

Memo

To: Mayor Don Merkes
From: Julie Parker-Birschbach
cc: Chief Al Auxier
Date: August 25, 2014
Re: Letter of Appreciation

I am writing to thank all of the firefighters from Station 22, for their continued acts of kindness and for making a young man's dream come true. I would like to extend a special thank you to the following firefighters: Kevin Korth, Jeff Ellis, Jeff Schweitzer, Mike Powkwinski, Nate Monfort, Brad Auxier, Al Wroblewski, DuWayne Schwartz, and Chief Al Auxier. Two years ago I approached my son's school and requested he volunteer at the fire station. My son, Brandon has Down syndrome, Autism, and a speech delay. After a lot of determination, continued requests and the open mind of Chief Al Auxier, Brandon started volunteering at the fire station. The fire station holds a special place in Brandon's heart, given his relationship with my late father, who was a firefighter.

When asked recently, what benefit Brandon received from the experience, I had to compile a list of all the ways he has grown/been blessed by the experience. First and foremost, Brandon's self-confidence has improved and he thinks he is part of the fire department family. He is filled with such pride when the firemen slide down the pole to recognize his hard day's work. Firemen have stopped us on the street to say hi and to tell Brandon what a hard worker he is. The smile on his face after one of these chance meetings could light up the sky. The firemen are so patient and welcoming. They help him wash the trucks, vacuum, roll up the hoses, or anything else that needs to be done. The weekly "fire station day", as we fondly call it in our house, is a very productive and special day for Brandon. He does not want to do anything to impede his ability to volunteer at the fire station. Brandon tells anyone and everyone who will listen that he works at the fire station. He tells them what he does and pauses to wait for a response that shows they are impressed. If the response does not meet his expectation, he will continue to explain until he knows that they appreciate how much the experience means to him. I have been touched as Brandon's mother to see him so happy as a result of the kindness of others.

Sincerely,

Julie Parker-Birschbach
Julie Parker-Birschbach