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Craig Chelf



Michael Lintz



Benjamin Quick

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW FIREFIGHTERS ARE INSPIRED WHILE LEARNING ON THE JOB

MUSCATINE, Iowa – The newest members of the Muscatine Fire Department share a passion to be a firefighter, to help those in need, and to learn the skills necessary to survive in a mentally and physically demanding environment. Craig Chelf, Michael Lintz, and Benjamin Quick joined the Muscatine Fire Department earlier this year and their training has not let up. Neither has their excitement for being a firefighter.

“When people call 911 you know they are having a bad day,” Lintz said. “There is never a good situation when you call 911 so being able to show up and do anything that will brighten their day is a rewarding



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feeling, whether it is emotional support or physical help. We do it 24 hours at a time and stay pretty busy. It's pretty awesome."

Being able to assist citizens in times of need is just one of the reasons that these three became firefighters. For Quick it was also something that he grew up around. For Chelf being a firefighter is something that he has wanted since high school.

"Initially it was my dad, he is a firefighter," Quick said of becoming a firefighter. "I just enjoy the lifestyle, the comradery, and helping people out. I grew up around that and I really like that. It is also similar to the Army and I liked that too."

Chelf has had a desire to be a firefighter for a long time. He drove trucks after high school but wanted a change and the desire to become a firefighter was still there.

"I was a volunteer for the Durant ambulance," Chelf said. "I went to school for paramedic last year and when I moved to the Muscatine area, I decided to try on my fire boots and go for it. I have wanted to do this for a long time, since I was in high school, and have been an EMS for 10 years."

Quick grew up in Rock Island and lives in East Moline. Chelf is a Davenport native while Lintz hails from Bettendorf. All are certified paramedics and demonstrate a unique positive attitude toward their firefighter training.

When on duty each of the newcomers can be found studying different subjects on fire fighting. That study continues during their off hours as they prepare for their Firefighter I exams. On duty they are participants in the regular training sessions held at the fire station for all members of the department and absorb as much knowledge as they can from the veterans.

"I love coming to work," Lintz said. "Being the new guy you don't know how you will be treated but from day one these guys took me under their wings and the senior guys have really helped in making a smooth transition to being a firefighter."



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These three, along with approximately 80 other firefighters from around the area, were provided some practical training and experience in fighting a fire during the recent training burn of the former Beach Lumber Company in Muscatine on the last Saturday in March.

“It was very good hands-on training because it gave us an eye opening for what could come and what could happen,” Chelf said. “We got our feet wet and could gauge our reaction to things. We also got some hose time which was beneficial.”

Quick noted he had never been that close to a fire of that magnitude before so just seeing the smoke, the smoke patterns, and how the fire worked its way through the structure was a great learning experience.

“Like when we were setting up for the fire,” Quick said. “To listen to Chief Dalbey, Chief Janssen, and Captain Bennitt debate about where to start the fire in relation to how they wanted the fire to spread, how quickly or slowly it needed to burn to consume the building ... I really liked listening to their expertise and knowledge.”

Lintz also thought the training exercise was pretty cool and a great time.

“There is so much to learn from handling hose to the fire behavior itself,” Lintz said. “Like the chief was saying to us, everything that burns nowadays, with all the new materials, burns fast and produces just nasty smoke. You can talk about it all you want but until you are out there experiencing it ... that is a whole another way to learn. You are right in the face with all that smoke and you cannot get any better than that when you are training.”

The day began with a variety of training sessions including water shuttle, hose handling, rescues, the command center, and ventilation. Each of the trainees rotated between the stations in groups and were instructed by veteran members of the fire department.



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“We had a good time with the different sessions of different training including ventilation,” Chelf said. “It is always good to have that one-on-one action with guys that have been doing this for years.”

The actual training burn was not so much to teach the trainees about extinguishing a large fire but more about containing that fire and protecting nearby structures.

“This was a pretty good example of what might happen when we get to a structure fire that is that engulfed,” Quick said. “This training is essentially what we would do, which is exposure control or cooling down the buildings around the fire so they will not catch fire. The training burn was pretty realistic from that stand point.”

Lintz noted that the main focus of the fire department is protection of people and property.

“We are doing more than just saving lives,” Lintz said. “We want to prevent exposures. If one house burns down we don’t want the next one to go too. During the training we were right down there with some of the hand lines protecting the buildings that we didn’t want to burn. Everything went well.”

Each of the new firefighters know that there is a lot of information they will need to learn and file away for quick recall at a later time. Gathering that information from books, online courses, and from one-on-one sessions with fire department veterans is good but hands-on training solidifies that knowledge.

“There is so much information that you have to learn and have at the ready at all times,” Quick said. “These guys have so much knowledge in their heads. I really like listening to and learning from their expertise and knowledge.”

The lifestyle of a firefighter is just something you definitely have to get used to Lintz said.

“It is 24 hours with pretty much your brothers so it feels like a second home,” Lintz said.



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And on your day's off?

"You just want to make sure you get enough sleep and come back well rested," Lintz said. "I am loving it right now."