



# Chaplains' Chat

**Fall  
2011**

Welcome to our first edition of “*Chaplains’ Chat*,” a newsletter both for Illinois Fire Chaplains and for our Chiefs. We hope this newsletter will help keep the lines of communication open between us, as well as provide information on training and important developments within the Illinois Corps of Fire Chaplains (ICFC) and the MABAS Chaplain Program. If you have something for the newsletter, please contact our editor, Chaplain Suzanne Anderson-Hurdle. Her contact information can be found on the back of this page. For more information on training events, requirements for Chaplains, etc., please contact Chaplain Jennie Swanson, ICFC President.

## **Here is information on some upcoming training opportunities:**

**October 7-8**—A special Chaplain’s Workshop training opportunity is being offered during the Illinois Firefighter’s 2011 “Down and Dirty” conference at the low price of only \$50! The conference is held jointly at two sites: Holiday Inn and Conference Center, Urbana, Illinois and the Illinois Fire Service Institute, Champaign, Illinois. To register for the conference check “Chaplain’s Workshop” on the form found at the link below. You need to make reservations at the hotel on your own. Shuttles will run us back and forth from the hotel to training.

The Chaplain’s Workshop focuses on two areas and both will help chaplains be effective when called upon by their department. The first part, Behavioral Health and Suicide Awareness, will be presented by Battalion Chief Jeff Dill of Palatine Rural FPD. Jeff holds a Masters Degree in Counseling and is founder of Counseling Services for Firefighters and the Firefighters Behavioral Health Alliance. Saturday’s program covers Fire Department Culture and Operations. Taught by Chief Nardoni (South Chicago Heights) and Jennie Swanson (Addison), this class meets the “Fire Department Culture and Operations” MABAS Chaplain training requirement.

The registration form is here: <http://www.illinoisfirefighters.org/Portals/0/2011IFAregformFINAL.pdf>

**Division 12 Trainings at Carol Stream FPD Station #3 - 1045 W. Lies Road, Carol Stream, IL 60188**  
**All are welcome, Training is free of charge.**

- Tues. **October 11** - 7-9:30pm & Thurs. **October 13** - 9-11:30am—Topic: Burn Victims
- Tues. **November 8** - 7-9:30pm & Thurs. **November 10** - 9-11:30am—Topic: Discussion/ Case Review

**October 18-20**—The National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) is holding BASIC CRISIS RESPONSE TRAINING (24-hour training) for people and professionals who work with victims and survivors of violent crime, trauma, and disaster. This will be held at Madde Auditorium, Decatur Public Library; 130 N. Franklin, Decatur, Illinois, 62523.

To register, contact: NOVA via e-mail at [training@trynova.org](mailto:training@trynova.org) or phone (703) 535-NOVA (6682)  
*The registration fee is \$300(NOVA members) or \$360(non-NOVA members) Training manual is \$75.*

**Please mark your calendars for the 2012 MABAS Command Conference February 20-23rd, 2012.**



We thought it might be helpful to share our experiences as Chaplains so we can learn from each other and see the value in the service we give. Here, is just one of many stories we hope to begin sharing...

An unexpected child's death and one call from Chief...made a world of difference to a hurting family.

**A Helping Hand,** What could a fire chaplain possibly have to offer? This was a question I struggled with but  
**A Listening Ear,** felt comforted knowing I was exactly where I was supposed to be on the morning Chief  
**A Praying Heart...** called me.

An 8 year-old, special needs child had died during the night and mom had just discovered her. Chief knew I could assist this mother and family and made the call. When I arrived on scene, the fire fighters were all there and nothing more could be done. This is where a Fire Chaplain has the opportunity to make a HUGE difference in lives touched with death and pain. I connected easily with this young, tearful mom understandably unable to make decisions regarding her other children. This was the worst day of her life and I felt called to simply BE with her. I addressed the immediate needs; her other 3 children were not aware of their sister's death and police were on the scene making their routine report. I was able to dress the children and arranged to leave the house, taking them with me to get them breakfast. After delivering the 6 year-old to school, I returned with the toddlers to comfort Mom as the coroner prepared to remove the body of the deceased sister. The kids responded well to me and I was able to keep them in another room while that all took place.

My role was not to 'fix' the situation, but simply to bring comfort and assistance. When the fire department left, who would have tended to this family? In our fast paced society many needs are often overlooked and emotional trauma results. I can only wonder what would've occurred if the children would have awakened to policemen in their house and a coroner leaving with their sister in a body bag. She was filled with so many questions as it was.

I left when I saw Mom had family around her. I shared I was only a phone call away if she needed anything. She DID call only a few hours later. Mom wanted me to explain to her 6 year-old about death and why her sister would not be coming back. They trusted me and reached out for further help. I returned and was greeted at the door with a house full of relatives and friends besides this sweet 6 year-old that had breakfast with me. Mom had trusted me with something this personal, something they ALL needed at this moment.

I called this young mom the next day to see how things were going. She texted me often during the week on how she was doing and updates on funeral plans. At the funeral home, the 6 year-old, surrounded with young cousins, eagerly sat with me during service. They traveled with me to the burial site just a short distance away allowing time for questions that I could easily answer, removing their fears and concerns.

Chaplains are willing and able to respond. How would your department have handled this event? I credit Chief Gambrill for his confidence in fire chaplains and the positive outcome it had on an entire family. I was able to simply BE THERE for this family and considered it an honor. This young mom is still in touch and the children are doing well.

***Ann Rohde is the Fire Chaplain at Harristown' FPD under the direction of Chief, Steve Gambrill.***



**Contact info:** *Chaplains' Chat* Editor, Chaplain Suzanne Anderson-Hurdle, revhurdle@sbcglobal.net

Illinois Core of Fire Chaplains: [www.ilfirechaplains.org](http://www.ilfirechaplains.org)

**In next month's issue:**  
Q&A's about MABAS Fire  
Chaplains...and lots more