responding to animal rescues in the past, they didn't have the equipment or training to handle the situation at the time.

"...We're getting the calls, we're assisting the best way we can, but in evaluations, we learned that, hey, we need to do better as far as our training and equipment to help assist our citizens when they do have these horse incidents."

Wilson says along with getting training and purchasing recommended equipment to better assist horses, they also partner with a local veterinarian to help get horses back on their feet or back on level ground if they fell in a ditch. Due to this rescue speciality, their Technical Rescue Team has seen calls to Chesapeake, Isle of Wight and other Hampton Roads areas. However, these rescues are not the only calls they respond to. Wilson noted how Technical Rescue Team members are "not absent" from normal fire-

fighting duties of house fires and EMS calls.

"They have to go above and beyond that. So it's not like our team is just, that's the only calls that they respond to is technical rescues, no. They respond to, we like to call them 'routine calls on a daily basis' with the expectation or anticipation of some type of technical incident, what [is] occurring. They have to be trained and ready to respond," he said. "And that preparation, it's daily. It's daily. It's hours each day that are spent honing your skills so you're prepared to respond to [these] type of incidents."

Wilson says that training for these "low frequency incidents" calls for members to be dedicated to their training, so they are "sharp and ready" to perform their duties when needed. As part of the Tidewater Technical Rescue Team, with Suffolk serving alongside Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Chesapeake and Norfolk, Wilson says they unite quarterly to train together.

"In some type of discipline, whether it be a rope rescue, a trench, a confined space, we train together because we depend on each other in this region. As many times with these types of incidents, especially in trench and confined space, even though we have the training and equipment and the preparation, manpower is sometimes needed," Wilson said. "So as with the mutual aid in our way, we work well to erase those lines, to pull in assistance. So, we train constantly together so if a larger incident does



occur and we needed our brothers and sisters from another jurisdiction, they're there, we know each other, we know what to do, and it's seamless in our integration and operation."

Wilson continued.

"So it's a lot of burden that's placed on these men and women that are on our technical rescue team, which is located out on Station 1. But they do it with honor and pride. They're prepared, they're trained. They're ready to respond for whatever that incident may be..." he said.

Wilson likewise says it's his "passion" to assist Technical Rescue Team members to provide what they need to make their job easier, safer and more efficient.


"So we're constantly evaluating and reevaluating what we're doing, how we're doing it, what's the effect it has to constantly improve, and it's pride in your members. It really is. It's pride in all our members in the department. And then, as it relates to the Special Operations Team and Technical Rescue, you understand the additional aspect that they're taking on...the additional role that they're taking on, and they're taking it on because they want to," Wilson said. "...We seek people who are interested in doing this, because we want to have people who want to do it, who have a passion to do it, who have an interest to do it. So that's the level of people that you're getting as a part of this Technical Rescue Team: the want, the willing and able..."

suffolk scenes

Mutt Strut

The Suffolk Humane Society celebrated its 16th Annual Mutt Strut on Sunday, Nov. 3, at Bennett's Creek Park with plenty of residents and their doggos enjoying the festivities.



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suffolk scenes

AFSP Out of the Darkness

Residents came out to walk for suicide prevention at the 8th Annual Suffolk Out of the Darkness Walk supporting the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention (AFSP) on Saturday, Oct. 19.



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Great Dismal Swamp Festival

It was a fun and educational experience for locals at the Great Dismal Swamp Wildlife Refuge's 50th Anniversary Festival held on Saturday, Sept. 21 at Jericho Lane Trailhead.



Taste of Suffolk

There was plenty of food, art and music in Downtown Suffolk as the 18th Annual Taste of Suffolk festival was held with much fanfare on Saturday, Sept. 14.



suffolk scenes

Peanut Fest Parade

Downtown Suffolk held a 'shell-abration' as citizens came out to enjoy the Peanut Fest Parade on Saturday, Oct. 5.



Peanut Fest

Suffolk residents enjoyed plenty of food, games and colorful rides at the 46th Annual Peanut Fest, held on Oct. 10 through 13 at Suffolk Executive Airport.



Last edition's Where Am I?

Alejandro Alonso Diaz Ordoñez was in town on buisness and took notice of last edition's Where Am I. He was the only one to correctly guess the location of the window. This ornate window is on the front of Hilton Garden In Suffolk Riverfront. Find this month's challenge on page 7.




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scrapbook



FIRE DEPARTMENT: Early in the 20th century, the fire department had acquired motorized vehicles- the first in 1914. By the time this picture was taken, horses had been retired. Across the street from this building stood the Pythian Castle, a meeting place for several fraternal orders. The Pythian Castle was lost at an unknown date. The fire house was demolished in 1963. An insurance agency now occupies the site.

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