



# **TOWN OF CANTON VOLUNTEER Fire & EMS Department**

*Valuing Life...at a Moment's Notice*



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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**For Immediate Distribution**

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### ***Fathers & Sons Continue Legacy of Family & Community in Town of Canton Volunteer Fire & EMS Department***

**Canton, CT June, 2010....** “Every day is Fathers Day in the fire service,” observes Town of Canton Volunteer Fire & EMS Department firefighter Scott Goeben. Goeben, who works as Fire Inspector at Yale University, is father to Zachery, a Fire Cadet and Stephen who just graduated the Cadet program and is currently at the Hartford County Regional Fire School at the Connecticut Fire Academy working on his Firefighter-I interior certification. “So, I understand the pride that other Department father-son teams, such as the Gotaskis and Barnharts, feel.”

Like the Goebens, Volovskis and other Canton families before them, the Gotaski's commitment to the fire service began with a father wanting to serve his community. “My dad John,” began volunteer firefighter Tom Gotaski, “was a charter member of Collinsville Fire Station. He'd come home and talk about the camaraderie of the membership. He'd stress the importance of protecting our family by volunteering in the fire service to protect all families in town.”

In 2005, Johnathan Gotaski joined Canton's Fire Cadets as soon as he turned the minimum age of 14. Tom was busy working as Transportation Manager at Old Castle Precast in Avon and coaching baseball. Johnathan began telling Tom about the need for qualified drivers to get the fire trucks out of the station. In addition, the senior Gotaski was reading interviews with Chief Rich Hutchings about the challenges facing the Department regarding recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters and EMTs. So at age 19 Tom, who holds a Commercial Drivers License, responded by volunteering. “No one has the time to do this. You find the time to do this.”

Now 18, Johnathan just completed his training for Firefighter-I at the Hartford County Fire School and is enrolled at Capital Community College, majoring in fire science and emergency management. Just recently, his 14 year old brother Jordan, who was already spending most of his weekends at the fire house, joined Fire Cadets.

The Barnhart clan, Jesse and his father Dan, are the first father-son team in Canton to go through the Firefighter-I program - together.

Jesse initially joined the Department as a Fire Cadet in 2008. “It was important for me,” says Dan, “to give Jesse some space and not crowd his experience by joining the Department at the same time. I wanted him to find his own way before I got involved.” Ultimately, Jesse left the Cadet program before graduation due to commitments in high school. Dan continued his desire to serve the town as a volunteer firefighter - some day. Meanwhile, he was busy working 70 hours a week in construction as owner of Barnhart & Barnhart.

In 2008, a sudden series of illnesses in his family made Dan rethink his life. He asked himself, “if not now, then when will I ever find the time to become a volunteer firefighter?” So, in 2009, he became a member of the Department. A month later, Jesse rejoined, but now at age 18, as a volunteer firefighter.

The Barnharts entered Hartford County Fire School in February/2010 and just completed Firefighter-I in June. They continued to participate in weekly Department drills and get additional guidance and support from fellow volunteer firefighters in their respective fire houses; Dan in Collinsville and Jesse in Canton. “The work that is demanded of firefighters,” states Hartford County Regional Fire School Assistant Training Director Jim Baldis, “requires expertise. That expertise demands training, extensive training. It’s been proven that with training, firefighters act more instinctively so they’re more prepared to protect their community, themselves and fellow firefighters.....who may very well turn out to be, (in this case), their own son or their dad.”

“Firefighter-I was a big commitment – 180 hours of evenings and weekends on top of running a small business and managing three kids,” observes Dan. However, both father and son feel it was well worth it. “There’s personal accomplishment in the group effort,” says Dan who at age 47 sees himself as a lifer. “I want Jesse to follow this own path. I want to encourage him to find his passion, but I do appreciate the opportunity to be beside him when he does.”

Soon enough, their sons will be rushing into burning buildings, as the fathers work either beside them or in support of them on a fire engine’s pump, ensuring that water flows through the hoses to help keep them and their brother and sister volunteer firefighters alive. “We trust the training will keep them safe,” agree Scott, Tom and Dan, “so that we can focus on doing the work as members of the same team.”

“Our sons,” the fathers conclude, “will grow to be men who appreciate that they’re part of something larger than themselves, while still knowing they have family ties and values as members of a band of brothers and sisters; very different types of people connected by profound experiences that bond them to each other forever.”

Anyone interested in becoming a member of the Town of Canton Volunteer Fire & EMS Department can visit [www.cantonfireandems.org](http://www.cantonfireandems.org), or drop by Collinsville or Canton firehouses Monday evenings during The Department’s weekly practice drill at 7:30 p.m.

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