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In Honor of Women's History Month Department Recognizes Seven Achievers



From left are Fire Commissioner Salvatore Cassano, Dr. Kerry Kelly, Carol Chodes, Lt. Michele Fitzsimmons, Lt. Anna Schermerhorn-Collins, Office of Recruitment and Diversity Deputy Director Nafeesah Noonan, EMT Amanda Schmidt, Chief Ann Fitton and Chief of Department Edward Kilduff.

The FDNY honored seven high-achieving women, including Office of Recruitment and Diversity Deputy Director Nafeesah Noonan, during a Women's History Month ceremony at FDNY Headquarters on March 26.

The honorees were recognized for being women of character, courage and commitment.

"Every woman in this job is contributing to making sure this Department runs smoothly," Fire Commissioner Salvatore Cassano said.

"Each of our honorees are the definition of leadership," added Office of Recruitment and Diversity Assistant Commissioner

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Meet 'Probie' LaShawnda Brinson-Shaheen

FDNY Probationary Firefighter LaShawnda Brinson-Shaheen said she has always been someone who likes to help people. As a young girl, she noted that she was exposed to many different careers in public service, but becoming an FDNY Firefighter was always one that really sparked her interest.

“When I was a kid, whenever I used to see the big red fire engine ride by, I would just look at it in amazement,” she recalled. “When you’re young, it’s very exciting to see that and I always knew I wanted to work as a Firefighter for the FDNY.”

After serving as a family worker for the New York City Department of Education for 16 years, Brinson-Shaheen made the decision to switch careers and become a New York City Firefighter. To prepare for the Fire Academy, she completed cardio and strength training at least five times each week.



Probationary Firefighter LaShawnda Brinson-Shaheen was one of four female firefighters who graduated from the Fire Academy in December 2013.

“The Fire Academy is intense and to help get ready for it, I made running a priority in my life,” she explained. “Running helped me a lot, because we trained hard every single day at the Academy. Becoming an FDNY Firefighter is a powerful experience and it really takes a lot of dedication, studying, exercising and hard work.”

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FDNY 'Probie' Looks to Inspire Young Women

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Brinson-Shaheen is also an FDNY Mentee and she noted that her Mentor, Firefighter Marc Anderson, stressed the importance of fitness and academics to help her succeed at the Fire Academy.

“My Mentor would study with me and give me helpful advice, especially during the extremely challenging times at the Fire Academy,” she said. “I honestly could not have completed the Fire Academy without his help, because I didn’t have a fire service background, so this was all new to me and he was really just a great resource.”

When Brinson-Shaheen graduated from the Fire Academy in December 2013, she became one of four female firefighters who attained the career achievement on that special day.

And now one of her goals is to help inspire the next generation of female leaders to include FDNY Firefighter in their list of career choices.

“I really love my job and I want to help young women to see that they can become FDNY Firefighters too,” she said. “I want them to know that this is a great career and they can work as an FDNY Firefighter and make a difference by helping people.”

She is now serving the city as a probie at Engine 226 in Brooklyn.

Female Firefighter Candidates Get Academy Fit

For 10 FDNY female firefighter candidates, Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons are spent completing Fire Academy-style physical training with the United Women Firefighters (UWF) at the New York Sports Club on Wall Street.

While wearing their 50-pound weighted vests, the women firefighter hopefuls complete high-intensity calisthenics, circuit and endurance training and other drills to help meet the physical demands of the firefighter career.

During each session, the aspiring firefighters train intensely for two hours and they hear words of wisdom from current female FDNY firefighters.



Firefighter candidates Jomarie Cruz, left, and Josephine Smith, are two women who train with the United Women Firefighters (UWF) twice a week.

“The workouts give the women a chance to experience the kind of physical training that is expected at the Fire Academy,” UWF President Sarinya Srisakul explained, adding that every female firefighter candidate should take advantage of the free sessions. “Our training helps to build their strength and endurance and it’s all about teaching the fitness skills that will help the ladies succeed at this job.”

The journey to becoming a New York City Firefighter has been an extremely busy one for most of the women. Not only do they train with the UWF twice a week, they exercise on their own five times a week, work full-time jobs and main-

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Aspiring Female Firefighters Train with the UWF

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Firefighter hopeful Hildany Santana completes the Sled Tow drill during a United Women Firefighters (UWF) workout session.

tain other important responsibilities. Their schedules are hectic, but the shared career motivation, many said, is to help those in need.

“I want to help people and that’s why I’m working so hard to get this job,” said 26-year-old candidate Hildany Santana. “Being an FDNY Firefighter will help me do something meaningful with my life, because I will be helping to save lives.”

Candidate Josephine Smith, 34, shared similar sentiments, adding that joining the firefighter ranks is one way she will continue to make her dad proud. The firefighter hopeful is the daughter of Kevin Smith, a longtime FDNY Haz-Mat Co. 1 firefighter who died in the line of duty on September 11, 2001.

“When I was a kid, I visited my dad’s firehouse all the time and I always wanted to be an FDNY Firefighter,” she said. “This is my dream job and I can’t wait to follow in my dad’s footsteps.”

And even though they come from different walks of life, the goal of adding one of New York’s Bravest to their list of life achievements keeps them united.

“Training with the UWF is helping us get mentally and physically prepared for this job,” Smith said. “We help one another out at each session and prepare as much as possible together. We’re like a family.”

UWF to Host Training for Candidates

The United Women Firefighters (UWF) is scheduled to host physical fitness training for women firefighter candidates in April at the New York Sports Club on Wall Street in New York City. The club is located at 30 Wall Street, New York, NY 10005. To be eligible to participate, every candidate must have a gym lock, at least a 50 pound vest, fitness clothes and sneakers, water and a medical waiver. In addition, every candidate should attend the training properly hydrated and fueled and ready for an intense workout. Please note that these workout sessions are designed to prepare candidates for the physical training at the Fire Academy. To register for the sessions, please e-mail womenrecruitfdny-subscribe@yahooogroup.com.



April 2014 UWF Training Schedule

April 10, 17 and 24 at 7:30 p.m.

April 13, 20 and 27 at 12 p.m.

Department Celebrates Women's History Month

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FDNY Assistant Commissioner for Recruitment and Diversity Michele Maglione, first row right, congratulated FDNY EMT Arallia Heggs, first row left, and FDNY High School for Fire and Life Safety student Nehemie Eril, second row, for serving as guest speakers during the Department's Women's History Month Celebration on March 26. FDNY High School students, back row, from left, Nhandi Brown, Ashayna Daniel and Tama Hallett also attended the celebration.

Michele Maglione, who served as the event's keynote speaker. "Your work has created a legacy that each of you can be proud of and the Department is indebted to you."

Noonan, who joined the Department seven years ago, was recognized for her continuous leadership in the Department's diversity efforts and in its Fire and Emergency Medical Services Exploring Program.

In addition, FDNY EMT Arallia Heggs and FDNY High School for Fire and Life Safety student Nehemie Eril served as the program's guest speakers. Heggs is also a FDNY High School alumna.

Join the #FDNYfit Movement

The FDNY wants to showcase your outstanding Fire Academy preparation efforts. Whether you are hitting the gym for a workout session, bike riding around town or visiting a quiet place to study the Probationary Firefighter Manual, we want to see it.

Join the #FDNYfit movement by sharing your preparation photos with Recruitment on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and/or Flickr. Show us how you are getting ready to become one of New York's Bravest!*

*Please note that all #FDNYfit postings should be shared with Join FDNY and should include your first and last name in the caption. Inappropriate photos, electioneering photos and/or photos promoting a business will not be shared on any of the Join FDNY accounts. In addition, please remember that every interaction with the FDNY is considered part of your interview process. Only serious submissions will be shared.