Press Release

Release Nr: 2001-02

January 10, 2020

Fort Drum Public Affairs

Local firefighter takes the reign as new Fort Drum fire chief

FORT DRUM, N.Y. (Jan. 10, 2020) -- Surrounded by family, friends and colleagues, Jason Brunet was promoted to Fort Drum fire chief during a ceremony Jan. 10 at the Garrett W. Loomis Fire Station 2 on post.

Brunet has served at Fort Drum for more than 20 years, starting as a firefighter in March 1998 before transitioning to fire inspections in 2003. He was named assistant chief of fire prevention in 2007, and he most recently served as deputy fire chief. He also has volunteered with Sackets Harbor Volunteer Fire Department for the past 27 years.

As the new Fire and Emergency Services Division fire chief, Brunet is responsible for overseeing three fire stations on post with 60 personnel who respond to roughly 2,000 calls a year. Additionally, Fort Drum Fire responds to an average of 50 to 60 mutual aid calls annually to assist local community first responders.

Brunet manages the Fire and Emergency Services program, to include human resource, budget and training functions. He provides oversight and guidance on all FES programs, such as the Fire Prevention and Inspection Program, and serves as the fire prevention and safety technical adviser to the garrison staff and directorates.

Lt. Col. Matthew LeBlanc, Fort Drum DES director and 91st Military Police Battalion commander, said that, as fire chief, the lives of more than 40,000 people who live, work and recreate on post, rests in Brunet’s capable hands.

“Jason is responsible for keeping us safe on this installation,” he said. “I know we are in good hands.”

Born and raised in Sackets Harbor, Brunet is a third-generation firefighter.

“From the time I was old enough to walk, my father would put me in a truck and we’d go on calls,” he said. “I remember how he’d put me on top of the tanker, and I would yell down to him when it was filled with water.”

Brunet said that his mother sometimes responded to the calls her husband went on – just to pick up their son when she thought he might not be safe in that environment.

“There were so many trucks and so many people, and with everything that was going on, she didn’t want me to get run over or anything,” he said. “But from the time I was 14 or 15 years old, I wanted to be a firefighter – that’s what I wanted to do.”

Naturally, his father was a great influence in Brunet’s decision to carry on the family profession.

“My father has been in the fire service for over 50 years,” Brunet said. “He’s been the Jefferson County Fire Chiefs Association president, he’s been chief at Sackets Harbor (Volunteer Fire Department), and he’s still very active.”

After graduating from Sackets Harbor High School, Brunet attended the New York State Fire Academy in 1995. Upon completion of his training, he applied for firefighting positions throughout the U.S. until he landed his first as a civilian contractor at Wallops Flight Facility, a small NASA naval base in Virginia.

He later entered the federal workforce, serving as a firefighter / emergency medical technician at FDR Veterans Affairs Hospital in Montrose, New York.

“So I was building up that work experience, getting the certifications I needed, and after six months of being in the federal system I was able to transfer to Fort Drum when they had openings,” Brunet said.

Brunet said that he always had his sights set at Fort Drum, and he never considered pursuing his career anywhere else.

“I’m a local guy,” he said. “I wanted to be here because of the ties that Fort Drum has with our community. I remember my dad taking me with him when he’d visit the fire station here. Me, being so young, I was just in awe of all of the equipment. So before I even started working here, I knew the layout of the fire stations, and I knew a majority of the guys, because a lot of them also work at Sackets Harbor.”

Brunet said that his father would often bring him along to visit a dear family friend, Gary Loomis, who retired as a Fort Drum assistant fire chief.

“When I was younger I looked up to him because he was always out here, doing the job that I thought I wanted to do,” Brunet said. “He was very influential to me.”

Brunet said that working on a military installation is an experience unlike any other for a firefighter, and that the professionalism and camaraderie throughout the department can be awe-inspiring.

“You can go into any station at any time and feel welcome,” he said. “It’s a great team of highly trained professionals who are ready to respond when called.”

Brunet has served under four fire chiefs at Fort Drum – Robert Kerr, Peter Queior, Donald Striejewske and Jeffrey Chrissley – and he said that he will use the lessons he learned from them as he takes on their former duties.

“They influenced not only me, but more people than they could ever imagine,” Brunet said. “True professionals who never let their guard down on the job.”

Brunet said that because of the nature of their work, firefighters spend as much time together as they do with their own spouses, children and other family members. He said that a good leader will have an open door to listen when someone is having personal issues and will give them the time they need to settle matters at home.

“We tend to miss so many ceremonies, activities and holidays because of our work schedules,” Brunet said. “So, it’s important to always stress putting families first.”

Brunet said that his priorities as fire chief will include staffing, upgrading the three fire stations and improving the quality of life for firefighters. He said part of that can be achieved by digitizing the department – going away from the excessive use of printers and fax machines – to streamline processes.

Before the promotion ceremony, Brunet said that he was excited about taking on the top leadership role in the fire department.

“I couldn’t have been happier when I got the phone call and found out I had the job,” he said. “I’m a little nervous to start, but I’ve got a great bunch of guys to work with – my staff is awesome and they help me every single day. I’m proud of them, and I’m ecstatic to be doing this.”

Photo Captions:

Caption 02: Roger Brunet pins the badge onto the uniform of his son, Fort Drum Fire Chief Jason Brunet, during the promotion ceremony Jan. 10 at the Garrett W. Loomis Fire Station 2. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs).

Caption 04: Fort Drum Fire Chief Jason Brunet (center) stands with his family during his promotion ceremony Jan. 10 at the Garrett W. Loomis Fire Station 2 on post. With him are his parents, Roger and Linda Brunet, his wife Courtney, and two sons Gannon and Grayden. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

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