

Secretary Crim: Delivers first-ever Youth Fire Fighter Training Program Grant to Oconto Fire Rescue

Posted on Friday, May 27, 2022

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Green Bay, Wis. – On Tuesday Department of Safety and Professional Services Secretary Dawn Crim awarded the first of three 2022 Youth Firefighter Training Program Grants to Oconto Fire Rescue at the Green Bay campus of the Northeast Wisconsin Technical College. Oconto Fire Chief Josh Bostedt accepted the check that will support a dual-credit Fire 1 Certification program for Oconto High School students. The program will be delivered in partnership with NWTC, which offers the district's only mobile burn trailers, which enable future fire fighter to experience flash fire training in their communities.

The department awarded \$17,982 to the program that will enroll students in the fall.

“I am honored to be able to award these funds for this kind of collaborative project to our passionate, committed partners in safety and education,” Secretary Crim said. “I have been working with fire departments since my earliest days with the agency, and I am proud I was able to secure resources to help address the very real and very serious recruitment and retention challenges facing fire departments in all parts of Wisconsin.”

The department developed the grant program and secured \$100,000 total in the biennial budget to award to youth training programs over two grant cycles. Crim said the idea came from her many interactions with fire departments throughout the state.

“Whenever I meet with any department, our conversations invariably turn to

recruitment and retention challenges, especially for all-volunteer departments, and I take these conversations to heart,” Secretary Crim said. “I recognize that adequate staffing is essential to not only keeping communities safe but also to keeping fire fighters safe. Finding ways to support recruitment and retention in the fire service is a public health and safety priority that needs greater awareness and additional resources. This grant program is a step in that direction.”

While on campus, Secretary Crim also toured the Public Safety building and training resources, and she met with campus leadership including Dr. H. Jeffrey Rafn, NWTC president, Dr. Kathryn Rogalski, vice president of learning, Dr. Colleen Simpson, vice president of student services, Meridith Jaeger, vice president of college advancement, and Cindy Estrup, dean of public safety.

“We were honored to host Secretary Crim on our campus to discuss challenges and opportunities facing our local fire departments,” said Dr. Rafn, NWTC president. “Keeping our communities safe and trained to respond is one of our top priorities, that’s why opportunities like this are important to maintain partnerships within our district.”

The fire service is a key stakeholder group for DSPS. The department currently [regulates fire fighter health and safety](#) and manages the state fire prevention program. It also administers the 2% dues program, which distributes funds collected from insurers and matched by the state back to qualifying fire departments.

“We look forward to welcoming students to this program in the fall of this year,” said Oconto Fire Chief Josh Bostetd. “We know there are students who are eager for this opportunity to gain new skills, earn NWTC credit, and start on the path to becoming a member of the fire service. We look forward to working with them, educating them, and, perhaps, working alongside some of them in the future.”

The DSPS grant program has funding to award \$50,000 this year and \$50,000 next year to help establish or expand similar programs in other parts of Wisconsin. Applications for 2023 grants will open later this year.

About DSPS: The Department of Safety and Professional Services issues more than 240 unique licenses, administers dozens of boards and councils that regulate professions, enforces state building codes, runs the state fire prevention program, and maintains the award-winning Wisconsin Enhanced Prescription Drug Monitoring

Program, which is a key tool in the multi-faceted public health campaign to stem excessive opioid prescribing. A fee-based agency, the Department of Safety and Professional Services is self-sustaining and receives no general fund tax dollars for its day-to-day operations. With five offices and 250 employees throughout Wisconsin, DSPS collaborates with constituents and stakeholders across a wide range of industries to promote safety and advance the economy.