

Meet Chief Metz



Bainbridge FD Leader Exhibits Passion for Public Service

By Anne Gallagher

Lou Ann Metz always wanted to go into medicine, but getting into medical school was very restrictive during the 70s. So for a few years after graduating from college, she served as a research and development director for a cosmetics company. Meanwhile, she enjoyed watching the television show “Emergency,” which featured fictional paramedics in Los Angeles. “I was fascinated by the type of work Johnny and Roy did on that show,” she says. “I liked the variety they encountered and the independence they had.”

Her fascination with EMS led her to become an EMT and to volunteer at her hometown fire station in Randolph, Ohio. “When I started volunteering, the excitement I saw on TV became real. Then friends convinced me to take a test at Ravenna. I passed and

started working as the first fulltime female firefighter in Portage County.”

Chief Metz is now an Ohio Fire Executive (OFE) heading up the Bainbridge Fire Department. “When I started in the fire service, I soon decided I like firefighting as much as EMS,” she says. “Serving as fire chief for Bainbridge is a great opportunity. We’re currently transitioning from a volunteer to a combination department, and the community is growing and very supportive.”

Before joining Bainbridge last fall, she served as division chief at Stow for nine years – after working her way up from firefighter/paramedic to lieutenant to captain. She has taught classes in Canada, the United Kingdom and Ireland. “I really enjoy teaching and training,” she says.

A nationally-registered paramedic, Chief Metz is certified as an instructor for courses in EMS, fire service, Trauma Life Support and American Heart Association classes. She’s also a fire safety inspector and Chemical, Ordnance, Biological and Radiological (COBRA) technician.

Driven by a passion to serve

“My mother died when I was six, and I was raised by my grandparents who taught me the importance of hard work,” says Chief Metz. “You don’t compromise. You find something you’re passionate about and you do it.”

While growing up as the only girl among 10 brothers, Chief Metz learned to stand firm. “I’m pretty tenacious, and I really enjoy working hard,” she says. “At Stow, I was one of 12 people hired to start EMS. “There’s no doubt that back in the day you had to be better and work harder to be considered an equal

among your male counterparts,” she notes. “It wasn’t a pleasant road because the feeling was that women didn’t belong in the fire station. But I stuck with it, and now I enjoy developing fire service leaders for the future. It’s important to give back and to help others realize the dream you had.”

A true “people person,” Chief Metz claims she’s most passionate about public service in general. “I believe in placing service before self,” she says. “The most rewarding thing for me is to make a positive impact on someone’s life. It’s fulfilling to make a difference – whether it’s by making someone smile or letting a young person shadow you to learn about your career.”

Chief Metz’s passion to serve is also exemplified by her involvement in search and rescue (SAR) missions. She was a founding member of Summit Search and Rescue Dogs, Inc. and is certified as a SAR technician II, lost person incident manager and certified human remains detection dog handler.

“Our all-volunteer team responds to requests for assistance across the U.S. and Canada,” she notes.

“Last year was a busy year for the team with 12 callouts in three states. My dogs and I train eight hours a week. It’s a constant process but very fulfilling.”

How she got to the top

After graduating from Waterloo High School in 1976, Chief Metz earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Slippery Rock State College in 1980. Two years later, she became a paramedic, and a year after that, she became nationally registered. By 1987, she was a firefighter and fire safety inspector.

Chief Metz completed additional courses through the National and Ohio Fire academies. She has served in leadership positions for several professional organizations, including the International Association of Fire Chiefs and National Fire Protection Association.

She received the Women’s Outstanding Leadership Award, OFE Class 9 Outstanding Research Project Award and Mayer Glimcher Award for Excellence in Trauma Education. In 2008, she was named EMS Educator of the Year.

Running a B&B

As if she doesn’t have enough to do, Chief Metz is the co-owner of a bed and breakfast in Ravenna.

“Again, it’s a people-oriented business,” she says.

“Fortunately, I have a very good business partner.”

In her limited spare time, Chief Metz enjoys cooking for friends and family. “My specialty is comfort food like peach cobbler,” she says. “I also love to read mysteries and biographies.”

PULL QUOTE:

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Chief Lou Ann Metz, Bainbridge Fire
Department