



city of
greenville

News Release

GREENVILLE CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT AND BON SECOURS ST. FRANCIS HEALTH SYSTEM PARTNER ON PUBLIC SAFETY INITIATIVES

(Greenville SC) Chief Stephen Kovalcik announced today that the Greenville City Fire Department (GCFD) and Bon Secours St. Francis Health System have joined forces on two important initiatives designed to make the community safer. As part of the City's celebration of Fire Prevention Week (October 9-15), there will be a formal check presentation and recognition of Bon Secours St. Francis Health System's support of GCFD at tonight's City Council meeting.

The first initiative, an education and awareness campaign aimed at protecting children, is part of GCFD's Community Risk Reduction Program and was developed in conjunction with Fire is Everyone's Fight™, a national effort led by the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA). Bon Secours St. Francis Health System provided \$7,500 for the campaign, which includes a brochure titled, *Don't Let Your World Go Up in Smoke*, that provides home fire safety tips for new parents and will be distributed to expectant parents at area pregnancy and childbirth classes.

Fire Is Everyone's Fight™ is a national initiative to unite the fire service, life safety organizations and professionals in an effort to reduce home fire injuries, deaths and property loss by changing how people think about fire and fire prevention. According to Chief Kovalcik, Bon Secours St. Francis Health System is the first major healthcare partner for Fire is Everyone's Fight™. "Since forming the community risk reduction team 18 months ago, installing smoke alarms in homes that had too few or no working smoke alarms has been our primary goal," said Kovalcik. "Now, with Bon Secours St. Francis Health System's support, our team can also focus its efforts on education programs designed to protect those who are most vulnerable to the risk of fire injury and death."

Bon Secours St. Francis Health System CEO Craig McCoy said, “We stand committed to partnering with the Greenville City Fire Department in a variety of capacities to ensure the Greenville community has the necessary resources in fire prevention. We are honored to work with our Greenville firefighters in an effort to make sure our homes, our people and particularly our most vulnerable children and the elderly are protected from the threat of fire.”

Not surprisingly, children ages 0 to 4 are at a higher risk of death or injury from home fire than older children. In addition to being too young to independently escape from a fire, young children suffer burns more quickly and easily than adults and are more susceptible to the danger of smoke inhalation. Additionally, children of this age are curious and will touch and play with most items left within their reach, including lighters and matches. As a result, the brochure is designed to remind expectant parents that reducing the risk of fire in their home and having an escape plan should be their first priority when preparing for the arrival of a new baby.

The second initiative is Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training for new firefighters. Having EMTs on board its response vehicles enables GCFD to assess victims’ conditions and provide basic life support upon arrival at a scene. Currently, a GCFD firefighter candidate must either be an EMT or complete EMT training within the first year of employment. Bon Secours St. Francis Health System provided \$13,000, which will allow GCFD to train 13 new firefighters as EMTs. According to Kovalcik, this additional training is critical as fire departments have evolved into multifaceted agencies that provide a myriad of emergency services to the community. In fact, a recent survey by the National Fire Protection Association showed that in 2015, approximately 64% of total fire department calls nationwide were for medical emergencies rather than fires.

While GCFD was already working with Bon Secours St. Francis Health System on the education and awareness campaign, their most recent partnership was purely coincidental. Representatives from both organizations attended the Greenville Heroes awards luncheon in August, where DJ Rama, JHM Hotels president, mentioned in his remarks that he was providing \$1,000 for GCFD’s EMT training program and encouraged others to do the same. “When the need for funding was identified for firefighters to be EMT certified, Bon Secours St. Francis Health System was pleased to step up and help meet that need. This partnership is one way we live out Bon Secours’ mission of being Good Help to Those in Need®. From my experience as a former paramedic with Greenville County EMS, it

would be beneficial for firefighters to have EMT training to ensure they are able to provide the best emergency care to the residents of Greenville County,” said McCoy.

“Bon Secours St. Francis Health System and the City have a history of successful collaborations,” said Kovalcik. “We are deeply grateful for their support and we look forward to working with them on additional community safety initiatives in the future.”

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