



Submitted photo

The Winston-Salem Fire Department's Fire Recruits Class XXIII pose at a training facility.

New firefighters ready to serve

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

On Jan. 15, the Winston-Salem Fire Department (WSFD) graduated 19 trainees from its Fire Recruits Class XXIII.

The graduates are now working as firefighters in stations around the city, living at their station for 24-hour shifts as they're on call to respond to emergencies at a moment's notice.

Four African-Americans were in the class. Out of the 357 employees that work at the WSFD, 93 are African-Americans.

Among this new crop of firefighters is Alfred "Theo" Jones, 25, who was in the Army National Guard for six years and began his firefighter training literally days after leaving the Guard. He said he

loved adventure but also loved helping others. He'd helped people internationally in the Guard and now wanted to do the same with the WSFD.

"I was always in love with the fire service. I think the job is very weighty, it's a very big deal and I wanted to be a part of it," he said.

Jones, a Charlotte native who moved to Winston-Salem three years ago, said firefighter training was intensive. He said there was extensive reading, studying and testing for the medical training and the fire training was physically demanding.

Jones is stationed at Fire Station 18 on Peacehaven Road. As of Jan. 26, he had yet to go out on a call. His station had gotten several calls for service while he was on



Westbrook



Jones

duty but were canceled when firefighters from other stations got to the scene first. Firefighting can involve a lot of waiting and training, he said, but he was looking forward to going out and helping people. Living in a fire station during his shifts reminds him of being in the barracks during his National Guard service. He said everyone there shared the same mentality and were dedicated to helping others. He said between his

firefighter's salary and his wife's income, they have no problem making ends meet while raising their 6-year-old daughter. He said he appreciated the pay raises that fire-

fighters and police got late last month from the City but the pay wasn't really a factor for him.

"As long as I know I'm impacting people, that's all that matters to me," said Jones, who has degrees in business from American Intercontinental University and is currently working on his master's at Liberty University online.

For William S. Westbrook III, 28, becoming a firefighter was following in his father's foot-

steps. His father, William Westbrook Jr., was a firefighter with the WSFD for 17 years.

He said his father would regale him with stories of the fires he responded to when he was younger and he also got to hang out at the fire station sometimes. He said being a firefighter seemed like the "best job possible" to him.

"It was always in my heart to be one," said Westbrook.

He tried for several years to become a firefighter after graduating from Elizabeth City State University with a business degree but couldn't get past the physically demanding agility test in 2010 and 2012. The third time was the charm and he was able to pass the tests to begin his training.

He said the experience

has been "awesome." After going through a burning building during training, he can't imagine doing anything else for a living. He described his class as one big family that quickly bonded to become brothers.

Westbrook is stationed at Fire Station 2 located off South Stratford Road. He's been on several calls, including grease and chimney fires and some false alarms.

"It's exciting, your heart is pumping a thousand times a minute," he said. "You're ready to get there and help in any way you can."

Westbrook, who plans to get married in August, said he was also grateful for the raise but is also OK with the pay.

Thank You! Gracias! Je vous remercie! Cảm ơn bạn! 謝謝! Obrigado!
Salamat! Блaгoдaрю! Hvala vam! Faleminderit! Vielen Dank!
Gratias ago tibi! Grazie! Mahadsanid! Asante! Ngiyabonga!

New Bus Routes - January 2, 2017



Thank you for attending WSTA's public meetings on proposed changes to our fixed route bus system. Your voice contributed to the development of what we believe will be a great new transportation system coming in 2017. We listened very closely and made modifications based on some of your concerns about the proposed changes. That information is now available for you in the form of a booklet with routes and turn by turn directions. Pick up a copy at the Clark Campbell Transportation Center or download the information from our website @ wstransit.com.

As we move closer to 1/2/2017, we invite you to join us as we take the next step in public transit for Winston-Salem.

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