

PRESS RELEASE—Contact DSPS Newsroom at dspnewsroom@wisconsin.gov

April 24, 2024
DSPS Communications
608-220-1553

DSPS Awards Youth Firefighter Training Program Grants

Program introduces high school students to exciting opportunities in the fire service

Madison, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) today officially announced the four winners of a grant that funds youth firefighter training. The Youth Volunteer Firefighter Training Program aims to boost recruitment in fire departments by introducing fire service careers to students across the state.

The program provides the winners a combined \$75,000 in grant funding.

- **Fox Valley Technical College** will receive \$15,405 toward a High School Fire program, through which FVTC will offer a Firefighting Principals course at the college, part of a partnership with nine area high schools and fire departments. Through the four-credit course, will learn fire behavior and fire control techniques, and meet all requirements of Firefighter I certification in Wisconsin.
- **Kewaunee County Junior Firefighter Program** will receive \$24,525. The program is a partnership between the Luxemburg-Casco, Algoma, Denmark, and Kewaunee school districts, along with eight area fire departments. The participating schools will recruit students, who will have the opportunity to receive credit for a course through Northeast Wisconsin Technical College. The students will be active volunteers at one of the participating fire departments, which all have mentor programs for new recruits.
- **Madison Area Technical College** will receive \$10,070 to expand the availability of its NextGen Responders Academy, which enrolls up to 24 students in both the Spring and Fall of each academic year. Madison College will use the grant money to purchase turnout gear in outlying sizes to expand program availability and improve the safety of participants. Donations have paid for 326 scholarships to the Academy over the past year years, removing financial barriers for a diverse group of students.
- **Northcentral Technical College** will receive \$25,000 toward its Youth Firefighter Academy, a partnership that includes the volunteer Central Fire and EMS District, and Colby and Abbotsford high schools. The college will train six high school students to be Firefighter Level I volunteers/employees and prepare them for the Emergency Medical Responder certification exam.

Recruitment and retention have become key issues for nearly all Wisconsin fire departments but particularly the all-volunteer stations in many rural communities. The Youth Firefighter Grant Program is designed to help address these concerns by exposing high school students to career and volunteer opportunities in the fire service at a time when they are making decisions about their future careers and endeavors.

“Northcentral Technical College (NTC) recognizes the growing demand for qualified volunteer firefighters within our community,” said Shane Heilman, Director of NTC’s School of Public Safety & Community Safety Simulation Center. “With the support of the Wisconsin Youth Firefighter Training Grant, we can continue building partnerships with local Fire and EMS agencies and local high schools that address this urgent need and ensure local departments are equipped with qualified youth firefighters who will respond effectively, mitigate risks, and safeguard lives and property.”

“This grant will give high school students in our district the opportunity to get a jump start on their firefighting career,” added James Austad, chair of the Fire Protection Program at Fox Valley Technical College.

The fire service is a key stakeholder group for DSPS. The department regulates firefighter 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.

“Public safety is a primary mission of our department and Wisconsin’s fire departments are a key partner in keeping our communities safe,” said Wisconsin DSPS Secretary Dan Hereth. “These grants support innovative educational programs that benefit those fire departments and lead to safer cities, towns, and villages across Wisconsin.”

In addition to responding to calls, Wisconsin fire departments provide fire prevention education to schools and community groups across the state. They also partner with organizations working to support living in place for older adults, provide critical demographic information, and offer support during weather emergencies and natural disasters like floods, tornados, and wildfires.

About DSPS: DSPS issues more than 240 unique licenses, administers dozens of boards and councils that regulate professions, enforces state building codes, and maintains the 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, DSPS is self-sustaining and receives no general fund tax dollars for its day-to-day operations. With three 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.

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