



Marion County Board of County Commissioners Marion County Fire Rescue

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AMERICAN LEGION NAMES MARION CAPTAIN FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR

Immediate Release

MARION COUNTY, Fla. (April 7, 2009) – The American Legion Post 284 in Belleview named Marion County Fire Rescue (MCFR) Captain Craig Damien, 34, the “Firefighter of the Year” for his dedication to MCFR’s new-recruit training program.

When new firefighters join MCFR’s family, they undergo a six to seven week orientation process. Though the recruits are already state-certified firefighter/paramedics or firefighter/EMTs, the additional training refreshes their knowledge, sharpens their skills and introduces them to the department.

At the end of orientation, firefighters take an oath of appointment, promising to dedicate their best efforts to saving lives and protecting property. “The new-recruit training is important,” said Damien. “It gives the firefighters a good solid foundation to prepare them for what they’ll experience in the field. They also learn other fundamentals such as work ethic, teamwork, respect and discipline, which will help them build the rest of their career.”

But the training doesn’t stop there. Damien, along with other instructors serving MCFR’s Support Services Division, ensures firefighters receive the classes and training they need to continue their education, keeping their skills and knowledge up-to-date with the changes and improvements in the fire service.

Captain Damien began his career at MCFR in 1991 as a volunteer firefighter. He promoted through the ranks, and in 2006, he became a captain who managed fire rescue dispatchers. He was then reassigned to the training group in 2008 following the ambulance service transition re-organization.

Damien joins the ranks of other exceptional firefighters recently recognized by community and veterans’ groups. So far this year, the Ocala Elks Lodge No. 286 named Captain Joel Matthias the “Firefighter of the Year” for his hard work during the recent ambulance service transition. The American Legion Post No. 58 in Dunnellon named Captain Clifford Grier the “Firefighter of the Year” for his work with the Juvenile fire Setter Program. And the VFW Post 8083 in Belleview named Captain Dennis Cronmiller the “Firefighter of the Year” for his dedication to the North Central Florida Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Task Force 8 Team.

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