INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIREFIGHTERS LOCAL 624





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We want to hear from you! If you have comments, ideas, or submissions, send them in! We're always looking for new ideas and fresh content.

Submissions for the next Grapevine issue will be due on August 15, 2023.

It's time! After many versions of the Grapevine masthead, it's time to choose the standard. Head over to your 624.org to cast a vote for your favorite!

Special thanks to Natividad Rodriguez, the cover photographer for our May/June issue!

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It is the mission of the Grapevine to produce an informative, entertaining, professional publication that promotes the San Antonio Professional Firefighters Association Local 624

Please submit feedback, questions, comments or advertising inquiries to the editor at grapevine@iaff624.org or (210) 699-9400

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May/June 2023

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Union Hall Hours

Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Closed Holidays

Union Meeting

Second Tuesday of the Month 10:00 a.m.

Medical Claims

Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Closed Holidays







From the President



both young and established fire officers, firefighters, and medics about "expectations" these days. What are they, how do we set them, and how do we maintain them are all questions common within these discussions, and they are also questions we are receiving with increasing regularity at the Union Hall.

One might wonder why members would direct questions about organizational/systemic expectations to the Union Hall? Well, the best we can figure is many of our teammates who I had the honor of serving within 5-O B and 1-O B are familiar with the expectations we set there, and apparently word has gotten out. We're always happy to help at the Union Hall so I wanted to take this opportunity to walk those who may be interested through the formulation, presentation, establishment, and maintenance of expectations... at least how it's worked for me thus far.

As a teammate and, eventually, a team leader who has served in multiple capacities within our department and Union, I have been establishing, refining, and evolving expectations since I was a young (ish) lieutenant at Rescue. In fact, most officers and teams already set expectations whether they call it that or not.

Think about it for a minute, we get detailed to a different station or take a rat and what is one of the first things we do? We ask the Captain, Lieutenant, or moved-up Engineer how they like to do things on runs, regulars, and around the station. Although we don't necessarily call it "setting expectations", that is exactly what we're doing.

Our recent conversations and discussions have gone deeper though. They go beyond "if the fire is on your side, then pull the speed-lay, attack line, pre-connect, crosslay" or whatever the officer might be calling it that day. The curiosity seems to revolve around organizational and systemic expectations. Something which, sadly, the SAFD still lacks in 2023.

My personal and professional experience setting, establishing, and maintaining expectations for our teams dates all the way back to my time at Rescue. Although expectations were not written back then, they were definitely understood. The process I used back then has evolved and as I ma-

tured as an officer and as a teammate, I was able to refine the process even further making it more dependable and reproducible. While at Training I began reducing expectations to writing so they could be easily referenced and were completely transparent. As I transitioned downtown the evolution continued and included setting expectations for our civilian teammates based on the City's core values of "Teamwork, Integrity, Innovation, and Professionalism."

After years of education and practice establishing expectations, I consider the concept critical in the creation of a healthy and successful team atmosphere. Once set, expectations provide an operational platform from which we can hold each other appropriately accountable while also providing a solid foundation for tough decisions which must be made in the grey areas beyond policy, procedure, and the written rules.

Non-believers are often quick to criticize expectations as "idealistic," "utopian," or "lofty." These people are easy to recognize because they are usually individuals who have never operated within a tight-knit, highly motivated, and high-performing team environment. Fact is the only principle that can be cast as idealistic, utopian, or lofty is that which is NOT observed, practiced, or agreed to within your team. Establishing an appropriate ethos for your team encourages intra-team camaraderie and pride in knowing the high standards each member strives to live by.

Unrealistic, nonsensical, or unobtainable goals can be damaging to a team. Much like the individuals who put self above service are damaging our profession, defined criteria which go unobserved by leaders will most certainly damage the team. We witness situations like these all the time in goal setting sessions with no follow-through or no implementation, the advancement of individuals with the wrong mindset who performed horribly as they rose through our ranks, or, worse, "leaders" who say all the right things but are not practitioners of their own preachings. The very fact that their principles are spoken but not practiced is exactly what defines them as "idealistic," "utopian," or "lofty." We must practice what we preach. Service over self.

Establishing expectations takes initiative by as few as one teammate and as many as the entire team. The best format for establishing effective expectations is to treat the process of setting expectations as a team event. Throwing out the core principles and asking for feedback, suggestions, and refinement, but also noting that the expectations document is alive and can be altered for the better. Your team should rightly be able to claim ownership of your team's expectations. It should be theirs as much as it is anyone's. The team approach is a critical component in the success or failure of setting expectations in our subculture. We are intrinsically team players who respond to effective leadership rather than authoritarian, totalitarian, or dictatorial rule.

"Once set, expectations provide an operational platform from which we can hold each other appropriately accountable while also providing a solid foundation for tough decisions which must be made in the grey areas beyond policy, procedure, and the written rules."

Business leaders, professional coaches, and leadership consultants will call it "buy-in", but in our world belief in a shared ethos transcends gimmicks, slogans, and catch phrases. Too often lives and injuries depend on our shared vision, beliefs, and behaviors. The proof is everywhere in our profession from team identities to shared mantras which further cement our intellectual and operational cohesion.

As a team leader, I have always begun the introduction of our team's expectations by telling them what they can expect from me. I am clear on the point that I hold myself to a higher standard and that the expectations I include for myself are in addition to those listed for the entire team. As a team leader I also make it crystal clear that I work for the team. In much the same fashion as I currently work for each of you in my current role.



There were seven "I's" in that last paragraph...geez...sorry about that.

After explaining all of this I also explain that the expectations are a living document and all contributions, enhancements, edits, and ideas will be considered and voted on by our team. Then I proceed to read the expectations to the team.

Yep, you read it right, I actually read the expectations to the team. Why? Because I am a firefighter and I understand firefighters?...absolutely. But by reading the expectations to your team you also provide an opportunity to discuss and explain items your teammates might have questions about. You can delve into the reasons behind the expectations you have included and provide your team with a more robust comprehension behind the expectations. You know, the kind of comprehension and understanding absolutely necessary for your team to actually believe in, apply, and practice the expectations.

Belief will not come immediately. Ohhhhh nooooo...it's not that easy. Belief only comes after time. Your team must witness you practicing the expectations. Your team must witness you living by the expectations. In other words, you must champion the expectations and live the standard if you expect them to do the same.

The alternative is hypocrisy which only leads to bad outcomes. We have all suffered through the struggles created within such an unhealthy professional ecosystem.

Integral to setting expectations is the idea that we all hold each other mutually and appropriately accountable. We are firefighters, and this is a healthy part of our subculture. Getting "called-out" is not a bad thing when it is done from a position of trust. Trust can only be built and earned within our profession. When you have a logical and virtuous set of expectations which are adhered to and practiced by your team, even when the going gets tough, you will find how quickly your teams congeal, your relationships within those teams solidify, and indeed your professional life will improve.

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Grapevine May/June 2023



Violate the expectations, even once, and your teammates will never forget. There are few actions as damaging as betrayal within a team environment. Depending on the severity of the infraction against expectations the damage can be irreparable so keep this in mind as you develop your expectations. You must find the right balance of principle and practice for your expectations to be achievable and applicable.

For your convenience, I have included the current expectations deployed in 1-O B, my home Battalion. They look much like the ones we used in 5-O B but have further evolved. I have "unionized" this document so no one gets upset with the use of official logos or station addresses but you'll figure it out pretty quickly. If anyone would like an electronic copy of the expectations which follow, then hit me up and I'll email them to you. I do not presume to be some mad genius or super expectations guru, just trying to help out with a topic that has been pretty hot lately.

The principles expressed within this article have been developed over the course of my 25-year career and are being provided here as a direct result of member requests and queries. I sincerely hope this article, and the sample expectations provided help you. The approach to expectations worked for the teams I had the privilege of serving in and hopefully it will work for you as well.

"We are finally here. We have created the internal electronic ecosystem which we have long discussed where our members, behind our paywall and security, can discuss issues and be open and honest with each other. We kept content light for now because we want the content to be member driven."

I also maintain a personal set of expectations. It works for me. But that is a topic for a different day. You may have noticed I didn't discuss much "Union" business in this article...there is a reason for that.

By now your member's only website has officially launched. If you have not already, then you will begin seeing fliers circulating around the stations with directions about how to login with a QR code which will take you directly to www.Your624.org.

Within Your624.org you will find the State of Our Union Address where we dive into detail about what has been going on and what is yet to come. You will also find other exciting features.

We are finally here. We have created the internal electronic ecosystem

which we have long discussed where our members, behind our paywall and security, can discuss issues and be open and honest with each other. We kept content light for now because we want the content to be member driven. Special thanks to our Communications Director Emily Leffler and her team for getting this mission accomplished.

There is so much more to come.

As promised, the first survey on our site is the poll to determine how our Grapevine masthead will look moving into the future. Please let us know what you think, and please keep the feedback coming. Healthy change continues to occur at your 624 and we look forward to continuing to redefine how we can better serve you.

United we stand.

Grapevine





SAN ANTONIO FIREFIGHTERS

SAN ANTONIO PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS
UNION HALL
8925 IH-10 WEST
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78207

30 November 2021

1-O "B" Expectations:

It is important to identify and clearly explain expectations for our Teammates. Without identification and clarity of expectations, we are left to interpretation, conjecture, and assumption. In an effort to avoid misinterpretation, rumors, and misinformation, we will go to great lengths to insure we are all on the same page. Likewise, it is just as important for you to understand what can be expected of us.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain our expectations here in 1-O "B". While some of these expectations may evolve as time goes by, I do consider these to be an absolute <u>minimum</u> for our team's performance. These expectations are not designed to hamper or limit performance or initiative, only to serve as a foundation from which you can build enhanced service delivery and improve efficiency and effectiveness within our team, our department, and our community.

Here is what you can expect from your 1-O "B" Command Team (BC & ICT):

- ★ We will place our team and our team's interests above our own. It is really very simple: team first.
- ★ We will operate without ego. (This is mission-focus and team-focus; not self-focus) Pride and ego are two separate mechanisms. Pride in performance should not be confused with ego in perception.
- ★ We are open to feedback, we consider alternative perspectives, and we know that "constructive" comes before "criticism" in our chosen profession.
- ★ We will hold each of you accountable to the high standards of the fire service and of the San Antonio Fire Department. We expect each of you to hold us accountable.
- ★ We will be open and honest with you.





- \bigstar We will be as transparent as professionally permissible.
- ★ We will be dependable, reliable, and consistent in our manners, deliberations, and methods.
- ★ We will continuously seek evolution and improvement in our operations, our organization, our practices, and our ideologies.
- ★ We believe this job was meant to be, and still is, fun and we will do our best to insure it remains fun.
- ★ We will live our standard.

What we expect from our Teammates:

- ★ Put your team first. If one person is working or tinkering or training, then all who are aware should be consorting in some manner.
- ★ Conduct yourself as a professional. This concept applies to duty, appearance, demeanor, representation…everything we do while we are at work. Think about our job, our responsibilities, and what is needed and be engaged hereand-now.
- ★ Be responsive and timely in communicating and following up with our fire department family.
- ★ Be honest and transparent.
- ★ Treat your teammates as you would like your teammates to treat you (the "Golden Rule").
- ★ Make an honest effort to work well with one another.
- \bigstar Support each other at all times, not just when it is convenient.
- ★ Take ownership of your actions and your deficiencies. Take initiative to improve your deficiencies and to expand your actions.
- ★ Pursue perpetual improvement. If you are not better than you were last shift, then you are devolving and not evolving.

Grapevine

★ Be dependable and reliable.

- ★ Be professional and respectful.
- ★ Stay proficient with your writing and verbal communication skills.
- ★ Suggest improvements, concerns, and desires but do so respectfully.
- ★ Depend on your teammates but make an effort to balance teamwork and independence.
- * Portray our department in the best conceivable manner possible.
- ★ Exceed expectations. If your goal is to hit minimal expectations, then you will never really know how good you could have been.
- ★ Put your teammates first. Again, it is simple: team first.
- ★ Assimilate to your respective teams. Make an effort to get along and get to know each other.
- ★ Search out wisdom from our veteran teammates. Take the good, leave the bad.
- ★ Work hard every time; all the time. While this may seem self-evident, you might be surprised at other's approaches and perceptions. It is in the moment you go easy when others will notice.
- ★ Do not fear failure. If you fail while working hard and trying to do the right thing, then there is no shame. If you never fail at anything, then you are not challenging yourself. All of this said, you should never accept failure as an outcome. You should do your absolute best to insure failure does not happen and in those rare moments it does happen, evolve to prevent its recurrence.
 - * First part refers to you the individual. Second part refers to our approach on the job.
- ★ Do the "right" thing for the "right" reason at the "right" time.
- ★ Do not be afraid to say "I do not know," but also make an effort to learn that which you do not know.
- ★ Take the initiative. Do not wait on others and do not believe an action is someone else's responsibility. Take the initiative to do what needs to be done.

- ★ Remember why you joined. This job is fun and if it stops being fun, then we, as a team, are doing something wrong.
- ★ Earn your badge every day. It is a privilege to serve our community. Be a responsible custodian of our noble and honorable profession.
- ★ Live your standard.

While our environment is constantly evolving, please remain loyal to our core values and uphold your standard. Our job exceeds fighting fire. We are professional problem solvers. We will be called upon when no one else can deliver results and it is incumbent upon us to produce a successful outcome. We provide this service under the worst possible conditions. Keep this in mind and keep your mind (I assure you others will be losing theirs). We operate as a team, and collectively there is nothing we cannot handle.

Stay safe, stay strong,



210.267.7769 (Cell)

A few quotes to consider:

"If not me, then who?"

Lt. Travis Manion USMC (Deceased)

"Physical courage and morale cowardice is a losing combination."

"Confidence is developed and stems from capability. Capability is earned and stems from knowledge, experience, and expertise."

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"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then is not an act, but a habit."

- Aristotle

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Chaplain's Corner

Our Road to Emmaus



ur Gospel reading last Sunday, the Third Sunday of Easter, was from the Gospel of Luke 24:13-35. On the day of Jesus' resurrection, two disciples were on their way to Emmaus. On the way, a third person joined them. They were very down over the happenings of the last few days. They could not understand how this person was not aware of what had happened.

This third person began to tell them how the Messiah had to suffer and died so that He could enter into His glory. It is here that He could bring salvation to the people. As they arrived in Emmaus it was getting late and they invited this person to come and stay with them, to have dinner with them. At dinner, He picked up the bread, broke it and said a blessing. It is here that their eyes were opened and they could see that it was Jesus. And, Jesus vanished out of their sight.

As I prepared for this Sunday, I could see how well this reading fit into our lives. How often are we on our journey through life when we are joined by that third person? Everyone is called to serve their neighbor. As firefighters, we have taken it a step, or ten, further. It is our job to serve and we have that opportunity each and every time the trip drops. Sometimes it is difficult to show the compassion that we should. I only know this because I have been there. I know that I could have, and I should have done better.

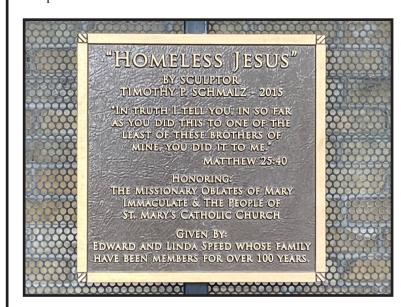
A couple of months back, I had to be in downtown San Antonio. I came across a beautiful church. It was St. Mary's Church located at 202 North St. Mary's Street. Just outside of the church is a bronze statue. It is of a homeless person sleeping on a park bench. It was hard for me to comprehend why someone would want a statue like this. I drew closer, and as I looked, I could see this person's feet sticking out from under the blanket. He did not have any shoes on. When I looked closer, I could see the nail holes in His feet. Wow, what an eye opener. What a reminder of what we read in the Book of Matthew, Chapter 25; 'Amen, I say to you, whatever

you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

It is important for us to remember that we are never alone. That Jesus is, and always will be, with us. We must see him in all that we encounter, especially those that we are called to serve.

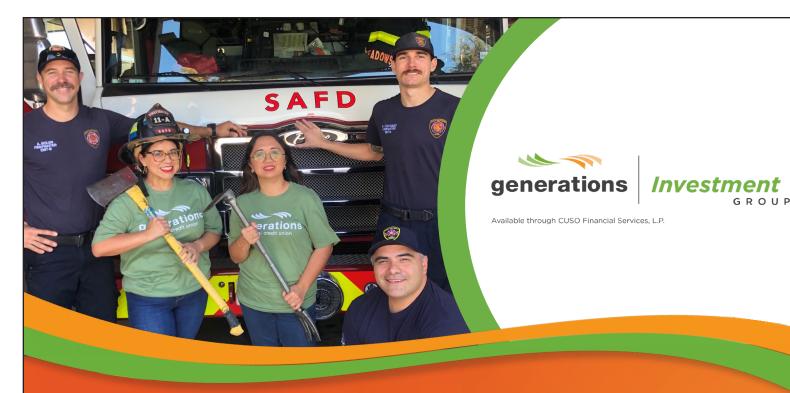
May Almighty God bless you,

Deacon Jerry Whitley Chaplain – SAFD / Local 624





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Grapevine

June Health Fund

his report is the continuance of the May report, which dealt with Wills and Estates. At that time, we discussed the necessity of protecting a person's assets that will eventually pass or have passed into the realm of God.

Besides having a Will, we need to have some other instruments that are necessary to protect the assets and make it easier for the loved ones we leave behind.

The instruments that I mentioned to complete the Will and other arrangements at the time of passing are as follows:

- 1. Statute durable power of attorney
- 2. A medical power of attorney
- 3. Directive to Physicians
- 4. Directive for disposition of remains
- 5. Declaration of guardian in the event of incapacity

If you do not have a Will, you do not have an Executor or an Executrix to distribute the dictates of a Will, and you do not know what to do, you should seek help from an Estate Attorney.

I want to repeat that I am not an Attorney, a CPA, or an Estate Planning Guide. I sincerely suggest that you consult with an Attorney to complete a Will. "Group Legal Services." at (210) 822-7678 specializes in working with Firefighters and Police Officers. They are very good people and will take good care of providing any information you may need.

Appointing an Executor or an Executrix is vitally important. An Executor or an Executrix of an estate is responsible for ensuring that the property and assets are distributed in accordance with a person's Will. An Executor or an Executrix must gather all the decedent's assets, and all the debts of the decedent. Nothing should be distributed until all the initial assets, including debts and chattel items, have been accounted for.

I do not want to get overly technical about what the duties of executors or executrices are; it is best to get the assistance of an attorney. I will mention one essential qualification of an executor's or an executrix's control of the distribution of a Will. An executor or an executrix can override a beneficiary. If you act in the estate's best interest and as the Will dictates, an executor or executrix can override a beneficiary.

This will probably be the last report I will write about Wills and Estates. However, I have gathered some vital and detailed information that I can send to you if you wish. The report will give you an idea of what steps you should take to prepare for dealing with a death.

In addition, this information could help a loved one prepare their paperwork before death. Finally, there are a lot of telephone numbers in the report that Firefighters can call to get immediate assistance. The Police Officers must contact the Police Chief's office to get help.

I will gladly send you this information if you wish. It is free; there is absolutely no charge. You can send me your email, or you can call me on the telephone: (210)-710-7378. My email is: htre2003@aol.com.

Henry Trevino

"No good is ever done in the world by hesitation."

-Thomas Huxley

Moral of the story:

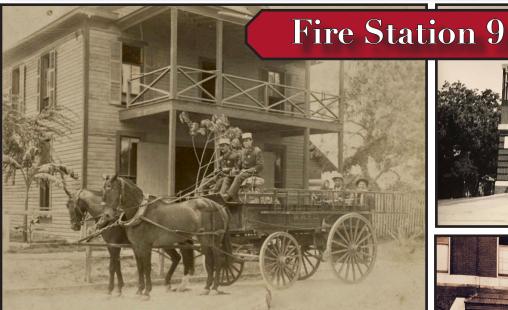
"Errrrrr" means I do not know what to do. Hesitation is an evil that immediately makes you wrong. Do not dwell on deciding; it is either "yes" or "no;" or "right or wrong." If you are wrong, at least you do not have the lingering thought of, "What if I was right." On the other hand, if you are right, you can pat yourself on the back and say to yourself, "I knew I was right all time."







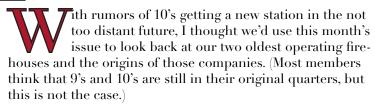
SAFD History: Within our Firehouse Walls

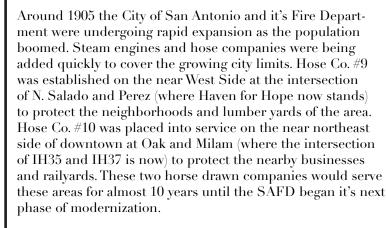












In 1914, for reasons currently unknown, 9's and 10's swapped sides of the City into their new twin Prarie-styled architecture fireproof quarters. Sadly, the fire horses did not accompany



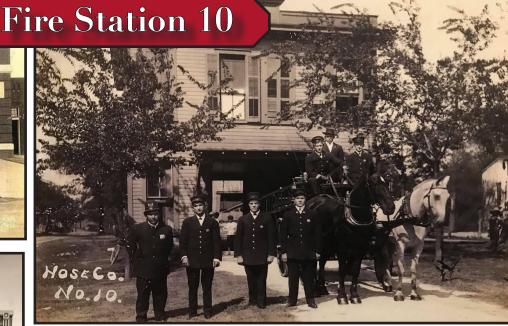


the men as new "motors" were purchased and placed into service with the new firehouses. The "Animal House" and the "Mens of Ten's" have seen some of the heaviest fire duty and many storied shenanigans over the course of more than a century of service in these twin houses.

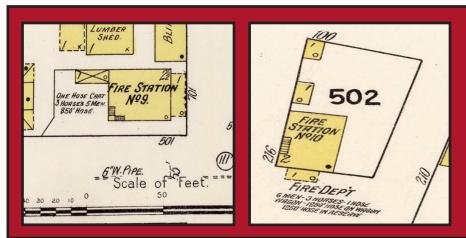
Today's young San Antonio firefighters should take any opportunity to work a shift in these legendary firehouses as your generation will likely be the last to have that privilege!

> Lt Rich Anderson Engine 4C

**Pictured to the right are the street plans for the original FS No. 9 and No. 10 complete with number of horses, apparatus, and personnel.

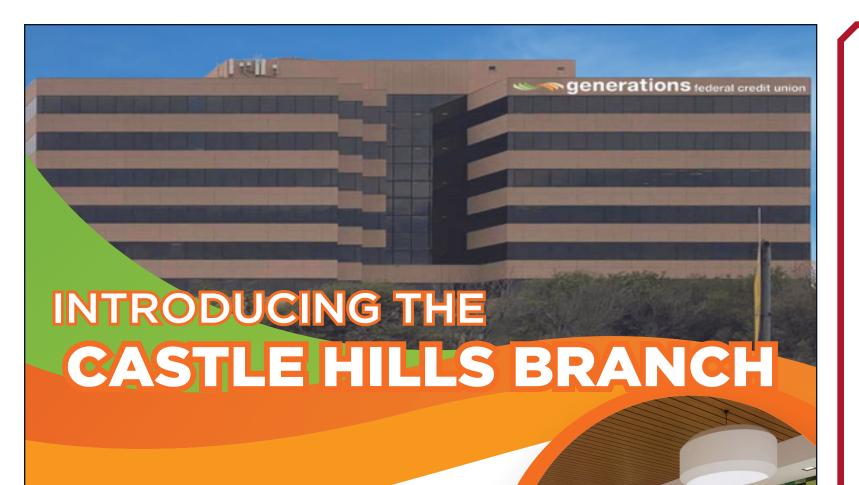












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he moment everyone has been waiting for is finally here! Local 624 has a fully functioning Members Only website! Through careful planning and preparation, your communications team has built what they hope is a streamlined, user-friendly, easy-to-navigate website. Your624.org is the place to go for anything you may need when it comes to your union.

Log in – When you enter your624.org into your browser, it will take you to the landing page. Follow the instructions to register, and you'll have a unique log in and password that will get you behind our paywall. This ensures that everything we post is secure and out of the public eye so you can feel safe knowing that you are protected as you navigate your site.

As a quick virtual tour, there are 7 tabs at the top of the home

Home – The home page will operate like a blog, with the most recent posts appearing at the top. This is where we will post reminders, upcoming events, videos, polls, updates, etc. There will be new information weekly, so check for updates to this page regularly.

Calendar – Not only is this a comprehensive calendar with all upcoming events, it also details which EMS and Fire shifts are working that day, so you will know at a glance what shifts coincide with each event.

Kitchen Table – This is the landing page for all things "Member Input". We will post periodic surveys about contract negotiations, website updates, and upcoming and past events, so you can share your opinion and see what other members had to

Media Gallery – This is where we will post pictures and videos of events as they occur. The best part of this is that you can also contribute. Just click on the "Upload your Media" tab and you can share photos and videos directly from your phone or tablet. We welcome all submissions. Whether it was a fun run, some crew shenanigans, or a union event, send us your pictures and we'll share them on this tab.

Documents – This is your landing page for any document you might need. From grievance forms, a copy of the contract, the Bylaws, insurance forms, to past meeting minutes, everything is

archived here for your convenience.

Contact Us – Have a question? A team leader is here to help. Fill out the "contact us" form and choose the appropriate category from an easy drop-down menu and the website will get it to the right place.

Edit Profile – If you need to update your station assignment, your rank, your email address, or your password, click this

As members get logged in and begin using the site, feel free to reach out to your communications team with any questions or issues you may have by filling out the "contact us" form for communications or emailing us directly at communications@iaff624.org.

Grapevine

We the SAFD



approved. Welcome to the San Antonio Fire Department." Every member of the SAFD remembers that day when the phone rang with the news they were waiting, hoping, and praying for. Then came the whirlwind of buying cadet uniforms, filling out paperwork, checking boxes. All with an underlying buzz of excitement knowing this dream, a life-altering calling, was finally becoming a reality. In seven months those who prove victorious would earn the right to wear the shield, a representation of innate courage and unwavering love for others, and call themselves a San Antonio firefighter.



Firefighters are synonymous with heroism, yet it's only since the onset of Covid-19 that our incessant need to achieve and conquer new opportunities has been truly marveled at and put on display. Firefighters have been at this game for years and have become quite skilled at being multifaceted. No team operates with only breachers and not everyone can be the team lead, but everyone must be familiar with all the positions of the team and prepared to take over if the tide turns. Our positions are earned through trial and won over in battle every shift. As iron sharpens iron, an evolving metropolitan offers no quarter for an easy shift. If bravery is the cornerstone and service

is the foundation, love for others is the keystone in this kingdom.

"Our positions are earned through trial and won over in battle every shift. As iron sharpens iron, an evolving metropolitan offers no quarter for an easy shift."

Moment by moment the veil that is emergency response yields new and extreme challenges, these to name a few, (just keep in mind not all fires in need of extinguishment are hot):

Call 1- A seemingly minor vehicle accident actually involves a semi transporting an untold number of unsettled honeybees on a major thoroughfare. Safety for all at risk is paramount. With no time to spare, decisions to divert, control and mitigate are all at the cusp of a crew, even while training a first-day rookie.

Call 2- In our bustling city in close proximity to the border, unquenchable fires involving trafficking persons and drugs flare up at a moment's notice. The reali-



ty is that a tractor-trailer hauling immigrants through town is a reality, and our responsibility to them is also of enormous importance. As passionate professionals we hurt when those reaching out for help are hurting, internal strength is fortified in these moments where panic is not an option.

Call 3- Mass shootings in our city and surrounding towns require rapid critical care. Not a moment is lost from when the call is hailed to tires rolling, props turning, and sirens wailing, help is immediately on the way.

Call 4- I offer a different perspective. Such as when a crane operator hundreds of feet up is impaired by a cardiac event with no elevator



or viable rescue option other than grit and tact. Leaning on rope rescue skills honed in a warehouse somewhere between exhaustion and a call for help at 2am, a hero took up the cause and climbed every single one of those steps. With clanking metal and dangling bundles

of rope, every bit of gear he would need to stabilize the patient and lower them alongside weighs him down. As stressful as this sounds, all the firefighter hears as his body is screaming for a break is the sweet sound of a clasp. The day his oath was taken and his badge was awarded, he knew sacrifice would come to collect. All he can think about in this moment is how there is nowhere else he would rather be. The darkness of the unknown is where a leader's light shines the brightest. How do you prepare to give vaccines to an entire city? Where do you start with a group of just ten firefighters when a city's worth of contact-tracing is at hand and protocols are non-existent? Where do you start when a 2-story nursing home is ablaze with no sprinklers and an unknown soul count? The firefighter is the answer. No matter the time... no matter the magnitude, the severity, the pain, or if the path to success must be cut through stone. We will adapt and persevere. We will answer the call. We will exceed expectations. We are SAFD.

Eng. Justin Kruciak EMS-A Shift









NEWBORN ANNOUNCEMENTS!

Maya Josephine Tovar

Born on 04/17/2023 To parents: Alexander and Sara Tovar

Hudson Christopher Xanders

Born on 04/19/2023 To parents: Chris and Abby Xanders

Aundre King

Born on 04/29/2023 To parents: Clifford and Andrea King

Nolan Reid Acosta

Born on 05/04/2023

To parents: Dominic and Kierstin Acosta To parents: Gamaliel and Nora Rodriguez

Nikolas Ryan Cavazos

Born on 05/07/2023 To parents: Estevan and Dora Cavazos

Arie Lane & Lula Jude Aguirre

Born on 05/11/2023 To parents: Jimmy and Andrea Aguirre

Abigail Elizabeth Groff

Born on 05/12/2023 To parents: Robby and Sarah Groff

Boaz Gamaliel Rodriguez

Born on 05/23/2023











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Texas Auto Salvage Our Community Giving Back



when it comes to vehicle extrication and stabilization.

When it comes to extrication, time is very often of the essence and there is no substitute for the time spent training on actual cars. The knowledge that develops the ability to proficiently remove a car from a patient rather than the patient from the car drastically improves patient outcomes and saves lives. Texas Auto Salvage has been committed to the San Antonio Fire Department, as well as surrounding ESDs for many years. They regularly host training for companies who want to come practice not only standard extrication, but challenging extrications

ones drop. Chairs slide back. Boots hit the ground. It's time to go to work. No matter what the challenge, San Antonio firefighters and paramedics descend on the scene as tested professionals. Across the entire city of San Antonio, firefighters stay ready and vigilant for any type of emergency that may come their way.

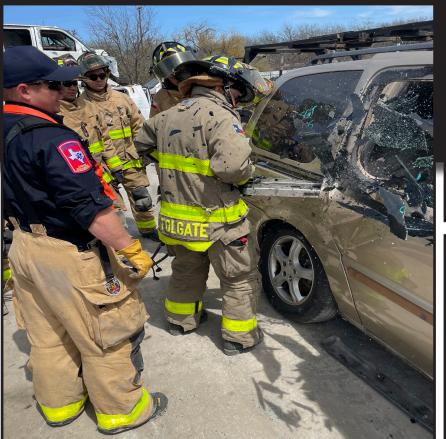
This readiness does not happen without constant preparation, however. Regular training is a part of any good fire crew's shift. On any given day, crews will find themselves busy pulling hose, practicing forcible entry through a variety of doors, reviewing the equipment on their apparatus, or even simply a tabletop discussion about tools and tactics.

Training most often occurs behind closed doors, but occasionally firefighters are given special opportunities to practice the way they play. One such opportunity has been made possible by Texas Auto Salvage. The support and accessibility they have provided over the years has almost single-handedly given San Antonio firefighters the edge to be some of the best in the nation

Owners Daniel and Brook Hack have gone above and beyond in demonstrating their commitment to the SAFD on many occasions. Often companies have called with requests for cars to practice on, and not only do they provide the cars, but are happy to stage them in many different positions, giving companies unique challenges and testing their skills.

Chief Doug Reed, Battalion Chief of 1-O on the B shift commented, "I've been going to train at Texas Auto Salvage for nearly 24 years and it has been a blessing

"The support and accessibility they have provided over the years has almost single-handedly given San Antonio firefighters the edge to be some of the best in the nation when it comes to vehicle extrication and stabilization."



in not only enhancing my knowledge of vehicles, but also the knowledge of my technical rescue companies when I was their officer. Now as a battalion chief I have been able to send my companies and get them real hands-on training as well. Texas Auto Salvage has been invaluable and irreplaceable in training at every stage in my career. I started going to Texas Auto Salvage back in 1999, before I was even a San Antonio Firefighter, so that shows how long Daniel and Brook have been committed to making us the best."

Although they downplay the role they have in San Antonio Firefighters' success on vehicle extrication scenes, the Hacks explain that they see it as the best way to give back to the community and their loved ones as well. In their minds, if they have the means and resources to make firefighters who will be responding to their emergencies into the best trained and most capable, then it only makes sense to do so.

The San Antonio Fire Department and the San Antonio Professional Firefighters Association would like to extend a massive thank you to Daniel and Brook Hack, and their long-time employee Ram for their extensive role in making San Antonio Firefighters into true professionals when it comes to vehicle extrication. Their selfless contributions over many years have influenced, impacted, and no doubt saved countless lives.

**Photography credits: Lt. Reed Curl- E31-B, Capt. Jake Garza- AP35-C, and FF Jonathan Arrambide- L37-B











Legislative Update



t was a busy first 7 months of the

Team. There was plenty of work

for us to do up in Austin for the 88th Legislative Session, as well as here in

San Antonio preparing for Municipal

We are extremely excited to report

that SB 1207, otherwise informally

known as the Police and Fire Pen-

sion Bill, passed both the House and

Governor. This Bill raises the current

Senate and has been signed by the

death benefit for our Widows from

50% up to 75%. This new language

amount of hard work between Local

was the result of a tremendous

624 and the representatives that

sit on the Pension Board. Special

thanks to our own Shawn Griffin and Dean Pearson for all their dedi-

cation to get this done.

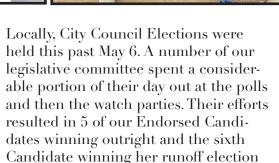
Elections.

year for your SAPFFA Legislative





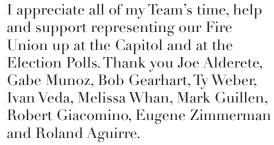




this past June. We wish the current

ward to working with all of them.

Council the best of luck and look for-



Engine 26-A







Capt. Javier Patlan





Grapevine

CONTRACTS IN THE NEWS

JURISDICTION	THE MONEY	THE DETAILS
Austin, Texas Police Department	• April 2023, 4%	► Retention incentives for current officers, such as pay increases for officers reaching retirement, are also included in the new contract.
Bellevue, Washington Fire Department	• 2023, 9%	The one-year contract extension adds Juneteenth as a paid holiday and creates a union leave bank.
Concord, New Hampshire Police Department	• January 1, 2023, 4%	► The new contract adds Juneteenth as a paid holiday.
Davenport, Iowa Fire Department	 July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2026, 3.5% annually 	► The new agreement also includes increased uniform allowances, fitness program incentives, and EMS certification incentives.
Lakeland, Florida Police Department	• 2023, 8.5% • 2024, 4% • 2025, 3.5%	Officers will also be eligible to receive \$2,500 in tuition reimbursement.
Palo Alto, California Fire Department	January 1, 2023, 4%January 1, 2024, 4%	► Paramedics will receive an additional 12% market adjustment increase.
Rochester, New York Police Department	 2019, 3% 2020, 3.5% 2021, 3.5% 2022, 4.5% 2023, 4.5% 	▶ Officers who were on the payroll during the height of the pandemic, from March 2020 to March 2022, will receive a \$4,000 payment.

Attention Wives of Retired Firefighters!!

We just celebrated our First Year Anniversary!

The FIRE wives meet every 3rd Wednesday of the month at different restaurants.

We promote camaraderie and support the wives of the retired firefighters, as well as community service. Our first year, we were able to raise over \$1000.00 for two separate projects. We are a small group and welcome wives of retired firefighters to join us.

For more information, please contact Frances Perez 210-771-0110 or Carmen Medina 210-421-6516.



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May/June 2023









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Brilliance in the Basics

"Everything in life goes back to the basics." – Kron Gracie



Brothers and Sisters,
Great things are happening within our department in regards to training. We've made great strides by making more, and better, training available at the FTA and have seen more and more people going to outside training opportunities to better themselves and learn from others. These are great to see, but I wanted to chat about some in-house training ideas so that we can make sure we're staying sharp and getting more reps to supplement Training Tuesdays and Training Thursdays as well as reps with outside groups.

As a sports enthusiast, I've always appreciated athletes in any sport that grind on the basics. Professional athletes that get paid millions of dollars to perform at the highest level routinely train and drill on the basics. MLB sluggers still hit off of a tee for hours in the cage and also for a couple minutes before game time. NBA hoopers take countless free throws before, during and after practice. Guys in the NFL make sure their first step and timing is down and that they know their role for every play that's called. All these elite level players pay attention to detail and practice the basics because being great at the basics is what got them there. If they can do that, so can we.

We have 24 hours to take care of our business to include daily truck and station duties, PR events, a workout, and of course runs to make, but we need to make sure we're utilizing about 30 mins to an hour of that time practicing our basics. So what are our basics? First off, it may seem elementary but EVERYONE should be making sure our equipment and gear is ready and ensuring we can turn out in less than a minute, especially with clean cab being implemented. On the firefighter level, if you're on an engine, make sure you can stretch a line quickly and cleanly. If you're on a truck, we need to make sure we can throw our ladders as fast as possible as well as force doors without delay. With that, we also need to make sure our truckies are pulling lines and our engine guys are forcing doors and throwing ladders as well! Engineers, make sure you're putting that engine in pump or setting up the outriggers every morning as well as reviewing that pump chart for our first out lines. Officers, lead by example and

set the standard by showing how quick and smooth these skills should go by participating and getting in some reps! One way to make it more fun as well is to make it into a competition. Winner gets a free dinner! Find a spot at the station like the parking lot or on the apron. Another great option is to get out and drive around if you want a change of scenery and to get real reps from structures in your district. Find a vacant building or lot where you can knock out some of these drills. You can also use fire alarms to practice getting a stretch in, throwing a ladder and spotting a plug. Don't forget to do walk throughs and talk about some of the key building construction features within your first and second due response areas.

On the engine, pull an attack line to a designated spot, timing each person to see who can pull it to that spot the fastest and with the least amount of kinks. For the truck, throw some ground ladders to a window or spot on the roof and let everyone take a shot at seeing how fast they can get there. Drilling on

the engine can include who can catch a plug the fastest and a good one for the truck is who can get the truck level with the outriggers out the quickest. Make it fun but make sure you're being effective and hustling like you would on the fireground.

We can't forget some of our basic EMS skills. Helping out the medics is imperative and helping assess and identify what's happening with our patients quickly will help them have a better outcome. Practice obtaining a 12 lead, setting up nebulizer treatments, spiking a bag and getting the ETCO2 put on the right way. These things will help some of our more intense EMS scenes run a bit smoother for our medics.

Remember that the FTA is always available to facilitate a training location or even help set up some drills. Your battalion's FTO is also available and can help with any training needs as well.

Obviously doing some of the same drills at the same spots might get mundane and it's often great to push ourselves and make the drills tougher and harder so that we are continuously growing, but we must always try and remember that the basics are essential. We can't make a push up a stairwell while flowing if we can't get the line to the front door, and we can't VES a 2nd floor window if we can't get the ladder to the right spot quickly. Most of all, we can't do any of this without putting our gear on the right way and as quickly as possible. These things should all be muscle memory, so take the time to make them just that! Whatever you do, make sure to put in some sweat equity and have fun with your crew as you're doing it. Drilling should be fun! This job is fun!

As the great fellas up at FDTN say, "The Basics Always Work"! So go work on the basics!

Your Brother, FF Logan Huesing Ladder 9-A

Grapevine May/June 2023



ALAMO BEER COMPANY SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS Alamo Beer Hall and Restaurant is open Wednesday - Sunday with daily specials, live music, games and events. Located downtown San Antonio, under the historic hays Street Bridge, just minutes from the Alamo (with plenty of parking!) 202 Lamar St, San Antonio, TX ((210) 872-5589 alamobeer.com

Fighting Inflation One Farm Fresh Egg at a Time





Verything is more expensive!" This is the refrain I've heard from many people for the past few months. One would be hard pressed to find a House Captain that hasn't used this line when explaining higher house expenses. Inflation on groceries has made it harder to find a supper club still at five dollars a night. Raising supper club dues to six, seven, or even eight dollars a night is a remedy some stations have instituted. Other stations have looked for alternatives to raising the cost per person. Some stations grow their own vegetables, some provide meat obtained from a recent hunting trip, others have invested in chicken coops.

According to a CNBC report last March, eggs have increased in price by 70% since last year, (Winters & Jensen, 2023). This coupled with a preference for farm fresh eggs has inspired the crews at Station 37 to find their inner poultry farmer and welcome seven newcomers to the station. However, the new guests are not living rent free. They will be expected to provide fresh eggs every shift.

We are, of course, talking about chickens. The crews at 37s have put the ample space behind the station to good use and built a chicken coop currently housing seven hens. Captain Tilt used to provide his crew with eggs from his father-in-law's personal coop. The crew soon preferred the taste of fresh eggs and were inspired to build their own.

There was a learning curve to becoming chicken farmers. Despite 37's urban surroundings, predators soon became a nuisance. An updated coop design including a protective roof and fence was necessary to safeguard the chickens from hawks.

Now with secure surroundings, the happy hens can provide eggs for the crews of Station 37 and hopefully help lessen the blow of inflation and keep the price of supper club in the single digits for, at least, a little while longer.

FF Chris Knight Engine 14-C











Local 624 in Action

Flambeau Parade



















Daddy Daughter Dance

here was a weekend this May when your Union Hall was filled with gold streamers and balloons, a craft table stocked with colors, stickers, costume jewelry, and a dance floor filled with dads and their daughters all with smiling faces. The Union Hall had been transformed from a place of by-laws and budget meetings to a venue celebrating the special bond between a father and his daughter.

The union's annual Daddy Daughter Dance was held on Saturday, May 6th and the Dads of Local 624 showed up ready to wow their daughters with some sick moves. The good intentions were there even if the skill was not.

Dads dressed to impress, and the daughters brought some class to the hall's auditorium in their fancy pink dresses and royal tiaras. The event was preserved in photos by a roaming photographer and in between Electric Slides and Macarenas, weary dancers could refresh themselves with cookies and juice boxes.

It wouldn't be a real firefighter event without some kind of competition. Dads could compete with their daughters in several games such as musical chairs or racing with balloons held between their legs. It was a celebration of fatherhood and a chance for dads to moonwalk their way into their little girl's heart. These are the moments that will be remembered in the years to come. Be it a birthday or pre-wedding slideshow, every little girl will look back at these photos and remember when her daddy was the man in her life.

It was once said, "In the dance of life, a father's love guides his daughter's steps, even when he's two beats behind and missing a shoe." - Anonymous

So, bravo to all the dancing dads out there, willing to embarrass themselves a little bit for their daughter's happiness. What you lack in smooth moves you make up for in a willingness to make your daughter smile. Keep dancing and let your love for your daughters be the rhythm that guides your steps, even if it's a bit offbeat.

FF Chris Knight Engine 14-C













Head over to https://www.your624.org/media-gallery/for more pictures and events!





Strength Training at the Firehouse



am a firefighter and an apprentice coach at Starting Strength San Antonio. My fire shift work schedule is 24 hours on and 48 hours off. Due to this schedule I occasionally have to train at the firehouse in order to complete all of my workouts for the week. Training in the firehouse weight room can be slightly difficult because workouts are frequently interrupted by one or two runs, but it is always a lot of fun. It is a good time hanging out and talking with the boys between sets, especially since on my days off I usually train in my garage gym with my wife, four year old son, and ten month old daughter.

Don't get me wrong, my garage gym at our home is my favorite place in the world. My wife is a good, competent lifter, to whom I occasionally serve as a technique and programming consultant (I like to live dangerously). My kids are great training partners, but my son is a bit of a daredevil on his bike, and likes to climb and jump out of trees in the front yard. My daughter usually eats dirt, poops her pants, needs a bottle of milk, and has to be put down for a nap before I can finish my squats. My beautiful wife is perfect and a joy to train with (see, I am not a complete imbecile), but needless to say, the parental obligations can be rather trying on my patience during a taxing training session. Now I am not saying that we don't have these same issues at the firehouse, but at least Jay can wipe his own ass, Stephen can toddle off to his bunk when he gets fussy, and if Scott's squat form is atrocious, I may express my disappointment in his poor performance as passionately and profanely as I choose.

We have a good group of lifters at the fire station. I train the basic barbell lifts according to the Starting Strength Method. Jay does his gym bro workout consisting of cardio on the treadmill, bench presses, and curls. Stephen practices the Olympic lifts and is a recovering CrossFitter. Jojo is a lifelong lifter, well versed in every training methodology from Starting Strength to Crossfit to 5/3/1 to bodybuilding to Westside Barbell. Scott exercises for health and general fitness. His workout consists of a sampling of the barbell lifts, bodybuilding, and Crossfit.

Somehow we all manage to train and coexist in the same weight room. Each firefighter trains however they like to train. The primary goal is to be a strong capable member of the team. Although we do not all follow the same program or do the same workout, training together and doing hard things on a regular basis builds a solid foundation of trust and respect among the

team. In between sets it is fun to agitate one another, talk family, tell stories, engage in epic gym bro discussions on weight lifting, and occasionally learn something from each

The wonderful thing about Starting Strength Gyms is that all of the same framework to build a positive team relationship amongst the lifters is there: a group of high quality like-minded individuals gather together to do hard work towards a common goal. Recognizing this, I strive to create the same community of camaraderie and friendship that I love most about the firehouse in the classes that I coach.

"The primary goal is to be a strong capable member of the team. Although we do not all follow the same program or do the same workout. training together and doing hard things on a regular basis builds a solid foundation of trust and respect among the team."

I remember one afternoon in the firehouse weight room Scott and I were lifting together. I racked my last set of squats, sat down on the bench, took off my knee sleeves, and I was just fixin' to get ready to do my presses when I noticed this odd rhythmic breathing coming from the vicinity of the

dumbbell rack. To my great dismay, I looked up to see Cap waving a pair of five pound dumbbells around like they were pompoms. Cap bore witness as my visage transitioned from a look of consternation to my signature head shake and eye roll of exasperation as I looked to the heavens in search of patience. Scott asked me "Why Joseph, whatever could be the matter?" I boomed, "You're doing it wrong!" I then proceeded to ask him, "Just what are you hoping to accomplish by waving those little five pound weights around?"

Scott went on to explain to me that he had injured his shoulder several years ago and that a physical therapist buddy had given him a long list of stretches and exercises to perform with light weights in order to rehabilitate and strengthen all of the little muscles of his shoulders. I in turn went on to explain to him that if I were him, seeing as he now had full range of motion with no pain in his shoulders, I would learn how to do barbell presses in order to get stronger and reduce the chances of future injury. I briefly summarized the concept of the stress, recovery, adaptation cycle and concluded by saying, "With all due respect, setting aside the fact that you look ridiculous, you are wasting your time. You can wave those little five pound dumbbells around for hundreds of reps in every possible direction, but those tiny weights don't cause enough stress to drive your muscles to adapt to get stronger." In short, despite my blunt tactless effort to persuade him to another course of action, Cap was unmoved. He said that doing things his way was working just fine, I said OK, and we let it go at that.

Now the very next morning we were all busy at work doing morning clean up (at the end of each 24 hour shift fire crews clean the station and trucks in preparation for the oncoming shift). I was mopping the kitchen floor when I heard a grunt of exertion coming from the direction of the kitchen pantry. I looked up from the task at hand and to my great delight I saw Scott standing there struggling to tear a heavy black garbage bag from its roll. I said, "Huh, that must be a six pound test." Cap proceeded to laugh his ass off and acknowledged that I just might have a point.

Shortly after that little episode, Cap asked me to teach him the barbell lifts. He is in his mid 50s, 5' 11" tall, weighs 195 lbs and is in good shape from doing his hodgepodge of bodybuilding and CrossFit style exercise. I first taught him the squat, press, deadlift, and bench press. I then put him on the novice linear progression training on a one day on and two days off schedule (he only trains at work). I have had a great deal of success when utilizing this program in my own training and when coaching a couple of other firefighters at the station:

Basic Starting Strength Linear Progression training one on, two off, alternating A and B workouts

Phase 1:	
A	В
Squat 3x5	Squat 3x5
Bench 3x5	Press 3x5
Deadlift 1x5	Deadlift 1x5
Phase 2:	
A	В
Squat 3x5	Squat 3x5 @ 80% of A day Squat
Bench 3x5	Press 3x5
Power Clean 5x3	Deadlift 1x5
Phase 3:	
A	В
Squat 3x5	Squat 3x5 @ 80% of A day Squat
Bench 3x5	Press 3x5
Weighted Chins 3x5	Alternate Deadlift 1x5 or Power Clean 5x3
Phase 4:	
A	В
Squat 3x5	Squat 3x5 @ 80% of A day Squat
Bench 5x3	Press 5x3
Weighted Chins 3x5	Alternate Deadlift 1x5 or Power Clean 5x3

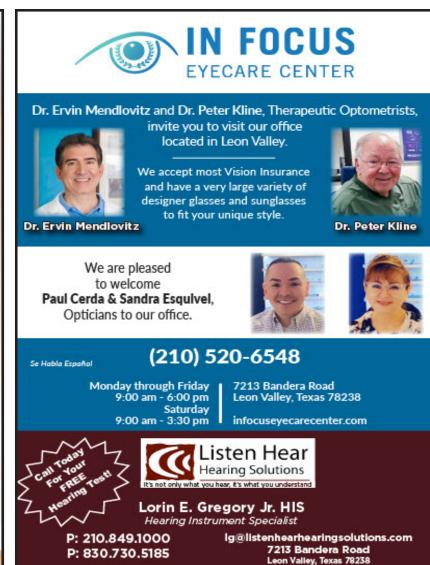
I started Cap out with very light weights and progressed more slowly than necessary (making 2.5 lbs increases for all lifts each workout) entirely because he was deathly afraid of injuring his back. So he isn't doing the program optimally, but even when imperfectly applied, the program will yield results if you work hard. Last shift after squatting 232.5x5x3, benching 200x5x3, and performing chin-ups for 3x5 with a 25 lb kettlebell hanging from his waist, Scott marveled at the fact that he is stronger now than he has ever been in his life. He has made tremendous progress.

The same man that used to think that deadlifting 225 would cause his spinal vertebrae to spontaneously combust, was walking tall because he deadlifted 280x5. Cap asked me what I thought about that. I said, "Well, my wife can deadlift 300x3x2. So you're not quite fit to carry her sports bra just yet, but you're doing alright. We'll get you there."

Joseph Rodriguez Engine 43-B









The instructors at the SAFD Training Academy recently created an Instagram account to help spread the word about what is happening at the FTA. Your FTA staff is doing their best to not only turn out some of the best training the department has ever seen, but also keep up with modern times. This is a chance for you to see what happens behind the scenes, during all the different training, and to see the opportunities you have to come and shape the department. Check out their hard work @SAFDTraining!



xpectations. The President's article really set the stage perfectly for our theme this issue: setting expectations, meeting expectations, and then exceeding expectations. But what is an expectation? I think the dictionary definition I like best is, "a belief that someone will or should achieve something." But then what does it mean to achieve? I continued down my rabbit hole and discovered that to achieve means to "successfully bring about a desired objective by effort, skill, or courage." So then, to set an expectation is to believe that we will meet our objectives through our work ethic, determination, training, ability, and preparation. If that doesn't define what we do as San Antonio Firefighters, I don't know what does.

This summer I got the chance to teach a team building class to high school students at our Heroes SAFD Summer Camp at the Training Academy. The class has evolved from its inception in a classroom into a very hands-on, physical curriculum. When each group arrives, I give them my expectations. Working together, they must get their entire team through an obstacle course. It starts with a wall of boxes that they have to climb up and over, then they have to get over a field of "lava" without touching the ground using only a prowler sled attached to a rope and a stack of weight plates, before moving under a table and off to "safety". At first glance it seems easy. Then I give them the final caveat. Each member of the team will be assigned a "handicap". Some are blind, some are deaf, some are mute, some can't use their arms, and some can't use their legs.

Usually at this point I am met with eye rolls and comments of "this is impossible!" I encourage each class to accept the challenge and tell them that no group has failed. In fact, it has been completed successfully dozens of times by groups before them. After the obligatory groaning, each member draws their handicap out of a hat, and then they get to work. What transpires is always amazing to watch. A group of 10-12 high school students who have never met before begins to become a team. At first, the ideas are sporadic. The group always spends time standing around looking at each other blankly, but little by little ideas start flowing, the group rallies together, a plan is developed, they implement it, and they meet my expectations. Every group looks a little different, every solution to the challenge is unique, but they are successful every time.

At the end of my team building class I get to talk to those high school students about how the challenge they comp leted mirrors the fire department. I explain how every day we operate under a set of expectations. We have the expectations set for us by our rules and regulations, policies, and procedures, sure, but a much higher standard of expectations are those set for us by our community we serve. Our community expects us to be perfect every time. They expect that we will show up and meet the objective they've set for us whether it is a medical emergency, a structure fire, or a cat in a tree, with effort, skill, and courage. Each of us has our strengths and weaknesses, or "handicaps" if you will, but by combining our abilities and working together, we will be successful in our endeavor to meet and exceed our citizens' expectations of us.

That really is the magic of what we get to do. Individually, we are each driven, dedicated high achievers. If we were n't at least to some degree, we wouldn't be in this job. Even so, there is a limit to what we can accomplish by ourselves. But when we join the team and bring our skills to bear for the greater good, that is when expectations are exceeded. The bar is high. Our teams are clicking at an unprecedented rate, and our future is bright. We will continue to set and hold ourselves to the highest expectations, and there really is no limit to what we will accomplish.

As always, it was a pleasure to put this issue of the Grapevine together. Please feel free to reach out to me on the contact form of our brand-new website, your624.org, or email me at grapevine@iaff624.org.

See y'all at the big one!

Emily Leffler Grapevine Editor

Grapevine May/June 2023



Local 624

Off-Duty Services Directory

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Origination Fee*	NONE	\$685	\$50-\$900	\$950-\$1,200
Appraisal Fee	NONE	\$450	\$495	\$510
Charge Points	NO	Yes	Yes	Yes

*Mortgage of Texas does not charge an Origination Fee; borrower may be subject to Lender Origination Fees.

*All applicants are subject to mortgage loan qualification standards.

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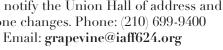
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Who: IAFF

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Where: Your Union Hall

When: September 13-14, 2023 from 0830-1630hrs

Why: Because our members matter

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