



# FIRE FIGHTERS IN PINK

## CAMPAIGN FOR BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

**D**ressed in pink turnouts, fire fighters are driving pink fire trucks across the country as part of a nationwide campaign supporting women in their fight against cancer. The “Cares Enough to Wear Pink” campaigns help raise money and awareness for the fight against breast cancer.

For IAFF members, losing the blue and donning the pink is a way to support women in their fight against all cancers.

At the IAFF 50th Convention, held in August in San Diego, California, delegates from the United States and Canada collectively approved a resolution to support and encourage IAFF members to participate in campaigns honoring women fighting cancer.

Specifically, the resolution calls on IAFF affiliates to wear pink duty shirts during Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October. The IAFF recommends affiliates donate 50

percent of funds raised to women’s cancer organizations, and the balance be used for fire fighters and their families engaging in their own battles with cancer.

Because many fire fighters have been affected by cancer, it’s been an important issue for IAFF members.

“Sadly, cancer has affected all of us in one way or another,” says IAFF General President Harold Schaitberger. “I hope our membership will take this resolution to heart and help raise awareness and dollars for this important cause.”

Some IAFF affiliates immediately took action. Oakland, CA Local 55 had been thinking about participating in breast cancer awareness campaigns for some time. Local 55 President Charles Garcia, who is also a cancer survivor, says, “This resolution gave us the push we needed to make it happen.”

All 807 Local 55 members plan to

exchange their regular duty shirts for pink ones for the entire month of October. Fire fighters will also sell shirts to the public, with proceeds benefiting Friends of Faith, an Oakland-based charity dedicated to fighting breast cancer.

Affiliates throughout the country are planning similar campaigns, including Carlyss, LA 4802. “We had heard from other IAFF affiliates about what a positive impact the pink T-shirt campaign can have on cancer awareness and research,” says Local 4802 President Jeremy White.

“Inspired by their success, we organized



By wearing pink T-shirts on duty and hosting a fundraising event, Palm Beach County, FL Local 2928 fire fighters raised more than \$4,600 for Making Strides Against Breast Cancer — an American Cancer Society program supporting breast cancer research, advocacy, education initiatives and local breast cancer programs.



Maricopa, AZ Local 4561 Vice President Carlos Schulz steadies a breast cancer survivor as she signs a truck.

our own event for the first time this year. The community response has been so positive that we hope to plan a bigger campaign in 2011.”

In addition to donating T-shirt proceeds to charity, Local 4802 fire fighters have reserved several autographed T-shirts to deliver as gifts to area cancer survivors.

On October 2, several off-duty Local 4802 fire fighters wore their T-shirts for the “Making Strides Against Breast Cancer” five-mile walk in Sulphur, Louisiana. The walk raises money for the American Cancer Society.

Still other IAFF locals were inspired by personal experiences with cancer. Three members of Sterling Heights, MI Local 1557 were diagnosed with various forms of cancer this year.

“We are fortunate that all three have returned to full duty, but nonetheless, we wanted to recognize their cancer survival and support those who are still struggling,” says Local 1557 President Bob Hasse. In addition, when the Susan G. Komen’s Three Day Walk for the Cure came through Michigan in August, Local 1557 committed to wearing pink duty shirts for three days.

Meanwhile, the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union (MPFFU) is supporting a cancer presumption bill introduced by Hasse’s wife, State Representative Jennifer Hasse. The bill has passed the House and is currently under consideration by the appropriate Senate committee.

Spruce Grove, AB Local 3021 fire fighters are taking “wear pink wear” to another level, making pink turnout gear for a Weekend to End Women’s Cancer event benefiting the Alberta Cancer Foundation. A team of four Local 3021 members participated in the two-day, 60-kilometer walk, raising nearly \$9,000.

To raise the money, Local 3021 fire fighters sold calendars featuring Local 3021 members posing with breast cancer survivors in the Spruce Grove area. Local 3021 Secretary Rob Good says fire fighters also wore the pink turnout gear October 3 for a Run for the Cure sponsored by CIBC Bank.

A growing number of IAFF affiliates are conducting larger-scale events, which include bringing the custom pink fire trucks to their communities. Orchestrated by the Guardians of the Ribbon — a nonprofit group comprised of fire fighters and other emergency service personnel — the tour is generating breast cancer awareness across the country.

The Guardians of the Ribbon uses decommissioned fire trucks painted pink. Each truck is named after a breast cancer survivor, and other survivors are encouraged to write personal messages in



**RISAFF refurbished a decommissioned fire truck to use in cancer awareness events. Fire fighters even made the interior pink.**



**Naperville, IL Local 4302 hosted a wellness fair and fundraiser benefiting two local cancer charities.**



**Sterling Heights, MI Local 1557 committed to wearing pink T-shirts for three days in support of their own members who are cancer survivors and the Susan G. Komen Foundation.**



**Inspired by the resolution passed at the IAFF Convention, Oakland, CA Local 55 quickly organized its first campaign. General President Schaitberger (center) was in town and made time to help kick off Local 55’s campaign.**

permanent marker on the truck. As many as 8,000 messages have been counted on each of the more than 25 trucks.

A fleet of pink fire trucks rolled into Jacksonville, Florida, for an event hosted by Jacksonville Local 122 at an open-air mall.

Gubernatorial candidate Alex Sink and area residents stopped by to buy pink T-shirts, learn about breast cancer research and treatment and sign one of the pink fire trucks. A significant percentage of the pink

**Continued on Page 22**

Continued from Page 21

T-shirt proceeds will benefit the local chapter of the Susan G. Komen Foundation.

Jacksonville Local 122 Public Relations Director Mark Treglio says, "We will continue to hold events to raise money and awareness for this important cause — even after Breast Cancer Awareness Month is over."

Naperville, IL Local 4302 is also among the IAFF affiliates bringing the tour to their city. Local 4302 member Chris Brazzale's own mother passed away from breast cancer 25 years ago. "I'm always looking for ways to honor her memory and to help others as they face breast cancer," he says. "This is another way to give back."

With the support of Local 4302 President Richard Sander, Brazzale and others organized a wellness fair and fundraiser. For

the event, the Guardians of the Ribbon drove four pink trucks into town, and fire fighters set up free blood pressure checks, secured speakers and provided health information. For children, there were pink balloons, pink plastic fire helmets, popcorn, pink snow cones, pink cotton candy and pink lemonade. All proceeds benefited the Edward Hospital Women's Cancer Foundation and the American Cancer Society.

The Rhode Island State Association of Fire Fighters' (RISAFF) participation in the Cares Enough to Wear Pink campaign is linked to a resolution passed at its state convention in May. When Central Coventry Local 3372 member Ted Dion reached out to the Guardians of the Ribbon after his mother began her fourth battle with cancer, the group agreed to

make stops across the state.

Dion secured a decommissioned truck with plans to paint it pink. Meanwhile, he also began driving the pink trucks to various events. "While Ted was gone on the tour, the RISAFF make some repairs to the truck and painted it pink," says RISAFF 3rd District Vice President Mike Stevens.

"When he came back, we picked up his mother and drove the truck to Ted's home. It was very emotional."

Stevens, who helped organize Care Enough to Wear Pink events throughout the state, arranged for the truck to stop at each of the 32 participating IAFF affiliates' cities during the week of October 24.

The RISAFF donated \$22,000 to local charities, including Ronald McDonald House in Providence, Rhode Island Hospice and Women and Infants Hospital-Oncology program

"The IAFF is proud to see so many affiliates participating in breast cancer awareness campaigns in their communities and inspiring others to join the fight against cancer," notes Schaitberger. ■



Carlyss, LA Local 4802 fire fighters organized a pink T-shirt campaign to benefit the Susan G. Komen Foundation.



Spruce Grove, AB Local 3021 don their pink turnout gear for an event benefiting the Alberta Cancer Foundation.



RISAFF members helped refurbish a pink fire truck.



Fire Fighter-endorsed Florida Gubernatorial candidate Alex Sink signs a pink fire truck at a fundraising event organized by Jacksonville Local 122.