

July 21, 2013

Darrell Willis, Division Chief, Prescott Fire Department

Dan Fraijo, Fire Chief, Prescott Fire Department

Dear Sirs,

My heart goes out to the Prescott firefighters who lost an amazing team of hot shots and the community who experienced evacuation and loss of homes. I have been deeply touched by the support of the community of Prescott, not surprisingly the state of Arizona; as well as people across the nation and throughout the world since this tragedy occurred. We are so beholdng to all firefighters for their hard work and sacrifice. This tragedy has brought to my attention the incredible service these men, particularly the hot shot crew, provide as caretakers of our forest land. I have a better understanding of what these men endure on a daily basis to get a wild fire under control. Every time their loved ones send them off to fight a fire, they have to deal with the possibility they will not come back. More than any other service on our homeland, the dangers are ever present and extraordinary with each situation.

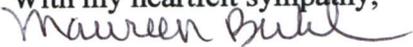
Traveling back to the Midwest in June, we avoided the Prescott area because of the Doce fire. Soon after my arrival in Wisconsin, I learned of the Yarnell fire and shortly after-the death of the 19 Granite Mountain Hotshot crew members. I regretted not being able to show my support and gratitude in person. I am grateful for the AZ Central website to watch the memorial service and the thoughtfulness of the family members in sharing their thoughts and stories about their loved ones. The least I could do was to read about each young man who lost their life. I just can't imagine what those last few minutes must have been like-how could one ever prepare for the final moments? Yet, you know from your own experience what they were facing when the winds shifted. As fire chiefs-who oversaw these amazing young men-your grief was evident during the memorial service. What a huge loss you must be feeling. I heard in your voices how you want to take the pain away from the families who no longer have a husband, father, brother, son.

As I read about the lives of these brave men, common themes or characteristics were evident-trust, faith, devotion to family, love of the outdoors, sense of dedication to the forestlands; remarkable, amazing, courageous, selfless...truly appropriate for a team of 'hotshot' firefighters.

How do you ever begin to rebuild such a strong core of 'hot shot fire fighters'? If there is anything I could do during these next few months or years, let me know. My gift is very small, but I will keep the firefighters in mind as I make annual charitable contributions.

Thank you so much for your service. God Bless you and keep safe your firefighting crews.

With my heartfelt sympathy,

  
Maureen Buhl