

“They gave their life in service to others”

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I have been a part of the volunteer fire/EMS family in Maryland for 37 years of my life. Together we've all witnessed situations throughout our tenure that the general public for the most part just could not understand what it truly takes to “give back to your communities.”

We share all the nice moments together by attending birthday parties, weddings, family gatherings and the like; but allow me to shed light on the horrific events your fire/EMS providers must endure too often; that's the death of a fellow “brother or sister,” mentor, friend, companion, son, daughter, husband and wife. You see, that is what makes up your fire/EMS service in Charles County and across the entire country. When we lose that special person, we all grieve, mourn, are heart broken, and finally have that humbling responsibility to give them their last and final ride to the resting place.

This year, 2015, has been especially difficult having lost life member Robert Eugene Buck from Benedict VFD in January, life member Kenneth “Dizz” Dean from Tenth District VFD in March, Autumn Jenkins from Nanjemoy VFD in April, Past Fire Chief James Herbert from Hughesville VFD in April, Elaine Wedding from Charles County Mobile Intensive Care Unit last week, and now EMS Deputy Chief Vernon Monday we just “laid to rest” yesterday.

The Charles County Volunteer Fire/EMS system has been dealt a challenge unlike other professions. These people are citizens within your own communities, willing to help others leaving the family dinner table to answer the alarm, miss their own child's ball game to attend a meeting at the firehouse or rescue squad, answer your call for service at 3 o'clock in the morning and attend funerals for their fallen comrades.

As you ride by a fire station, rescue squad, a district station at the sheriff's office and you see the “black ribbons” draped across the buildings or vehicles, remember one thing; “they gave their life in service to others.”

When you see a funeral procession with emergency vehicles, lights flashing, police escorts, roads being temporarily shut down to make certain we pass through safely; remember one thing; pull over safely, be patient, “they gave they life in service to others.”

We have lost over 200 years of combined service in Charles County so far this year. When you see a firefighter, EMT or a police officer on the street, just say “thank you.” It means a lot.

Every fire department and rescue squad, not only in Charles County but across Maryland, are in immediate need of volunteers. Now it's your time to “help us so we can help you.” Stop by any fire department or rescue squad to sign up. Be part of the solution – not the problem.

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