

MEET YOUR TOWN STAFF

Dan Sparks, PKS Firefighter

By Jacquie Pipkin

Pine Knoll Shores Firefighter Dan Sparks lives on Harkers Island in a house once owned by his grandparents, who have an extensive history on the island. In fact, the street he lives on is Sparks Road, named after the Sparks family. Firefighter Sparks has had many experiences and many stops along the way back to his roots.

Dan's parents met in Philadelphia. Dad was in the United States Coast Guard, and his mother was a civil servant with the Navy. Dan was born in the Philadelphia Naval Hospital, one of the last few children born there before the facility closed. Dad was transferred from Philadelphia to Elizabeth City, and in 1979 was deployed to Guam. The family drove cross-country, was shipped out and lived in Guam for several years.

Dan was 4 when they moved to Guam and had the privilege of being able to catch his first Blue Marlin at age 8. During those formative years, Dan learned the local customs and language and still maintains close friendships. "Facebook is a wonderful tool," explains Dan.

In 1987, Dan returned to Philadelphia, where he graduated from George Washington High School, the same high school, incidentally, that comedian Kevin Hart attended. After graduation in 1993, Dan returned to Guam and brought his ailing father home to North Carolina, where he could be better cared for. Dan returned to Philadelphia for a time, then returned to Harkers Island to be with his father and near family.

For a short time, Dan worked as a charter fisherman on the *Mattie G II* with Captain Leroy Gould. Between 1996 and 1999, Dan, having earned his USCG captain's license, ran passenger ferries between Harkers Island and Cape Lookout. In 1999, Dan began working for Sea Tow, providing assistance and rescue to those in distress on the water. While serving with Sea Tow, Dan received its International Life Saving Award for his bravery in helping rescue those aboard a yacht that had run aground.

After spending some time in Key Biscayne, FL, Dan returned to Harkers Island and began volunteering with the Harkers Island Fire Department while attending the Crystal Coast Fire Academy and earning his firefighter and basic EMT certification. Dan has since gone on to earn his advanced EMT certification and is currently studying to earn his paramedic certification.

Dan has previously served with the Marshallberg Fire Department and Otway Fire and Rescue. On his days off duty in Pine Knoll Shoes, Dan serves as captain at Harkers Island Fire and Rescue. In October 2014, Dan began working part time with the Pine Knoll Shores Fire Department and in May 2015 became a full-time firefighter with the department. Because of his experience with lifesaving and rescue, Dan also drives the Yamaha WaveRunner for the department when assistance

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Pine Knoll Shores Fireman Daniel Sparks

—Photo by Mary Ellen Schramm



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