

CYFS honours Acting Captain for exceptional leadership



It was something of a full circle moment for Central York Fire Services Acting Captain Phil Montgomery when he was called up to the stage on Thursday night to accept the kudos of his peers.

As an up-and-coming firefighter, Montgomery was trained by Jim Allan, a retired firefighter who was described as a man who exemplified what skills, knowledge and attitude stand for.

With Allan at his side, Montgomery, now a trainer himself, was this year's recipient of The Jim Allan Award, an honour that exemplifies the very qualities attributed to its namesake.

Introduced in 2018, the Jim Allan Award recognizes individual members of the CYFS for their significant contribution to the development of CYFS personnel as well as their personal dedication to training and education.

According to Assistant Deputy Chief Claude Duval, Montgomery received the most nominations from his peers than anyone since the award's inception.

He started with Central York Fire Services in 2003, was promoted to his current rank in 2016, he said. He is a shift training instructor in specialty disciplines such as road rescue, water rescue, firefighter survival, rapid intervention teams, and high-rise firefighter. He constantly seeks further knowledge and skills by attending specialty courses, most of them on his own time and from his own money. Acting Captain Montgomery's generosity at this time to help others learn and make his department better is remarkable. He volunteered to assist the training division during the 2023 recruit class. His classes are always conducted professionally and safely while maintaining a high level of engagement. Every recruit from the 2023 class were hoping they will end on his crew [or] at the very least end up on his platoon.

His peers described him as a great leader and a great educator, a man with a contagious positive attitude, and someone who is not inclined to use the word 'no' or the phrase 'not today'.

Accepting the award, one of the first people Montgomery thanked was Allan for setting an amazing example of passion for training and for taking a chance on a young firefighter 17 years ago.

?I am passionate about training,? he said, joking the ?cat was now out of the bag.?

?It has been an amazing experience. I would like to thank the current training department for giving me the opportunity to get involved in training and obviously the chiefs and deputies for giving a firefighter the chance to have an impact within the fire service.?

Thursday's ceremony was also an opportunity to honour members of the CYFS for 20, 25, and 30 years, as well as members who have shown grace under fire.

This year's honourees included

20 YEAR ? FEDERAL EXEMPLARY SERVICE MEDAL:

Boyden, Francis (Captain)

Bryan, Darryl (Firefighter)

Cook, Gordon (Firefighter)

Crane, Vincent (Captain)

Gibb, Andrew (Captain)

Knights, David (Captain)

Linklater, Ryan (Captain)

Marshall, Quinn (Captain)

Meijs, Jeff (Captain)

Milliken, Liam (Captain)

Preston, Robert (Firefighter)

Shier, Matthew (Acting Captain)

Simard, Alex (Acting Captain)

25 YEAR ? PROVINCIAL LONG SERVICE MEDAL

Donohue, Scott (Captain)

Dunkerley, Jason (Firefighter)

Madill, Kevin (Captain)

Mitchell, Shaun (Captain)

30 YEAR ? FEDERAL EXEMPLARY SERVICE BAR & PROVINCIAL LONG SERVICE BAR

Cooke, Paul (Retired Captain)

Mumford, John (Firefighter)

Among those on hand to honour the recipients were Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy, Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas, Newmarket Mayor John Taylor, and Councillors from both municipalities, including Ward 2 Aurora Councillor Rachel Gilliland who chairs the Joint Council Committee governing the CYFS.

Saluting the members, instead of giving a formal speech, Councillor Gilliland read out a letter she wanted to share with First Responders.

?Thank you for spending countless hours at the firehouse training to save lives. Thank you for waking up at 2 a.m. to help save a family whose house burnt into flames. Thank you for saving the life of someone's father when he went into cardiac arrest or used the jaws of life to extract a woman from a crashed car. Thank you for being so selfless that you don't even think twice when you run into a burning building. You are heroes.

?You may not feel like you are but I can promise you there is a little boy or a little girl who is looking up to you. A little boy or girl who dresses up just like you for Halloween every year. And children who are awestruck when a truck passes by. Thank you for teaching us how to stop, drop and roll and spending your days teaching children and adults why fire safety is so important. Thank you for constantly running towards what others run away from.?

Added Mayor Tom Mrakas: ?Congratulations to the award recipients this evening for your hard work, leadership, and tremendous contributions. Your commitment to protecting our residents and making our community a safer place to live is admirable. We are all very appreciative of the role CYFS has within our community and all Central York Fire Services staff should be very proud of their outstanding efforts.?

MPP Gallagher Murphy also paid tribute to the CYFS team for their ?dedication and hard work.?

?I am proud of this department's excellent record of promoting safety and minimizing risk through your prevention efforts, educating the community and your commitment to best practices and innovative approaches,? she said. ?I would also like to thank your families for all they do to support you. It may not seem like a lot, but without your help, your firefighter could not make the difference that they have made and continue to make now. Thank you for having grace and compassion when your partner runs out the door to save a life.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter