

# GJFD

Grand Junction Fire Department

2016



Taking Care of People and Property



**Total Hours 20,580**

## Training Spotlight

**E:** (Chris) you're actually a member of the support team. What was the training like for you?

**C:** Something I hadn't expected was how old issues I thought I had dealt with kept popping up ... You can only sweep so much stuff under the rug before it oozes up through the carpet. We all need to be better about asking for help when we need it.

**E:** Are you doing any cross-training with other institutions in the city?

**G:** Our Rescue Task Force is working with Grand Junction Police and Mesa County Sheriffs to provide training for active threat situations and the types of injuries we may see in those situations.

**C:** Historically police and fire have not worked well together, we got to a scene and did our own things. But with this training we're bringing commanders together to make decisions. We are also getting EMTs together with officers to simulate how they would work together to rescue people, treat injuries, and manage the incident.

**E:** We've talked about all of these other types of training, but how do the crews train on live fire?

**G:** Right now we rely on donated structures, but we are really limited by the time of year, burn bans, and the structure's safety to be able to use it. If a house isn't available then we have to go outside our community which comes down to additional cost and time in order to provide that training.

**C:** Ultimately we need a training center where we can do reliable and repeatable live fire training. With donated structures it's really hard to get everyone the same training experience because the house really deteriorates with each use.

**E:** I just read an article about how training is the foundation of a healthy department. Are there next generation problems you see on the horizon?

**C:** We're incorporating virtual professional development these days. I really think that opportunities exist with technology that are incredible and will ultimately advance our department.

**G:** Everything used to be made of wood and wool, now because of technology so many things are made of plastic. This has really increased the amount of carcinogens our guys encounter at a fire. So now we are looking at how we take care of our people AFTER a fire and making sure we are protecting them from those dangers.

**Ultimately we need a training center where we can do reliable and repeatable live fire training.**

- Training Officer Chris McCoy





**2016 Training Hours**

**Fire 13,712**

**EMS 3,899**

**Special Rescue 1,200**

When something terrible happens and we don't know who to call, our community turns to 9-1-1. Our Training Office makes sure that whether it's a structure fire, a medical emergency, or even a pet or person in need of rescue our professional first responders have the training and skills they need to problem-solve and keep the community and themselves safe. Ellis Thompson-Ellis (**E**) interviewed Training Chief Gus Hendricks (**G**) and Training Officer Chris McCoy (**C**).

**E:** When I look at past years, it looks like our training hours are steadily increasing, why is that?

**G:** Our firefighters have prescribed hours to meet and maintain their certifications, and they also go above and beyond to train as crews or individuals and further themselves.

**E:** With training in department, there is so much to learn. Are we developing our personnel as jack of all trades?

**C:** Whether it's a medical problem, a car wreck, or a hiker stranded in the monument we're there. We give our staff those basic bread and butter skills, but we also have to make sure they are well-versed in these specialty scenarios.

**G:** We provide training to meet certifications but we cover a lot of other topics. Our specialty training covers hazmat, rope rescue, water and ice rescue, and I think that's what brings people to our department, the ability to do so many things.

**I think that's the what brings people to our department, the ability to do so many things.**

**- Training Chief Gus Hendricks**

**E:** For 2016 what are some accomplishments or things the Training Office worked towards that you take pride in?

**C:** Rather than one single piece, I'm really proud of the amount of things we've been able to do given a limited budget and limited time frame. Call volume is higher than ever, so we've had to be really innovative and have gotten a lot done as a result of that.

**G:** One of the bigger things we are still working toward is our behavioral and mental health program. National suicide rates are rising for first responders, and we've seen a need for a couple of years to tend to the mental health of our team. This year it has really come together.

**E:** So with your mental health program, how do you get past the quiet stoic exterior of a firefighter?

**C:** We use firefighters as part of our team! They understand and trust each other. We put those individuals through a 40-hour training and certification to empower them to help their brothers and sisters in need.



# EMS Responses



Best fire department and ambulance service ever. They respond quickly to their calls and they get the job done right. Very amazed by their work. What a job well done.

- Hyasendera Barnes-Nathan

In 2016 GJFD was awarded the Gold award by The American Heart Association for treatment of heart attack patients.

When all danger of the fire re-flashing was gone, the fire fighters (still in hot, heavy gear) carried all our belongings back into the garage so it could be secured. Several times during the four plus hours the crew was on site, the commander came to update my wife and I on their progress. I am unable to recall the names of these valiant firemen who came to our aid but I am exceedingly grateful to them and to the entire force for their professionalism and courtesy to us.

- Roger McClelland

Most Active EMS Units

Ambulance 1	3,465
Ambulance 3	3,394
Ambulance 2	3,139

# GJFD Fire and

Thank you for showing the Girl Scouts around the station today! Also thank you for all you do to protect our town!

- Destiny Covault

Thank you, GJFD, for a wonderful job last night! We slept much better knowing everything was safe.

- Joseph Harawi

Thank you so much to the men and women that are our first responders! Also thank you for taking our wonderful school children on a tour of your station, it was such a treat!

- Bailey Downing

GRAND JUNCTION  
FIRE

ENG

## Most Active Fire Units

Engine 2	4,088
Truck 3	2,362
Truck 1	2,341

**Workout Room-** Fire departments are starting to look at the overall wellness of their employees. So while we do build physical strength here, we are also incorporating things like injury prevention, mobility, and teamwork to our workouts to make them more well-rounded.



**Report Room-** I love learning, and working as an EMT allows me to do that. We write detailed reports and review our patient care thoroughly to improve our performance.



**Office-** Being a Captain or a Battalion Chief is all about leadership. I love seeing my team improve, seeing them meet personal goals, and supporting them along the way.



# HFire House



**Bay-** Our apparatus are our lifelines, and a physical representation of our department in the community. People's lives and our lives depend on us having all of our supplies, and our equipment working the way it should. We take a lot of pride in that.



**Bathroom-** Firefighters have a cancer rate nearly three times higher than the normal population. New research is telling us that it's important for us to get clean as soon as possible after a fire to reduce our exposure to toxic chemicals.

**Bedroom-** Last year Station 1 averaged 27 responses per day. That is any apparatus, whether it's a truck, an ambulance, Battalion Chief, or Medical Officer, leaving 27 times in a day. Sleep is precious for us, not only for our performance but our overall wellness and mental health as well.



**Living Room-** We love what we do, but there is also a lot of stress that comes with the job. There are emotionally hard calls, and sometimes relentless shifts. This space gives us a place to unwind at the end of the day. Some people watch TV, others study, read or meditate. We take care of ourselves so we can take care of others.



**Kitchen-** When you're on shift, meals don't always happen on time. We love cooking and eating together, but when a call comes in, we have to go, period. Calls are such a priority, that our stoves are actually programmed to shut off if we get a call.

OUR



# Wildland Team

## Bringing Expertise to the Grand Valley

The Grand Junction Wildland Fire Team began in 2008 when Josh Evans recognized a need in the department for more in depth wildland firefighting training as well as a need for more wildland fire equipment. Evans proposed the formation of a specialty wildland fire team that would be utilized in our community, regionally, and eventually nationally. Things really grew from there and the team became very active locally and nationally in 2011. As of 2016, we have about 25 employees in the department with their wildland firefighting certification.

The team initially utilized one small wildland fire engine that is still in use today. In 2016 the department added Brush 4, a new larger and more advanced wildland firefighting engine. Brush 4 carries more water, hose, and firefighting equipment than the previous brush engine. Brush 4 was put in service with the department in June 2016 and has since responded on 31 fires in the City of Grand Junction as well as several large fires in Colorado and other states.

The Grand Junction team participates in a firefighting resource system that functions like a national fire department that is activated for large incidents. Throughout the years the team has spent a considerable amount of time in Colorado but has also been deployed to California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Idaho, Wyoming and Utah. Non-local deployments of the team ultimately benefit Grand Junction by giving our personnel real-life experience and expertise should anything major ever occur in our area. The national system that the team participates in can also benefit our community should we ever have a large scale wildland fire or natural disaster.

In 2016 the department was also able to roll-out the use of a new technology that will streamline our participation in local, state, and national events. A new computerized ID card system allows team members to check in and out of an incident, as well as provide credentials on-demand with a simple QR code reader. This paperless system will undoubtedly aid incident management on large fires in the future.

Evans said his most memorable experience with the team was at the Rockport Fire near Park City, Utah. He and his crew were assigned to protect about 20 homes in a subdivision. Evans said, "The fire really blew up that day and ended up coming through the subdivision, our crew played an instrumental role in saving all of the homes. We directed other crews, coordinated air drops, and fought fire directly that day. It was a great feeling to have made such a difference when the conditions were so adverse."

Grand Junction is not immune to large-scale incidents. The potential for fast moving fires exists here during much of the year; with high summer temperatures, low humidity, and sustained winds, a fire in some areas could be devastating.

Homeowners can assist firefighters and themselves by removing vegetation that's close to their home. Providing that space between vegetation and your home gives your house a chance for survival during a wildfire.



# Fire Prevention

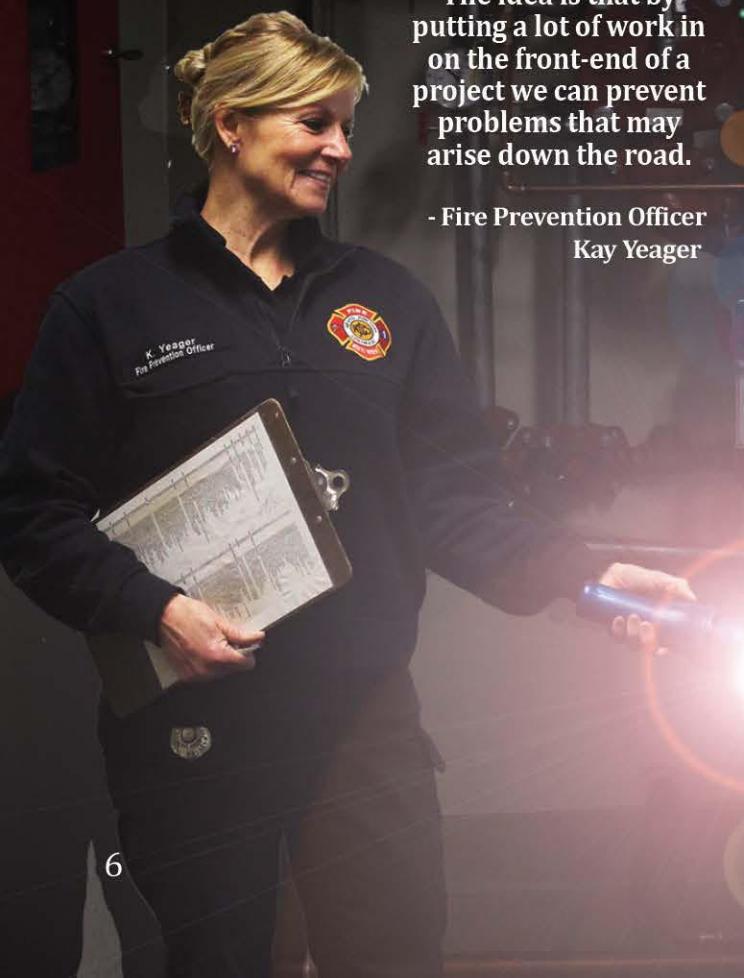
## Meet Kay Yeager One of GJFD's Newest Assets

In 2016 the Fire Prevention Office hired a top-tier expert to help keep our community and staff safer every day. With over 26 years of experience in environmental science, industrial safety, and expertise in hazardous materials, the addition of Kay Yeager as a Fire Prevention Officer has added depth to our fire department. Fire Marshal Chuck Mathis said, "We deal with hazardous materials very frequently. Having Kay here as a resource helps us work through those problems faster, more efficiently, and most importantly more thoroughly than we have been able to in the past."

As a Fire Prevention Officer, Kay works closely with businesses called Tier II facilities. "A Tier II facility typically has industrial amounts of potentially dangerous chemicals, which they are required to report. We have about 60 of these facilities that we have identified", Yeager said. "I try to be more than just a fire inspector,

**The idea is that by putting a lot of work in on the front-end of a project we can prevent problems that may arise down the road.**

**- Fire Prevention Officer  
Kay Yeager**



I'm really there as a resource to work with and educate facility owners about how to keep them, their employees, and the assets of their business safe."

With her years of experience in issues such as fire protection and hazardous materials in a facility, Kay is able to work with designers and architects to make new buildings safer before ground is ever broken. "The idea is that by putting a lot of work in on the front-end of a project we can prevent problems that may arise down the road", said Yeager.

Kay also works with our fire crews to increase their safety on the job by helping them develop a pre-plan. Yeager said, "A pre-plan allows us to fully examine a building's construction, layout, and contents, as well as how and where hazardous materials are stored. If we ever have an emergency happen at one of these Tier II facilities, our crews can actually review this document on the way to the scene so they know what they are getting into. This allows them to be as safe as possible when they get there."

Kay says her job is exciting because she is always able to learn new things. With new technology the face of fire prevention and hazardous materials is changing every day. New industries like distilleries and marijuana bring new challenges to fire prevention. "There are a lot of things that come with those industries; flammable gasses and liquids, molds, and sulphur. We have to grow with these industries to keep the community and our fire personnel safe. But I'm always ready for a challenge!"

Annual Inspections (Crew)	2,028
Annual Inspections (Bureau)	550
Arson Investigations	17
Burn Permits	1,392
Fire Plan Reviews	360
Approval Inspections	755

#### 4. Training:

Manages and coordinates continuing education for firefighters and EMTs to maintain a high level of response skills.

#### 5. Community Outreach:

Offering classes for adults and children including Hands-Only CPR, Business Risk Reduction, and fire and life safety classes for schools.



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#### 8. Hazardous Materials Team:

Specialized personnel and equipment are available to mitigate dangerous releases of industrial substances.



#### 9. Bomb Squad:

A joint operation between GJFD and GJPD, our team renders explosive devices safe. This team responds to over 55 incidents per year on the Western Slope.

#### 10. Wildland Team:

Special training allows this team to control fires in forests as well as urban-interface situations where heavy brush grows next to structures.

## 1. Fire Suppression:

Extinguishment of all types of fires; including structure fires, vehicle fires, brush fires and flammable liquid fires. Coordinate response and scene management and protect property during clean-up.

## 2. Emergency Medical Service:

All GJFD apparatus are equipped with tools and personnel to respond with basic and advanced life support.

## 3. Fire Prevention:

Provides plan reviews and fire inspections for businesses in the community to prevent emergencies before they happen.

# What we do



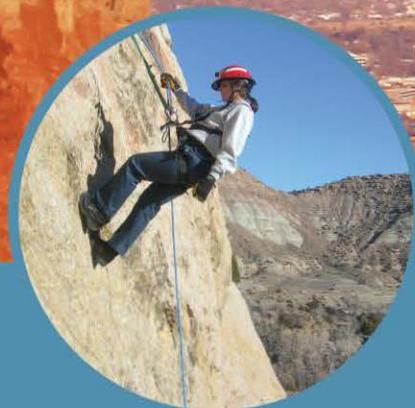
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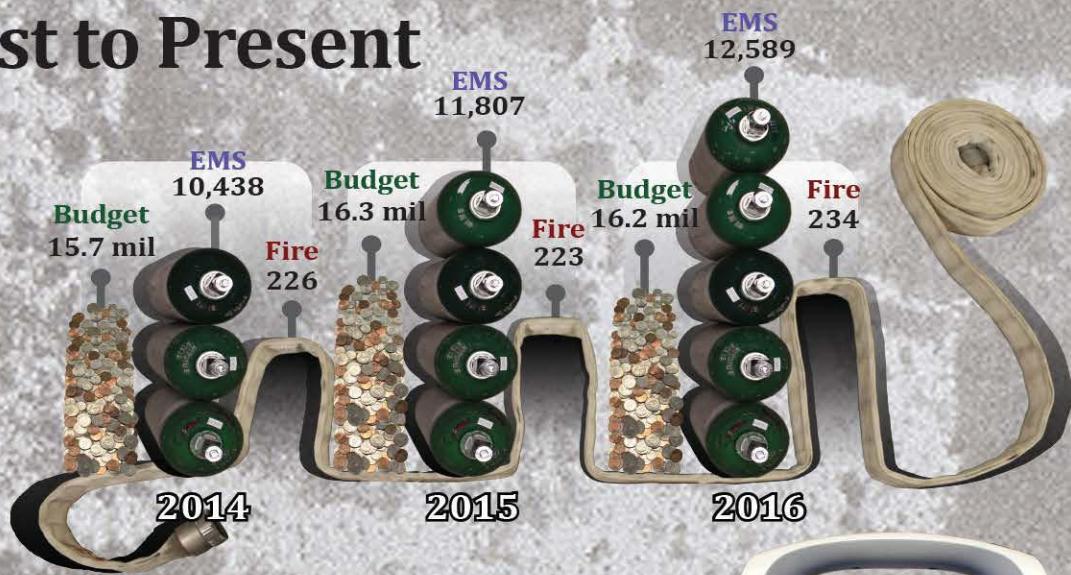
## 6. Technical Rescue:

From confined spaces and trenches, to rope, water, and ice rescues our tech-rescue teams are equipped to respond to special emergencies.

## 7. Fire Investigation:

All fires are investigated to determine cause and origin. In special cases investigators work with law enforcement to resolve incidents.

# Past to Present



## 2016 at a Glance



## 2016 Responses by Station

Station	Responses
Station 1	10,079
Station 2	10,334
Station 3	6,070
Station 4	2,072
Station 5	1,338



# Chief's Welcome

In the last year, our department has seen and accomplished so much. Our team is always willing to improve, step up, and reach higher in our dedicated service to the community. We've made changes to improve what we do every day, and our team has pulled together to make great progress. We continually evaluate our service delivery and used data to adjust personnel assignments and schedules to provide the most efficient and highest level of service possible.

I'm particularly proud of our firefighters, EMTs, and paramedics who respond to emergencies 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year. They are always training, improving, and making sure that they are providing the best possible care for our city. As call volume increases steadily; 21% in 5 years, 5% over the last year, our men and women are rising to the challenge and are excited to do their job on a daily basis.

Our leadership team has brought innovation and fresh enthusiasm for moving our department forward. From implementing closest unit response, to securing a FEMA grant to assist in paying the salaries and benefits for three firefighter-paramedics, to revamping our community outreach office, new ideas are flourishing. These types of collaborative efforts allow the department to do more with less.

I see so much potential and vigor in our department every day. I absolutely believe that through the work that we have done in 2016 we are on track to become a national example of an all-hazards department.

- Ken Watkins  
Fire Chief



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Excellence in Service Through:  
Integrity • Dedication • Efficiency • Unity



Grand Junction Fire Department

Office: 625 Ute Ave.

Phone: (970) 549-5800

E-mail: [fire@gjcity.org](mailto:fire@gjcity.org)

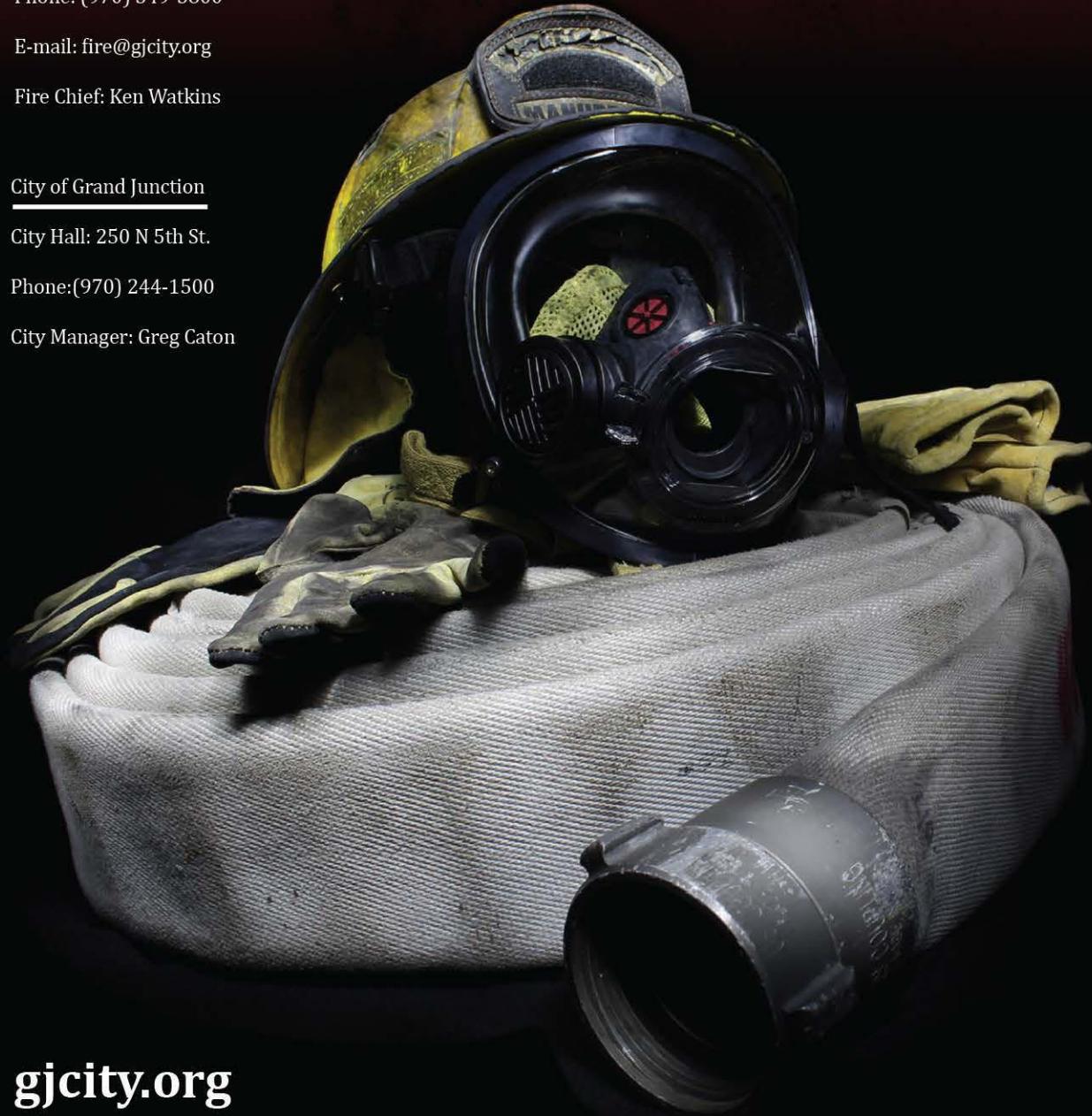
Fire Chief: Ken Watkins

City of Grand Junction

City Hall: 250 N 5th St.

Phone: (970) 244-1500

City Manager: Greg Caton



**[gjcity.org](http://gjcity.org)**



STATION 1

9. Gus Hendricks, Training Chief and Emergency Manager: Develops and plans emergency preparedness for natural and man-made disasters in the community.

10. Harmony Ward, Senior Administrative Assistant: Gathers and records formal documentation for all activities, employees, and meetings at the GJFD.

12. Bill Roth, Deputy Chief: Collaborates with Battalion Chiefs to ensure that all line operations are moving smoothly and efficiently.

11. Ken Watkins, Chief: Guides GJFD financially, politically, and idealistically toward providing the best service for our community now and in the future.

# Command & Administrative Staff



1. Sheldon Kier, EMS Chief: Ensures that GJFD is able to provide the best quality EMS care for our patients, and that we meet best-practice guidelines.

5. Danni Ferguson, Finance Technician: Facilitates EMS billing for patients and supervises all department finances including payroll and budgets.

2. John Williams (black crew),  
3. Doug Walsh (green crew),  
4. Duncan Brown (red crew),  
Battalion Chiefs: Coordinate and manage activities for shift crews at all five stations on a daily basis.

6. Chuck Mathis, Fire Marshal: Oversees and enforces all fire safety codes for commercial buildings in Grand Junction including plan reviews for new construction.

7. Maranda Jones, Administrative Assistant: Provides customer service and acts as a liaison between the state of Colorado and GJFD Fire Prevention.

8. Chris McCoy, Training Officer: Plans and coordinates all GJFD trainings to maintain employee certifications and ensure the highest quality of skills and service.

# Employee of the Year

Robert Thomason

If you asked Robert why he received the GJFD employee of the year award, he would present you with a bashful smile, a shrug of his shoulders, and tell you he was just doing his job. He would humbly shake his head and tell you that everything he does, he does because he loves his work, end of story. The truth is, there's a lot more to it than that.

Robert has worked with the GJFD for 17 years as a paramedic, and in those years he has selflessly lent his time and talents to various projects around the department. He picks up the pieces of things that break along the way, and uses his mechanical aptitude to make them whole again. He has worked on faulty computers, repaired heart monitors used on all the ambulances, ordered and organized EMS supplies for all five stations, and installed new hydraulic stretchers on all seven ambulances. Robert does complete some of these projects between EMS calls, but he also uses his days off and has even been known to come in from vacation to get things working again in a timely fashion.

No one has ever tallied his contributions, in part because he would never make it known that he does so much. If we had to guess Robert has saved the department and the taxpayers thousands of dollars in the last year alone. Without his contributions, the department would have to hire out contractors, mechanics, and service technicians to work on the countless jobs that he does.

Robert does all of this for the good of the department. He strives to help his colleagues have the best equipment possible so they can continue to provide quality services for the community.

We are so thankful to have Robert as a member of our organization because he consistently reminds us of our core values. He has wholeheartedly dedicated his life to serving others. He is selfless and brings exceptional effort and attitude to his work every day. When things are difficult or stuff breaks, his relentless optimism and "carry on" work ethic drives others to be their best. Robert goes above and beyond in his work, holding himself to the highest standard; but he would tell you that it's all just part of the job.



## Robert's Vital Stats

27 years	Lead Paramedic Powderhorn
24 years	JUCO Field Operations
23 years	Clifton Fire Department
20 years	GJ Airshow Board
17 years	Grand Junction Fire Department
15 years	Mesa County Dive Team
9 years	CareFlight Paramedic
5 years	Lead Paramedic GJ Rockies

# Turkey Trot 2016

Ten years ago Jason Whitesides was a new employee at GJFD when his 9-month old daughter got very sick. So sick in fact that she had to be flown to Denver Children's Hospital for emergency treatment. While Jason cared for his daughter, firefighters at GJFD came together to help him. The recently-hired Fire Chief Ken Watkins came to the hospital in Denver to visit with Jason's family, and Jason's firefighter brothers and sisters came together and insisted on helping his family financially. Jason never forgot that selflessness and generosity, and when his daughter got better he decided to give back to the fire family.

In 2006, along with the help of GJFD Captain Eric Moyer and a few others, Jason hosted the first Turkey Trot in Grand Junction. Their goal was to have a family-friendly event for the community, and for the profits to help local firefighter families in need. That first year, 120 people turned out to trot. In the years that followed, Turkey Trot caught on quick and by the tenth anniversary in 2016 over 1,600 people ran in the event.

As participants and profits increased Jason and his new partner, Wes Engbarth, decided it was time to give back to the larger community. In 2014 they established the Grand Junction Fire Fighters Foundation (GJFFF) to give back to families in need. Since the inception of the foundation, they have given to families that were devastated by house fires, helped the family of a firefighter battling cancer in Arizona, and created a Christmas miracle for a local single mother and her four children. In total, the foundation has given around \$42,000 back to the community to help others in need.

Last year the event raised over \$52,000 that will go to help similar families in need. Overall Jason and Wes say the best thing about the foundation is, "Simply the ability to give back to people who really need it. We've been in their shoes, and we know how much that can mean, what a difference that can make in a really hard time." In 2017 the foundation hopes to continue to grow by offering eight \$1,000 college scholarships to local students.



(L-R)  
Nicole,  
Jaxon, Wes,  
and Izzi Engbarth.  
Jaida, Jason, Zoie, and  
Natalie Whitesides.

In 2016, the Community Outreach office was created with a vision to blend the successes of the past with the innovation of the future. Taking a proactive approach, the Community Outreach office will use a whole-community approach to reduce risks to the citizens of Grand Junction. These risk reduction techniques will guide and transform the more traditional programs for fire and life safety education and provide effective public information. Ultimately, the Community Outreach office will take a more comprehensive approach to preventing emergencies by providing educational opportunities to the community.

The Community Outreach office provides engaging fire and life safety education for businesses, families, community organizations, and schools. In addition to the more traditional educational programs, we also offer: juvenile fire setter interventions, fall prevention programs for assisted living communities, car seat checks, and parade and event appearances. In 2016 we held 169 different events throughout the Grand Valley focused on preventing emergencies.



**Schools** - Our education programs play a critical role in educating children about fire and life safety. Teaching children to play responsibly and practice fire drills at home keeps families safe.

**Emergency Evacuation Planning** - We offer this free service to local businesses to help them develop comprehensive emergency evacuation plans for their facility.

**Media** - Whether it's public safety information, structure fires, or rescue operations we facilitate getting information to local media outlets by providing interviews and press releases.

# Community Outreach



**CPR** - We offer free hands-only CPR classes throughout the community giving people the skills they need to save lives.

[cprisfree.com](http://cprisfree.com)

**Station Tours** - Many groups visit our stations to learn about life at a fire house, how our teams work together, and the tools we have when we help others in need.