



CITY OF MUSCATINE

PRESS RELEASE

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For more information contact:
Kevin Jenison, Communication Manager
Phone: (563) 264-1550
Fax: (563) 264-0750
E-Mail: kjenison@muscatineiowa.gov

BATTALION CHIEF ABBOTT TO RETIRE FROM FIRE DEPARTMENT

Citizens, friends, & family invited to celebration Thursday (May 31) from 2-4 p.m.

MUSCATINE Iowa – After almost 22 years of serving the citizens of Muscatine as a member of the Muscatine Fire Department, Battalion Chief Brian Abbott will work his last shift Thursday, May 31, 2018. A celebration of his firefighting career and on his retirement will be held from 2-4 p.m. Thursday in the dayroom of the Public Safety Building.

The one-time farmer turned firefighter will return to the farm but do not expect him to sit idly on the porch watching the world pass by. The first weekend of his retirement will find Chief Abbott at the Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area located 12 miles northwest of Cedar Rapids near Palo, Iowa, for the Pigman Sprint Triathlon.

“I have a daughter who lives near Lone Tree that has become involved with these sprint triathlons,” Abbott said. “She talked me into competing. I’ve done a lot of biking (25 straight years of riding in RAGBRAI) and running 5Ks but my only concern was the swim and I have been working on that since January.”

A sprint triathlon consists of a half-mile (750 m) swim, 12.4 mile (20K) bike ride, and a 3.1 mile (5K) run.



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There will also be time in his retirement to visit family and friends across the country along with camping trips with his wife.

“I am actually looking forward to getting back to the farm and taking care of our little orchard that we have,” Abbott said.

Abbott received his Emergency Medical Technology/Technician certification from Southeast Iowa Community College and was working for two months at the Mount Pleasant Hospital when he was hired on by the Muscatine Fire Department.

“I really didn’t think much about applying in Muscatine at the time,” Abbott said, “focusing more around Cedar Rapids. But Muscatine was taking applications, I applied, and was hired. Two months after starting in Mount Pleasant, I was back in Muscatine.”

Abbott’s first day on the job was Nov. 19, 1996, and it has been a “shade over 21 and a half years” that he has been working for the citizens of Muscatine as a member of the Fire Department. He was promoted to Lieutenant by then Fire Chief Steve Dalbey and to Captain by Jerry Ewers who succeeded Dalbey as Fire Chief.

He was promoted to Battalion Chief when Assistant Chief Garry Lee retired on May 1, 2013.

“They changed the job title at that time,” Abbott said. “I got a late start in this business. I have to thank the City of Muscatine and the Fire Department for hiring me at 40-years-old. Thinking back 21 years ago really shows me that the time has gone by quickly.”

The biggest change Abbott has noticed over the years has been the number of calls the department answers in a day. When he started, five calls was a busy day. Now, if the department does not answer 15 calls a day, it is a slow day.



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“To be honest you never want to see the amount of calls go up because it means someone is in distress,” Abbott said. “It is amazing, however, how our call volume has gone up.”

Part of that is due to the Fire Department taking over the ambulance service in 2000. Muscatine was still running a provisional paramedic service off of the engines, and taking over the ambulance service has proven to be a feather in Muscatine’s cap.

“With the way budgets are and as tight as money is, many services in Iowa are laying off firefighters,” Abbott said. “Here we have been fortunate and are constantly trying to hire them.”

A lot of the paramedics are also certified in Illinois so coverage is not just in the City of Muscatine but in Muscatine County and in Illinois as well. Muscatine also has a Hazmat Response Program that covers a five-county area including Muscatine, Louisa, Washington, Henry, and Keokuk.

As chief of training operations, Abbott knows from his position and from his own experience, just much time and effort the firefighters put forth in training and education.

Abbott has found it amazing and fascinating the amount of continuing education and training is required of today’s firefighters and paramedics.

“Not that we are any better than any other department in the state or in the country for that matter,” Abbott said, “but we are demanding a lot from these men and women.”

Being a paramedic requires 60 hours of continuing education and some of those are national registries which is 80 hours. In addition, in order to abide by Iowa Code, the firefighters must do



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24 hours of remedial fire training in order to do interior firefighting plus 16 hours of hazmat training annually.

“On top of that we have confined space and other rescue training along with vehicle extrication training,” Abbott said. “Then we ask them to do reports and be proficient at computers. You are doing something all the time. And then when you do get a chance to catch your breath, it is usually in the middle of the night.”

This is definitely a game for the young, Abbott noted, and he feels fortunate to have lasted as long as he has.

“I will be 62 when I retire,” Abbott said. “I thank the good Lord above for keeping me in the shape that I am so that I can do what we do. When you see some of these young kids and how hard they work, you begin to think you just can’t keep up with them anymore.”

Abbott recalls starting with a volunteer company, becoming good friends with some of the guys from that city, and actually mentoring one of their sons who is now working for Abbott with the Muscatine Fire Department.

“It has been enjoyable watching these kids grow up in the business,” Abbott said. “I can remember one firefighter who didn’t know anything when he first showed up. Just watching him mature and become the young man that he is, the paramedic that he is, and the firefighter that he is, gives you a good feeling knowing that you were part of that process.”

His final thought on his years with the Muscatine Fire Department?



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“This is a great group to work with, it really is,” Abbott said.

Later this fall you may find Abbott on his homestead near Nichols and allowing people to come pick fruit in his orchard for a donation to the charity of their choice.

“We have always had people come up and ask if they could have some of the fruit from our orchards,” Abbott said. “There is always plenty and we don’t mind. When they ask up how much they owe use, we just ask them to make a donation to the charity of their choice.”