



THE 2011 TONY PINI *Awards*  
for **DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**  
IN THE FIRE SERVICE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Tony Pini Diversity & Inclusion Award Winners Announced:  
Departments to be Honored at FRI Diversity Breakfast in Atlanta, August 25**

**Portsmouth, VA; Toronto, ON; Bainbridge Island, WA;  
Fire Service Women of New York State Take Top Honors**

*Bremerton, WA*—FIRE 20/20 is pleased to announce that Portsmouth, VA; Toronto, ON; Bainbridge Island, WA; and the Fire Service Women of New York State have been named winners of the first annual Tony Pini Diversity & Inclusion Awards. Each will be honored for their outstanding work to build and nourish a diverse and inclusive fire department culture; to foster proactive relationships and build trust with their multicultural communities.

“Some people look at diversity as a problem. We believe it’s the solution to more safely and effectively serving our growing multicultural communities,” said Larry Sagen, Executive Director of nonprofit FIRE 20/20. “The Tony Pini Awards give the fire service an opportunity to acknowledge, celebrate and share diversity and inclusion programs that are helping departments better serve their communities.”

The four winning departments will be presented with etched glass awards during a special ceremony at the Diversity Breakfast of the Fire Rescue International Conference in Atlanta on August 25<sup>th</sup>. Awards will be presented to the honored departments by the sponsors of the 2011 Tony Pini Awards: FIRE 20/20, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, LION, and Scott Safety.

Twelve semi-finalists were selected from a field of forty nominations from throughout North America. The selection committee was comprised of volunteers from the *International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters (IABPFF)*, *International Association of Women in Fire and Emergency Services (iWomen)*, *National Association of Hispanic Firefighters (NAHF)*, *National Native American Fire Chiefs Association (NNAFCA)*, *National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC)*, *Volunteer Chief Officers Section (VCOS)* and the *Human Relations Committee of the International Association of Fire Chiefs*.

The Tony Pini Awards are named for the late Santa Rosa Fire Chief Tony Pini, who demonstrated a lifelong commitment to diversity and inclusion. Chief Pini was a founder and an active member of the International Association of Fire Chiefs’ (IAFC) Human Relations Committee, a member of the IAFC Ethics Task Force, a past chair of the California Fire Chiefs’ Cultural Diversity Committee, and a founding board member of nonprofit FIRE 20/20.

**ABOUT THE 2011 AWARD WINNERS:**



**Portsmouth Department of Fire, Rescue & Emergency Services,  
Virginia**

*Program: Department Diversity & Equity*

In 2009, the Portsmouth Department of Fire/EMS was under a Consent Decree from the Department of Justice because of its entrance testing. Though the Decree was not the result of actions of the department's 240 dedicated firefighters, incoming Chief Don J. Horton recognized the need to take steps toward mitigating rumors and unknowns that might divide the department's personnel and harm their working relationships. The Chief implemented a new

culture of transparency, and strengthened the organization to address and embrace the culture change. Under Chief Horton's leadership, the department hired a contractor to provide diversity and equity training for every member, and to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the department as a whole. Members were sent around the country to receive further training, with several officers and members becoming certified Level I EEO Officers.

Portsmouth soon began hosting Women in the Fire Service and Diversity & Equity conferences; promoted its fifth African American Captain and its first female Captain; and renovated two older fire stations to provide private sleeping areas and female locker rooms. All newly promoted officers now receive a training module on Equal Opportunity, Diversity, and Equity awareness. While these initiatives may not be measurable in the traditional sense, the department is accomplishing something equally impressive: changing the entire culture of the organization to be more diverse and inclusive.

"The Portsmouth Fire Rescue and Emergency Services is truly honored to receive the Toni Pini Award," said Portsmouth Fire Chief Don J. Horton. "This award indicates to all that change and progress as it relates to inclusion and fairness can occur when supported throughout the entire organization from top to bottom."

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**Toronto Fire Services, Ontario, CA**

*Program: Enhanced Curriculum for the Ontario Standardized Pre-Service Firefighting Training/Education Program*

Despite census data showing near 50% diversity in Toronto and surrounding areas, focused research indicated that Ontario's community college-based Pre-Service Fire Program (from which the Toronto Fire Service draws its applicants) exhibited less than 10% diversity. Based on these findings, the Toronto Fire Service (TFS) realized that it could not meet its moral, legal, and political obligations to be representative of the communities it serves without removing the equity barriers that prevented diverse students from seeking certification in the Pre-Service Fire Program.

In 2009, TFS partnered with Centennial College, one of the most diverse community colleges in Canada, to co-author an enhanced version of the Pre-Service Fire Program curriculum, and to then usher that new curriculum through the necessary approval and validation processes. Their goal was to assure that a greater number of visible minorities, women, and Aboriginal persons would be able to participate in and graduate from the program, thus increasing the diversity of potential applicants to TFS. The first class began in September 2010 with 34 students—18 visible minority males, 3 visible minority females, 6 white females, and 1 Aboriginal person—for a total diversity participation rate of 77%, well above the average. The group graduated this July.

"We are very pleased to be recognized and awarded for our efforts in fire service diversity and inclusion," said Toronto Fire Services' Fire Chief William Stewart. "It is especially exciting that this award will appropriately recognize our leadership at an international level," he continued. "This is a fitting tribute to the commitment and leadership of our people working together in teams to bring the finest in courage, compassion and service to the people of the City of Toronto."

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## **Bainbridge Island Fire Department, Washington**

### *Program: Off-Island Volunteer Fire Program*

At the Bainbridge Island Fire Department, career and volunteer members work hand-in-hand to provide emergency services to the island's 23,000 inhabitants. Traditionally, all members of the Department were required to be island residents. But over time the pool of Bainbridge residents who were interested and physically capable of becoming firefighters/EMT's diminished, while the need for emergency services was increasing. Applicants were typically acquaintances of existing members and shared a very similar cultural background, which unintentionally limited the diversity of the membership.

By developing a program to proactively recruit off-island members, Bainbridge Island Fire Department was able to increase the number and diversity of volunteer firefighters on the island and to meet the increasing demand for emergency services. Additionally, recruitment of off-island members has provided a pool of applicants for career and volunteer positions that add significantly to the diversity of the Department, in terms of life experience, age, education, ethnicity, and cultural background.

"The Off-Island Volunteer Program has added diversity and improved service to those who live, work and visit Bainbridge Island," said Bainbridge Fire Chief Hank Teran. "To be recognized for such efforts with the Tony Pini Award, is a testament to all of our membership and their desire to be open to change and the positive influences of diversity."

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## **Fire Service Women of New York State, New York**

### *Program: Phoenix Firecamp*

Of an estimated 18,000 career firefighters in New York State, only 107 are women; of the 96,000 volunteer firefighters statewide, it is estimated that 5%-6% are women, most of which work in EMS. Phoenix Firecamp began in 2007 by Fire Service Women of New York State (FSWNYS) to address the issue of diversity in the fire service, specifically the challenges of recruiting and retaining women.

The program—an annual week-long overnight camp for girls ages 14-19—nurtures interest in, and education about, careers in the fire service for women. The girls live in a converted firehouse and learn

first-hand the challenges of being a firefighter through exercises and classroom instruction. Except for a \$75 application fee, the camp is free. While Phoenix Firecamp was the first camp of its kind in the Northeastern United States, applications are accepted from throughout the country.

As Phoenix Firecamp marks its fifth anniversary this year, 84 young women are proud graduates of the program. In December 2010, a survey sent to all Phoenix Firecamp graduates indicated that all but nine of these young women are now involved with their local fire department—and many are pursuing fire service related degrees.

"Fire Service Women of New York State (FSWNYS) is thrilled to receive the Tony Pini Award. We hope it will encourage other career and volunteer women firefighters, and their affiliated departments, to adopt this concept and institute similar programs. We have a successful model which we are anxious to share," said firefighter Mary Wrobel, FSWNYS president.

### **Fire Service Women of New York State Media Contact:**

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## **About the Semi-Finalists**

In addition to the four winners, nine additional departments and/or organizations were honored as semi-finalists for the Tony Pini Diversity & Inclusion Awards. Each will be presented with a certificate recognizing their accomplishments. The nine semi-finalists include: Amputee Firefighters Association, MI; New Hanover County Fire Rescue, NC; Seattle Fire Department, WA; Grand Blanc Fire Department, MI; Casselberry Fire Department, FL; Worcester Fire Department, MA; Syracuse Fire Department, NY; Norfolk Fire-Rescue, VA; and Kentville Volunteer Fire Department, NS (Canada).

*Note: High resolution images from each winning program available upon request.*

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For more information about the Tony Pini Awards, please visit FIRE 20/20 at [www.fire2020.org](http://www.fire2020.org).