

“PAYING IT FORWARD” – FIREFIGHTER STYLE

Jefe Cuerpo Activo de Bomberos (Fire Chief) Adrian Alberto Peralta posed proudly for a photograph in front of the 1986 American LaFrance pumper immediately after it was off-loaded at the Customs Dock in Zarate, Argentina. It was the first real evidence for him, that dreams do come true!

In October of last year, Copperas Cove Fire Chief, Dennis Haas, accompanied Dr. Stephan Hittmann, President and CEO of the 9-1-1 Program Fund to Argentina to help conduct a needs assessment for the Bomberos Voluntarios de Garin (Garin Volunteer Firefighters). The 9-1-1 Program Fund is an I.R.S. approved non-profit foundation that was founded after the tragedy on September 11th, 2001. The Foundation provides donated equipment, apparatus, ambulances, tools, bunkers and most anything else that can be used by firefighters, including training on the equipment. They have to date, provided ambulances, fire trucks and equipment to firefighters in Panama, Dominican Republic, Argentina, Kosovo and many other countries around the world.... and the best part is that all of this has been GIVEN FREE OF CHARGE to the firefighters who protect the communities in which they live. The pumper is the latest of many needs around the globe that have been met by the 9-1-1 Program Fund.



The American LaFrance, which was donated by the Neptune, New Jersey Fire Department, arrived at the docks in Zarate, Argentina on March 22nd. The pumper, while 20 years old itself, has only 18,000 miles on it and still is many years newer than the one it will replace..... and again, the best part of this story is that it was DONATED FREE OF CHARGE to the Bomberos of Garin, along with a long list of added equipment including pike poles, bunker pants, bunker coats and nozzles. The pumper was shipped by an Argentine shipping company who provided their service at “cost” to help the firefighters of their country.

Chief Haas has just returned from Argentina where he accompanied Dr. Stephan Hittmann, and was joined by Captain Jeffrey Gaskin from Scarsdale Fire Department in New York and Tim Marinace, Special Operations Training Officer from Nassau County Sheriff’s Office in New York. All donated their time to the Foundation and were involved in two separate aspects of their work. Chief Haas and Captain Gaskin provided one day of training covering the American LaFrance’s specifications, pump operations, maintenance, hose loads, hose evolutions and fire attack tactics associated with preconnected 1 3/4” hoselines. A second day was spent witnessing and providing critique for hands-on search and rescue and fire attack evolutions of firefighters from Garin, Mauschwitz, Tigre and Maquinista Savio.

While Chief Haas and Captain Gaskin were spending time with the firefighters, Dr. Hittmann and Officer Marinace accompanied Jefe Guillermo Rios, Chief of Police for the Autopista (Highway) in Buenos Aires Province, where they met with tactical officers and spent a day at their tactical training site evaluating procedures, equipment and weapons.

A third day of the trip was spent in Buenos Aires, meeting with Jorge Daniel Venturini, who is the Minister of Security for Buenos Aires and his staff. His division of 1,700 personnel are all cross-trained and are responsible for all law enforcement and firefighting in the City of Buenos Aires. One of the items of interest that was discussed, was having the Foundation provide arson investigation training at some time in the future.



Chief Haas has been soliciting and collecting donated equipment since his original trip last October and has collected over 50 sets of bunker coats and pants, 15 helmets, 20 pair of boots, many hoods and gloves along with a few breathing apparatus. Chief Haas says he is very grateful for the fire departments from Central Texas, who have really stepped up to “PAY IT FORWARD”. This equipment will be shipped to Argentina and to the Dominican Republic in the coming months.

For information on how to donate apparatus or equipment or to inquire into many available references provided by the Foundation, please contact Dr. Hittmann at hittmann@911program.com or by telephone at 914-479-8800. Chief Haas may also be contacted at dhaas@ci.copperas-cove.tx.us or by telephone at 254-630-9700 to donate or to provide a presentation on the work of the Foundation in Argentina.