

Chief Dan Stefano honored with Spurgeon Award from local Explorer organization

Exploring of Orange County presented Costa Mesa Fire Chief Dan Stefano with the organization's Spurgeon Award, citing his commitment to youth and impressive record of community service and outstanding leadership to Explorer programs.

Stefano received the award at Exploring Orange County's 28th annual Spurgeon luncheon on Friday Oct. 20. Also honored were Orange County Sheriff Sgt. Dan Daniels and Jeff Snow, municipal services director for Republic Services.

"Our Explorer programs provide incredibly valued opportunities for us to connect with the youth of our community," Chief Stefano said. "The sustained success of Costa Mesa's Explorer programs is only possible with the engaged support provided throughout all levels of our organization. At the end of the day, it is about helping our youth develop their leadership, character and life skill sets."

Stefano has been the Costa Mesa Fire Chief since 2013. Prior to that he served for 18 years in the Laguna Beach Fire Department where he held several roles starting with Reserve Firefighter to Fire Division Chief, Training and EMS Chief and Fire Marshal.

Stefano has the distinction of being the state's 32nd Certified Fire Chief through the Office of the State Fire Marshal and he also holds the designation of Chief Fire Officer through the Center of Public Safety Excellence.

Exploring of Orange County serves about 1,300 youth in more than 60 explorer posts throughout the county, which provides

young people with opportunities to explore career paths, many in public safety and law enforcement.



Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue has managed Explorer Post 400 since 1996, which is led by Capt. Rob Gagne, Engineer Steve Cathey and Engineer Eliasar Maldonado. All of them were explorers before being hired as full-time professional firefighters.

In addition to Stefano being honored, Costa Mesa Fire Explorer and Intern Moises Vaca and Costa Mesa Police Explorer Citlaly Gomez received the 2017 Young American Award scholarship presented by the Orange County Council Boy Scouts of America. The Young American Award is presented to an Explorer who is recognized as a leader within their Explorer Post.

A graduate of Aliso Viejo High School in 2013, Vaca attended the Fire Tech Program at Santa Ana College and was a Fire Explorer with Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue from 2015-2017. He received the department's Explorer of the Year award in 2016. He currently is a Fire Explorer Advisor for the Costa Mesa

Department and a Fire Prevention Volunteer Intern.

Gomez, a graduate of Costa Mesa High School, joined the Costa Mesa Police Explorer program in July of 2012 and has risen through the ranks and is currently a captain supervising 37 Explorers. She has volunteered 3,870 hours in her five years as an explorer and has received numerous awards.