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San Diego Fire-Rescue Battalion Chief Receives Prestigious Award for Service

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS BESTOWS NATIONAL AWARD TO SDFD'S HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICER

SAN DIEGO – In recognition of his work to support fellow employees with peer support programs and emotional health resources, San Diego Fire-Rescue Department (SDFD) Battalion Chief David Picone is being recognized with a prestigious honor from the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC).

On Sept. 1, 2020, Chief Picone was notified that he was selected to receive the Chief Sandy Davis Safety Officer of the Year award. He was selected from a large group of nominees representing fire agencies across the country. The recipient of this award is recognized for making a significant contribution to their organization or the fire service. Chief Picone serves as SDFD Health and Safety Officer.

“We are very proud of Chief Picone and his team’s efforts to expand behavioral health and other support services offered to our employees,” said Fire-Rescue Chief Colin Stowell. “He has made such a major impact on our workforce which has really allowed individuals who may not have asked for help in the past to feel more comfortable and secure in reaching out for assistance. Chief Picone and his team have helped reduce the stigma of asking for help not only at our department but at other agencies as well.”

Since starting in his position as Health & Safety Officer three years ago, Chief Picone has expanded the peer support and chaplaincy programs to add more volunteers and improved training opportunities. He also initiated the concept of including employees’ spouses as peer support volunteers. He is credited with implementing several other initiatives, including:

- The Family Support Network and the Chaplain Crisis Canine Program.
- A joint wellness resource website for SDFD and SD Police Department personnel.
- Collaboration between the City’s Risk Management Department and private behavioral health facilities to serve first responders.
- Assisting other local first responder agencies with their behavioral wellness programs, cancer prevention methods and injury prevention programs.

- Creating the Injury and Illness Prevention Program which includes more than 20 specific policies for the safety (physical and behavioral) of the SDFD workforce. These policies also address physical injury prevention among many other employee safety topics.

Prior to competing for the health and safety officer position, Chief Picone was troubled by the high number of divorces in the fire service and wondered what was causing them. He also began to witness and understand the concept of first responders experiencing post-traumatic stress. As a result, he started finding ways to help firefighters, lifeguards and dispatchers navigate stresses of their jobs and find balance, emotionally and physically.

Chief Picone is a 21-year veteran of SDFD. He volunteers at his local church as a musician and works with his wife, Judy, to mentor other couples.

The IAFC has been in existence since 1873 and has provided a forum for fire and emergency service leaders to exchange ideas, develop professionally and uncover the latest products and services available to first responders. The mission of the IAFC is to provide leadership to current and future career, volunteer, fire-rescue and EMS chiefs, chief fire officers, company officers and managers of emergency service organization throughout the international community through vision, information, education, services and representation to enhance their professionalism and capabilities.

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