

**PLANT CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT RESERVE FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM  
DISSOLVE OR REVITALIZE**

**EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT**

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## ABSTRACT

The Plant City Fire Department has operated as a combination department for many years. The career firefighters are augmented by a reserve force. The problem is the reserve program is lackadaisical with the members not adhering to the standard operating guidelines. The program appears to be lethargic with no administrative guidance and members apathetic in their participation while being compensated. The purpose of this research project was to determine if the reserve program should be dissolved or continued with some revitalization or structural change.

The research method used for this project was evaluative. Information was acquired through literature review, three survey questionnaires and personal interviews. Research questions used in the evaluative method were:

1. What is the purpose and intent of the Plant City reserve program?
2. Are other fire departments using reserve programs?
3. What are the concerns, if any, of the Plant City Firefighters Union members regarding the existing program?
4. What can be done to revitalize and/or improve the existing reserve program?

The principle procedures utilized for this research project were: (a) a literature review of existing material addressing reserve firefighter programs, (b) a survey of 87 random fire departments in Florida for informational data, (c) a survey of the eleven reserves currently in the program, (d) a survey of the 28 union members of the Plant City Fire Department, and (e) two personal interviews with former training officers.

The results of this research presented supportive information that reserve programs can be a

valuable asset to the fire service, other departments in the area are utilizing reserve programs all with different methods of compensation and requirements, there are no internal problems between career and reserves, and training is a major issue.

Recommendations included establishing policy that reserves shall be State Certified Firefighters, provide financial assistance to attain certification, encouraging reserves to be Emergency Medical Technicians, increase the number of reserves, change from monthly stipend to pay per hour, and have more joint training sessions.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Plant City Fire Department is a career department that is augmented with a firefighter reserve program. The department provides fire protection and first responder emergency medical service to the approximate 28,000 residents of the City of Plant City. The career department consists of twenty-seven combat personnel, two inspectors and four administrators. The reserve program consists of eleven personnel.

**Problem statement:** The current reserve program is lackadaisical in its adherence to the existing standard operating guidelines and personnel qualifications are minimal, below state standards, to participate in the program.

**Purpose statement:** The purpose of this research project is to determine if the reserve program should be dissolved or continued with some revitalization or structure.

The author of this research paper was hired in July of 1999 to be Chief of the City of Plant City Fire Department. The reserve program was identified as a program where a “volunteer firefighter” is given a stipend in appreciation for his/her service. Stipends are only given to reserves who conform to an established criteria which appear in the Standard Operating Guidelines (Appendix A). Control and leadership of the reserve program was identified in the job description of the Training Officer. The Plant City Fire Department has been without a Training Officer since January 1, 1999. Without organization or meaningful control the reserve program was in a state of despair but continued to be an auxiliary labor pool. Without leadership, the reserve members were not being held to the Standard Operating Guidelines regarding training and meeting attendance. Reserves were still meeting their ride along

requirements and thereby were given the stipend. Other reserve members were discontent and not participating at all. This Chief Officer had no prior experience with “reserve firefighters” and there were other issues that needed immediate attention so the conditions were allowed to continue pending additional research and attaining a Training Officer.

The problem that this research project addressed is whether the Plant City Fire Department should continue with the reserve program and if so, should it be revitalized? The purpose of this research project was to identify if the reserve program was meeting the needs of the Plant City Fire Department, the career members and the reserve firefighters.

Evaluative research methodology was utilized to answer the following questions:

- What is the purpose and intent of the Plant City reserve program?
- Are other fire departments using reserve programs?
- What are the concerns, if any, of the Plant City Firefighters Union members regarding the existing program?
- What can be done to revitalize and/or improve the existing reserve program?

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

There are currently more than 30,000 fire departments in the United States that are organized in various ways to meet the specific needs of the communities they serve. Although public fire protection is normally a function of local government, state, provincial, or federal properties may also have organized fire departments for protection (Paulsgrove, 1997). The organization and objectives of public fire departments vary according to resources available, and range from simple too complex (1997).

The City of Plant City organized and supported a combination department, career and volunteer, until 1988. It was determined at this point to change the volunteer program to a reserve program. Captain Patrick Walker, an eighteen-year veteran of the Plant City Fire Department and former training officer provided some valuable background regarding the program. Captain Walker (personal communication November 22, 1999) explained the main purpose for changing from a volunteer department to the reserve program was due to a decline of volunteers. The theory was to offer some sort of compensation and more members would participate and continue to participate. Initially, reserves were offered \$1.50 per hour for the time spent in either training sessions, ride along time, or actual emergency incidents (P. Walker personal communication November 22, 1999). The program was geared to augment the career force not to replace them. In March of 1996 the firefighters of Plant City became affiliated with the International Association of Fire Fighters. Contract negotiations started but were stalled by a very reluctant Plant City administration and the elected officials. At some point during a long three years bargaining processes, some harsh words or implications were made by both sides. The administration made a comment at one point about firing them all (union activists) and hiring the reserves to replace them. Union members countered with threatening action against the City because they were paying the reserves below the minimum wage rate for work performed. The City of Plant City then changed the payment of the reserves to a flat per month stipend for their service. Then for the first time the reserves were included, in writing, into the Standard Operating Guideline. According to Captain Walker (personal communication November 22, 1999) this managed to accomplish two things: (1) caused direct differences between the career firefighters and the reserves and (2) it limited the amount the reserve could earn plus required more participation.

The requirements to be a reserve firefighter for Plant City have not been documented and is an area of great concern of this author. The State of Florida requires all career firefighters to be State Certified in Minimum Standards (currently 480 hours training). Volunteer (reserve) firefighters can obtain Firefighter I certification. Firefighter I training course covers the science of fire, breathing apparatus, ladders, hose, nozzles, and streams. The program also includes First Responder medical and awareness level hazardous materials training. Upon successful completion of the course, 160 hours, and a written examination, the firefighter will receive a Certificate of Competency from the Bureau of Fire Standards and Training as a Volunteer Firefighter. Reserve firefighters are not identified as needing minimum requirements by the State of Florida but are held to local department requirements.

This research project is related to the material that was conducted in the *Executive Development* class of the Executive Fire Officer Program. Organizational culture was one of the topics covered in the first Executive Fire Officer Program. Undoubtedly the reserve program or volunteer program, historically, is a part of the organization culture of the Plant City Fire Department and any changes should be carefully scrutinized. As quoted in the student manual *Executive Development*, Unit 7: Organizational Culture:

“The climate or culture of an organization is analogous to the mortar in a brick wall. It can be so incredibly strong and supportive to the reason for the wall, or near a state of failure in need of change or repair... the effective leader is one who can assess, shape, and manage this mortar—to be a social architect.”

Charles J. Burkell

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The Eighteenth edition of the *Fire Protection Handbook* estimates there are approximately 1,100,000 firefighters in the United States in 1995. It is estimated that 838,000 are on call or volunteer firefighters and a little more than 260,000 are career personnel. There are no set guidelines or criteria determining the types or make up of the fire departments. The decision is up to the local political jurisdiction usually made after given consideration to the desired level of protection necessary (Paulsgrove, 1997).

Richard A. Marinucci (1995) explains in *The Fire Chief's Handbook* there are benefits and drawbacks to any type of fire service provided to a community. Financial reasons, greater community involvement in the fire department, adequate personnel pool in a labor intensive business, alternative to addressing specific community needs are a few of the most popular reasons for volunteers and paid on call firefighters. Negative attributes of a volunteer and on call firefighters include: longer response times, ill feelings between career members and volunteers, time constraints of the volunteer are only a few.

As budget problems continue, many of today's fire departments are investigating using auxiliary forces such as reserves, on call volunteers, or volunteers to help with alternative staffing at reduced costs. Although career personnel may feel threatened by this move, if they can be convinced into buying into the concept it can work. Clear, and specific program objectives, with no hidden agendas, are critical to the survival of any auxiliary compliment. Clear explanation to career personnel that the auxiliary program will help meet the new service demands the public expects to be provided with. Stress and over stress the auxiliary force will not result in the decline in the importance or value placed

on regular, paid personnel. Failures of programs are usually attributed to internal problems, conflict between career and reserve forces. Within the fire service, it is a given fact that some career personnel will never like reserve or volunteer firefighters. Another given fact is there will always be pressure from organized labor not to accept the non-union activities of auxiliary forces. (Lamm, 1996)

Auxiliary forces can be structured in a variety of ways to meet the needs of the community it provides service. These forces have a variety of names. One type is the traditional “volunteer/reserve” who is a member of the community with an interest in the fire service. These are individuals who can participate side by side with the career members but who themselves earn a living doing something else. Reserves, meeting the department’s criteria, can augment paid personnel and assist with emergencies on a regular basis. The program can provide a ready well trained available labor force for individuals looking to be career personnel. On the negative side there is a need to commit time and personnel to manage the program. (Albertson, 1995)

Most volunteer departments are not volunteer by choice. They simply cannot afford to compensate the firefighters for their time. Some departments are having to pay the firefighter per run to help retain them in the service. Regretfully, some other areas suffer because they are not compensated, such as training officer, prevention, or vehicle maintenance personnel. These support roles are sometimes carried out by the members who no longer are active with suppression duties. These members are vital parts of the organization and keeping them in the system is critical and vital to the success of the department. One way to help keep personnel involved would be a retirement system. This type of benefit is growing in popularity and structuring of the plan and participation can be done on an individual department need. (Zimmerman, 1993) The State of California has the Volunteer

Firefighters' Length of Service Award System which went into effect January 1, 1980, primarily as a retention and recruitment tool.

In *Managing Fire Services* reference is made to a study done by Arthur Bennet in Montgomery County, Maryland. From that study, Bennet concluded that the career and combination departments functioned better than the volunteer fire departments. More importantly were his findings that combination fire departments provide generally equivalent fire protection services at a lower cost than the fully paid departments. (Bryan and Picardy, 1979).

The Porterville Fire Department in California has a reserve firefighter force to augment its career force. The reserve program was identified as a valuable asset to the community and the fire department. In 1992, Saxton F. Guyton looked very closely at what could be done to maintain participation and interest. He identified some low budget items that could possibly help to maintain interest of the firefighters in the program. One idea was to have more interaction between the career and reserves members. Another was to issue the reserves' uniforms and badges. Include the reserves in the City's physical fitness program, and develop a career track for reserve advancement (Guyton, 1992).

Chief Richard C. Kline (1998) of the Plymouth Fire Department in Minnesota states the rapid growth of the community and the corresponding changing demographics and socioeconomic factors of the City of Plymouth had a direct negative impact on their inability to retain and recruit firefighters. Kline further indicated that demographic and socioeconomic factors were impacting other communities that were experiencing rapid growth (1998).

Recruitment and retention are continuous struggles for the majority of combination departments.

Volunteers all have different reasons for being a part of the program. Chief Eric Ward of the Blue Township Fire-Rescue suggests that understanding the volunteer can help with recruitment. Ward has evaluated the volunteers into three personality groups: good neighbors, professionals, and adrenaline seekers. Good neighbors are the volunteers that live and/or work in the service area, they are a part of the community, they have a stake in the protection service. The professional volunteers are the more career oriented volunteers. The professional groups are the members who motivated by the opportunity to be a career firefighter. The adrenaline seeker is the member who wants to be in on all the action, the “big one.” These members like to hangout at the station and really like to have hands-on training drills. By being able to identify the different traits of the volunteer it should be easier to place them in duties that can best fulfill their potential for the fire service. (Ward, 1999)

Many fire departments and their leaders have identified the reasons why they are having difficulty in recruiting new members and retaining active members. Increased incident loads, more stringent training standards, poor leadership, improper management, the cost of belonging, family responsibilities, changes in the societal structure and reluctance to accept new members have been identified as contributing factors. Following is a list of some effective activities or programs that have been implemented:

- Personnel management seminars
- Written guidelines and information about the organization
- Timely communications
- Open recruitment policy
- Quality assurance

- Volunteer benefit's package

Some programs and/or policies that have helped some departments with attracting new recruits:

- Public education
- New resident awareness packages
- Community activities display model
- Courses offered at the local schools
- Courses offered at the fire station

Even with all the above recommendations there is a need for the entire or at least the majority of the department to be a part of the activities for a retention or recruitment program to be successful. With retention, once the firefighter is lost it is very difficult to bring them back (Goldfeder, 1992).

The recruitment and retention of auxiliary fire forces posed such a problem that the National Volunteer Fire Council in conjunction with the United States Fire Administration and the Federal Emergency Management Association conducted a study on the subject. Through the study several contributing factors were identified as the probable cause for the decline. Those factors included: an overall decline in people who are willing to volunteer which affected all agencies, more stringent training requirements, a shift in where people were living - urbanization, more demands on family time and values, a decline in civic responsibility, employers demanding work ethics with less time off and the auxiliary personnel moving out of their communities for economic reasons. (1995)

Today's progressive fire leaders must be concerned with the physical and mental wellness of their personnel. The members of the International Association Fire Chief Volunteer Chief's Section decided to look into the possibility that employee assistance programs should be offered to their

members. This concept was derived after looking at today's society and asking the question why are we losing some of our volunteers? Today there are a variety of different pressures the personnel must contend with such as: financial, marital, alcohol and other substance abuse problems. With an employee assistance program available these individuals may get the help they need and possibly remain in the fire service. (Chiaramonte, 1999)

In 1995, F.C. Windisch reviewed several concepts that can improve management after a change in leadership. In the article, Mr. Windisch stated, "Change should not be made for the sake of change— but for the sake of improvement." The best way to commit to change is to continually ask the question, why ? We should be able to answer with a value and not the answer to change for the sake of changing (1995).

## **PROCEDURES**

The procedures utilized for this research project included a review of current literature and three surveys. Each survey was directed to a different fire service group.

Research was conducted on volunteer/reserve programs to determine if the current reserve program should be dissolved or should it be revitalized. Using the research tools available through the Learning Resource Center of the National Emergency Training Center, a review of pertinent literature was done. The literature consisted of research papers, trade periodicals and reference books.

Additional research was conducted at the Hillsborough Community College in Tampa, Florida and the Bruton Memorial Library in Plant City, Florida.

Three surveys were conducted using a variety of questions focused on each service group. The

first survey, Appendix B, was mailed to 87 random fire departments in the State of Florida. The surveys were mailed out November 23, 1999. The departments were asked to return completed surveys via mail or fax. The focus of the survey was to determine how many other departments were involved with reserve or volunteer firefighter programs. If they had reserve programs where they held to the same training and department standards as the career personnel. To determine if compensation was given for participation in any of the reserve programs.

Second survey was done on the current reserve fire personnel in Plant City, Appendix C. The purpose of this survey was to provide a profile of the members and obtain information on their feeling of the management of the department and the program. Eight of the eleven reserves completed the survey at a meeting on December 28, 1999.

The third survey, Appendix D, was conducted among the career fire personnel of the Plant City Fire Department. This survey was conducted over a three-day period, December 14 - 16, 1999. Twenty-four surveys were completed and returned from the twenty-nine uniformed members of the department. Prior to doing the member survey the bargaining unit, International Association of Fire Fighters was informed and queried to see if they objected to participation of their membership, which none was filed. The focus of the survey was to first see if the career employee directly opposed the reserve program. Second focus was to obtain information of what the career firefighter felt would be the comfortable level of training and certifications required for reserve personnel.

All surveys were distributed with instructions and explanations that the information would be used for this research paper and the future of the reserve program. Honest and truthful replies were encouraged however cannot be assured.

Personnel interviews were conducted with Captain Patrick Walker and Firefighter Lawrence Rogers, both held the position of training officer and direct supervision of the reserves. These interviews were rather informal and usually occurred when they were on duty and I had a question regarding the program. Most information obtained was in the form of background information, unfortunately not too much was documented on the reserve program.

Definition of terms is as follows:

*Career firefighter* - a person who works a regular scheduled shift or assignment for compensation, usually a full time position.

*Combination department* - a fire service organization whose members are made up of career firefighters and volunteers/reserves.

*Paid-on-call* - a fire service organization style. Members receive an hourly wage for being available and responding to calls.

*Reserve firefighter* - a fire service term for a person who is an extra. A person who does not have a regular assigned work schedule or position. Not a career firefighter but a firefighter who sometimes receives monetary compensation for performance of duty. Same as a volunteer.

*Socioeconomic* - “relating to, or involving, a combination of social and economic factors which impact a given population” (Kline, 1998).

*Volunteer firefighter* - a term to identify a person who gives their time and services to an agency or to support a cause. The service is rendered without compensation.

## RESULTS

The research project started by identifying a problem. The problem was centered on one issue should the Plant City Fire Department continue to function with the assistance of the reserve force?

Four questions were used to develop the research on this topic and are explained as follows:

**Research Question 1:** What are the purpose and intent of the reserve program?

The experts in the fire service all seem to agree the level of fire protection is up to the government having jurisdiction. Fire departments traditionally were volunteer departments and were effective to a level that was accepted by that jurisdiction. Career departments were created to provide protection in areas where greater protection was deemed necessary. As early as 1948, *The Fire Protection Handbook* identified criteria that could be used for a combination department. More than fifty years later the need and the criteria are still the same. The major difference that has occurred in those fifty years has been a change in the demographics and the socioeconomic factors (Carter, 1993). Combination departments can exist to provide an optimum protection for a community.

The survey completed by the career members of the Plant City Fire Department provided insight regarding their understanding of the intent of the reserve program. Twenty-five members of the department returned completed surveys'. The survey was constructed in a simple manor consisting of fourteen questions. Two questions were multiple choice and the other twelve required one word answers: yes, no, increase or decrease. The purpose of the reserve program is to augment, give additional support, to an existing core group. The first question in the survey asked if the respondent agreed with the concept of a reserve program? Twenty members indicated they agreed with the

concept and five marked they disagreed. Eighty percent reflects a high overall agreement with the concept of an auxiliary force in conjunction with the career members. Part of the purpose of the reserve program is to provide a ready labor pool for employment. The survey question asked should being a reserve help an individual get a job with the Plant City Fire Department? The results from the survey shows nineteen members felt that being a reserve should help get them a career position. Six members did not agree that being a reserve should help get the member a career position.

**Research Question 2:** Are other fire departments using reserve programs?

Fire department surveys were distributed to 87 departments in the State of Florida to obtain data regarding reserve or volunteer forces to supplement career departments. The 87 departments were randomly selected because the author was from another state and did not know the demographics of the area. Sixty surveys were returned in a timely manner and upon review it was determined that one had to be voided leaving 59 surveys to be the base of the study review. A total of 37 returns was identified as coming from totally career departments, not using any auxiliary members. This resulted in 22 combination departments from which data could be reviewed regarding reserve programs. Of the 22 combination departments to review, seven were County Departments, each had more than 150 career members and various numbers of volunteers (reserves). Of the remaining 15 departments 11 were very similar in size, both career and reserve. Thirty-seven percent of the surveys returned came from combination departments. Of those returns no consistent data or conclusions could be drawn linking the departments. Two questions were asked to get information regarding the compensation for the reserves and minimum requirements to get compensation. Following are various different combinations of compensation and minimum requirements identified from the fire department

surveys. The left column is the compensation given and the right column is the minimum requirements for the left column.

Lump stipend to charter agency	minimum training requirements
no compensation	24 hours per month
no compensation	no requirements
\$6,000 lump stipend to organization	no requirements
based on number of calls	varies per department
no compensation	no requirements
\$2 per hour/contract to non profit organization	ride time, station work, training
no compensation	no requirements
\$30,000 per year to volunteer organization	mandatory retraining annually
\$6 - \$8.50 per hour	attend 90% of training sessions
\$5 per call plus \$1 per hour after 1 <sup>st</sup> hour	per call out only
no compensation	no requirements
\$1750 per quarter to organization	no requirements
\$5 per call - maximum \$275 per month	four drills and 20% of calls
flat fee \$25 per month	20 hours per month ride time
\$5.25 per call	minimum 15% of calls
\$6000 per organization per year	attendance is monitored
hourly rate - same as career firefighter	56 hours month
hourly rate in relation to certifications	no requirements

hourly rate - same as career firefighter                      same as career firefighters

hourly rate - same as career firefighter                      12 hours ride time or training

The results of the survey shows a wide variance of ways to compensate reserve personnel with a wide variance of minimum requirements for compensation. Six departments do not compensate their volunteers with any monetary reimbursement and 15 departments rendered compensation in some form.

**Research Question 3:** What are the concerns, if any, of the Plant City Firefighters Union members regarding the existing program?

The survey that was given to all the union members had a direct question to this issue. Do you feel threatened (job security) by the reserve program? Of the 25 surveys' returned, 76 percent indicated they did not feel threatened by the current program. Six members checked they felt the reserve program was a threat to their careers. In the same employee survey, question eleven read: Currently, we have eleven reserves on a roster who are active or have been active in the recent past, should this number be increased or decreased? Your suggested number of reserve personnel? For the first part of this question, six members indicated the number should decrease. Only one union member indicated the program should go to zero and four members identified the number of reserves should be ten. It would appear only one individual felt severely threatened to the point of indicating a zero in the space for the number of reserves.

The survey addressed reserve training requirements on two levels, emergency medical training and fire training. Almost half, 46 percent, or fourteen of the career members felt the reserves should have a minimum of State Certified Firefighter I (Volunteer Certification). This level of certification is

higher than the current recruit level training each reserve receives upon entry to the program. Eight members felt the current recruit level training could remain status quo, which means 32 percent felt comfortable with the current system. Only three members, or 12 percent felt the reserves should have the same minimum standards as the career members are required to attain.

On the emergency medical level of training the majority of members, fourteen, felt that the appropriate level should be First Responder. There were two levels listed below first responder, basic first aid with cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the Plant City Fire Department recruit training. The survey results for those were 16 and 8 percent, respectfully. Only five members or 20 percent concurred with the same required level of certification as a career firefighter, State Certified Emergency Medical Technician.

**Research Question 4:** What can be done to revitalize and/or improve the existing program?

Many combination and volunteer fire departments are having a difficult time recruiting and retaining members because family pressures, second jobs and other commitments limit the time volunteers can spend on fire department activities (Foley, 1999). One way to attract volunteers and reserves is to keep them active and promote interest in non-fire responsibilities by developing a retirement system (Zimmerman, 1993). Fire department administrators need to be concerned about the physical and the mental wellness of the members. Employee assistance programs could be offered and designed to assist the members of combination and volunteer departments (Chiaromonte, 1999).

Training is extremely important in preparing personnel to properly discharge their duties as firefighters. The reserves were asked via the survey for reserves, What efforts can we initiate or continue in order to attract and retain qualified members? Of the eight replies, five indicated training.

They asked for more training, they requested better training, they suggested combined training exercises with the career firefighters. The other three responses to the above question were: make reserve feel like a vital part of the team, give them more recognition, and one no answer. Members tend to feel good if their training is good. Training can motivate and set or change policy. Consider it an investment in the future (Marinucci, 1995).

*The Fire Chief's Handbook* implies you must understand why the firefighters joined and what makes them stay (1995). Chief Eric Ward identifies three groups of volunteers: good neighbors, professionals and adrenaline seekers. Reserves all have different reasons for being a part of the service. Each of these personalities has something different to offer to the fire service, and each has pitfalls to be aware of and to avoid. If you want to get the most out of them, you need to learn what makes them tick (1999).

## DISCUSSION

The literature research revealed there was limited information directly related to reserve firefighter programs as an alternative staffing program. *The Fire Protection Handbook* identifies three types of departments: career, combination and volunteer. The local political jurisdiction determines the type of protection that is necessary (Paulsgrove, 1977). The public has come to expect safety and security in their homes and businesses as a pseudo-right of citizenship, communities have had to provide this by hiring sufficient numbers of full and /or part time personnel (Carter, 1993). Budget problems continue to impact the level of service provided to the public and the fire service continues to look at auxiliary forces to help with alternative staffing at reduced costs (Lamm, 1996). The literature review

did reflect one recurring theme that fire service leaders will find a way to provide an acceptable level of protection for each community.

The research conducted for this project supports the findings of the limited other studies on reserve programs. According to Chris Alberson, Battalion Chief of the Santa Barbara City Fire Department, "Reserve firefighters can make a positive contribution to the fire protection of the city" (Alberson, 1995). The advantages of additional manpower at reduced costs lend credence to the feasibility of establishing a call fire fighting force for the Harwich Fire Department (Remillard, 1997). Deputy Chief Remillard further agreed it was in the best interest of the department to have a reliable pool of qualified candidates to fill vacancies on the career force (1997). Remillard went on to recommend the Harwich Fire Department not implement a call or reserve program.

The results of the fire department survey showed that demographics were a factor in determining if a department was career, combination or volunteer. Interesting to note, of the 22 combination departments, six departments are within a 50-mile radius of Plant City. Of the 21 returns the correlation between the compensation given and the requirements revealed no consistency. Three were identical with no compensation and no requirements. The other 18 showed that each jurisdiction gives various types and amounts of compensation with different minimum requirements.

The results of the reserve member's survey showed an overwhelming desire for training. The members know the necessity of the importance of being well trained. Of the eight returned surveys only two members are State Certified Firefighters. The other six members only have recruit firefighting training.

The results of the employee survey showed the majority of the members agreed with the

concept of the reserve program. What is surprising from this group was they felt the level of training of the reserve should be higher than it currently is but did not feel it should be to the same standard they, as career personnel are required to attain.

The results of this research project have clearly identified there are various ways to provide auxiliary programs to assist with staffing and career development. It is also evident the programs will vary with structure and will be dependent upon local political leadership and the demographics of the area. The major impact the research has shown is training is critical to satisfying the needs of the reservist and the career members. Of equal importance is to structure and have written policies and guidelines for the reserves.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

After reviewing the available subject material and examining the results of the fire department surveys, the Plant City reserve firefighter survey and the Plant City employee's survey, it has become apparent that the reserve firefighter program should be continued. Robin Paulgrave describes it best in *The Fire Protection Handbook*, "There are many fire departments—career, combination, and volunteer— that provide an acceptable level of service for their respective community. The success of their operations is not dependent upon whether the personnel are paid or unpaid, but upon their individual and collective ability to perform and accomplish department objectives" (1997). Listed are recommendations to revitalize the current reserve firefighter program:

1. Establish policy that requires State of Florida Minimum Standards Certification for Firefighters be obtained by all personnel, career and reserve.

2. Provide financial support for tuition for Minimum Standards Certification for current members of the reserve program.
3. Encourage reserve members to obtain State of Florida Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Certification.
4. Provide financial support for tuition for EMT Certification.
5. Establish training sessions that give the opportunity for the career and reserves to train together.
6. Establish policy that reserves will be paid an hourly rate, comparable to hourly rate of an entry level career firefighter for attending department training sessions, ride along time, and response to working incidents not to exceed fifty hours per month. (Only for reserves who meet requirements of Standards Certification)
7. Increase number of reserves to fifteen.
8. Assign each reserve to a platoon. Reserve can only get ride along time on his/her assigned platoon.

The current budget does not allow for additional expenditures in the stipends and training for reserves in this fiscal year. Budget increases will be considered for the next budget year, beginning October 1, 2000 in accordance with the recommendations listed.

Change is inevitable. These changes are not suggested to have something to change but are recommended to improve the current reserve program of the Plant City Fire Department. Different requirements of levels of training should not be used for different work groups all doing the same job. Firefighters have a difficult job, fire behavior does not alter because of type of personnel doing

suppression, fire cannot differentiate between career and reserve. The research data and information shows that well structured reserve programs can work. Raising the level of required training for the reserves should increase the overall proficiency and productivity of the department. More importantly it should increase the safety of all personnel.

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## **APPENDIX A**

1. Reserve Firefighters that are in training will be assigned to a company officer on an engine company.
2. It is the responsibility of the new reserve to schedule and coordinate training with his/her company officer.
3. Reserves have been informed the best times to complete their training is in the evening on week days and on weekends.
4. Reserve have also been informed that there may be times due to standby events or numerous calls that the engine company may not be available to work with them and training will have to be rescheduled.
5. New reserve firefighters are not allowed in the station if it is unmanned due to a response, they will have to leave and return later.
6. New reserve firefighters are not allowed to follow emergency vehicles to incident scenes. They may work the support unit if trained in that unit ONLY any by approval of the incident commander. Irregardless of how far along they are in their training. If they have not been cleared to ride, they should not be anywhere else on the fire ground.
7. Company officers working with new reserves should communicate with the training officer on any problems associated with training the new reserve.

1. Reserves (driver or passenger) responding to the fire station or to the scene of the emergency in a privately owned vehicle and using an authorized red rotating light do not have emergency vehicle status and will be governed by all applicable state and local traffic laws and all Fire Department rules and regulations. This includes, but is not limited to, all occupants of the vehicles will be seated in a proper seat with a seat belt fastened before starting the response. The only exception to this rule is that personal protective clothing should not be put on until you arrive at the scene, if responding directly to the scene.
2. The only personnel that are authorized to ride in a privately owned vehicle that is responding to an emergency scene using an authorized rotating red light in Plant City are persons authorized to ride on Plant city Fire Department vehicles. This specifically forbids children and family members from being in the vehicle during a response and utilizing a red light.
3. Personnel are authorized to go directly to the scene of the emergency in a privately owned vehicle ONLY if they have all of their personal protective equipment in the vehicle and report to the incident commander once on the scene.
4. Use of a rotating red light on a privately owned vehicle is not authorized outside of the boundaries of the city limits.
5. Those reserves that possess a red light may display one rotating red light on their vehicle, in accordance with current Florida statutes. Use and displaying of this light is only authorized when responding to a reported emergency within the city limits.
6. Reserve fire fighters are not to call the dispatch center seeking information on location of calls or directions on how to get there. Reserve fire fighters have the ability to receive calls via alpha page if they so desire to be notified when not in the station. If the reserve is unsure of a location, he/she should rely on a map. The dispatch center is too busy to handle these types of calls.
7. Reserve fire fighters are expected to assist in returning equipment back to service after a call is complete unless they must leave to report to work on their regular job or are dismissed by the incident commander.

**17-3 Reserve Fire Fighters working in the Station**

Page 1 of 1

R-R

1. Reserve Firefighters are required to check in with the company officer when they arrive for work and fill out a time sheet.
2. Reserve Firefighters should place their gear, ready for a response and make their bed.
3. Reserve Firefighters should assist in any details that are currently being worked on by the crew.
4. Reserve Firefighters should be in the station for the night no later than 9:00 p.m. unless arrangements have been made with the company officer.
5. Reserve Firefighters should become a part of the team and function as a team member with the crew he/she is working with.
6. Reserve Firefighters are expected to follow the same guidelines, rules and regulations, dress code, safety policies, etc., as everyone else.
7. Reserve Firefighters working standbys and special details should be in issued uniform and meet the standards of the paid department.
8. Reserve Firefighters should not leave the fire station once they come in to work unless on an errand for the company officer. If the reserve must leave for personal reasons, it must be cleared through the company officer, or check out, leave and do not return that shift.
9. Reserve Firefighters who signed up on the reserve calendar for a particular date have priority over seating compared to a reserve that drops in and not on the calendar.
10. Reserve Firefighters who are in the station when reserves have a scheduled meeting or event will be released from the station to attend their function.
11. Reserve Firefighters will refer to officer's by their rank and last name.
12. Reserve Firefighters will abide by all station rules (such as use of telephone) and guidelines as any other personnel should.
13. Reserve Firefighters will not sleep late in the morning, they will rise and unmake their bed with the crew and remove all of their belongings from the engine and station before they leave.

**17-4 Reserve Fire Fighters Active Status Requirements**

Page 1 of 1

*Rue*

1. Active status requirements for reserve fire fighters are that they attend the two meetings a month and stay a minimum of two nights a month in the stations.
2. The Tuesday nights when meetings are not being held, the reserves are usually meeting at the track or Station 2 for physical fitness however, this event is recommended and not required.
3. Orientation for new reserve firefighters wanting to enter the program are conducted on the first Thursday of each April, August and December.

**17-5 Reserve Fire Fighters working on incidents**

Page 1 of 1

*RJR*

1. Reserve Firefighters will function in support of career firefighters they are assigned to.
2. If responding in on an apparatus, the reserve firefighter is already assigned to the company officer of that apparatus.
3. If responding to the scene by P.O.V., the reserve firefighter will check in with the incident commander with their protective gear in hand to be assigned where needed.
4. Reserve Firefighters on apparatus will have his/her P.A.R. card with the P.A.R. cards from that apparatus. Reserves arriving by P.O.V. will retrieve their P.A.R. card from an apparatus or present their I.D. card for accountability purposes.
5. Reserve Firefighters should never be assigned to drive any apparatus. The only vehicles they are permitted to drive are the support unit and standard passenger automobiles.
6. Reserve Firefighters should never be assigned technical details of aerial operations, pumping operations, extrication tool operations, AED or combitube operations (even if an EMT), air bag operations, or any other detail that the company officer does not have confidence in the reserve's abilities.
7. Reserve Firefighters should stay up with the company officer or team leader they are working for and not freelance or make the company officer look for them.
8. Reserve Firefighters should handle themselves in a professional manner as any other member of the crew.
9. It is the responsibility of the reserve to turn in a time sheet for the incident worked if not working in the station at the time of the incident.
10. If the reserve must leave the scene early, he/she must check out with the incident commander.

**17-6 Reserve Fire Fighters working special details**

Page 1 of 1

RWR/SAS

1. Reserve Firefighters that are cleared to ride and have been issued uniforms are allowed to sign up to work special details and standbys with the department.
2. Reserve Firefighters must be in uniform for the event and most events it is preferred that the reserve ride the apparatus to the event and back to the station so parking of their personal vehicle does not become an issue.
3. If the reserve does take his/her personal vehicle and there is an admission fee to park, the reserve is never to solicit free parking privileges for being with the department and may very well have to pay to park the vehicle.
4. Once on the detail with the department, preferably the reserve is to be assigned with a career firefighter and not left to freelance. If a company officer elects to assign a position to a reserve only, the company officer is responsible for checking on the reserve periodically for quality assurance of the duty, breaks, etc.
5. The reserve is responsible for filling out a time sheet for the detail worked.
6. It is preferred that the reserve comes in with the crew he is working and stays until the crew leaves. If the reserve must leave ahead of time, he/she should make prior arrangements with the supervisor to leave early.
7. In the event an emergency occurs while working the special detail, the reserve should report to the supervisor in charge of the detail for instructions.
8. The reserve should act in a professional manner at all times while representing the department at the detail. Keeping in mind we are at the detail to "work" and not to be entertained.

## **APPENDIX B**



## **APPENDIX C**

## Plant City Reserve Fire Fighters Member Survey

### Instructions

I appreciate your taking the time to complete this survey. The purpose of the survey is to provide data which will be used to complete research to evaluate the current reserve program and to be used as part of my Executive Fire Officer research project. Since you are a vital part of the reserve program, I would appreciate you being as open and honest in our reply as possible.

All information given will be completely confidential and anonymous.

Any question you do not wish to answer, just skip over.

Please circle or fill in your answers to the following:

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Male Female

Single Married Living with Significant Other

Are you raising children? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

Ages: \_\_\_\_\_ Do they live with you? \_\_\_\_\_

Years of schooling: circle highest level

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19+  
 elementary high school Undergraduate Graduate

Are you a State Certified Firefighter? Y N Are you State Certified EMT? Y N

List degrees or other certifications \_\_\_\_\_

Years of experience in the fire service: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of experience with the Plant City Fire Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you live in the City of Plant City? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, for how many years have you lived in Plant City? \_\_\_\_\_

Distance (in miles) from your home to the closest Plant City fire station: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you work in the City of Plant City? \_\_\_\_\_

What efforts can we initiate/continue in order to attract and retain qualified members? \_\_\_\_\_

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Please describe the Department's performance in the following:

Communication

Is it timely?	Y	N
Is it adequate?	Y	N
Are the methods appropriate?	Y	N
Is the flow of information proper?	Y	N

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Leadership

Do the leaders communicate well?	Y	N
Are they open?	Y	N
Are they decisive?	Y	N
Are they fair?	Y	N
Do they involve others?	Y	N
Do they listen?	Y	N
Are they flexible?	Y	N

Do they show foresight?	Y	N
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Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

### Equipment

Is it up-to-date?	Y	N
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Is it adequate?	Y	N
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Is it properly maintained?	Y	N
----------------------------	---	---

Do you think we need more equipment?	Y	N
--------------------------------------	---	---

Do you think we need less equipment?	Y	N
--------------------------------------	---	---

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

### Training

Are the topics appropriate?	Y	N
-----------------------------	---	---

Are the instructors qualified?	Y	N
--------------------------------	---	---

Are you encouraged to be involved?	Y	N
------------------------------------	---	---

Is the time spent appropriately?	Y	N
----------------------------------	---	---

Would you be willing to participate more?	Y	N
---	---	---

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

### Compensation

Is current pay rate appropriate for duty involved?	Y	N
--	---	---

Hire full time employees <u>only</u> from reserves?	Y	N
---	---	---

Provide other benefits?

Y

N

Anything that was not covered that you feel could pertain to this issue? \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX D**

Plant City Firefighters - Employee Survey  
Regarding Reserve Firefighter Program

As part of my applied research project for the Executive Fire Officer Program with the National Fire Academy, I would appreciate your participation by completing this survey. I am in the process of doing research on the current Plant City Fire Department Reserve program. My research will evaluate the current program and determine if it should continue. If it should continue then what can be done to revitalize the program or better enhance the program to fit the needs of the community and the Plant City Fire Department (PCFD).

Your participation will be completely confidential and anonymous.

CONCEPT - please answer yes or no

1. Do you agree with the concept of the reserve program? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you believe the reserve program is a benefit to the PCFD? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you feel threatened (job security) by the reserve program? \_\_\_\_\_

CURRENT RESERVE PROGRAM

4. What level of training do you feel is appropriate for an individual to have completed before becoming a bonafide Reserve Firefighter?
  1. State Certified Minium Standards Firefighter
  2. State Certified Firefighter I (Volunteer Firefighter)
  3. State Firefighter certification not needed, just PCFD recruit training
5. What level of training do you feel is appropriate for a Reserve Firefighter to have pertaining to EMS?
  1. State Certified EMT
  2. First Responder
  3. Basic First Aid/CPR
  4. PCFD recruit training
6. Should Reserve Firefighters be instructed in advanced areas such as Pump Operations, Aerial Operations, etc? \_\_\_\_\_
7. If yes to question 6, should City assist with cost for advanced classes? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Should being a reserve help an individual get a job with the PCFD? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Should active status requirements be changed from current SOG that requires reserve to attend two meetings a month and stay a minimum of two nights a month in the station? Yes or No - suggestions \_\_\_\_\_
10. Current monetary compensation is \$82.50 per month, should this amount be changed? Yes or No - suggestions \_\_\_\_\_
11. Currently we have eleven reserves on roster who are active or have been active in the past, should this number be increased or decreased? \_\_\_\_\_  
Your suggested number of reserve personnel. \_\_\_\_\_
12. Should reserves be utilized more for additional events such as standbys or other community support services that would be identified by the Administration? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Should the support unit be utilized more and if so, how? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Were you a reserve prior to becoming a career firefighter? \_\_\_\_\_

Please note any additional comments regarding this matter below.

THANK YOU

## **APPENDIX E**

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**17-1 RESERVE FIREFIGHTER UTILIZATION**

Fire Chief George D. Shiley

1. **PURPOSE:**

1. To identify the process for Reserve Firefighters to receive approval for riding apparatus.
2. To establish guidelines for Reservists in reporting for duty.
3. To establish the formal record keeping process for recording duty and training hours of Reservists.

2. **RESPONSIBILITY:**

1. The Training Officer and the Shift Captains are responsible for insuring that all Reservists complete required skills assessment and entry requirements.
  1. The Training Bureau shall maintain records of certificates and assessment results.
2. The Training Officer shall insure that all requirements have been satisfied and will issue a monthly listing of qualified Reservists to all Fire Stations.
3. Station Captains shall assure authorization to ride apparatus.
  1. The names of all authorized Reservists will appear on the list distributed by the Training Officer.
4. Station Captains will also be responsible for seeing that Reservists receive proper orientation before assigning them a riding position.
5. Station Captains will also be responsible for seeing that Reservists have the proper equipment, uniform and protective clothing and that they meet the Fire Department grooming standard.

3. **PROCEDURES:**

1. **RESERVISTS REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Reservists in the Fire Suppression Department must meet the following requirements prior to being authorized to ride apparatus.

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**17-1 RESERVE FIREFIGHTER UTILIZATION**

Fire Chief George D. Shiley

2. Must be a member in good standing with the Plant City Reserve Firefighter's Association.
  3. Must complete application process including:
    1. High School Diploma
    2. Physical/Psychological Examination
    3. Background Check
  4. Must have completed and be Florida Firefighter Minimum Standards Certified.
  5. Must complete orientation on the assigned apparatus to the satisfaction of the Company Officer.
2. RESERVE RECRUIT ORIENTATION:
1. Prior to ride list activation, and following application procedure, the Reservist will successfully complete a Reserve Recruit Orientation Program provided by the Training Officer.
  2. Following successful completion, the Training Captain will forward notice to the Fire Chief verifying qualifications regarding the recruit.
3. DUTY ASSIGNMENTS:
1. Reservists are required to work a minimum number of hours per month as determined by Association Officers with recommendations of the Training Officer.
  2. Reservists reporting for duty will contact the Operations Captain in advance before reporting to their assigned station.
    1. The Operations Captain will consider the current staffing needs and the Reservist's capabilities when making changes in his/her assignment.
    2. The Operations Captain shall notify the Station Captain that a Reservist is being assigned to their Company.

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17-1 RESERVE FIREFIGHTER UTILIZATION

Fire Chief George D. Shiley

3. Reservists will be treated and will act as a regular member of the Company, performing any and all tasks that Company members may be required to perform at all times while on active duty.

D. RECORD KEEPING:

3. Company Officers shall log active duty time of Reservists on the current Daily Activities Log in the chronological section.
  1. The time the Reservists reported , the name of the Reserve and the time of departure shall be entered.
    1. EXAMPLE: 1500 FF John Doe, Reserve On Duty  
2200 FF John Doe, Reserve Off Duty
4. Reservists are required to maintain a monthly record of duty time and training .
  1. The Reservists are responsible for maintaining their copy of the monthly record and obtaining the initials and badge number of the Station Captain or Training Officer to verify entries.
  2. Prior to leaving duty or the Training site, the Reservists will complete his/her own record and give it to the Station Captain or Training Officer for review and initials.
  3. The Station Captain or Training Officer will review the report and initial the appropriate spaces verifying the information on that line.
  4. Monthly records are to forwarded to the Training Officer by the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month.
5. Injury/Accident reports will be completed by the Station Captain or Training Officer in the same manner as by paid personnel.
6. Where a Reservists reports to the scene of an incident, he/she will report immediately to the Incident Commander who shall be responsible for recording the Reservist's presence on the back of the Incident Report.

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**17-2 RESERVE RIDING POLICY**

Fire Chief George D. Shiley

**1. PURPOSE:**

1. To establish guidelines for participation of non-combat Reserve Firefighters.

**2. RESPONSIBILITY:**

1. Operations Captain and the Station Captains will be responsible for insuring that these guidelines are adhered to and that non-combat Reservists are restricted from actual combat participation.
2. Reserve members will be responsible for obtaining proper approvals prior to participation.

**3. PROCEDURES:****1. RESERVE PARTICIPATION:**

1. Non-combat Reserve participation will be limited to riding as an observer with the Operations Captain or the apparatus.
2. Assignments will be those that may be handled by a non-certified person and in an area free from potential danger.
  1. Assistance with maps, charts, drawings and record keeping.
  2. Delivering messages.
  3. Radio communications (only if trained with use and terminology).
  4. Other as determined by the Chief Officer involved.
3. The Training Officer will insure that all requirements have been satisfied and will issue a monthly listing of qualified Reservists to the Operations Captain and Station Captains.

**2. RIDING AUTHORIZATION:**

1. Non-combat Reservists desiring to ride with the Operations Captain or a Company will contact the Operations Captain and make that request.

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**17-2 RESERVE RIDING POLICY**

Fire Chief George D. Shiley

2. The Operations Captain will check to insure that the Reservist's name appears on the current monthly roster.
3. Riding authorization will be at the discretion of the Captain involved.
4. The Captain will record the Reservist's name and times in the Log Book.

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**17-3 RESERVE - STATE CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE** Fire Chief George D. Shiley

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## 1. PURPOSE:

1. To provide for accurate validation of State Minimum Standards Certification for Reserve Firefighters.

## 2. RESPONSIBILITY:

1. It will be the responsibility of the individual Reservists to meet the requirements of this procedure and to properly document training and riding time through submission of time sheets.

## 3. PROCEDURES:

1. The Plant City Fire Department will certify the validity of the State Certification for Reserve Firefighters only where the following requirements have been met:
  1. The Reservists must meet Department requirements and remain on the approved riding list.
  2. The Reservists must participate by logging an average of eight (8) hours per month, ninety-six (96) hours per year of riding time.
  3. The Reservists must attend an average of eight and one-half (8 ½) hours per month, one hundred (100) hours per year, of approved training sessions.
  4. The Reservists must be in good standing as a member of the Plant City Firefighter's Association.
2. In the event that a Reservists fails to meet the criteria stated above, the burden of proof of the validity of State Certification rests on the individual.

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**17-4 RESERVE TRAINING - TUITION**

Fire Chief George D. Shiley

**1. PURPOSE:**

1. To establish a method of sponsorship for all qualified Reserve Firefighters.
2. To provide financial aid for qualified Reserve Firefighters for Florida Minimum Standards and Florida Emergency Medical Technician training.

**2. RESPONSIBILITY:**

1. It is the responsibility of all Reserves to understand and comply with these procedures.

**3. PROCEDURES:****1. DEFINITIONS:**

1. This procedure applies to all qualified members of the Plant City Reserve Association (Qualified Ride Program)
2. A qualified Reserve member is defined as one who:
  1. Is an official dues paying member in good standing with the Plant City Reserve Association.
  2. Is assigned to the Qualified Ride Program for at least six (6) continuous months prior to requesting sponsorship.

**2. PROCESS:**

1. The individual requesting sponsorship for Florida Firefighter Minimum Standards training will request and complete the application for required recruit training, form obtained from Hillsborough Community College in Tampa.
2. The form is completed (typed) and forwarded to the Training Officer for review, logging, signature and then sent to the Fire Chief for approval.
3. The form is returned to Hillsborough Community College at Tampa for processing.
4. Individuals requesting reimbursement for EMT training must complete (type) an

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**17-4 RESERVE TRAINING - TUITION**

Fire Chief George D. Shiley

Educational Assistance form.

5. The form will be forwarded to the Fire Chief for final review and approval.
  1. The request for reimbursement must be approved prior to attending the class.
  2. Individual pays cost of EMT class up front.
  3. Following proof of a passing grade, and proof payment, reimbursement can be processed.
  
3. **RESTRICTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF SPONSORSHIP:**
  1. Sponsorship and reimbursement payments cover tuition only.
  2. Lab fees, books and personal items are the responsibility of the individual.
  3. Sponsorship for either program will be allowed once per applicant.