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Commerce Connects: Tell us a little bit about your current role with SFM. What do you do? How long have you been in this role?

Jenni Snyder: I have been with SFM for 10 years as a fire and life safety educator. I cover nine counties in southwest Ohio – working with fire departments and the public on reducing risks. My passion is working with youth who misuse fires (also known as “youth firesetters”). I help lead a group of youth firesetter specialists from across the nation, as well as New Zealand, Australia and the UK. This group collaborates on best practices and assists members with educational needs and community resources.

Angela Potter: As a fire and life safety educator, I serve as a liaison between SFM and the fire departments across my district of five counties in northeast Ohio. In this role, I mentor new educators, assist department staff in organizing and expanding their prevention outreach activities and programs, provide youth firesetter intervention, and teach courses through the Ohio Fire Academy. I follow up with departments after significant incidents to offer reporting assistance, attend fire service and stakeholder meetings. I also teach fire safety lessons to all Ohioans – children in the schools, employees of healthcare, businesses, and industries, as well as special groups and clubs.

Anita Metheny: I am assistant chief and OFIRS (Ohio Fire Incident Reporting Systems) program manager with SFM’s Fire Prevention Bureau. As an assistant chief, I promote fire safety education with a strong emphasis on community risk reduction to Ohioans and fire departments alike using current fire data to assess trends. As the OFIRS program manager, I am responsible for collecting, validating and submitting all of Ohio’s fire department response data to the national system.

Commerce Connects: What do you enjoy most about your role with SFM?

Snyder: As a career firefighter for 28 years, my goal has always been to reduce the loss of life and property. I have been given the opportunity to teach firefighters and the public how to be safer in the event of a fire. We can’t stop all fires; but we can, however, teach everyone how to survive. I love being approached by people and being told I taught them in class a year ago and, as a result, their home is safer.

Potter: Through my position at SFM, I’ve been able to continue learning by attending trainings, workshops, conferences and seminars, as well as enrolling in courses through the University of Akron, Ohio Fire Academy and the National Fire Academy. This has given me the opportunity to learn from other amazing people, connect with stakeholders, and build partnerships.

Metheny: I am passionate about collecting good-quality data from Ohio’s fire service. As a fire service member for many years, I know people often don’t know all we as a fire service truly do. The fire service has been an all-hazard mitigation service for more years than not, and these members are highly trained in not only firefighter and EMS responsibilities, but basic problem solving. I get to highlight that in data submissions to FEMA. I also love interacting with current members of the fire service and teaching them how to enter fire reports to highlight their duties.



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Commerce Connects: Are you currently employed with a fire department on top of your duties at SFM?

Snyder: I have been with the Whitewater Township Fire Department all 28 years of my fire service career and currently hold the rank of captain.

Potter: Before accepting my current position with SFM, I was a member of Granger Fire Department in Medina County. While there, I started a community fire prevention and education program, and taught safety lessons with my K9 partner, Ahrens. I began my career in the fire service 22 years ago as a firefighter/paramedic.

Metheny: I volunteer in a small community fire department where I live in Craig Beach, Ohio, and have been there for two years. I started in a small community in Portage County in 1990 and have been in the fire service ever since.

Commerce Connects: Why do you think it is important for women to pursue a career in the fire service?

Snyder: The fire service offers so many opportunities for women. It isn't an easy career to pursue, but the benefits definitely outweigh the challenges. Each person who chooses to serve their community brings their own set of skills and strengths. As a woman, it pushed me to find not only my physical strength, but my emotional strength. The fire service is an incredible career choice, giving all members the ability to specialize in certain areas and develop skills you can't get anywhere else. It gives a woman the chance to grow personally and professionally – all while serving her community and making an impact on the people around her.

Potter: The fire service offers many professional opportunities on the local, state and federal levels – from teaching to community risk reduction; disaster planning to code enforcement; investigations, forensics, and so much more. When we're given the freedom to get creative and share our passion with others, we can achieve great things!

Metheny: When I started my career, women were not openly accepted in the fire service. We had to prove ourselves to be worthy of the position. While it was trying, I don't believe any woman "deserves" a position in the fire service just because they are a woman. We have all had to do the work and move up based on our merit. Having said this, I believe women play an integral role in the fire service – being able to afford compassion with pure drive on every incident we see. I have mentored many men and women as they have moved into fire service roles and have counted it a privilege to be able to mold future fire service members.

Photos on next page.



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