

Nominee for Top FF in Wellington

Firefighter Eric Aho of Station 30

Date of Hire: 10/15/2007

Eric Aho is my nominee this year because his life both on and off the job is the embodiment of compassion and dedication. Eric is a husband to Heather and father to 2 children, Evan and Mia. He has been working in Wellington for several years and during that time he has proven himself again and again to be a firefighter with a heart for his community.

It's easy to talk about Eric with regard to his paid duties because he is a committed and impassioned member of our department who serves the public with his knowledge, skill, and caring. What is sometimes not so obvious is his attention to non-emergency duties, sacrifice for others, volunteerism, and deep love for his family. We build our firefighters to do a job that demands keeping emotions in check and that is very important while delivering our essential services so when we get to observe someone like Eric relaxing that stoicism and showing a lighter side it is confirmation that he is in this job for the service that he can provide to others.

We routinely assign our personnel to meet with school groups, adult groups, camp groups, special needs groups, public groups at shopping malls, HOA groups, etc. Eric has participated with all and when sometimes we may see a firefighter being a bit of a wallflower the complete opposite is found with Eric. He is talking to the public, performing demonstrations or helping children squirt the fire hose. This is a very important part of our job. We depend heavily on our personnel to engage the community with education and relationships.

Eric is heavily involved in Boy Scouts with his son Evan. He has given many hours of volunteering as a leader in the organization and a role model to the boys. He's one of the guys who is proud to wear that uniform too.

Eric recently was put in a situation to use his skills without the support of a team of firefighters, the big trucks and fancy equipment. At home one evening a panicked neighbor knocked on the door because her mother was choking on food. Eric jumped into action, ran to the house and finding the woman in critical condition due to the airway obstruction he worked tirelessly to help her. Finally, he was able to clear her airway with the Heimlich maneuver. This may seem a basic feat but when faced with a nearly unconscious person and the hysteria of family it requires focus and tenaciousness. Eric saved her life.

Perhaps, the greatest showing of courage and devotion came this last year when Eric's son experienced serious medical problems. This necessitated Eric taking a brief leave of absence from work and providing his own family with the services usually applied to the public. We are happy to report that Eric's son has recovered well and Dad is back to work. Times like this can test anyone and we're sure they did test Eric but he delivered for his family and they are all better, healthier, and stronger because of their dad and husband.

We look forward to Eric's career growth at Palm Beach County Fire Rescue and are pleased to have him serving in Wellington. He is a great person and a great asset.

Sincerely,

Ken Sehres, District Chief Battalion 2A

Theresa Colagiovanni
17453 48th Court North
Loxahatchee, FL 33470

February 16, 2015

Chief Mike Arena
Palm Beach County Fire Rescue – Station 28
1040 Royal Palm Beach Boulevard
West Palm Beach, FL 33411

Dear Chief Arena:


I am writing this letter in reference to Eric Aho, PBC Fire Rescue Paramedic, who is not only a close friend but the person whom I will call my "Forever Hero." Eric and his family are my next door neighbors and have been for quite some time. My 86 year old mother has lived with me for five years now and often visits with them. She is battling a second type of lung cancer as well as cardiac issues. Eric is very familiar with her health situation. I have often called on Eric to check on my mom when I think I might need to take her to the hospital because of her breathing issues or even if I have a general question.

On the morning of January 7, 2015, I rang Eric's phone and I don't even remember what I said but he knew something was wrong and he needed to get over to my house. I had given my mom a prune and she was choking on it. I had tried to perform the Heimlich maneuver with no success and I was on the floor with my mom trying to get her to respond. Eric was at my house within minutes and immediately began trying to resuscitate her. He told me to call 911 as he continued to give her CPR and tried to clear her airway. All the time he was giving her CPR, he kept saying "I am so sorry Gerry" as he did not want to hurt her but we both knew we were losing her. I was certain that I had lost her but Eric did not give up trying and then all of a sudden she gasped for air and regained consciousness. By the time the paramedics arrived, Eric had resuscitated her and she knew exactly who he was and was responding to questions.

Words cannot express how grateful I am to Eric for saving my mom's life. I am sure his job is hard enough, but I know it is even harder when it is someone you know. Eric has given me a gift that I cannot ever repay – more time with my mom.

Thank you "Eric" – you are my forever hero.

Sincerely,


Theresa Colagiovanni
(561) 795-2138