



# Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue

Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal Vernon Green

WFIA Awards Committee,

I, Vernon Green NMFR Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal, would like to nominate Mike Flunker NMFR Shift Commander, as the WFIA Public Educator of the Year.

Mike Flunker was hired as a Firefighter for the Neenah Fire Department in 1981. During Fire Prevention Week in 1982, one of the Inspectors became ill and was not able to complete his public education assignment. Mike Flunker stepped up and filled in for the Inspector to complete the assigned task. This opportunity provided Mike the exposure that would catapult him into the Public Education arena in a big way.

From that point on, Mike remained involved with the Public Education staff. In 1990 Mike and two other Firefighters started the "Smoky and Sparky Fire Clown" program. This program focused on elementary aged children and was presented specifically during Fire Prevention Week. Mike performed many portions of the presentations himself. In 1992 the program added additional Firefighters and expanded to provide more programs to additional schools.

In 1996 Mike formed, and headed up, the official Neenah Fire Department Public Education Team. The focus of the team changed from providing Public Education programs during fire prevention week, to the development of multiple programs presented throughout the year. One of Mike's first self-designed programs was named, "Ten Mega Myths of Fire Safety". Mike presented this program at the annual WFIA conference to rave reviews.

In 1997 the Neenah Fire Prevention Program was recognized by the State of Wisconsin and the City of Neenah presented a "Proclamation" to the Public Education Team. The Public Education Team, under the direction and guidance of Mike Flunker, continued to grow and develop additional programs.

In 2003 the Neenah and Menasha Fire Departments consolidated forming Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue. Mike continued to lead the now combined Fire Prevention Team made up of fifteen members. Two additional Fire Prevention week programs were added to provide programs that rotated on a three-year schedule in an effort to not have repeat programs from year to year to keep the children's interest while they are learning fire safety.

Under Mike's leadership the NMFR Public Education Team programs are currently presented annually during Fire Prevention week to roughly 2,500 children in 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at 19 elementary schools, both public and parochial, throughout the Neenah-Menasha school district.

A smoke detector "contract" is given out to each student. They take the contract home, perform an inspection of their home to make sure they have proper working smoke detectors and review other fire safety information with their parent/guardian. They then return the contract to their school for a chance to win the opportunity to be chosen to come to the firehouse for breakfast with the Firefighters and spend the morning learning "hands on" firefighting skills. Two children from each of the 19 schools are chosen to spend the morning with the firefighters. They also have the opportunity to be entered in a drawing to win a new bicycle donated by a local bike shop. In addition, the team conducts a calendar contest for 4<sup>th</sup> grade students at all 19 schools. The team has also developed several additional programs including, the Senior Citizen program, Senior High School program, Juvenile Fire Setters program and most recently, the Then and Now program.

To this day Mike continues to head the Public Education Program and is clearly the leader of this team. Mike does this while also very effectively serving as a Shift Commander for Neenah Menasha Fire Rescue. As Mike has been promoted through the years, he has continued to take on additional responsibilities. Mike has willingly chosen to not only remain a part of the Public Education Team, but has voluntarily maintained his role as the leader of the Team.

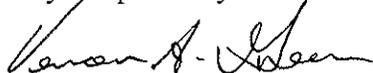
Mike also serves as the departments lead Fire Investigator and clearly has developed a knack for interviewing and educating the youth of the Neenah Menasha community with respect to the Juvenile Fire Setters Program (JFSP). Mike not only oversees the JFSP, but also personally conducts the majority of the interviews and delivers the programs. Mike's goal is to make sure that the child is educated about fire safety, that they fulfill their obligation of learning the cause and effect of their actions, and Mike does this with respect and dignity for the child.

Mike does the majority of these things as part of his profession at Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue. It should however be noted that Mike also gives many hours of his personal time, without compensation, in an effort to provide Public Education, and to promote Fire Prevention throughout the State of Wisconsin. Mike has also been extremely active with the MDA throughout the years serving as Camp Director for the MDA Summer Camp. Leading the NMFR "Fill The Boot" campaign and "Shamrock" fund raising efforts.

As the Assistant Chief of Prevention and Fire Marshal for the Cities of Neenah & Menasha, Public Education, Fire Prevention, and Fire Investigations fall under my umbrella of responsibility. Shift Commander Mike Flunker is without a doubt an irreplaceable asset that exhibits an incredible passion, commitment, and dedication to each of these divisions within the Fire Prevention Bureau.

I am truly honored to work with Mike Flunker, and I ask that you please give serious consideration to awarding Shift Commander Mike Flunker as the Public Educator of the Year for the 2011 Wisconsin Fire Inspectors Association. Mike's career now spans 30 years as a true Fire and Public Education Professional. Mike plans on retiring within the next 18 months, and I feel that this would be a very fitting way to recognize Mike for his enduring commitment to Fire Safety and Public Education, not only for our community, but also for the Fire and Life Safety Industry as a whole.

Very Respectfully Submitted,



Vernon A. Green

Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal  
Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue