

DVFA President – Jay Jones  
1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Report  
December 2, 2019

Over the course of my 1st quarter as President of the DVFA, it has been a delightful but awakening experience. I spent 189 hours attending 63 events covering 4478 road miles traveled. We as an association haven gotten a lot accomplished.

I want to first thank all the fire companies for their support and hospitality thus far this year. I have a wonderful team and board directors behind me, and I have been so blessed to be able to work with them. I appreciate them sharing the load and supporting the vision and goals of this administration.

First, I would like to cover some updates. The new website committee has been working diligently and are on track to complete a new face lift to our website in January of 2020. This is well overdue and will benefit us tremendously. Second, the Recruitment and Retention committee has been reorganized and they are currently working on programs that will help the DVFA get back out into the local communities and provide more help with the on-board processes for each fire department.

The Recruitment and Retention Taskforce is the task force that the general assembly put together during their last legislative session. This taskforce consists of six (6) legislators three (3) from The House of Representatives and three (3) from the Senate, Representatives from the Governor's office, Department of Education, Department of Safety and Homeland Security, Department of Volunteerism, the Fire Prevention Commission and 3 appointees from the DVFA. The representatives for the DVFA that I have chosen will be as follows:

New Castle County - Tom DiCristofaro from Claymont  
Kent County - Rob Watts from Felton  
Sussex County - Robbie Murray from Frankford

They have already met several times calling in people to testify and will be having another meeting in January. Please feel free to contact these individuals with your input. They are appointed to represent your interests, especially if you are unable to attend any of the open meetings. So far, they have been doing a wonderful job. They bring a lot of experience and information to the table. The DVFA office sent out a survey to each President and Fire Chief encouraging that these surveys be sent out to their active membership. Good information is crucial for this committee to work. The results of the survey will be shared in January at the next taskforce meeting. Please be sure to participate in this survey. We are hoping for some beneficial legislation for the DVFA coming out of this taskforce.

Myself and my Vice Presidents will be meeting with Governor Carney next week to discuss our current status and our goals for the DVFA in 2020.

A delegation of officers took part in the VCOS (Volunteer Combination Officer Section of the IAFC) symposium in Florida. It featured some excellent speakers along with some great networking opportunities. Some of the topics were on Leadership, How to Navigate Problems, Working as a Combination Department, Recruitment and Retention of Volunteered Departments, and Health Issues

such as, Cardiac, Cancer, Stroke, and Mental Health. We have access to a ton of information and resources on these topics. Please reach out to the office or me to obtain more information.

The DVFA cruise has been set up through Bethany travel and will take place in November and December 2020. So far Cindy from Bethany Travel has been able to secure better deals than we originally expected through Princess Cruise line, please give her a call at (302) 933-0955 to discuss this trip if you will wish to go.

Last year we were tasked to find a funding source for \$10,000 worth of smoke detector for our local communities. I have met with the leadership of the Red Cross. They have programs and resources available that we can partner up with them for these efforts. They can accomplish this task in one (1) of two (2) ways. One program is they are willing to come out to our neighborhoods for a half day neighborhood blitz. Install smoke alarms in your fire districts along with your fire company. This will give your department some amazing public relations. The other program is where they have an unlimited supply of smoke detectors to give to your fire department (with the appropriate paperwork that needs to be filled out). Then throughout the year they will pick up the paperwork for their filing purposes. They have already worked with a few of our local fire departments in the state along with our neighboring States. They are very excited about this partnership.

The DVFA Foundation's Vice Chairman Jim Cabbage will be stepping down from his position on the Foundation at their next Spring meeting. Mr. Cabbage has been with the foundation since its inception and has done exceptional work along with his colleagues over the past years securing funds for Scholarship opportunities for our own to pursue higher education. I've signed a letter of appointment of Jeff Eisenbrey to be his successor to the Foundation. Jeff has been active and has held many positions in his fire service career. With Jeff's knowledge and commitment, I am certain he will do an excellent job on the Foundation board. Congratulations to both Mr. Cabbage and Mr. Eisenbrey.

Now on a more somber note, an issue we cannot continue to ignore must be addressed. In the past fire service newspaper, my article spoke a lot about the needs of a culture change within the fire service. This is a solution that needs to start from the top and work its way down. We have a major leadership issues in this state. Over the past few months the multiple stories that I've heard about sexual and criminal acts happening within the walls of our departments is disturbing and sickening. This coupled with what is happening on the fire ground is very disheartened. It is no wonder we have a retention issue within our service. With these type of things going on there would be no way in hell, I would let a child of mine being male or female join in today's culture. We are supposed to be a family but instead we are crushing people's lives. If this is how we treat family, no wonder we are disconnected at times. Of course, I do not want to see any front-page news, giving the whole fire service a black eye over the actions of a select few. At the same time, we cannot sweep these issues under the rug what is happening within our four walls. If we cannot respect each other in the station, how do you plan on having respect at the fire grounds? We must make the corrections from the inside out. We need leaders that are going to be willing step up and lead or please just get out of the way. Be the solution, not the problem. Now that we have addressed the elephant in the room, what are we going to do about it? I challenge every leader in every department to take a stand for what is right. Quit making excuses and being blind to these issues. Be a leader. No one should be worried about votes for re-election or think the only roll of the fire hall is to be a social club, step up and do the right thing. Each department is a multimillion-dollar corporation. Do you think that any CEO or COO at a multimillion-

dollar company would put up with what we do in their business? We are here to provide a service and our whole bases for existence is placed on public trust.

Which brings me to my last point. The Delaware State Fire Prevention Commission has set up a working group to investigate the facts of some of which I have spoken about already. There are legislators that are currently wanting to create legislation for oversight of the fire service. I do not believe it would be in our best interests to go under Department of Homeland Security, Public Safety, when we already have a body such as the Fire Commission who already regulates BLS. Under the Fire Commission, we will not be pushed aside as step children or scraping the bottom of the barrel of an agency, it is a place where we actually have a seat at the table. We have two (2) choices when it comes to this legislation, sit back and see what's handed to us, or take a seat at the table and help work out the best path forward, not only for our departments but most importantly to the citizens of the State of Delaware who deserve and expect the professional services we are charged to offer. This working group is set up of three (3) commissioners and three (3) members of the fire service. I have appointed Dave Majewski, Jeff Eisenbrey, and myself. We have asked that all meetings be transparent in an open forum. The first meeting will January 16th at the Dover fire school at 7:30 p.m. I am sure there will be several meetings. We plan on allowing time for everyone to speak and be heard with time limitations. I encourage every department to have a representative attend one of these upcoming meetings. The outcome of this will change the credibility of the fire service, so we must get this right. Staying at the status quo is not an option.

I want to thank everyone once again for their support and confidence in me, as your president. I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and happy holiday season with a prosperous and safe New Year!