

FIREFIGHTER MAKES BAD SITUATIONS BETTER

Sixteen-year-old Scott Burnette watched in terror as a raging brush fire tore towards his Mills River, N.C., home. Seeing the grim firefighters battle the flames and secure his family's house changed Burnette's life.

He became a junior firefighter with the Mills River Fire Department. Now, 16 years later, Burnette is a lieutenant with the Asheville Fire Department, the volunteer chief at the Mills River Fire Department and part-time paramedic with Henderson County.

"I really love so many aspects of firefighting," Burnette noted. "I work with a wonderful crew of people, and I get to help people by making bad situations better. Whether it is putting out a fire, training or educating the public, firefighting is never boring."

Last spring, Burnette graduated in the first class of students to earn the Bachelor of Science degree in UNC Charlotte's Fire Protection and Engineering Technology program. He says his classes helped him become a better firefighter, and he credits the program with helping to propel his career.

"The professors with the engineering technology program are great," Burnette attested. "People not only around North Carolina, but the United States are becoming aware of this program. After earning my degree at UNC Charlotte, a lot of opportunities opened up for me, including being appointed accreditation manager at the city of Asheville Fire Department."

Burnette and his committee of more than 70 people are helping the fire department meet competency standards set by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International in the areas of training, promotion, recruitment and emergency response. Burnette and his team are increasing training efforts and most importantly improving the planning process.

"Accreditation allows a department to be more proactive instead of reactive," he explained.

If Burnette is successful, his department will join an elite group of just 89 fire departments in the country that have achieved this certification. Burnette says that the certification will improve the department overall, and higher goals are being set to work from each day.

Burnette's talents were recognized this year shortly after graduating from UNC Charlotte when he was named the Western North Carolina Firefighter of the Year by the Western North Carolina Association of Firefighters. He was chosen from more than 200 firefighters based on his education, his involvement in the fire service community and training experience. This honor puts Burnette in the running for state firefighter of the year, which will be awarded in August.

He is deeply appreciative of the regard in which his fellow firefighters hold him by naming him to the regional honor, saying anything else is "icing on the cake."

Equally important to Burnette is his most recent vote of confidence. In May, the Asheville Fire Department promoted him to lieutenant. In this role, he is responsible for a crew of firefighters and is moving closer to his dream of becoming a fire chief at a municipal fire department.

Perhaps as Burnette directs a team battling flames, he will serve as an inspiration to some other 16-year-old future firefighter.

— *Jemi Johnson*



Courtney Burt '99 married William Henry Scott III on Nov. 15, 2003. Courtney, who earned an M.F.A. in theatre/costume design at the University of Tennessee in 2003, designed the costumes for the Children's Theatre of Charlotte's productions of *Madeline* and *Wiley and the Hairy Man*. The couple makes their home in Monroe.

Births

Kristie Parker Graham '90 and her husband, David, announce the birth of their second child, Dawson Andrew Graham, on Feb. 23, 2004. He was welcomed by brother Parker Ray Graham, 2. The family lives in Yadkinville.

Theodore Clippinger '90 his wife, **Lynn Daniel Clippinger '93** are proud parents of Caroline Tate Clippinger, born on Feb. 28, 2004. She joins brother Andrew Taylor. Tedd is employed by Community Planning and Architectural Associates as a project manager and managing associate of the Pinehurst office. Lynn is very busy as a stay-at-home mom.

Jeannie Matos '92 and her husband, Frank Chukoskie, announce the birth of their twins, Cole and Joseph, born Feb. 2, 2004. The family lives in Ashburn, Va.

Andrew Holt, '94 and **Tammie Harrell Holt '99** are proud parents of Lela McKenzie Holt who was born on Nov. 17, 2003. Andrew is a consulting insurance agent with Legacy Financial Group, and Tammie is vice president of consumer risk solutions for Bank of America. The family lives in Charlotte.

Valderia Brunson '95 and her husband, Emanuel Brunson, Jr., announce the birth of their son, Isaiah Emanuel Brunson, on Feb. 15, 2004. Valderia is employed as lead real estate attorney for the real estate practice of Reinhardt Milam Law Group, PLLC in Durham. She writes in her spare time and was awarded third place in the 2003 North Carolina State Bar's Annual Fiction Writing Competition for her short story "Jesus Freak."

Amy Tetu Kushner '95 and her husband, Stephen, announce the birth of their second daughter, Georgia Nicole. Georgia was born on March 4, 2004, in Charlotte where the family resides. She was welcomed by her sister, Victoria, 2.