



2021 FAIRFAX COUNTY

VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT BY

FAIRFAX COUNTY VOLUNTEER
FIRE COMMISSION

AND



FAIRFAX COUNTY VOLUNTEER
FIRE & RESCUE ASSOCIATION

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County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods, and diverse communities of Fairfax County.

Volunteer Fire Commission

Zone I

Companies 2, 8, 10
Gerald B. Strider
Bailey's Crossroads
VFD
Vice-Chair

Zone II

Companies 5, 19, 22
Sean R. McLaren
Franconia VFD

Zone III

Companies 14, 17, 21
Robert J. Mizer
Burke VFRD
Secretary

Zone IV

Companies 1, 12, 13
Michael J. Masciola
Dunn Loring VFRD

Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association Administrative

Shawn P. Stokes
Dunn Loring VFRD
Chairman

Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association Operational

Adam J. Searle
Vienna VFD

At-Large Fire Commissioner

Jeffrey A. Snow
Vienna VFD

2021 was a year of transition, adaptation, and recovery from the initial impacts of COVID-19 by your volunteer partners in the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department. We transitioned to a different operating environment due to the roll out of vaccines and changes in masking and social distancing requirements. We quickly adapted to the needs of the Fire and Rescue Department to support staffing shortfalls caused by COVID-19. Finally, recovery began by our volunteer fire departments to ensure our continued viability as a partner in the community.

The challenges in 2021 continued to be significant – operationally, financially, and personally – for our volunteer departments and their members. However, the opportunities to continue to serve, to reconnect in the communities, and to plan for the future have set us on a path for 2022 and beyond. Our commitment to providing service to the citizens of Fairfax County remains the same.

Our continued relationship with the Fire Chief and the Fire and Rescue Department has allowed us to continue evolving and integrating the volunteers at all levels. While the operational challenges brought on by COVID-19 surged throughout the year, we used this as an opportunity for the volunteers to increase participation and provide coverage to keep units in-service. A few years ago, this level of integration would have been the exception, but today it is the rule. Our focused efforts to strengthen our partnership are providing dividends during this challenging time and they lay the groundwork for a stronger, more robust volunteer system.

In 2022, we continue our efforts to grow the volunteer system through targeted retention and recruitment efforts, we build on the successes of the existing volunteer integration, and we collectively and strategically plot a path to the future of the combination system. We look forward to continuing the partnership between the 12 member companies of the Fairfax County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association and the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department.

John S. Butler
Fire Chief
Fire and Rescue

Shawn P. Stokes
Chairman
Volunteer Fire Comm.

Michael Wendt
President
Volunteer F&R Assoc.

The Volunteer Fire Commission is appointed by the Board of Supervisors to deal with the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department on all matters pertaining to the volunteer fire services in Fairfax County.

*Volunteer Fire Commission
12099 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22035
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fire-ems*



ABOUT US

THE FAIRFAX COUNTY VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICE

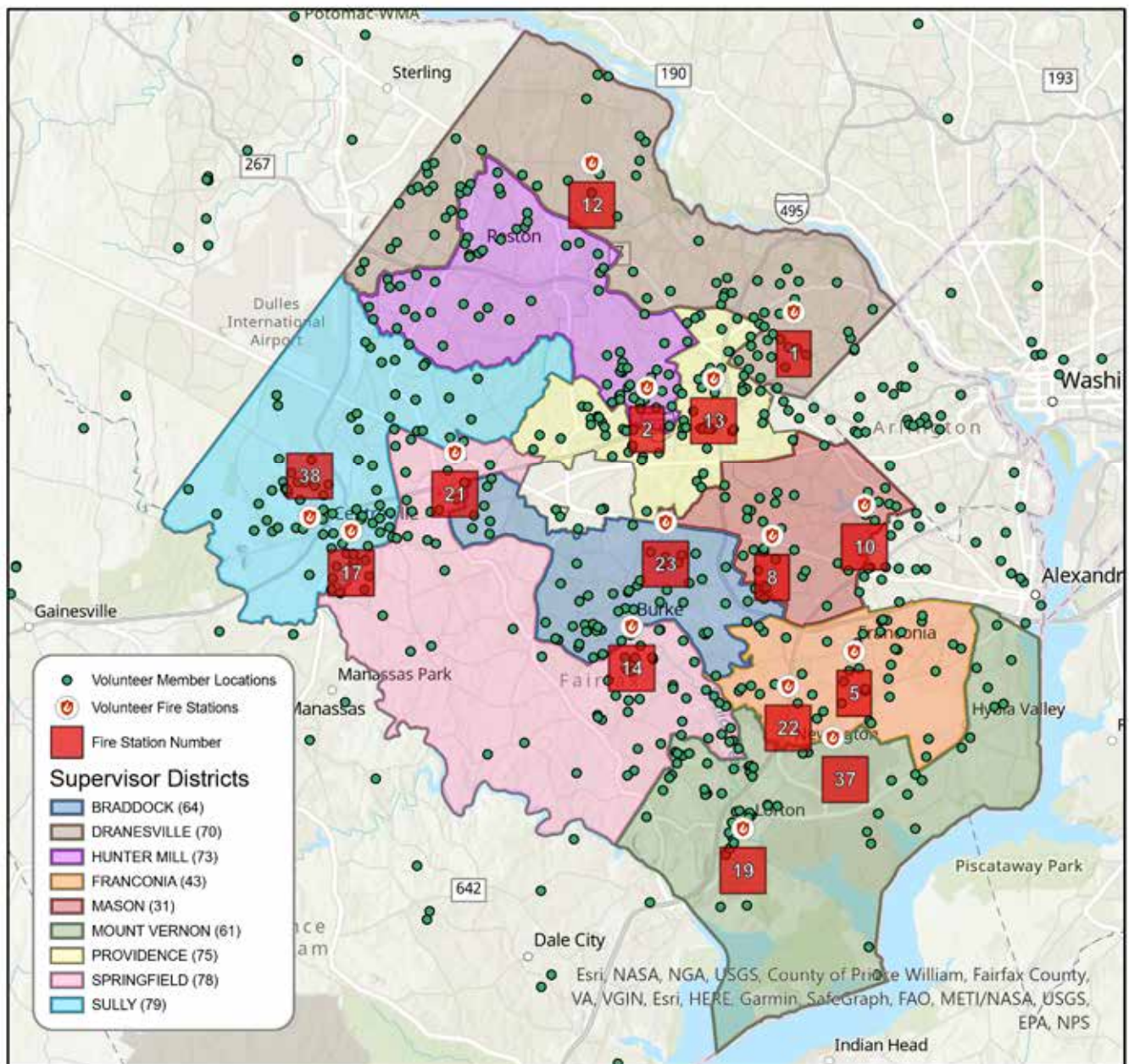
The Fairfax County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association is comprised of 12 independently chartered volunteer fire and rescue departments operating throughout Fairfax County. The history of organized volunteering in Fairfax County, which can be traced back 117 years, parallels the history of the fire service in the United States. Today, volunteer members proudly serve in a combined career and volunteer fire and rescue system that was formally established in 1949.

Our members come from all walks of life, with ages of active volunteers spanning eight decades, and professional backgrounds from all industries and fields. We leverage our unique experiences, skills and educational backgrounds to contribute materially to the fire and rescue system, bringing our passion for public service to improve the safety and security of our neighbors and our communities.

We are proud to support one of the nation's premier fire departments, with our apparatus, facilities, and members contributing to the outstanding reputation of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department. ■

THE VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICE IN FAIRFAX COUNTY

Fairfax County volunteer fire departments are located across the county, from north to south and east to west and 81% of our members live in the county, providing service in the communities where we live and work. The map below indicates the location of volunteer fire stations and those operated in partnership with the county. Volunteer member locations show where volunteers live throughout the county and the legend includes the total number of volunteer members living in each magisterial district.



Magisterial District

SPOTLIGHTS

The members of Fairfax County's volunteer fire departments live and work in the communities where we volunteer and serve including all nine county magisterial districts. These members are examples of the diverse group of public servants who compose the Fairfax County volunteer fire service.

HUNTER MILL DISTRICT | Zach Smith



For Zach Smith, joining the Vienna VFD and becoming a Firefighter/EMT was just the first step in a personal journey that led to him changing his entire career to focus on public safety and emergency response. He now works for the US Cyberspace and Infrastructure Security Agency's Emergency Communication Division.

MASON DISTRICT | Janet Araujo



"I grew up watching Fire Station 10 help people in my community," says Janet Araujo, whose childhood home was just a short walk away from the Bailey's Crossroads VFD. She is now one of its newest operational volunteers. "I wanted to be just like them." She is well on her way, having completed the introductory training courses, and joined multiple ambulance shifts as an observer. She is scheduled to begin EMT school at the Fire and Rescue Academy in the fall. "I was working a back to school event, at the Baileys Crossroads Community Center, and a girl that I know from my neighborhood, came up to me and told me that she wanted to be just like me. I just remember seeing my 13 year old self in this little girl. And in that moment, I felt so good and proud of the impression that I left and continue to leave."

SPRINGFIELD DISTRICT | Harry Chelpon



"Every experience has left an impression," said Harry Chelpon when we asked what experiences in the VFD made the biggest impression on him. "Some you don't realize until much later. Whether it's reassuring a patient as you're loading them into the ambulance or helping a family make arrangements after losing a loved one, they all stay with you." Chelpon, who is now the senior chaplain for the entire Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department as well as an operational volunteer at the Burke VFRD and adjunct instructor at the fire and rescue academy, specializes in helping first responders make sense and meaning of the difficult experiences that stay with them.

SULLY DISTRICT | Anthony & Lauren Stancampiano



The Vienna VFD is home to husband-and-wife team Anthony and Lauren Stancampiano. Anthony, a Fairfax County police lieutenant, is the president. Lauren, an ICU nurse and former operational volunteer, is now the bingo manager. They've served together for fourteen years. Both joined the department before their eighteenth birthday, drawn to the challenge of work in the fire service and the opportunity to help people in need. "The real bonus," says Anthony, "is making life-long friends along the way." He also met his wife that way. They met through their membership at Vienna, married in 2016, and celebrated the birth of their first child in 2021.

📍 MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT | Mekde Ashagrea



"The Lorton VFD brought me in and introduced me to the world of EMS" says Mekde Ashagrea, who is now a professional EMT for MidWest Medical Transport as well as an operational volunteer and board member at Lorton. Fairfax County has been her home since she immigrated to the USA as a child in 2001. "I would say the one thing that is most interesting about Lorton in particular is how close the volunteer side is, not only with each other, but also with the career staff. As a station we all train together, work out together, cook and eat dinner together, making Lorton a second home for a lot of us."

📍 DRANESVILLE DISTRICT | Laura Calkins



"I initially started volunteering with the fire department after having to call 9-1-1 for a family member in respiratory distress," recalls Laura Calkins, a member of the McLean VFD who, as a Firefighter/Paramedic, is among the most highly trained volunteers in the county. When asked about the experience that left the biggest impression on her, she told us about a time when she arrived at the scene of a car crash to find ordinary bystanders already safeguarding the scene and caring for the injured. "You don't have to be a firefighter or paramedic to make a difference. Using what you have and showing compassion (and maybe taking a CPR class too!) can make a difference."

BRADDOCK DISTRICT | Tonya McCreary & Matt Bryant



"We first learned about the fire department when we moved to the neighborhood more than 20 years ago and Santa Claus came through our development on a fire engine," recalls Matt Bryant, who serves as an administrative volunteer at the Burke VFRD alongside his wife, Tonya McCreary, who is also on the board of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Association. "We received the fund drive mailings and sent in some checks, but we knew an organization that took the time to spread holiday cheer in that way was a place we wanted to be." "I get the privilege of seeing the notes included in our fund drive donations," says Tonya, "and it really is humbling to see how we help people in their greatest moment of need, and how grateful they are for our professionalism, service and the kindness that our crews provide."

📍 FRANCONIA DISTRICT | Anthony Chu



"While on duty, we see parts of people's homes or businesses that maybe even their closest friends do not see," says Anthony Chu, an EMT and crew chief at the Bailey's Crossroads VFD. "How often does one get to walk the hallways leading to the projector room of a theater, or access a park from the hidden backroads?" Speaking of unusual experiences: in the fall of 2021, as thousands of hastily evacuated refugees from Afghanistan were arriving at Dulles Airport, he was one of the volunteers who signed-up to provide care for the evacuees. "Operational volunteers stepped-up over the course of weeks to provide additional units and staffing, sometimes driving across the county after work to staff a sleepless overnight shift before going to work the next day, then signing up for another shift a few days later."

📍 PROVIDENCE DISTRICT | Kim Burns



Kim Burns, a pilot for United Airlines, was drawn to the Dunn Loring VFRD by the strong sense of fellowship she felt from the first time she visited. "We have very similar personalities, but very different occupations," she says of her fellow volunteers. "I find it interesting that we all 'run to the fire' and compete for the next duty shift. It has been incredible to find others with such drive!"

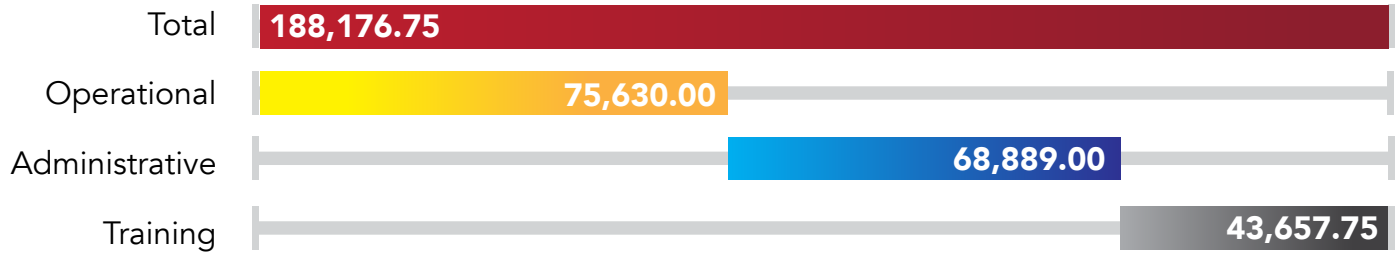
3,091,372 Volunteer Hours

have been reported in the Volunteer Management System (VMS) from its July 1, 2007 implementation through 2021.

Operational Hours	1,186,863
Administrative Hours	1,238,369
Training Hours	666,141

CY2021 hours are **↑ 22%** year-over-year from 2020 showing a recovery in volunteer participation following the pandemic and nearly returning to the long-term pre-pandemic trend.

2021 VOLUNTEER HOURS REPORTED



Additional Unit Duty Shifts are **up 11% Y/Y** from 2020.

- ▲ ALS 117%
- ▲ BLS 4%
- ▲ Engine 2%
- ▼ Canteen -18%
- ▼ Command Officer -25%
- ▲ Bike Team 125%
- ▲ Brush 167%
- ▲ Utility 400%

FAIRFAX COUNTY VOLUNTEERS BY THE NUMBERS

Additional Unit Duty Shift Trends

Volunteers placed 1,500 additional units in service in 2021, an 11% increase over 2020. Of these, 1,148 were EMS units responding to calls for medical emergencies.

Advanced Life Support (ALS) Medic shifts have returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Basic Life Support (BLS) Ambulance shifts are holding steady to the long-term trend, as they did during the pandemic due to focused staffing efforts.

Engine shifts are steady year-over-year from 2020.

BLS Bike Team shifts are up year-over-year and approaching pre-pandemic levels as community events and outdoor recreation return.

Brush Unit and Utility shifts are up reflecting both an increase in festivals and community events and the number of weather-related needs for these units.

Canteen units, used on significant long duration incidents, responded less frequently in 2021.

Volunteer Command Officer shifts declined year-over-year from 2020.



Operational Hours Trends

Total Operational hours are up 29% from 2020 reflecting a recovery from the pandemic and a return toward the pre-pandemic trend.

Minimum Staffing hours grew dramatically in 2021 due to increased opportunities for volunteers to serve in that capacity, setting a record more than nine times the highest prior year.

Supplemental Staffing rebounded with a 45% increase over 2020, returning to a level just slightly below the long-term trend.

Additional Unit Staffing rebounded with a 20% increase over 2020, also returning to a level just below the long-term trend.

Operational hours **up 29% Y/Y**

▲ Supplemental	45%
▲ Additional	20%
▲ Minimum	1,121%



Training hours **up 15% Y/Y**

▼ VISIT	-7%
▲ Level 1	21%
▲ EMT	9%
▲ EVOC	6%
▲ FF	39%
▼ ALS	-9%

Training Hours Trends

Training hours climbed 15% over 2020.

Volunteer In-Station Introductory Training (VISIT) declined from 2020 reflecting a subdued pace of new recruits.

Level 1 training, the first step in formal academy training, rose 21 % year-over-year.

EMT training hours climbed 9% as pandemic-related training constraints eased.

Emergency Vehicle Operator's Course (EVOC) hours climbed 6% as previous EMT graduates continued to the next step of their training progression.

Firefighter training hours climbed 39% as the annual fire school program resumed following a pandemic-related cancelation in 2020.

Administrative hours **up 20% Y/Y**

▼ Canteen	-51%
▲ Community Outreach	15%
▲ Fundraising	62%
▲ General	9%
▲ Non-Paid Instructor	91%

Administrative Hours Trends

Total Administrative hours recovered and increased 20% from 2020 reflecting the easing of pandemic-related constraints.

Canteen hours declined 51% from 2020 corresponding to the decline in utilization of Canteen units at long duration incidents.

Community Outreach hours climbed 15% beginning a recovery to normal levels expected when Open House activities and other community events return in 2022.

Fundraising hours climbed 62% from 2020 with the resumption of bingo games and other VFD fundraising events.

Non-Paid Instructor hours rose 91% as academy and station-level training returned to pre-pandemic norms.



LOOKING FORWARD

CHALLENGES FACING THE VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICE

Since the first volunteer fire department was formed in Fairfax County in 1903, volunteers have served their neighbors and communities when they needed it most. As the county developed from a rural community to a bustling urban suburb, the emergency service needs of the growing population increased and the fire service evolved to meet them.

Our volunteer departments operate in partnership with the county in one of the nation's leading combination career and volunteer fire and rescue departments. But across the country, the volunteer fire service faces growing challenges every day complicating our mission to provide manpower, apparatus, and facilities.

We recruit and train new members and hone our skills through drills and continuing education courses. But recruiting new members is more difficult than it has ever been. Volunteer fire departments face a national decline in volunteerism amid a societal shift in work and life priorities. Competition for volunteers is high and candidates have a wide variety of opportunities for volunteer service in the metropolitan Washington area. To serve as a fire and rescue volunteer requires a substantial time commitment to hundreds of hours of intensive training in preparation for a hazardous vocation.

We purchase, maintain, and operate a fleet of emergency apparatus including fire engines, ladder trucks, ambulances, snow plows, canteens, and utility vehicles. Apparatus costs are increasing at a rate several times the broader inflation rate. Improvements to vehicle emissions, safety, and technology provide enhanced capabilities, but at a price. A fire engine purchased ten years ago will cost 50% more today and an ambulance purchased five years ago will cost 25% more. COVID-19 supply chain issues and parts shortages have doubled or tripled procurement lead times and accelerated already staggering price increases, rapidly adding a surprise premium of another 15-20%.



We maintain and operate fire stations providing facilities to house career and volunteer personnel. Fire stations operate on an arduous 24x7x365 *(continued...)*

schedule and aging physical plants require steady maintenance. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that, nationwide, 44% of fire stations are more than 40 years old.

We manage and operate non-profit corporations that raise funds that make the manpower, apparatus, and facilities possible. Most departments rely on direct mail fundraising campaigns and many host charitable gaming. The long-term future of charitable gaming is uncertain due to changing demographics and social preferences. Departments are exploring alternative methods of fundraising including events, sponsorships, and grants to



increase receipts and reduce exposure to any one source of funds. However, over the last ten years fundraising receipts have been flat and have not kept pace with rapidly increasing expenses.

As we confront these challenges, we are encouraged by the support we receive from Fire Chief John Butler and his senior staff, county executive staff, and the Board of Supervisors. The Volunteer Fire Commission is developing a strategic plan to complement the FCFRD strategic plan, to prepare for the future and to position county volunteer fire departments to continue their role as an integral part of our combination system. ■

SPOTLIGHT ON ...

ADAM SEARLE

Adam began his volunteer EMS/fire career in the United Kingdom with his local ambulance station when he became a first aid provider for his collegiate rugby team. When he moved to the United States his desire to continue as an EMS volunteer crossed the Atlantic with him. Upon settling down in the Vienna community Adam walked into his local firehouse and struck up a conversation with the career staff on duty. Luckily the station he walked into, Fire Station 2, was a volunteer department and he quickly put in an application. Adam joined Vienna in 2012 and quickly expanded his qualifications to include firefighting, completing firefighter training in 2014, becoming a fire engine driver/operator in 2014, and achieving certification as a volunteer officer in 2021 holding the FCFRD operational rank of Lieutenant.

Outside of volunteering, Adam works as a Senior Financial Advisor and Portfolio manager for an international investment bank. Adam says that balancing a volatile, high stress career with his responsibilities within the VFD is one of the many challenges he had to overcome this year, while another is "managing/leading volunteers who are also my friends."



Adam Searle is a member of the Vienna Volunteer Fire Dept. (VVD), Company 2, where he serves in operational leadership as the Suppression Captain. Adam is the Vice President of Operations for the Fairfax County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association and serves on the Volunteer Fire Commission.

When looking backwards at some of the lessons learned from this past year, Adam states that learning how to be comfortable in the uncomfortable is the most important thing he has learned. "This goes for anyone looking to jump to the next step in their volunteer fire/EMS career. The unpredictability keeps you on your toes but don't let it stop you from learning and growing. You'll never feel 100% ready."

Finally, we asked Adam what advice he would have given himself at the start of his fire/EMS career: "This is supposed to be fun, so when at times it's not so fun or overwhelming, change something. Ask for help, cut back, perhaps even say 'no', change perspective and refocus. It'll help with bringing a more positive attitude to the firehouse every day. For every fire department problem I grumble about, bring or be part of the solution. Look after your body, go to physical therapy, do yoga, etc., don't ignore lingering injuries."



FCFRD STAFFING

CHALLENGES & VOLUNTEER RESPONSE

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to spread in 2021, the Fire and Rescue Department faced multiple staffing challenges, including requiring increased overtime to meet the department's operational needs. As the county leadership worked on a long-term solution to the staffing challenges, volunteers stepped up to fill the gaps and ensure that residents of the county would have the emergency services they need in a crisis.

With the availability of vaccines and a replenished and consistent supply of personal protective equipment, volunteer unit staffing in 2021 almost completely rebounded from the decline it suffered in 2020 due to the pandemic. Basic Life Support (BLS) shifts have continued to maintain their long-term trend, and Advanced Life Support (ALS) and Engine shifts have both returned to pre-pandemic levels. Overall volunteer staffed shifts rose by 11% over 2020 but are still overall down 8% from 2019 pre-pandemic levels when all unit types are included.

Construction of Fire Station 44 (Scotts Run) was completed in August 2021. The station then went into service but, due to staffing challenges, the station's engine could not be staffed immediately. The volunteer departments often staffed their volunteer engines at Fire Station 44 providing a frontline fire suppression capability at the station while the FCFRD worked to permanently place staff and a new engine in the station.

After many years of FCFRD career transport units being exclusively ALS, in 2021 FCFRD planned to return to a two-tier EMS service delivery model in early 2022. This decision to field a combination of BLS and ALS units was supported by extensive data analysis conducted by the FCFRD. While this transition was a noticeable change for many career staff, the volunteer staff have been operating in this two-tier BLS/ALS system all along. The volunteers never stopped providing BLS transport units when the FCFRD upgraded all transport units to ALS. As a result of this, the volunteers were well-positioned to support and assist the career staff during the transition, resulting in a more efficient adoption of the new EMS delivery model.

With the staffing challenges faced by the FCFRD career staff in 2021 the volunteer staff had the opportunity to step up and further support the FCFRD by filling minimum staffing positions of various frontline suppression and EMS units after all career staffing options were exhausted. Traditionally volunteers have always been able to fill a minimum staffing position on a frontline unit. However, historically, it has always been for short periods of time and only available to volunteer firefighters as volunteer EMS-only staff had not previously been utilized. Beginning in 2021 and continuing into 2022 volunteer utilization in minimum staffing positions increased to include both suppression and EMS-only volunteers and began to include mixed *(continued...)*

career/volunteer crews with volunteers operating as both drivers and the Officer in Charge (OIC) of a unit. Across the board volunteers filling minimum staffing roles were well-received and appreciated by career personnel from the rank-and-file through Fire Chief Butler, as the alternative was to temporarily place a unit out of service until replacement staffing could be identified. Utilizing these mixed staff crews FCFRD's continued response capability was seamless and the volunteers helped to maintain FCFRD's high level of service delivery. To facilitate this transparent integration volunteer personnel were incorporated into standard FCFRD staffing *(continued...)*

“The collaboration between stations is extraordinary and reflects a lot of hard work by all involved. As you can recall, there were times in the past that we wouldn't have had such a positive report. We've come a long way!!”

*Supervisor Penny Gross,
in response to hearing about the
volunteer staffing at Fire Station 10*

SPOTLIGHT ON ...

MARIA SEVERA PANGELINAN



Maria Severa Pangelinan is a member of the Lorton Volunteer Fire Department (LVFD), Company 19, where she is an Emergency Medical Technician and leads the department as the Volunteer Chief.

Maria started her volunteer EMS career as a commuting biology student at George Mason University. “I found interest in working with our local hospital and fire department. As a freshman, I dedicated several months working at Inova Fairfax Hospital, and following that experience, I explored opportunities at the Lorton Volunteer Fire Department.” Maria has since graduated from GMU and has continued to volunteer at Lorton, along with accepting a position with a private interfacility hospital transport company. Her goal is to attain a degree and become a Physician Assistant.

Looking back on the past year, Maria spoke about how many moments of triumph have been accompanied by challenges and failures. These failures forced her to view these as learning experiences and opportunities to grow. “As an operational member of LVFD, an example of a challenge that we tackled head-on was the effort to justify the need to equip Ambulance 419 (A419E). When I became Chief, A419E was not assigned the equipment necessary to put the ambulance in service. Upon thorough discussion with our board, we established a goal to substantiate the need for equipment to put A419E in service. This was only possible through the dedication, commitment, collaboration, and support from both volunteers of LVFD and other

VFDs. For the year 2021, we have put A419E in service 58 times for a total of 574.5 hours.”

Maria spoke about how the relationships between all operational members, volunteer and career, are crucial to the success of any fire station. “Building relationships and strengthening the already established relationships are fundamental factors to the collaborative work we do at Company 19. Setting aside time outside of the station hours has been effective in strengthening these bonds.”

The first two characteristics Maria cites as keys for success are a strong work ethic and staying focused. To be a part of this organization, people must work hard and be focused on the task at hand. The next would be for all members to remember their “why”. “My ‘why’ is to serve the greater community. It’s a humbling experience to respond to a crisis and provide the best care I can. Knowing I could trust in my team, and collectively we can provide the best service during a call is extraordinary. It’s those moments when we are looked upon for help, in those desperate minutes when citizens rely on our critical thinking and quick response to provide support, and in serious situations when we need to actively implement emergency response... this is my ‘why’.”

processes and were contacted by FCFRD duty officers when career staffing options were fully exhausted.

In preparation for key operational periods, such as anticipated weather events or holidays when staffing was anticipated to be an issue, the volunteers developed a schedule of on-call staff to be available to quickly fill staffing needs as they arose. As a result of these combined efforts, volunteer utilization in minimum staffing roles was further normalized and institutionalized across the entire FCFRD system. During the 2021 holiday season the FCFRD experienced severe staffing challenges. As a result the department was forced to “brownout” select units, one of which was Medic 410B (M410B), the second ALS unit at Fire Station 10, Bailey’s Crossroads. With only two days notice volunteers from across the county, led by the Bailey’s Crossroads Volunteer Fire Department, developed and implemented a staffing plan to staff Ambulance 410 (A410) as a frontline unit

to assist career staff while M410B was out of service. From December 22, 2021 until January 5, 2022 A410 was continuously staffed with the exception of the evenings of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. This continuous staffing totaled 27 shifts with crews that included 24 volunteers from six different volunteer companies (10, 13, 21, 22, 2, and 17). These volunteers worked 320 crew hours and ran 123 calls over the course of holidays ensuring Fairfax County citizens’ safety.

The staffing challenges faced over the last year by the FCFRD were significant and the volunteers stood ready to help. Fire Chief Butler was not only open to utilizing the volunteers in new ways but encouraged it. Thanks to the leadership of Chief Butler and the foresight of the combined volunteer leadership the Fairfax County volunteers were able to provide critical just-in-time staffing to ensure FCFRD units remained in service, new stations were staffed with apparatus, and the transition to a new EMS service delivery model was successful. ■

SPOTLIGHT ON ...

JAMES SOBECKE



James’ yearning to dedicate his life to the service and validation of others compelled him to become involved in emergency response as a volunteer. Beginning in college, he joined the Chicago Civil Defense Rescue Squad, followed by a career in the military. While stationed in Maryland, he became an EMT and a member of a volunteer rescue squad. After retiring from the military, he became a government contractor with traveling requirements that prevented him from joining a local Fairfax County Volunteer Fire and Rescue company.

James was looking for a way to continue his community service and emergency preparedness instruction when he learned about Fairfax County CERT through a friend and immediately registered. He soon became a CERT instructor himself and further developed the community-based training initiative as the coordinator in 2010. He enjoys teaching and engaging with community organizations about the importance of being prepared for an emergency that may overwhelm public safety resources.

James Sobecke is a member of the Fairfax County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). James joined CERT in 2008 with CERT Class #32 and holds a host of leadership roles – Operations Division Lead, Lead Instructor, Traffic and Crowd Management Instructor, Community Volunteer Training Coordinator, and Radio Team Manager.

In addition, James is directly involved with CERT support at planned community events where he leads the Traffic and Crowd Management Team. His ancillary interest in amateur radio and emergency communications led him to develop the CERT Radio Team as well as hosting monthly CERT Radio Workshops at the Dunn Loring Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department, Company 13.

Now retired from government contracting, James finds volunteering with CERT a rewarding way to keep active and gets great personal satisfaction with the work he does. His volunteering is not exclusive to CERT. James also serves as President of the Kings Park Civic Association and the Braddock Supervisor’s Representative to the Fairfax County Citizens Corp (CCC) where he is currently the Chairperson.

For his years of leadership and dedication to a more resilient community, James was awarded the 2018 Fairfax County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services Award for CERT Member.



COVID-19

IMPACT AND RECOVERY IN 2021

In January 2021, COVID-19 cases were surging to new heights, vaccines had recently been authorized for adults but were not yet widely available, and news outlets were reporting the presence of the first COVID-19 variant in the U.S.

Masks, gowns, face shields, and gloves, critical personal protective equipment for first responders, were no longer in short supply. The Virginia Department of Health and the Fairfax County Health Department prioritized vaccination for firefighters, emergency medical technicians (EMTs), and paramedics, including volunteers, due to our substantially higher risk of exposure to the virus. Vaccinations for operational volunteers began in the first week of January and within a month 84% were fully vaccinated.

Career and volunteer personnel carefully followed protocols proven and refined over months responding to COVID-19 emergency calls. Vaccine supplies increased, public vaccination clinics were scheduled, and within months the vaccine was available to all adults, followed later in the year by children from 5-11 years old. Volunteer crews joined our career colleagues providing standby medical coverage for vaccine clinics and paramedics helped administer vaccinations.

Over the course of the year COVID-19 continued to be present in our lives as our departments and communities sought a return to normalcy, albeit a "new normal". The patterns of day-to-day life

continued to adapt as did the nature and locations of calls for emergency services. Remote and hybrid work arrangements continued to shift work locations and commuting patterns. Like many work environments, the Volunteer Fire Commission conducted remote and hybrid meetings during 2021. As a result, the Commission experienced increased engagement resulting from the flexibility of its meetings and has seen a substantial increase in accessibility and attendance at commission meetings.

Students began to return to school, first in hybrid and opt-in arrangements and then full-time. High school football players returned to the field in February to play games postponed from 2020 and then again in the fall for the regular season. Volunteer ambulance crews returned to the sidelines providing standby medical coverage for neighborhood schools.

Our fire stations remained closed to the public. Community fairs and festivals including Celebrate Fairfax, Herndon Festival, and Viva Vienna did not return and National Fire Prevention Week open houses, popular opportunities for families to visit and tour our firehouses and see our apparatus, were canceled for the second year in a row to avoid the risk of exposure for as-yet-unvaccinated children.

A critical fundraiser for many departments, charitable bingo games continued, with additional departments welcoming the community back to their bingo halls. Capacity limits and mask requirements were *(continued...)*

relaxed over the course of the year following revised public health guidance. Departments explored alternatives to mitigate the risk of additional interruptions and began to shift their mix of fundraising sources.

Volunteer recruitment, interviews, background investigations, and training returned to normal, but the number of new member candidates continued to be depressed, reflecting nationwide trends of both increasing competition for volunteers and a reduced overall level of interest in volunteerism.

Despite a year of improved conditions, the year ended much as it began, with an aggressive new variant, Omicron, causing a skyrocketing number of

SPOTLIGHT ON ...

CAPTAIN STEVEN BONKOSKI



Inspired by his brother, Captain Steven Bonkoski followed in his footsteps and joined the Dunn Loring Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department, Company 13, in 1998. In early 1999, Steven earned his EMT certification and completed firefighter training later that year in December. During his time as an operational volunteer at Dunn Loring, Steven would earn his minimum staffing firefighter qualification and qualify to operate the ambulance, engine, and light and air unit. Steven would also go on to oversee the training of new members, earn both Dunn Loring's Rookie of the Year award and the Fairfax County Volunteer Firefighter of the Year award, and meet his now wife. They both continued to volunteer with the DLVFRD until 2003, when they moved to Prince William County where they continued to volunteer.

Steven decided to switch from volunteer to career while working as a dispatcher for what is now the Department of Public Safety Communications (DPSC). He entered the county hiring process and would begin work as a Fairfax County career firefighter in May 2005. Steven started as a probationary firefighter at Fire Station 24 and would achieve the technician rank and serve as an engine and tower driver at Fire Station 30. In 2013, he was promoted to Lieutenant and assigned to Field Communications, responsible for the department's maintenance, programming, and coordination of all mobile and portable radios. Captain Bonkoski was promoted to his current rank and

new cases and a scarcity of available testing unable to keep up with a holiday surge of infections.

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department (FCFRD) staffing reached critical levels leading to temporary staffing adjustments to cross-staff six specialty units, place four units out of service, and call on our volunteers to assist with staffing transport units (see page 10, *FCFRD Staffing Challenges & Volunteer Response*).

COVID-19 demonstrated what we had grown to know; it is a part of our lives now, will affect our communities for the foreseeable future, and will require volunteer fire departments, and the FCFRD as a whole, to continue to adapt to the challenges it presents. ■

Captain Steven Bonkoski, Aide to the Deputy Chief of Operations, Division 1, A Shift, began his fire service career as a volunteer at the Dunn Loring Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department (DLVFRD) in 1998.

served as the Uniformed Fire Officer at DPSC. He began his current assignment as an Aide to the Deputy Chief of Operations for Division 1 A Shift in February 2021. In addition to his current role, Captain Bonkoski is also part of the National Capital Region-Communication Interoperability Group (NCR-CIG) as well as the Urban Search and Rescue Team (VA-TF1)

Steven is a firm believer in the value added by the hybrid career/volunteer system that exists within Fairfax County. Between the purchase of apparatus, the continual maintenance and upkeep of volunteer buildings and property, and the provision of supplemental staffing alongside their career counterparts, "the role of the volunteer fire departments is important to the overall system's success." Also, the hybrid system provides members of the community the opportunity to not only find a new hobby or career but a sense of purpose in helping others. The combination of the high quality of training and the close working relationship between volunteers and career personnel provides those interested in serving opportunities that are unmatched in other localities. While he recognizes the challenges of recruiting and retention on both the volunteer and career sides of the department, he hopes that "the volunteer system continues to grow and get stronger. Through recruitment and education, hopefully, the public will realize the opportunity to get involved and take it".

SAFER GRANT WORK BEGINS

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, on behalf of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, awarded the FCVFRA a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant in the amount of \$367,000 for volunteer recruiting and retention efforts in Fairfax County. While the grant was awarded for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, the Association only started its planning activities in the fall of 2021 due to COVID-19 and the system-wide pause in recruiting.

This is the second SAFER grant received by the Association, following an award in 2010. Making the most of lessons learned from a decade ago, the grant steering committee spent the fall identifying advertising opportunities and learning about new technologies to reach prospective members where they spend their time browsing, streaming and watching online. In addition to advertising, the committee is creating a new recruitment video, which will be used as part of a larger social media campaign in 2022.

Another focus of the grant will be retention, where the focus will be on training the next generation of leaders. The committee has begun researching conferences and speakers to attend and/or customize to bring to Fairfax County.

Special thanks to grant committee members, who have been meeting every other week with many more hours offline:

- Andrew Luu, Dunn Loring VFRD
- Tonya McCreary, Burke VFRD
- Dave Presson, Bailey's Crossroads VFD
- Shawn Stokes, Dunn Loring VFRD
- Jonathan Wood, Fair Oaks VFRD

To check out early marketing activities, please visit www.joinfairfaxfire.org.



FAIRFAX COUNTY VOLUNTEERS BY THE NUMBERS

365 days in 2021 with a volunteer on duty somewhere in the county

658 members serve 12 VFDs across the County

432 operational members provide firefighting and emergency medical services

226 administrative members manage our non-profit corporations, fundraising, operate our canteen units on large emergencies, conduct community outreach, and teach classes at the training academy

42% of our members are female

16% of our members self-identify as racial or ethnic minorities

81% of our members live in Fairfax County

OUR SERVICES

PEOPLE

Our members are our most valuable assets. We provide operational volunteers who respond to fire and medical emergencies throughout Fairfax County. Administrative volunteers manage the business of departments to include fundraising, facilities/hall rental management, recruitment/retention, financial operations, community outreach, and operating canteen units on large emergencies.

Operational volunteers train at the county's Fire and Rescue Academy and operate side-by-side with FCFRD career personnel. Operational volunteers also share administrative responsibilities in the management and operation of the business of the departments.



SOME EXAMPLES OF THE MANY SERVICES VOLUNTEERS PROVIDED IN 2021:

- ▶ Provided rehabilitation support at major incidents, training events, and other departmental needs with canteen units and the FCFRD Rehab unit.
- ▶ Hosted blood drives, providing enough blood to save thousands of lives during a shortage of blood donations during the pandemic.
- ▶ Provided a strong program of fire safety education within our community through virtual public education programs.
- ▶ Recruited a cadre of individuals from our communities or surrounding areas that are willing to contribute their time and talent.
- ▶ Volunteer fire chaplains provided spiritual support for volunteers, career staff and their families.
- ▶ Though the pandemic forced their cancellation in 2021, in other years volunteers provide community outreach, emergency medical services, incident command, and logistics at community fairs and large festivals, typically signature events for volunteer participation.

FACILITIES

Volunteer fire stations provide a round-the-clock base of operations for the delivery of fire and emergency services. We partner with the County on 15 of the 39 fire stations with the volunteer corporations owning and operating seven facilities, and in partnership in the operation of an additional seven facilities.



▶ The assessed value of seven volunteer-owned facilities is \$26,984,930.

▶ The total annual operating cost for the VFDs, including both volunteer-owned facilities and those operated in partnership with Fairfax County, is \$3,100,000.

SPOTLIGHT ON ...

MATT LANNON



Matt joined the Centreville Volunteer Fire Department in 2003 as an operational member. "I've been a lifelong fire buff and I saw this as an opportunity to get involved in some manner with the fire service," he said.

Though Lannon's work as an administrative member does not resemble what he originally sought to do, he has grown into the role and has become a key member in the department's day-to-day functions. As the treasurer, Lannon's responsibilities include paying the bills, keeping the books, and ensuring that the department can afford to fulfill its long-term goals, like purchasing apparatus, while also negotiating near-term goals and unforeseen expenses.

In his role as a member of the board, his responsibilities focus more on the big picture. "[We] look at policy changes, bylaws changes, and other major decisions concerning the purchase of the apparatus and maintenance of the building," Lannon said.

Despite the fact that Lannon's role as an administrative member does not involve the apparatus, he considers his involvement in the

Matt Lannon is a member of the Centreville Volunteer Fire Department (CVFD), Company 17. Matt is an administrative member and serves as Treasurer, Bingo Manager, and is a member of the Board of Directors.

department's purchase of new apparatus as his greatest accomplishment. "Since I've been here, we've bought two engines and three transport units," Lannon said. "We even purchased the frontline medic unit at [Fire Station] 38," Lannon said, referring to a transport unit that the department purchased for the West Centreville Fire Station.

To juggle all of his administrative roles at the department, Lannon can regularly be found at the fire station. "I'm up here at least a few days a week. I come in once during the week to do routine paperwork, pay the bills, things like that, and I'm here to work bingo and help with the building," Lannon said.

About volunteering for the fire department, Lannon said, "It means a lot to me, because this is my way of trying to do something to make my community better. I'm pleased that there is a way for me to contribute meaningfully as an administrative member," Lannon said.

APPARATUS

Volunteer fire departments purchase state-of-the-art fire and rescue apparatus (fire engines, ambulances, canteens, etc.) and equipment; both for front line service (staffed 24 hours a day by career personnel) and for ready reserve service (staffed by volunteers).



- ▶ VFDs own 77 vehicles that are deployed throughout the county.
- ▶ In 2021, volunteers ordered 6 new medics and 2 new utility vehicles and took delivery of 2 new fire engines and 1 new medic representing a total cost of \$4,150,000.
- ▶ The current replacement value of the apparatus in the volunteer fleet is approximately \$27,950,000.



OUR GOVERNANCE BODIES

Good governance and leadership are critical for any organization. While we are 12 independent volunteer fire companies, each a non-profit corporation chartered by the Virginia State Corporation Commission, managed by dedicated citizens and operated for the good of the communities we serve, it was recognized long ago that having umbrella organizations to provide high-level governance, policy, procedure and practice would bring consistency across the organizations.

Today, we have two such umbrella groups as described below:



FAIRFAX COUNTY VOLUNTEER FIRE AND RESCUE ASSOCIATION

With a history dating back to 1929, the Fairfax County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association (FCVFRA) is a linchpin for collaboration on leadership and the delivery of emergency services. The FCVFRA is an independently chartered non-profit organization representing the partnership of the 12 VFDs in the areas of planning, operations, training, community outreach, and administration. While all volunteers are members, the FCVFRA supports the junction between corporate interests and the line officers. It is the place for presidents and chiefs to cooperate and communicate on common matters and manage county-wide initiatives. The FCVFRA provides a common, public face for the volunteer fire service in Fairfax County.

2021 FCVFRA LEADERSHIP

CHIEF MIKE WENDT, *President*

Centreville Volunteer Fire Department, Company 17

CHIEF THOMAS WARNOCK, *Vice President, Operations*

Burke Volunteer Fire & Rescue Department, Company 14

CHIEF SHAWN P. STOKES, *Vice President, Administration*

Dunn Loring Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department, Company 13

NATALIA DURR, *Secretary*

Greater Springfield Volunteer Fire Department, Company 22

CAMILLA MORRISON, *Treasurer*

Fair Oaks Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company, Company 21

CODY COLLINS, *Director*

McLean Volunteer Fire Department, Company 1

TONYA McCREARY, *Director*

Burke Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department, Company 14

ROBERT MIZER, *Director*

Burke Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department, Company 14

VOLUNTEER FIRE COMMISSION

The Volunteer Fire Commission history dates to pre-World War II and the Commission was reorganized by the Board of Supervisors in 1983 as a component in a sweeping plan to standardize fire and rescue services.

Commissioners are appointed by the Board of Supervisors, based on input from the VFDs, and members are drawn from their ranks. The Commission is a policy-making body providing assurance that the VFDs, FCFRD, and Fairfax County remain mutually committed to excellence in service. Mechanisms established to achieve this mission are a comprehensive Volunteer Policies and Procedures Manual, oversight of the management agreement between the VFDs and Fairfax County, review of all FCFRD standard operating procedures and general orders, review of officer candidate credentials for annual certification to supervise response crews or to serve as command officers, and serving as a resource to the Board of Supervisors. The Commission works directly with the

VFDs and FCFRD through the Volunteer Liaison to the Fire Chief.

The Volunteer Fire Commission is composed of seven elected commissioners reaffirmed by the Board of Supervisors. The VFDs are divided into four zones with one commissioner representing each zone.

ZONE I: Companies 2 (Vienna), 8 (Annandale), and 10 (Bailey's Crossroads)

ZONE II: Companies 5 (Franconia), 19 (Lorton), and 22 (Greater Springfield)

ZONE III: Companies 14 (Burke), 17 (Centreville), and 21 (Fair Oaks).

ZONE IV: Companies 1 (McLean), 12 (Great Falls), and 13 (Dunn Loring).

One commissioner represents the Fairfax County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association (FCVFRA) by virtue of election to the FCVFRA Vice President of Administration. One commissioner represents the volunteer fire chiefs by virtue of election to the FCVFRA Vice President of Operations. The seventh commissioner is elected at-large by the members of all of the VFDs. ■

VOLUNTEER FIRE COMMISSION 2021 MEMBERS

CHIEF SHAWN P. STOKES, Chair
Commissioner representing FCVFRA as Vice President of Administration
Dunn Loring Volunteer Fire and Rescue Dept.,
Company 13

GERALD B. STRIDER, Vice Chair
Zone I Commissioner representing Companies 2, 8, and 10
Bailey's Crossroads Volunteer Fire Dept.,
Company 10

DEPUTY CHIEF JEFFREY A. SNOW
At-Large Commissioner
Vienna Volunteer Fire Dept., Company 2

CHIEF THOMAS K. WARNOCK
Commissioner representing FCVFRA as Vice President of Operations
Burke Volunteer Fire & Rescue Dept.,
Company 14

ROBERT J. MIZER
Zone III Commissioner representing Companies 14, 17, and 21
Burke Volunteer Fire & Rescue Dept.,
Company 14

CHIEF TIMOTHY G. FLEMING
Zone II Commissioner representing Companies 5, 19, and 22
Franconia Volunteer Fire Dept., Company 5

MICHAEL J. MASCIOLA
Zone IV Commissioner representing Companies 1, 12, and 13
Dunn Loring Volunteer Fire and Rescue Dept.,
Company 13

ABOVE & BEYOND

Each of these volunteers demonstrated extraordinary commitment through hundreds of hours providing fire and emergency medical services or through other roles that support the goals of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department. They are to be commended for their contributions to the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department and the communities they serve.

On October 6, 2021, the Volunteer Fire Commission honored the recipients of the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service Awards for their service in 2020.

2020 VOLUNTEER FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE AWARDS	
AWARD	RECIPIENT
Volunteer Firefighter	Dylan M. Bates Bailey's Crossroads Volunteer Fire Department
Volunteer Operational Officer	Sean M. Jolliff Vienna Volunteer Fire Department
Volunteer EMS Provider	Aileen A. Bay Vienna Volunteer Fire Department
Volunteer ALS Provider	Frank S. Smith Great Falls Volunteer Fire Department
Volunteer BLS Provider	Scott Sterling Fair Oaks Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company
Administrative Member	Christian A. Kassis Centreville Volunteer Fire Department
Canteen or Auxiliary Member	John F. (JJ) Jackson Greater Springfield Volunteer Fire Department
CERT Member	James McPheeters Community Emergency Response Team
Special Recognition Award	James Hedrick Fire and Rescue Academy
Volunteer Rookie	Noah R. Bilger Burke Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department
Volunteer Unit Citation	Mo Ahmed, Dylan Bates, David Presson, Kelsey Robins, Paul Wasserman Bailey's Crossroads Volunteer Fire Department

On October 22, 2021, Fire Chief Butler presented the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Volunteer of the Year Award alongside the department's annual awards for Career Officer, Career Firefighter, Civilian Employee, and Team of the Year.

2021 FAIRFAX COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE DEPARTMENT AWARDS	
AWARD	RECIPIENT
2021 Volunteer of the Year	Adam Searle Vienna Volunteer Fire Department

The volunteer ambulance crew on A422E was recognized with a Unit Citation for BLS care rendered while responding to a call for a pediatric patient with trauma from a fall on June 5, 2021.

2021 FAIRFAX COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE DEPARTMENT UNIT CITATIONS	
UNIT	RECIPIENTS
A422E	Laura Rahman, Ricardo Machado, Sun Jin Hunt and Victor Ighodalo Greater Springfield Volunteer Fire Department

The following volunteers were honored for their service to their communities by local civic organizations.

2021 COMMUNITY AWARDS TO FIRE AND RESCUE VOLUNTEERS	
AWARD	RECIPIENT
American Legion 2021 EMT of the Year Award	Sean M. Jolliff Vienna Volunteer Fire Department
Elmer Timberman Masonic Lodge No. 54. Volunteer of the Year Award	Cindy Rollins Annandale Volunteer Fire Department
Mount Vernon Lee Chamber of Commerce 2021 Volunteer Provider of the Year Award	Maria Severa Pangelinan Lorton Volunteer Fire Department
Optimist Club of Greater Vienna First Responder of the Year	Maria Monroy-Osorio Dunn Loring Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department
Rotary Club of Vienna 2021 Service Above Self Award	Grayson Garbini Vienna Volunteer Fire Department

AWARDS

The President's Volunteer Service Award is the nation's premier volunteer awards program, encouraging citizens to live a life of service through gratitude and national recognition from the President of the United States. This award honors individuals whose service positively impacts communities in every corner of the nation and inspires those around them to take action.

The following members of the Fairfax County Volunteer Fire Service received the President's Volunteer Service Award in 2021 in recognition of their contribution of more than 1,000 hours of service to their communities over the course of the year.

2021 PRESIDENT'S VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD	
Dylan Bates	Bailey's Crossroads Volunteer Fire Department
Aileen Bay	Vienna Volunteer Fire Department
Lindsay Beymer	Dunn Loring Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department
Noah Bilger	Burke Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department
Magdalena Bugajska	Franconia Volunteer Fire Department
Rishan Chaudhry	Centreville Volunteer Fire Department
Cody Collins	McLean Volunteer Fire Department
Tim Fleming	Franconia Volunteer Fire Department
Jaimie Gillespie	Vienna Volunteer Fire Department
John Gutmiedl	Centreville Volunteer Fire Department
Nesya Hopkins	Dunn Loring Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department
Sean Jolliff	Vienna Volunteer Fire Department
Joseph Kalfa	Centreville Volunteer Fire Department
Daniel Liebman	Franconia Volunteer Fire Department
Paul Lago	Greater Springfield Volunteer Fire Department
Cory Lobo	Lorton Volunteer Fire Department
Jacob Miller	Dunn Loring Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department
Maria Monroy-Osorio	Dunn Loring Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department
Gary Moore	Annandale Volunteer Fire Department
Frank Pappas	Greater Springfield Volunteer Fire Department
Maria Severa Pangelinan	Lorton Volunteer Fire Department
Anthony Ruth	Annandale Volunteer Fire Department
Augustus Sawatzki	McLean Volunteer Fire Department
Adam Searle	Vienna Volunteer Fire Department
Lidya Sebsibe	Burke Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department
Michael Server	Bailey's Crossroads Volunteer Fire Department
Shawn Stokes	Dunn Loring Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department
Roger Waller	Annandale Volunteer Fire Department

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