

Nominee: Fire Chief Len VanderWyst

Fire Department/Agency: Appleton Fire Department

State: Wisconsin

Explanation: Coming into the role as Fire Chief, Len knew that the department was struggling with issues of low morale and a lack of participation by the members. One of the first things that Len implemented was an open door policy. Personnel of all ranks were encouraged to approach the chief with any concerns, improvements, or just to "chat". Len also made an effort to meet with all of the firefighting staff prior to implementing any new changes to the department. Change is hard for any firefighter to accept, but by listening to the firefighters and taking their advice into consideration, any changes that have occurred are being met with little resistance. As a result of seeing their advice being utilized the firefighters have begun to take ownership in the department again. Participation in committees, specialty teams, charity events, and off duty functions have increased. All of the positive results are due to the hiring of Len VanderWyst as the Appleton Fire Chief.

Name of person submitting nomination: Firefighter Matthew Gerrits

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