



## OFFICE OF THE CHIEF

### ELSMERE FIRE DISTRICT TOWN OF BETHLEHEM – ELSMERE, NEW YORK

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**Chief**  
Francis J. Wickham

Commander,

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Robert C. Baldwin

**Assistant Chief**  
Marc F. Futia

Once again, on behalf of the Elsmere Fire Company I would like to thank The Nathaniel Adams Blanchard Post 1040 for their unwavering support throughout the year and as always for allowing us the opportunity to recognize outstanding individuals from throughout the Town of Bethlehem's first response agencies.

It is a privilege and an honor to stand before you here today to acknowledge the Elsmere Fire Companies recipient of the firefighter of the year award, this March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020. This award has been given over the years for a variety of reasons and regardless of those reasons, the common theme is dedication to the residents of the district we serve, commitment to the training we receive, and continuous acts of selflessness. This year's recipient checks all of those boxes and goes above and beyond his call to duty.

On a quiet weekend in September the recipient, who is always monitoring the town's fire control frequency, heard an ECHO response come over the air and quickly realized a neighbor of several decades was in need. The recipient has responded to numerous calls just like this one and each has a lasting impact regardless of outcome. Nothing can prepare you mentally or emotionally when the person in need is someone you know personally, a neighbor, or a friend. The recipient selflessly rose to action and rushed to his neighbor's side, relied on his training, and immediately began performing CPR. The training tells us that those first minutes are crucial to survivability and in this instance CPR was started right away. At this time I will read to you, a letter that I received from Executive Director and Chief of Delmar-Bethlehem EMS, Steven Kroll. (The name of the individual was replaced with firefighter)

"Dear Chief Wickham, I want to thank one of your firefighters for first responding to an echo call this past weekend. He responded and began CPR immediately, continuing until the EMS crews arrived. His actions contributed to our ability to restore a heartbeat. This elderly gentleman did pass away later in the day, but the firefighter helped us give him a chance and gave his family time to come to grips with this sad event. While we wish we could save everyone, giving a person a fighting chance and giving a family some time really matters. In the end he was called home, but it was with the grace and caring of our Town's emergency responders. Please thank the firefighter for making a difference."

Thank you Chief Kroll for your thoughtful words and providing us with the level of detail highlighting how time is of the essence and how that time can make such a difference and for sharing with us how the actions of others can give someone else a chance. The recipient responded to two different echo calls in 2019 so he's no stranger to these types of situations. This is also not the first time this recipient has helped a neighbor in need as just a couple of years back, he responded to a medical emergency at her home and she was suffering from a stroke. He again rose to action and made a difference for someone else in need as he stayed by her side and kept her calm while waiting for EMR crews to arrive. It's these acts of kindness and selflessness that made choosing this year's recipient an easy decision.

In addition to his actions we have mentioned, this year's recipient has had many accomplishments throughout the years. He's been a member of the Elsmere Fire Company since July of 1975 and has been actively involved all facets of the company ever since. Along the way he's held many elected positions such as President, Vice President, Director, Property Clerk, and Lieutenant, all of which he's served with great pride. Forty-Five years later he continues to be one of the companies top responders annually. He was the chairman of the Hudson Mohawk and Albany County conventions in 1992 and 2004. He served as the company president for a total of ten years over two terms (1984-1990 and 2000-2002). He was the Chairman of the recruitment and retention committee for many years and played a large part in creating the Kenneth E. McNary award, an award given annually to those that exemplify characteristics of dedication, professionalism, and concern for fellow firefighters as well as maintaining a high level of commitment to both the company and the community, an award he himself was awarded in 1995. In May of 1992, he was recognized for his support role for the 9/11 World Trade Center Response where he and fellow firefighters from the town responded to NYC to support in the efforts. He was the recipient of the Kevin M. Shea participation award in 2010, an award he was proud to have won due to his close friendship with Kevin Shea. Last but not least, in 2017 he was awarded firefighter of the year by the Elsmere Fire Company as he was recognized for his dedication and commitment to the company and the residents it serves spanning six different decades and for the many accomplishments we've already mentioned. The recipient currently serves as the fire police Lt, a role he's held since 2009 and has championed relationship building between the fire police of the different agencies in town and by doing so, Town of Bethlehem Fire Police meetings were born.

This year's recipient was born to be a firefighter. He's the 2<sup>nd</sup> of four generations of Elsmere Firefighters, joined by his Father, Step-Father, both of his sons, son in-law, and his grandson. He has been known around the EFD to be passionate about taking care of the "old timers" so it may be fitting to point out that he might just be an "old timer" himself now. He's dedicated his life to caring for his brothers and sisters in the fire service and if you asked him, that is his greatest feat of them all, even with a resume of accomplishments like his. He would tell you "Don't wait. Don't wait to make a difference in someone's life, do it now before it's too late" and "Never forget" as he refers to those we've served with and those who've gone before us.

Throughout the years this person has put others before him and last fall he did what he's always done as he responded to a neighbor in need. His actions made a difference for the family and for the first responders because through his training and quick response he gave them all a chance. For his actions on that September day, and countless other reasons,

Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me in honoring Steven R. Wright as we proudly select him as this year's recipient of Firefighter of the year

Chief Frank Wickham  
Elsmere Fire District