



ABINGTON TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT (ATFD) INTRODUCES HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO FIELD OF FIREFIGHTING DURING ANNUAL SERVICE LEARNING DAY EVENT

ABINGTON – Approximately 30 Abington Senior High School students experienced what it’s like to enter a smoky building, extinguish a grill fire and operate a fire hose as part of their visit to the Abington Township Fire Department’s training facility on May 27th.

Volunteer firefighters introduced the teens to a variety of activities that are part of a firefighter’s training and duties so that they would get a real feel for what is involved in joining the local fire company. Service Learning Day is an annual event organized by the high school to teach students about the many volunteer opportunities that exist within the community and stress the value of service. It also represents a chance for the ATFD to pique the interest of young people who can help continue the legacy of the five volunteer fire companies that make up the ATFD (Abington, McKinley, Weldon, Edge Hill and Roslyn).

“We keep everything interesting to see if we can’t recruit some new members,” said First Assistant Engineer John Mason of the Edge Hill Fire Company. “Some students are surprised by what they learn. It’s a new thing for a lot of them.”

High school sophomore Victoria Kent said she was surprised by how much weight firefighters carry around once they suit up to go into a burning building. With the help of ATFD member John Rohrer, she dressed in boots, pants, heavy jacket and a helmet to enter the training facility’s burn room, where simulated smoke billowed out of the door as students held onto a hose to make their way through the dark interior.

“You get hot really fast,” she said of the experience.

Still, it did not deter her from wanting to join. Victoria said she requested to spend her Service Learning Day experience with the fire department because she hopes to one day become a member.

“I want to be a volunteer firefighter. It’s just something I’m interested in,” she said.

Fellow student Charles Pierre-Francois said he was looking forward to seeing what it would be like to enter the burn room. While suiting up, he was caught off guard by the weight of the air tanks that firefighters wear after trying on the apparatus. After following his classmates into the burn building and coming back out, it was clear an impression had been made.

“It was very hot, and you couldn’t see anything. There was no light,” he said. “But it was kind of cool.”

Max Malloy, a high school junior who is already a member of the Roslyn Fire Company, helped his fellow high school students put on the firefighting gear and also operated the thermal imaging camera inside the burn building to show students the type of equipment that is used. He said events like Service Learning Day are helpful in reaching that next generation of firefighters.

“It’s important to show kids and get other people interested,” he said. “It’s never bad to have more volunteers.”

This is the fifth year in which students have visited the ATFD’s training facility to learn about the five volunteer fire companies that comprise the ATFD and what they do to prevent and fight fires. The ATFD’s Public Safety Training Facility is located at 2200 Florey Lane in Abington. For more information about the department, visit www.abingtonfd.org.

