



Future firefighter impressing his mentors

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2010-05-02 18:31:53



ELIDA — If there is a position open on the American Township Fire Department when Ryan Brown graduates from college, it's his.

"I would bring him on board in a heart beat," Deputy Chief Keith Brickner said of the Elida High School senior who's been volunteering at the department this school year.

Ryan sees himself more on a big city's fire department. Wherever he looks for work, Brickner is confident he'll do well.

"I've been impressed with Ryan and his determination to move forward," he said. "I know he is going to make it."

Ryan volunteers through the SUCCESS (Students Understanding Culture through Community, English and Social Studies) class. He signed up for the class in hopes of being placed at the fire department.

"I wanted a first-hand look at what it was like here," he said, admitting he was once one of those children who liked to set small things on fire and then put them out. "Fire excites me, I guess."

Ryan volunteers one day a week for four hours. One of his recent jobs has been to load hydrant testing information into the computer system. He's been to the dispatch center, to training activities, and to a meeting about the new Elida High School. He cleans trucks and does daily chores too.

"He stands right along with the other guys," Brickner said. "He gets right in there and plays with us."

Ryan has also had the chance to assist at several recent house fires. He offered support and had a try with the hose, wetting down hot spots after crews extinguished the fire. There is only so much Ryan can do at the scene because of his age, but it has been enough to heighten his interest.

"The adrenaline is rushing. You are just ready to help," he said. "This has been a really good learning experience."

Ryan will study fire science at the University of Akron in the fall. He's enrolled in its four-year program. On his own, he's applied for grants and scholarships, while still putting in 35 hours a week at Happy Daz.

His self-motivation is another thing that impresses Brickner. To Ryan, it is his only choice.

"I just want to be something in life," he said. "That is my main motivation."

Ryan Brown, 17

School: Elida High School

Role: Volunteers at American Township Fire Department

Parent: Sylvia Mitchell

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