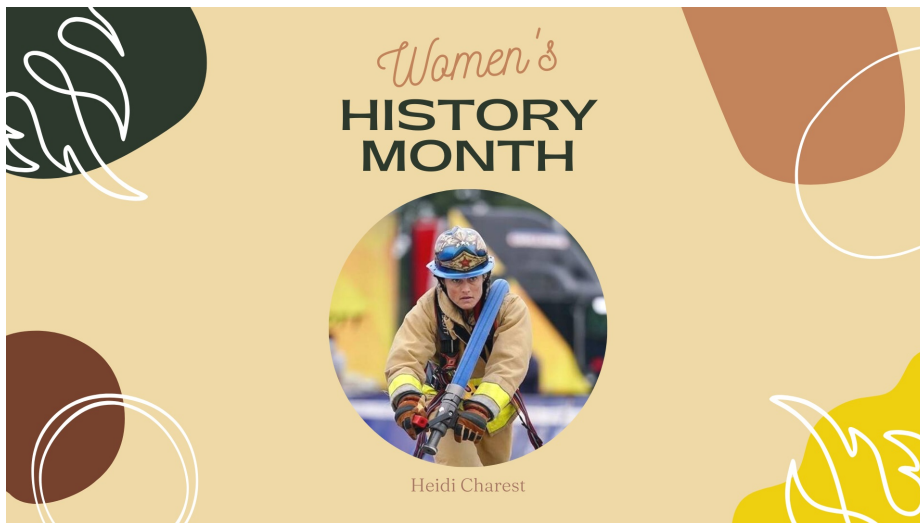




MARCH 9, 2023 | ISSUE 41

Rattle Watch

Proudly informing South Carolina firefighters.



Heidi Charest + the future of the fire service

Firefighting takes tremendous physical effort day in and day out. Being physically fit is a necessary part of the job – being one of the most physically fit firefighters in the country is a remarkable feat, one that **Heidi Charest** with the **Lady's Island-St. Helena Fire District** knows well.

Charest earned not one world title at the Firefighting Combat Challenge World Championship in 2020, but *three*. She bested her competition in the Open Female Division, Over 40 Female Division, and Male-Female Tandem Division partnered with a firefighter from Texas. She finished the Open Female Division in impressive time – *less than three minutes*.

Her competitive nature lends itself well to the job, and her history in fitness competitions helps maintain motivation to cross the finish line.

“I got started in fitness in the early 2000s, working with a trainer and then got into figure fitness competitions. When I moved back to Lady's Island, I got into CrossFit. The firefighter competitions and CrossFit lend themselves to each other pretty naturally,” said Charest.

Charest is the first in her family to join the fire service and she started out, as most do, as a volunteer with the Lady's Island-St. Helena Fire District. Within months, she was hired full-time.

“I loved it immediately,” said Charest. “I liked that every day that you worked or volunteered, there was always something different. There’s somewhat of a routine, but you never know what you’re going to get.”

In a profession where stigma about women in the workplace still has a firm grip on its reputation, Charest is competing with and defeating the best of the best in the fire service. Her latest accolades are proof that there is immeasurable value in women entering the fire service. She’s well aware of the challenges women face when joining the fire service but knows the future is bright.

“Going into schools and not just speaking to the girls but all levels is how we start to cross those hurdles,” she said. “People will say, ‘I need a guy to do this,’ but I can do it, too. Bringing up the young people to realize that there is no difference – I can do what the guys can do. It may take a little extra work, but it can be done.”

Charest’s advice to the next generation of female fighters is simple.

“Stick with it,” she encourages, “The road will be rough but stick with it. You’re more capable than you think you are.”

Association event



Are you ready for the changes that are coming?

The workforce is changing. The fire service is changing. Are you ready for the challenges that come with change?

Pew Research states that 48% of Gen Z are considered “racial or ethnic minorities.” In comparison to a study of American millennials in 2002, only 39% of Millennials were considered the same. *That's a significant difference that comes with significant challenges.*

We're here to help you navigate those changes.

Join us on March 31 at 10 a.m. in the Denny to talk about it. Lunch is on us, just [let us know](#) you're coming.



Fire-Rescue t-shirts are available

When you're from South Carolina, *college football is in your blood*. Weddings and big life events are planned around bye weeks and the off-season, and there's no doubt what game you're watching the last Saturday in November.

It's just different here.

The passion for our teams and the camaraderie of team sports inspired the t-shirts for Fire-Rescue 2023. There's a lot to be said about the similarities in the fire service and football—the physical fitness, the game plans, the trust in your brother, the commitment to getting better every day. We hope you proudly support Fire-Rescue and your favorite team.

T-shirts (S-4XL) are available for [pre-order](#) at \$20/piece.

See you in June at the beach for [Fire-Rescue](#).

Community events



Save the Date for the T2T Low Country Golf Classic

Tunnel to Towers Bluffton is hosting its inaugural Low Country Golf Classic on Sunday, April 30 at The Golf Club At Hilton Head Lakes. The funds raised from the tournament will benefit the area's first responders and veterans. Volunteers are also needed for the event. Find more [information](#) on registration and volunteer needs.



Darlington Raceway's First Responder Appreciation Day is May 14

Darlington Raceway is proud to support first responders on First Responder Appreciation Day on Sunday, May 14. For \$40 per person, you will get a reserved grandstand seat and a limited-edition NASCAR challenge coin. Friends and family are eligible for the discounted ticket rate.

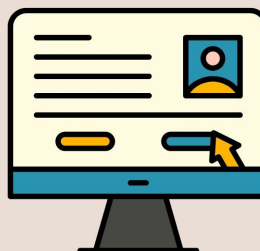
[Get your tickets.](#)



V-SAFE GRANT APPLICATIONS

Deadline to apply is
March 20, 2023

Apply through the Fire Portal



V-SAFE grant deadline is March 20

South Carolina **State Fire** is accepting applications for **Volunteer Strategic Assistance and Fire Equipment (V-SAFE)** grants until Monday, **March 20**.

According to State Fire's website, "Chartered volunteer fire departments and chartered combination fire departments with a staffing level that is, at least, 50 percent volunteer are eligible to receive grant funding.

A chartered fire department that receives a grant must comply with the Firefighter Registration provision of Act 60 of 2001 and sign the statewide mutual aid agreement with the South Carolina Emergency Management Division. The amount of the grants awarded shall not exceed \$30,000 for each eligible chartered fire department, with no matching or in-kind money required. A chartered fire department may be awarded only one grant in a three-year period."

More information on V-SAFE grants is [available](#).



SAFER grant deadline is March 17

The **Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grant** (SAFER) was established to help fire departments by providing direct funding to increase their number of trained firefighters to serve their communities. The goal of the grant is to enhance a fire department's ability to comply with NFPA staffing, response and operational standards. [Apply](#) for a SAFER Grant before the **March 17** deadline.

News from the State House



Legislative Update

Each week when the legislature is in session, Association lobbyists Stewart, Konduros, and Associates provide an update on legislation that impacts the fire service. All Legislative Updates for current session are posted on our [website](#).

Today we're looking at House Bill 3179 Chief Jerry Williams Dedication.

H 3179 (Chief Jerry Williams Dedication) By Pope and Ligon. Requests the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation to Dedicate the Statue and Plaza of the SC Fallen Firefighter Memorial Garden, located on the grounds of the SC Fire Academy. Referred to House Judiciary. **The resolution has been passed by both the House of Representatives and the Senate.**

Remember to sign-up to escort your legislator at [Legislative Day](#) on April 5.

Was this email forwarded to you? [Subscribe to receive Rattle Watch every Thursday.](#)



- [March 16 - 1% Regional Training, Spartanburg County](#)
- [March 31 - Humanistic Approaches to Fire Service Diversity Summit](#)
- [April 5 - Legislative Day](#)
- [April 20 - 1% Regional Training Class: Berkeley County](#)
- [May 16 + 17 - Cleveland School Fire Remembrance](#)
- [June 14 - Foundation Golf Tournament](#)
- [June 14-17 - Fire-Rescue](#)



South Carolina State Firefighters' Association

Westpark Boulevard 111, 29210, Columbia

This email was sent to {{contact.EMAIL}}
You've received it because you've subscribed to our newsletter.

[Unsubscribe](#)