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Retired Firefighter Continues to Serve

By Nick Marnell



ConFire's Clive Savacool, center, is honored by the Board of Supervisors Feb. 10. Photo provided

between lung cancer and fire exposure," said Savacool. He questioned how his own injuries could have been avoided, and he determined that if there was a way to track firefighters' exposures to toxic materials, careers could be lengthened and lives may be saved. So he and a business partner formed Exposure Tracker, an Internet-based system that allows firefighters to monitor their exposures to those toxins, which Savacool expects will result in much healthier firefighters.

"You can't hold these guys down," said Carman, speaking of his retired firefighters. "They continue to provide a positive impact for the fire service even though they're not here with the district today."

Savacool was assigned as a rookie firefighter to Lafayette station 15. He later covered Lafayette as a battalion chief and he recalled one of his first fires as the Lafayette commander. The incident involved a young woman who was doing yard work and noticed that a neighbor's house was on fire. She jumped a fence into the neighbor's yard, she ran into the bedroom and she carried out the disabled resident, saving his life.

"In my whole career this was the first time I'd ever seen anything like that, and it gave me a great introduction to the Lamorinda community," said Savacool.

The Board of Supervisors honored Savacool with a proclamation at its Feb. 10 meeting. Exuding the poise and confidence of a political candidate, Savacool thanked the board and his ConFire peers. Could a career in politics lie ahead?

"Nope. It's a thankless job, and it's too stressful," said the man who fought fires for 18 years.

Contra Costa County Fire Protection District Chief Jeff Carman grabbed his captains and shot out of the room in the middle of a 2014 Lafayette Emergency Services Task Force meeting. "One of my battalion chiefs has been injured," he said. Firefighters had been battling a vegetation fire in Pittsburg most of the day, and that evening battalion chief Clive Savacool collapsed on the scene and was rushed to John Muir Hospital. It was the last fire that Savacool would fight, but it was not his last act of service to the firefighting community.

"Lying in my hospital bed, I knew the writing was on the wall and my time was limited," said Savacool. He had been hospitalized three times in his fire service career, and the cumulative effect of the consistent exposure to the smoke and flames resulted in a serious respiratory ailment, forcing his retirement in July at age 36.

"I knew that there was a direct correlation

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