



Media Release

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Finding a future in firefighting: Female students get firsthand look at the field

Fire Station 1 was a hive of activity on Tuesday, as a group of female grade 10 students from WL Seaton Secondary got a firsthand look at what it's like to work as a firefighter. The hands-on training was led by long-time Vernon Fire Rescue Service (VFRS) member, Lieutenant Allyson Reich, who touched on all aspects of the firefighting profession.

"It was exciting to welcome the students from WL Seaton into our department and show them that firefighting is a career that can be available to anyone," said Lt. Reich. "I hope that at the end of the day, these young women felt empowered and encouraged to pursue something that challenges them, fulfills them, and gives them the confidence to occupy space in one of the greatest careers ever."

The students were selected for the day of training after expressing interest in a career in the fire service through a written essay.

"They [VFRS] did an amazing job of simulating some of the experiences," said student Mya Koleba. "It is important to understand the different careers that are out there, not just hear of them, but actually understand what takes place. It was so great to learn from Lt. Reich what it is like to be a female first responder in a male-dominated field. I think that it is important for more women to become a part of the firefighting industry."

The day of training falls on the heels of the Fire Rescue Service's most recent recruitment drive and is part of a School District 22 (Vernon) pilot project.

"The Female Firefighter for a Day program was a great opportunity for some of our female students to see themselves in a career of firefighting," said Josh Vance, District Principal of Career Education with School District 22 (Vernon). "Having the chance to be mentored by community role models that are currently working in the field, students were inspired by the possibilities and the seeds were planted for a bright future."

"I truly believe that you can't be what you can't see, and if young girls don't see themselves in firefighters, they may not know that they too can do this work," said Lt. Reich. "I am so proud to wear our uniform and show the next generation that they can be whatever they set their minds to. Yes, it's hard. Yes, it takes work. But it's worth all the effort to achieve something you are so passionate about."

Lt. Allyson Reich is an 18-year veteran of VFRS and Vernon's first female professional firefighter.



Female students from W.L. Seaton Secondary pose with Lieutenant Allyson Reich during a day of training with Vernon Fire Rescue Services.