



OCTOBER 27, 2022 | ISSUE 24

# Rattle Watch

Proudly informing South Carolina firefighters.



*Pictured above: Jennifer Miller participates in the law enforcement track; pictured below: Ashton Sullivan catches her breath after completing the fire track on day one.*

## Clinicians academy a success: "We really did walk a mile in their boots"

The [South Carolina First Responders Assistance and Support Team](#) (SC FAST) held its first-ever clinicians academy, **Mile in Our Boots**, at Colleton County Fire-Rescue the weekend of September 15-18, 2022.

The goal of the program was for the clinicians to acquire an enhanced understanding of mental and physical stresses that our first responders face through participating in interactive sessions with first responders themselves, develop awareness of challenges outside the job, and utilize the knowledge gained to help enhance future sessions with first responder clients through new perspectives gained from the academy.

The participating clinicians either have a history of working with first responders or hope to work with first responders in the future. Every participant had one thing in common: **a heart for emergency services.**

"The experience was inspiring and a reminder of the sacrifices first responders endure while trying to take care of their communities," said **Jennifer Miller**, clinician at Counseling Plus in Lexington and graduate of the first Mile in Our Boots.

"The shift life and dealing with the unknown on a daily basis can affect

daily functioning and I felt reminded of that, even as a combat veteran, after that first day of training due to the adrenaline and hyper arousal it was hard to settle down and take care of daily functioning needs, reminding me of the trust that I want first responders to have when they come in to my office and allow me to help them through a difficult time,” she continued.

The ‘hyper arousal’ described by Jennifer was an intentional aspect of the academy, integrated into each phase of the program to expose clinicians to the overwhelming sensory aspects of the job that don’t stop when you leave a scene. Clinicians participated in five tracks: fire, law enforcement, 911 telecommunications, chaplaincy, and EMS.

Clinician and Mile in Our Boots participant **Ashton Sullivan**, Art Therapist and Counselor at Emerge Counseling and Art Therapy in Beaufort, echoed Jennifer’s sentiments about the hands-on learning experience.

“The academy gave me a different kind of ‘knowing,’ something much more real and powerful than hearing stories from clients or learning concepts out of a book,” Ashton said. “I hope it will help first responders to give us a chance seeing that we are just humans too and care so much for them. We really did walk a mile in their boots.”

SC FAST is hosting the second Mile in Our Boots program at Colleton County Fire-Rescue the weekend of **September 21-24, 2023**.

## Association event



## 1% Regional Training in Oconee County

**\$18 million.**

That's how much money South Carolina fire departments receive annually in 1% funds. But do you know the rules and regulations tied to these dollars?

Our next 1% Regional Training is on Monday, January 23, 2023, 6-8:30 p.m. in Oconee County at the Oconee County Emergency Services. Join us and find out what you need to know to keep and best use your 1% money. A meal will be provided. [Let us know you're coming.](#)

Contact [Jeff Oswald](#) to schedule a 1% Regional Training in your area.

## Community event



## USC offering discount for first responders

The **University of South Carolina** has partnered with Firehouse Subs to offer first responders and their family and friends discounted tickets to the October 29 Gamecock football game against Missouri. Tickets are \$25/piece. [Get yours](#).

For more information on Gamecock football tickets and assistance ordering First Responders Day tickets, contact Mikey Schnepfe at 803-777-7028 or via email at [schnepfe@email.sc.edu](mailto:schnepfe@email.sc.edu).



## Cancer policy benefit reminder

The South Carolina Firefighter Cancer Health Care Benefit Plan became effective July 1, 2021. The legislature appropriated funding in the FY 2021-2022 budget for State Fire to purchase an insurance policy to provide the benefits defined in the statute. After a competitive bidding process, managed by the South Carolina Division of Procurement Services, the contract for the insurance policy was awarded to AXIS Insurance Company. AXIS will be utilizing Provident Agency, Inc., for claims management and processing and the South Carolina Firefighters Insurance Services for local claims assistance.

[Find more information and file a claim.](#)



## Labor shortage summits are next week

We recognize that the fire service is on the brink of a labor shortage crisis. But how do we fill the gaps? What needs to change in the fire service to attract and retain talent as our culture as a whole continues to evolve?

We are hosting two summits, Workforce Limitations designed for career departments and Volunteer Criticality for volunteers, to allow for an open and honest conversation about the issues you're facing and to figure out the next steps.

### **Workforce Limitations Summit - Career**

When: Wednesday, November 2, 2022

Time: 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Where: Denny Auditorium on the Fire Academy campus

What: A structured, interactive dialogue, by participants around the state, to discuss and identify trends and needs in addressing paid staffing shortages. The objective of the summit is to produce action items at the local, regional, state, and federal level which can positively affect change.

[Register for Workforce Limitations Summit – Career](#)

Lunch is provided.

### **Volunteer Criticality Summit - Volunteer**

When: Saturday, November 5, 2022

Time: 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Where: Denny Auditorium on the Fire Academy campus

What: A structured, interactive dialogue, by participants around the state to discuss and identify trends and needs in addressing the maintenance of volunteer firefighter numbers. The objective of the summit is to produce action items at the local, regional, state, and federal level which can positively affect change.

[Register for Volunteer Criticality Summit – Volunteer](#)

Lunch is provided.

Staffing shortages aren't unique to the fire service but there are unique aspects of the fire service that makes filling those shortages a significant challenge. We invite you to come together to brainstorm how we as a collective fire service can address our current needs and how to set ourselves up for the future.





- [November 2 - Workforce Limitations Summit](#)
- [November 5 - Volunteer Criticality Summit](#)
- [January 23, 2023 - 1% Regional Training, Oconee County](#)
- [January 26-29, 2023 - Fire Service Improvement Conference](#)
- March 5-10, 2023 - Fire Officer Academy: The Company Officer



## **South Carolina State Firefighters' Association**

Westpark Boulevard 111, 29210, Columbia

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