

Fire Science News

Public Safety Live-In Program

SMCC's Public Safety Live-In program is celebrating its 20th year in operation this year with over 60 SMCC students participating in over 14 community fire departments in Southern Maine, as well as at Eastern Maine Community College with ten participating communities. Steve Willis, Live-In Coordinator and Fire Science Faculty, was a firefighter for 30 years in Gorham and 7 years in Portland before he became an instructor for SMCC's Fire Science Technology program.

After applying and being interviewed, students are selected by local departments to live at the fire stations and answer calls – a “win-win-win” situation, according to Willis. The students receive hands-on, experiential learning and housing while the community receives the help they need to respond to emergency calls. “The Live-In students become affiliated with departments, which opens doors for them professionally,” says Willis. “The applied education and real world experiences provide the best extension of the classroom.”

Campus Connection had a chance to interview students of the Live-In program and meet the chiefs of participating communities. Dan Soffron and Ray Whitney, students and roommates living at the Scarborough Fire Department, were interviewed before running off to answer a fire call. Receiving at least 50 calls a month, Dan admits that Live-In students “give up a traditional college experience because you're up at odd hours, there are curfews, and it takes a toll on your friends and family. But if you love the fire service and this is what you want to do, this is the perfect education for it.” Ray says: “I can't picture myself sitting behind a desk. I do this work because I'm remembered for it and we help save lives.” Check out interviews with students on the following page.



Did You Know?

You have a 40% higher chance of surviving a fire in your home if you have working smoke detectors and an 80% chance of surviving with a working sprinkler system and smoke detectors.

“No fire department is more effective than working smoke detectors and sprinkler systems.”

-Steve Willis, SMCC Fire Science

SMCC's Public Safety Live-In Program

The Southern Maine Community College (SMCC) Public Safety Live-In Program is an opportunity for full-time students to attain real life fire protection and emergency medicine field experience while completing a related college degree program. Students in this program are selected on a competitive basis. If candidate is selected he/she will receive basic employment training, live and work at an area fire/rescue station free of boarding expenses, respond on emergency calls, and perform applicable station duties.

Students in the Live-In Program will gain a valuable advantage in the pursuit of a fire/rescue or emergency medicine career. How-

ever, the candidates will be required to demonstrate a high degree of personal responsibility. Public trust is the community's belief that their public servants will always act in the best interest of the community. Since Live-In the students will become members of a community fire/rescue department they will be held to a very high level of public trust. The participating fire/rescue departments will screen live-In candidates prior to placement and continue to monitor participants throughout the program to assure that community's trust is being honored. This process may include background checks, reference checks and drug/alcohol use monitoring.

Fire Science News

Spotlight :: Public Safety Live-In Students



NATALIE WOODWORTH is a first year Fire Science Technology student at SMCC. Natalie plans on eventually earning a second degree in Paramedicine and currently works for the Cumberland Fire Department.

CC: Describe a typical day living at the Cumberland Fire Department?

NW: I am usually up by 6 am because of work or classes. I pretty much just keep the station clean, work on homework, and keep the trucks in working order. I work per diem shifts on Wednesday, and that's where all the real work happens. There is a list on the board that we try to get done -- it can have anything on it, like checking SCBA packs to washing the chief's truck. One day me and one other person had to shovel out the whole town's hydrants.

CC: What did your life look like before you attended SMCC?

NW: My life consisted of high school, figure skating practice, private cello lessons, symphony rehearsals, and then in my second semester of senior year in high school I did an internship at the Derry Fire Department in NH, where I fell in love with the job. I had originally wanted to be a music teacher, but after the internship I had to go with what I loved most.

CC: Why did you decide to be a part of the Live-In program?

NW: The guys I worked with in Derry said it was a great experience and that I would learn a lot. And for me hands on is how I learn best. So I worked for a few months on my interviewing skills, and then went to the interview. I did not grow up in a fire fighting family like a lot of the students did, but I guess I did a good job.

CC: What is the best thing about this program?

NW: Probably the experience I have been getting, and of course all the different people, not only in the Live-In program, but also the Fire Science program, and all the different fire departments I have been in.

CC: What is the most challenging thing about this program?

NW: I would have to say the curfews, which I don't mind following. But its difficult. I can't go home when I want to, except on holidays, because there has to be one of the Live-Ins at my department at all times on weekends. It is also kind of hard to be dating someone. Sometimes I

won't see him for a week, which is a bummer, but part of the experience.

CC: What do you like to do when not assisting in fire calls or going to class?

NW: Figure skating is a passion of mine, so I try to get to the rink when I can. I also like to hangout with my friends and see my boyfriend when I can, and of course go shopping when I have the money.

CC: What is your advice to other students interested in applying for the Live-In program?

NW: Definitely go for it, its a great experience. Don't be nervous about the interview, just start preparing yourself in advance. Look up online "questions for an interview with a fire department"-- something along those lines, and then really think about how you would answer the questions and how a department might respond to your answers. I also really suggest going to your town's department; they would be more than happy to help.



In Their Own Words

Lida Munroe

Fire Science Technology
Cumberland Fire Department

After serving as a volunteer fire fighter, Lida Munroe is now in the Live-In program. "This was the best way to help myself get the job I want. I get a lot out of being a Live-In. The fire department is another family... I get more experience, more space than a dorm and a free place to live. And it's a big jump start on my career."

Matt McLean

Fire Science Technology
Topsham Fire & Rescue

As a kid, Matt spent a lot of time around the firehouse with his father, Captain for the Dover Fire & Rescue. "It's a wonderful opportunity to gain some on-the-job experience while putting the knowledge learned in the classroom to practical use. As a Live-In student you are a member of one of the most trusted groups of public servants in the world. You need to be able to be independent and mature enough to handle it."

Abigail Kelley

Fire science Technology and Paramedicine
Yarmouth Fire Rescue

As the first person to graduate high school in her family, Abigail says her biggest goal was to get a college degree. In order to gain more practical knowledge and experience, she applied to the Live-In program. "This place becomes your home and your place of work and being able to find the time for studies and an even balance is important. But the experience is worth it."