



**October is National Fire Prevention month and an excellent time to recognize women firefighters and emergency responders. We are pleased to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions women make in the field of firefighting in Loudoun County.**

Of course, Ashburn has had a woman firefighter since 1947 when then Chief Charlie Fletcher deputized his wife, Gertie, because she was the only other person at the fire station as an emergency call came in. He told her to get on the truck, and she did.

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Who are the firefighters and EMS personnel of Ashburn volunteer Fire and Rescue Department (AVFRD)? Our volunteer firefighters come from all walks of life. During the day they are office managers, accountants, mechanics, analysts, nurses, students, and homemakers –

your neighbors. Most have full time professional career positions within the community or surrounding areas.

Anita Rodriguez came into the volunteer service initially “to add some variety to my life.” Since Ashburn is a dual station that operates with both EMTs and firefighters, she signed up for the fire academy and says she was drawn to the expertise, camaraderie and tradition that envelop the fire service. The added benefit of being able to do something physical after sitting at a desk all day was also appealing. “There is a thrill and a solemnity that I experience every time the tones drop. Who else do people call after they call 911? There is no other number!”

Lindsay Pearson is a government analyst and graphic designer. She had done years of EMT (emergency medical technician) and search and rescue training before coming to Ashburn. “On the first day of fire fighter school our instructor told us there could only be ONE top graduate.” She says, “I made up my mind then that it was going to be me.” – None of the 40 other students in her class were surprised - it was!

The Ashburn Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department (AVFRD) currently has approximately 40 women in operations (Fire and



Emergency Management Services). While firefighting and responding to medical emergencies are the primary responsibilities of volunteers, they are also involved in community activities. AVFRD hosts many events that promote accident prevention and fire safety.

Heidi Wallner started her time with AVFRD as an administrative member. “I became very involved in all the things that bring the community to AVFRD. I was hoping to use some of my creativity and planning experiences to help with fundraising events. I participated in our Open House events, pancake breakfasts, even the Boy Scout tours. Families come here and learn not just safety information, but about whom we are and what

we do”, said Heidi. “I still am involved. But I always dreamed about being a firefighter, and now I am.”

Lucy Todd is in transition. She is still working full time at her old job, in the IT industry while starting school to become a registered nurse. “Fire Fighting just looked like such fun”, she said, “but I always thought it was just for the “big guys’.” Lucy is 5’2” and proved to herself that size did not matter.

Kim Edwards relocated to Ashburn in 2003, from New Mexico. After getting settled in the community and a new job, she said, “I happened to get information in the mail that new volunteer members were needed. I had fire

training from my previous volunteering. I was happy to find another volunteer organization I could join in my own back yard.”

Would you like to join these firefighters and EMT’s in experiencing the excitement, challenge and satisfaction that comes with being a part of an essential community resource? Please consider getting involved with any of the 17 independent volunteer fire or rescue companies in Loudoun County.

Visit our website at [www.ashburnfirerescue.org](http://www.ashburnfirerescue.org) to view the many services and events provided, as well as to learn more about becoming a volunteer. Take the opportunity to pursue one of the best jobs in the world!