

Record number of incoming SMCC students selected for Public Safety live-in program

By: B. Michael Thurlow, Fire Chief & Professor Steve Willis, Department Chair SMCC

A record-high 41 new Southern Maine Community College students have been selected to serve as live-in students at fire stations in 17 area municipalities for the 2016-17 academic year.

Students who participate in SMCC's live-in program receive fire-rescue and emergency medical services training and live and work at fire stations while enrolled as full-time Fire Science, Paramedicine and Criminal Justice students at SMCC.

Now in its 27th year, the program started with just six students — two each at the South Portland, Gorham and Scarborough fire departments. This year's participants will serve at 31 fire-EMS stations in 17 municipalities stretching from Kennebunk in the south to Topsham in the east to as far inland as Raymond.

Here in Scarborough we are welcoming six new students this year, 1 from Maine, 2 each from both New Hampshire and Connecticut, and 1 from Vermont. These six new live-in students will be joining 7 veterans some of whom have already earned one Associates' Degree in Fire Science, and are now working on a second degree in Paramedicine.

"This program is a partnership between our students, our partner communities and the college," said Steve Willis, chairman of SMCC's Fire Science program. "Students receive valuable career experience, education and training opportunities, and economic benefits. Participating communities benefit from well-trained and enthusiastic student employees. The college benefits by having students gain in-the-field experience to apply their academic knowledge."

A total of 93 new and returning SMCC students will participate in the live-in program this year. That, too, is a record-high number in the history of the program.

In preparation for the live-in program, the new students will go through orientation and develop basic firefighting and EMS skill sets during a three-week Summer Fire Academy that begins Aug. 8. The academy takes place at fire department facilities in Falmouth, Yarmouth and Cumberland.

The new students come from across Maine and six other states. As live-in students, they will respond to hundreds of emergencies and assist with fire prevention and public education programs in area communities.

As one of the founding departments in this cooperative venture, we couldn't be more proud of the success of this program. It has turned into an exceptional recruitment tool since dozens of the over 200 students that we have hosted here in Scarborough since the inception of the program have continued their service with us as full-time, per-diem, or call members. They are highly trained and motivated working hard to deliver exceptional customer service to the citizens and visitors of Scarborough.

If you have any questions about this article or any fire department issue you may contact me at mthurl@ci.scarborough.me.us or 730-4201.

Editor's note – I've attached a photo below of the new group of live-in students if you have room and would like to include it. The photo is courtesy of the SMCC Fire Science Department

