

## Two county fire chiefs among first in Ohio to earn credentialing

Two Trumbull County fire chiefs are among the first in the state, and are the only two to date in Trumbull County, to earn credentials recognizing them as Ohio fire chiefs.

Chief Dennis K. Lewis of the Bazetta Fire Department and Chief George B. Snyder of the Burghill Vernon Fire Department were recently granted the new Ohio Fire Chief (OFC) designation by the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association. Originally developed in early 2014, the designation seeks to provide independent verification and certification of fire chiefs in the state. Each applicant is measured against a predetermined set of standards, and the applications are subsequently reviewed by a panel of the chiefs' peers statewide. If the applicant meets the standards of the review, the credential is bestowed upon the officer by vote of the Board of Directors of the association.

"The OFC credential seeks to affirm to government officials, agencies, and, most importantly, the public that the chief serves that the person earning it is truly qualified to hold such a position as determined by an independent body," said Chief Snyder. "It is one thing to believe you have what it takes to do the job. It is quite another to be able to demonstrate that your peers recognize that you are qualified. This credential is the vehicle to do just that."

According to the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association website, the credentialing program was established to "promote the professional development of the chief fire officer in Ohio." It was developed out of a need to have uniform credentialing for chief fire officers, and to ensure that there is accountability for these professionals. The application process looks at different facets of the development, such as occupational education, fire service related training and experience relative to the field.

The OFC program is designed so that chiefs of full-time, part-time and volunteer departments alike

may have an equal chance at earning the credential. Chief Lewis heads Bazetta Fire Department, a full-time fire department with two stations, 11 full-time staff and 15 part-time staff. His agency protects approximately 6000 residents of the township. Chief Snyder leads the Burghill Vernon Fire Department, a single-station volunteer fire department with about 30 volunteer staff, protecting just over 1500 residents of Vernon Township. Both departments provide fire protection and prevention services, and both have advanced life support ambulances.

Both chiefs have extensive experience in public safety. Chief Snyder began his career as a cadet firefighter when he was 16 years old, and recently completed his 25<sup>th</sup> year in the fire service. He holds a Bachelor of Criminal Justice degree from Tiffin University. He is both a fire and emergency medical services instructor, a certified fire safety inspector, a fire investigator and a Certified Healthcare Emergency Professional. Chief Lewis began his career as a junior firefighter when he was 16 years old as well, and is in his 31<sup>st</sup> year in the fire service. He holds an Associate's Degree in Fire Protection Technology from Akron University and is currently enrolled at Bowling Green State University working to earn a Bachelor's degree in Fire Administration. He graduated in 2013 from the 11th class of the Ohio Fire Executive program, a program also sponsored by the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association.

Both chiefs are also paramedics, and attended their paramedic initial training program together in 1996.

Chief Lewis and Chief Snyder, along with any others throughout the state earning the credential, will be required to renew it every three years.

Any questions may be directed to Chief Dennis Lewis, Bazetta Fire Department at 330-637-4136, and/or Chief George Snyder, Burghill Vernon Fire Department, at 330-442-7444.