



# Kingsville Home To Fire Chief Of The Year



*Kingsville's highly accredited and respected Fire Chief has been named to one of the most prestigious titles awarded in the Province of Ontario. This past week, the Ontario Municipal Fire Prevention Officers Association (OMFPOA) honoured Kingsville's Fire Chief Bob Kissner Jr. as Fire Chief of the Year. Pictured above, Chief Kissner accepts the honour on behalf of the entire Kingsville Fire Department from OMFPOA President, Eric Chant during a recognition event in Barrie.*

The Town of Kingsville can proudly claim to be the home of the Fire Chief of the Year. At a ceremony on Wednesday, June 7 in Barrie, the Ontario Municipal Fire Prevention Officers Association (OMFPOA) presented Kingsville Chief Bob Kissner Jr. with the honour.

The award is presented for contribution to public education, fire prevention, and protection of life and property in the community. Chief Kissner first found out about the honour two weeks ago and it was brought to the public's attention at the recent Kingsville Fire Department Recognition Banquet.

"Usually I am not at a loss for words, but when they first told me I just sat there speechless," he said.

Kissner, who will turn 50 in August, began with the KFD in 1975 and worked his way up to the position of Deputy Chief. In 1995 he took over as Chief of the Leamington Fire Department and in November of 1998 he returned to Kingsville as Chief.

As usual, Kissner was humble in accepting the accolade, spreading the credit around amongst a variety of groups and individuals.

“When I accepted the award, I did on behalf of the team we have here. My job is the simple one. It’s reporting to Council and identifying in the budget what our needs are. We have a supportive Council who is providing the services we need, yet still being fiscally responsible. It’s also (a matter of) scheduling and supporting the officers. I see my role as a support role.”

Kissner also gave credit to the community’s business sector. “We have a very supportive business community. Each year we give fire safety booklets to each grade three child. The book is provided by ad sales from businesses in the community. We provide feedback forms to staff who tell us they are an excellent resource.”

Each year, firefighters give up their time to visit the local schools during Fire Prevention Week. “A lot of guys take vacation time in order to visit the schools,” explained Chief Kissner. “The volunteer firefighters are the guys that are going to the schools and making a difference.”

Finally, Kissner gave credit to Fire Prevention Officer Lt. Jeff Dean for his work with fire prevention. His professionalism, precision and planning were focused on in his acceptance speech. The department’s website is one of the highlights of the fire prevention campaign.

“How many departments can send monthly reminders to residents to check their smoke alarm batteries?,” continued Kissner. “Jeff has it set up so it is completely private and there is no spam.”

Like every team or organization, they are only as strong as their person at the top. Kissner has high expectations of his staff and in turn, gets results. Kissner also noted that the KFD was involved in a variety of fire safety and prevention measures long before they became provincially mandated and long before he was in charge.

There are many pieces of evidence that show the local fire prevention campaign works. One major sign came not too long ago when the KFD was called to a potential fire above the former Desk Top at the four corners. Because the structure had been retro-fitted to control fire, it stopped the blaze from spreading. The fire could have spread to the hallways, potentially destroying several homes and businesses.

On receiving the honour from the OMFPOA Chief Kissner added, "It reinforces for me that what we're doing is the right thing."

Due to fire prevention methods across the province, statistics show that the death rate by fire has dropped by more than fifty per cent in the past decade. Locally, there has been a dramatic decrease in the number of structure fires.

The results speak for themselves, but preventing fires has to start somewhere. In Kingsville, it begins at the top with the newest Fire Chief of the Year, Bob Kissner Jr.

*Courtesy of the Kingsville Reporter*