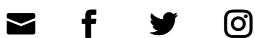


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## NEWS

### Firefighters celebrate tradition at county dinner



THERE WERE PLENTY of laughs shared at the Addison County Firefighters Association

annual meeting at the Eagles Club in Vergennes on Jan. 18. Here, ACFA Vice President Justin Allen (right) laughs as a happy crowd applauds Myron Selleck of Middlebury (center), to whom the association's 51st Regional Fire School was dedicated.  
Independent photo/Marin Howell

January 26, 2023

By Marin Howell



BRISTOL DEPUTY CHIEF Eric Forand receives the Addison County Firefighters Association's Chief of the Year from Middlebury firefighter Donald Patterson at

VERGENNES — Last week, for the first time in three years, more than 100 local firefighters gathered at the Eagles Club in Vergennes for the annual meeting of the Addison County Firefighters Association (ACFA).

First responders clearly enjoyed being together in-person again, with laughter punctuating the evening's program celebrating past achievements and honoring those who have dedicated their time to serve the Addison County community.

the association's annual meeting last week.

Forand was one of eight firefighters (plus one civilian) to receive awards at the event.

Independent photo/Marin Howell

The Jan. 18 gathering was a return to the tradition of congregating at the club after a couple years of holding the event in alternative formats during the pandemic. The event itself was full of other traditions, from the ACFA honor guard's presentation of the colors to

the ringing of the bell ceremony that memorialized firefighters in the county who had died in the past year and called them home for the last time.

However, there was a specific tradition upheld by the association that Vermont Deputy Commissioner of Public Safety Daniel Batsie commended during his comments to the crowd. That was the association's commitment to serving its community.

"Thank you for preserving the very important tradition of volunteerism here in Vermont and paving that pathway with the fire service," he said. "I want to applaud you for preserving that tradition, preserving the thing that so many of us gather together for. This is what it's all about and that is what will sustain us going forward."

Haley Pero, outreach coordinator at the Office of U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, shared with the crowd a message from Sen. Sanders that thanked ACFA members for their efforts to ensure that commitment to service continues in future generations.

"I appreciate you showing young people in Addison County what public service looks like and for inspiring them to join the fire service," Pero said.

The roll call at the meeting recorded 140 firefighters representing 15 of the county's 17 departments. A handful of those attendees were recognized for their service with awards in eight different categories, presented by Bob Patterson of Lincoln.

Two additional firefighters were recognized for their laudable actions by having award categories named in their honor. The Chief of the Year award was named in recognition of Chief James Breur of Vergennes, and the Emergency Maintenance Technician of the Year was named in recognition of Chief Leo "Butch" Dupont of Monkton.

This year's awards were:

- Chief James Breur Chief of the Year: Deputy Chief Eric Forand (Bristol).



JAMES GOODYEAR OF BRISTOL  
FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR

- Chief Robert Jenkins Line Officer of the Year: Captain Anna Jo Smith (New Haven).
- Firefighter of the Year: Firefighter James Goodyear (Bristol).
- Senior Firefighter of the Year: Firefighter Dave Broughton (Middlebury).
- Chief Tom Estey Training Officer of the Year: Captain Justin Soter (Ferrisburgh).
- Leo "Butch" Dupont Emergency Maintenance Technician of the Year: Assistant Chief Ryan Cushing (Ferrisburgh).
- Friend of the ACFA: Chris McClain (Ferrisburgh).

- Life Member: Past Deputy Chief Ken Lemner (Ferrisburgh).
- Life Member: Past Deputy Chief Chris Gebo (Vergennes).

Also at the meeting, John "Peeker" Heffernan of Bristol, Dean Gilmore of New Haven and Peter Lynch, chief of training at the Vermont Fire Academy in Pittsford, were also awarded life membership to the Vermont State Firefighters Association. The ACFA also recognized former state Rep. Harvey Smith, who represented New Haven, Bridport and Weybridge for 20 years in the Vermont House of Representatives, for his years of dedicated legislative support.



CHRIS MCCLAIN OF FERRISBURGH FRIEND  
OF THE ACFA

This year's Friend of the ACFA award was given to Chris McClain, a Ferrisburgh resident and member of the Pipes & Drums of the St. Andrews Society of Vermont. McClain was recognized for her various contributions to the Ferrisburgh Fire Department throughout the years, which include donations of time and money and supporting the department as firefighters grieved the loss of former Chief Bob Jenkins.

At the meeting, the ACFA's 51st Regional Fire School was dedicated to Middlebury Assistant Chief Myron Selleck, who served as president of the ACFA in 2020 and 2021.

During the dedication, ACFA Vice President Justin Allen of Salisbury commended Selleck for leading the association during the pandemic and navigating the association's

proceedings as they shifted online.

"Myron was in charge of getting people together in ways that weren't normal to us," Allen said. "His role throughout the pandemic was more than just a president of the ACFA. He became the conduit of information about COVID-19, and even the expert in some eyes."

The evening ended with a final tradition, as the ACFA's honor guard retired the colors. Attendees rose and exchanged farewells as they headed out into the chilly winter night and into another year of serving Addison County.

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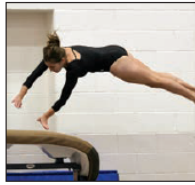


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gymnastics team leapt into action  
against St. J. See Page 1B.



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