

# CANNON

## Spotlight



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**21** years ago, a tragic event that shaped the United States happened in the heart of New York City. September 11th is a day marked in the country's history that many today still remember and one that kids are learning about in school books. At Cannon AFB, it's a day remembered by the fire department and its members with a **special tribute** that they have planned for this year. Here is an interview with the coordinator of events for the memorial as well as an insight to a military firefighter's job.

**Q: How long have you been at Cannon AFB?**

A: This month will be my two-year mark.

**Q: What is the fire station's role on the base?**

A: We specialize of course in firefighting and stuff like that and emergency management type of actions but we actually do fire prevention activities such as education and facility inspection.

**Q: Are there less emergencies since you have these kinds of programs?**

A: I can't speak for the specific details but I know the fire prevention side of the house for Air Force helps us have less incidents.

**Q: What are some highlight moments for you?**

A: The highlights of my career that I remember are big incidents, big fires that don't happen day-to-day. Of course, it's terrible if it's somebody's house that's on fire, but for us we're happy to do our job.

**Q: Have there been any challenges that you've faced and overcome?**

A: The challenges are definitely learning new things while on the go. Because depending on what the mission might be for the Air Force at the time, we're trying to balance that with doing firefighting training.

**Q: Is there a lot of paperwork involved with calls?**

A: There's documentation for afterwards for every single event that we have. Something as small as an alarm activation to something as big as a large-scale fire. I think there is a lot of paperwork but I don't feel like it is because it's just normal business for me.

**Q: You're not an operational firefighter right now but you have been in the past?**

A: Yes. I've been a firefighter for twelve years and at least nine of it has been an operational firefighter on the floor.

**Q: What are the hours that you work as a firefighter?**

A: We work 'forty-eights'. What that entails is that we show up to work at 7am and then we don't get off for two days. That doesn't mean we stay up 48 hours. That's always a misconception that people have. We have dormitory facilities here. We basically live here.

**Q: Do you run drills/exercises? If so, how often?**

A: All the time. Training is probably the most important thing for us to do as operations because we have to stay sharp so when it's time to do the real deal, we're ready.

**Q: What's the wildest/strangest call you've been on?**

A: The strangest call that I've had, to this day, is actually one from when I was deployed. We got a call for someone who was trapped in the razor wire. The first thing that came through my mind was, "Okay. They're trapped. They might be bleeding." So, we went there assuming it was going to be medical. And we got there and it was a local national and they were completely naked on the barbed wire, with no cuts. Just sitting there like a hawk. Not moving. It was kind of scary. It was like a 12-foot fence and there's like a small teenager almost a child. Like, 1) how did they get on the fence, and 2) how are they not injured by climbing all over this barbed wire stuff? It was just a mystery on how they even got up there. But that was pretty weird.

**Q: To fight the stereotype, are firefighters as good at starting fires as they are at putting them out?**

A: I know there's always this joke, "Oh yeah, firefighters are pyromaniacs, right?" The short answer to that is we're better at putting them out. Because we'll be trying to start fires for our training fires and it will take forever.

**Q: With there being only one station on base proper, how big is your crew?**

A: We technically have three stations. But for this station we typically have, for operational firefighters, somewhere between 8-12 people and they're manning 3-4 vehicles. Overall, on a good day, we typically have 21 firefighters on duty.

**Q: How big is your response range/coverage area?**

A: We have sectors where each fire station is responsible for that we kind of overlap. We help out with the city a lot. So it can be pretty far.

**Q: What made you want to pursue this career field?**

A: I loved the fact that it was like a 'Jack of all trades' kind of job. There's a lot of things we have to know how to do and be proficient at. It'd be hard to be a master at everything. Classic "Jack of all trades, master of none" kind of thing. Aircraft firefighting, that's our primary mission, but that changes depending on the base you go to. You'll have to relearn aircraft or it might be something you've never even seen because you've only been at one or two bases. But to me that's what makes it fun.

**Q: September is a memorable month for the United States. Last year for the 9/11 memorial, Cannon AFB firefighters climbed the ATC Tower stairs as a way of remembering those who lost their lives. Is this something the fire department is thinking about doing again this year?**

A: Yes. We're doing the same thing. We have a board with the names of the 343 firefighters who died and we'll be bringing them up the stairs as a symbolic remembrance of the people who lost their lives that day. We'll be doing a ceremony here at the fire station [on base], it's going to start at 6:43am which is, when you take account for the time difference, the exact same time the first aircraft hit the World Trade Center. After the ceremony we'll be starting the climb.

**Q: What does the climb involve?**

A: It's supposed to represent the same number of floors [110 floors] at the World Trade Center that the firefighters who lost their lives ended up climbing. It's supposed to be us literally following in their footsteps.

**Q: Are you wanting strictly firefighters to attend this or would you prefer others to attend as well?**

A: No, it's actually open to everybody. We had some other first responders such as the medics and Security Forces, in their full gear taking it [the names] up.

**Q: Do you have any last words or comments?**

A: I feel like it's our duty, not as just firefighters but since we're military members, 9/11 means a lot to us. So, for us to continue this tradition, it's an honor that we choose to do. Especially now with it being the 21st anniversary of it, there's people joining [the military] now that were just born or were born after the event, and it's something that they've learned about in books. So, it's really on us, like my generation of the military to continue the traditions so they know, you know, why we do it and to, as we said 'never forget', the people who lost their lives that day. I'm happy to be able to run the event and I hope that a lot of people show up and pay their respects.



Monique Hyman  
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Chief of Youth Programs

**C**hildcare is a career that requires passion and understanding. One person here on base has dedicated close to two decades of her life to this passion. Here is a short interview with her to know more about her job and the program!

**Q: How long have you worked here [at the Youth Center]?**

A: 18 years.

**Q: What are some of the activities you have here at the facility and which ones are your favorite?**

A: We run Boys and Girls Club curriculum and we run 4-H curriculum. We do cooking club, photography, art, STEM, fitness and recreation. And anything else that the children might come up with that they are interested in. What we try to do is, not only run things that are mandatory for us to do by the Air Force, we also try to facilitate activities that the children want to do.

**Q: What's the role of the Youth Center for the Children on base or those who are enrolled?**

A: Our main role is to give them a fun, safe place to come after school. Somewhere that, you know, they can feel that it's theirs. I always like to say that it's not ours, this is for them.

**Q: What age range do you cater to?**

A: Here at the Youth Center, which is our Open Recreation program as well as our teen program we take children ages 9-18.

**Q: Being a part of the facility for as long as you have, do still see or talk to any of the kids that have 'graduated' the program?**

A: Actually it's funny that you ask me that. I had a young man come in to my program yesterday or the day before yesterday that him and his brother came through the program and now he is stationed here. So a lot of times, like either we'll have youth come back and say hello because they're in town with their families or they're stationed here, end up working here and then we'll see them in that aspect.

**Q: Is there anything that makes this job difficult?**

A: Not to me. I think because I love what I do. When you love what you do, I don't think it's hard.

**Q: What made you want to pursue childcare?**

A: I just love kids. I always have. Just being here for them, especially being that we're a military base, our children go through a lot of different things whether it's deployments, moving a lot and things like that.

**Q: What is a highlight of this job that you could share for someone who is considering childcare as a career?**

A: I think a big highlight for me is watching that kid that comes in that's kind of quiet and to themselves, that doesn't really know anybody, doesn't have any friends and then in a couple months' time you see a whole different kid. That kid's wanting to lead and activity or giving you suggestions.

**Q: Do you have any words of advice you would like to share?**

A: A lot of times parents or teachers or childcare providers can get frustrated with children. Have patience. Have understanding. You don't realize how much of an impact you have on that child's life. So just staying positive, teaching children, "Shoot for the stars, don't let anybody tell you that you can't do something, never give up."

**Q: What do you see that's different from the time you first started and today? How has that journey been?**

A: I don't think that it's much different from when I first started until now. I think things in our lifetime have changed. Like, going through a pandemic. Just going through something like that and keeping the doors open and keeping smiles on people's faces. Like, "It's going to be okay. We're going to get through it."

**Q: Even if retirement is not something you're thinking about, where do you see yourself in the future?**

A: Still working with kids. Still going out there on the basketball court and shooting around with them and shooting pool and playing video games. I'm never growing up. And also, at some point, coaching again. Basketball.

**Q: Do you have any last comments?**

A: Only a few people know the Youth Center. Everyone knows School Age. And they don't understand that we continue that program [School Age] into this program [Youth Center]. They're different programs but this program [Youth Center] is geared for the older children.