Fire Captain Heunemann receives the March City Manager Leadership Award

City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly presented the City Manager Leadership Award to Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue Captain John Heunemann.

“Captain Heunemann has a broad range of valuable life skill sets that continue to be noteworthy contributions to those around him and to his evolution as a Costa Mesa Fire Captain,” Gallardo-Daly said. “He does an excellent job of connecting with people and getting the job done with a valued blend of mindful professionalism, sound technical competency and a congenial disposition. I’m proud to present him with this award.”

Captain Heunemann attended Mission Viejo High School and after graduation went on to study chemistry at San Diego State University. Heunemann had aspirations to be a Chemistry Professor, but then one day he realized he didn’t want to work inside all and decided to pursue a career in the fire service. Heunemann decided to test for a fire agency and the rest is history.

Heunemann began with CMFR as a Firefighter in 2003 and was promoted to Fire Captain in 2010. During his tenure with the department, Heunemann has been a key member in many of the Urban Search and Rescue drills and he introduced the electronic charting program to both the city and the county.

In 2024, Heunemann volunteered to be a Regional Task Force training manager. Those duties include developing and coordinating all the necessary certifications for each of the 30 positions needed to deploy as a Regional Task Force. Additionally, Heunemann maintains all the training records,

including quarterly training exercises, of the task force. He is responsible for coordination of all training aspects of the taks force and four partner agency training officers.

Heunemann developed the first of its kind certification track task book for each position within the task force. The task book is in the process of being recognized at the State level by the CAL OES Urban Search and Rescue Working Group as the standard moving forward for all 13 Regional Task Forces within the State of California.

Prior to working for CMFR, Heunemann worked at Mission Viejo Hospital and Balboa Naval Hospital in the NICU, as a Respiratory Therapist.