

Fire Chief for a Day
by: Rebecca Sousa.

I have learned in this life that it is difficult to understand certain things until you have experienced them, and on March 15, 2010, I experienced what it is like to be the Fire Chief of Acushnet. My day began on the bus trip to the Town Hall where I sat with my friend, Monique. The rain outside definitely added a sort of dreariness to the picture, but not even that could dampen my spirits.

I entered the Town Hall where I became inducted into the position of Fire Chief, and a meeting was hosted by the Selectmen and the Town Administrator. I was sitting in the back with Chief Kevin Gallagher during this meeting, and when it was finished I began my day as Fire Chief. First, we went to Station One, which is the station where I looked at the fire trucks and met two firemen. There was a very relaxed environment at the fire station and I could tell that those two men enjoyed their job. At that station I learned from Chief Gallagher that the safety of the fire fighters is the main priority. I let Monique use my jacket to cover her head from the rain, so I was stuck with just my sweater. Chief Gallagher gave me his coat—the one he wears in fires—and then I was off to Station Two.

Chief Gallagher had gotten an e-mail from one of the fire men that there was a leak in the roof at Station Two, so we were going to check on that. Station Two is an un-manned station where a fire truck and a tanker are held. A tanker is a truck with a huge tank on the back that is filled with water, and is used when there are not enough fire hydrants around the building that is on fire. Behind the fire truck there was a puddle on the floor and when we looked up it was apparent that the roof was indeed leaking. It was just a small leak that could be patched up temporarily until it could be fully repaired. Next was Station Three, which is the EMS building. Inside were two EMT's who I was introduced to, and I saw some pictures from a recent car accident on the highway. They were both very nice. Chief Gallagher showed me his office there. After an accident a form has to be filled out explaining exactly what occurred. Chief Gallagher then sends the form to the insurance company where the billing is taken care of. I then was able to see the inside of an ambulance for the first time ever. It is like a mini ER on wheels. The paramedics have everything they need to do their best at helping a person in need, until they can get them to a hospital.

While I was getting a tour of the building the Chief got a call from the student Town Administrator, Zachary Boulds. He asked to speak to me, and when I got on the phone he ordered us to return to the Town Hall immediately. I was speechless. Chief Gallagher signaled for me to agree with the Town Administrator and when I got off of the phone he told me that we were not quite done yet and that the Town Administrator could wait just a little longer. He then took me into a room where a

long sleeved Acushnet EMS Paramedic shirt, and an Acushnet Fire Rescue hat where waiting for me.

Then we headed back to the Town Hall where there was a meeting between the student government leaders. I went up to the podium and made the selectmen aware that there was a leak in the roof of Station Two that would need to be repaired. The leaders then handed out certificates to the student(s) that had taken their position for the day. I was flattered when Chief Gallagher announced to the selectmen, before giving my certificate, that I am a very inquisitive person and have a high intelligence level. That is when all my hard work at school paid off. After the meeting the students were getting back into the bus to go to the Century House. Instead of taking the bus Chief Gallagher asked my principal, Mr. Green, if it was okay to take me there himself. At the Century House the Chief put the sirens on and did a lap around the parking lot. Inside the Century House I took a picture with Chief Gallagher, Mr. Alves, the Police Chief, and Monique who had shadowed him for the day. I ate lunch there, which was definitely better than having lunch in the noisy school cafeteria. Pheobe Laplante, who is Miss. Acushnet, gave a speech to us while we finished up our lunch. She praised us for our hard work and encouraged us to continue it throughout high school.

During my day as Fire Chief not only did I learn some of the responsibilities of Chief Gallagher, I learned that the fire fighters and EMT's all work as a team. They share a bond that I never had expected to find. I respect those people who I met on that day for who have made helping people and saving lives their job in life. Right now, getting an A on a test is what makes me feel proud of myself. I can only imagine how proud the chief and the firemen feel as they save lives from raging fires, or the sense of pride felt by the EMT's after they safely transported an injured person from a car accident to the hospital. I am completely grateful for being able to walk the life of someone else for that one day and I thank Mr. Kevin Gallagher, Fire Chief of Acushnet, and head of the EMS department, for giving me that amazing opportunity.