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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## FPC Fire Leadership Academy takes field trip to county fire tower

**September 4, 2018** – The only thing that looked different about a group of soon-to-be firefighters honing their skills at the Flagler County Fire Tower is that their helmets were Bulldog green.

Students participating the Flagler Palm Coast Fire Leadership Academy spent the day Thursday (August 30) dressed in full firefighter gear during fireless training exercises to prepare them for future careers as first responders.

“This program is offering our students a literal ‘classroom to career,’” said Flagler Schools Superintendent James Tager. “We thank our partners with Flagler County Fire Rescue for giving our student firefighter candidates this valuable opportunity.”



Sydney Adams, a junior, was among the first enrolled for the program that started the second semester of the 2016-17 school year.

**Charles Ericksen, Jr.**  
District 1

**Greg Hansen**  
District 2

**David Sullivan**  
District 3

**Nate McLaughlin**  
District 4

**Donald O'Brien, Jr.**  
District 5

“I definitely want to be a firefighter,” she said after practicing Advancing Initial Attack Hose Line exercises to gain experience maneuvering the hose and directing the water stream. “This is a wonderful opportunity.”

Besides learning basic firefighting skills – how to use ropes, tools, and other protective equipment – students learn about the history of and specialties in fire service.

“We also learn about respect and authority,” said high school senior Trenton Orr – second in command at the Fire Leadership Academy, or deputy chief. “We have rank, just like you would in an actual fire department.”

Orr is on an accelerated schedule to get through the program, which started well after he began high school. He will take his Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training during night courses next term.

The State Fire Marshal’s Office will individually test the first 11 graduating students for “Firefighter 2” in August 2019, said Flagler County Fire Rescue Chief Don Petito. “We are getting them ready for everything they will need to know to pass their written and hands-on test,” he said. “Today they are working through a maze that has two levels, and search-and-rescue techniques. They cannot do any training with live fire until they turn 18 years old.”



Kyle Najpaver, a 7-year firefighter paramedic and field training officer for Flagler County, said it is an honor to be among the adjunct professors for the Fire Leadership Academy.

“This is a wonderful program for these young adults,” Najpaver said. “This gives them a real taste of what they will experience as firefighters.”

And, the students are fast becoming part of the greater firefighting family.

“We have grown together so much,” said Jaevon Jones, a high school junior and Fire Leadership Academy captain. “Our skills. Our trust. We’re already family. We know we can depend on each other and that is going to help us give back to the community.”

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