



Marion County Board of County Commissioners Marion County Fire Rescue

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NEW FIREFIGHTERS GET SWORN-IN AND RECOGNIZED Immediate Release

- WHO:** Marion County Fire Rescue (MCFR) and Commission Chairman Jim Payton
- WHAT:** MCFR Employee Recognition and Swearing-In Ceremony
- WHEN:** June 5, 2009
3 p.m.
- WHERE:** McPherson Government Complex ▪ Commission Chamber (601 SE 25th Avenue)
- WHY:** Nineteen newly hired men are ready to take their oath of appointment and become MCFR firefighter/paramedics and firefighter/EMTs. On Friday, as part of a MCFR tradition, these recruits will raise their right hand and promise to dedicate their best efforts to saving lives and protecting property. MCFR will also recognize eight current employees for their committed years of service and six recently promoted employees.

Two special award recipients will also be honored at Friday's ceremony. Captain Craig Damien was named "Firefighter of the Year" by the American Legion Post 284 for his dedication to MCFR's new-recruit training program, and Richard Helsel, a graduate of the Firefighter/EMT Career Academy, was selected to be this year's recipient of the Robert E. Blair Scholarship.

The scholarship was named in the memory of United States Army Specialist Robert Edward Blair, who wanted to become a MCFR firefighter after returning from Iraq, but whose dream was sadly cut short when he died in Iraq on May 25, 2006. MCFR posthumously named Robert an honorary firefighter on September 1, 2006, and at that ceremony, the Blair family presented department leaders with \$500 to initiate a scholarship in Robert's name. Local 3169, the firefighters' union, matched the fund and the first Robert E. Blair Scholarship was awarded on June 20, 2008 to Joshua Deese who is now a Firefighter/EMT with MCFR..

This year the \$1,000 scholarship was funded completely by Local 3169, and will be used by Richard Helsel to continue his training and education at the Florida State Fire College.

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