

“I want to be a firefighter when I grow up”

By Mable Hastings

“I want to be a firefighter when I grow up,” is a statement made by many small children as they enter the imaginative world of role playing and dress up. The lure of danger while saving lives and possibly being a hero is powerful; not to mention the sporting of a pretty amazing uniform and gear. For many, the childhood dream subsides and other professions are studied and pursued but for some, regardless of a chosen career, becoming a firefighter or first responder remains and these people become the very neighbours and friends who work both day and night when called upon, to keep our community safe. The first faces of hope to arrive when a loved one has died, when a home is in flames, when an accident has occurred and time is of the essence...

While fires are a reality, there are many reasons why the fire department and first responders are called upon in emergency situations. Firefighters and first responders must be on-call day or night and ready to quickly travel to a scene, not always knowing what may be in store. Gathering equipment with a calm sense of composure and detail, joining others who have chosen to provide this much needed service, he or she must mentally prepare for a variety of emergencies not always evident when one dreams of being a hero and saving lives. Emergencies are not always defined by pictures in a storybook and can often be difficult to imagine but that calm and composure must remain until the situation is under control.

For Potton firefighter and first responders who serve a rural community which is some 260 sq/km in size, those in need are often located in isolated areas and reaching emergency locations can be challenging. A firefighter arrives at the scene of an emergency and assesses the situation, receiving instruction from the chief or other firefighters on the scene. The role of a firefighter first responder or first responder is to offer basic medical care in order to stabilize victims of medical emergencies working in close collaboration with paramedics. Paramedics and First Responders reduce the number of deaths and are a vital part of the immediate care in situations where accidents have occurred.

In emergency situations, every minute counts. A firefighter and first re-

sponder must work as part of a team to be most productive and of help in emergencies. Following the most difficult of situations, a firefighter/first responder joins his/her team to debrief, share and receive support if needed. In emergencies, those who choose to serve their community in this way are putting themselves in a position to carry what they see, hear and experience during the often worst of times always emphasizing their want to support and care for their neighbours, friends and sometimes family. They do not get to choose the emergencies they face but rather are faced with the emergencies put upon them as each emergency arises.

Potton has 29 firefighters and first responders in total. While some on the team fill the role of a first responder only or firefighter only; many are trained in both. The entire team includes: Alex Bechard, Dominic Bouchard, Bruno Cote, Alexandre Ducharme, Jonathan Ducharme, Jean Sebastien Ducharme, Eric Field, Mathieu Fordham, Samuel Fortin, Stephane Fortin, Stephane Gauthier, Jean Francois Giroux, Melissa Harrison, Bradley Korman, Ronney Korman, Pierre Robillard, Mathieu Laplume, Martin Lavoie, Eve Milanovic, Rejean Neron, Vincent Ouellet, Adam Patch, Eric Patch, Lydia Pouliot, Shawn Pouliot, Anna Savage, Alexis Stogowski, Paul Stogowski and Amanda Andrews-Wuthrich. These are the faces that appear at our doors in the middle of the night, during the day, at the water's edge, on an icy bank, in the middle of a forest, in the mountains, in a quiet neighbourhood, on a busy street... at all hours of the day or night.

These are the men and women who will likely hear or who have already heard their own children say, “When I grow up, I want to be a firefighter/first responder,” and depending on the day, this might evoke a smile or maybe a tear. For youth like Jeremy Hamilton who was taken under the wing of the Potton firefighter and first responders during his High School years and who is now a firefighter and first responder for the city of Ottawa, the Potton team were role models in his life and influenced his career path choice.

“Shawn Pouliot was my mentor,” states Hamilton. “I would not be the firefighter I am today without his influence.”

According to Shawn Pouliot, Captain of the Potton firefighters and first re-



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Melissa Harrison Potton First Responder proudly represents the Potton Team while driving the Emergency Response Vehicle in the annual Esprit de Potton Parade.

sponders, if you choose to take on this role, it is because of something engrained in you, not for notoriety or to be seen or referred to as a hero of some sort.

“Most of our team will tell you,” says Pouliot, “Our biggest satisfaction comes from knowing that we have helped someone. A quiet understanding when meeting someone you have helped and they take the time to acknowledge that the effort made a difference is thanks enough.”

As one firefighter/first responder told me, “When you have the privilege of sav-

ing a neighbour and then meeting that person on the street with their family, you feel an immense sense of joy and accomplishment. But, on the other hand, when a life is lost, or a home is destroyed or some other negative result occurs, you are often left wishing you could have done more.”

On behalf of communities everywhere that are blessed with the dedication and efforts made by those men and women who choose to keep us safe, day and night, a resounding thank you.

In Recognition of Years of Devoted Service,

On behalf of the members of the municipal council and all citizens of Potton, we would like to thank our First Responders and Firemen for their invaluable service benefiting our community. We would also like to thank all those who have generously made donations throughout the years.



POTTON

En reconnaissance des années de loyaux services,

Au nom des membres du Conseil municipal et de tous les citoyens de Potton, nous aimerions remercier nos premiers répondants et pompiers pour leurs services inestimables au bénéfice de notre communauté. Nous aimerions également remercier tous ceux qui ont généreusement fait des dons au fil des ans.



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Potton's Fire Truck is always a favorite of the kids as it is seen for what it is, the vehicle that carries a team coming to help people in an emergency.