

KeizerCommunity

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Keizer Fire presents awards

By **DEREK WILEY**
Of the Keizertimes

When the Keizer Fire District got back on the conflagration list in 2017, Sean Cummings led the way, serving as the engine boss on wild fires at Chetco Bar, Eagle Creek and Napa, Calif.

He spent about two weeks at each fire. Chetco Bar and Eagle Creek, according to the United States Forest Service, were at one point the No. 1 priority fires in the nation.

KFD chief Jeff Cowan presented Cummings with Employee of the Year at the annual district awards ceremony on Monday, Jan. 22.

As much as he meant to helping Keizer navigate fighting wildland fires, Cowan said Cummings is also just an outstanding guy.

“He had an immediate impact on the organization and he’s got a positive outlook on life and the world,” Cowan said. “When you get a standing ovation at the awards reception from your fellow firefighters, that’s a big deal.”

Cummings grew up in California, set to become a teacher like his mom and sister. But while working in the special education department for a school district in Sacramento, he spoke to a fire captain on a 911 call, who convinced him to switch paths and enroll in the Regional Fire Academy.

For a year, he continued working in special education during the day and trained to become a firefighter at night. Cummings moved to Keizer in 2013, following his girlfriend, who graduated from

Willamette University.

He worked full-time for the Beaverton school district and then the Oregon Department of Forestry in the summers. He became a volunteer firefighter in Keizer at the end of 2013 and then was hired as a full-time career firefighter in 2015.

He was the only certified engine boss on staff when Keizer Fire reported to its first wildfire at Chetco Bar in August. Cummings then went to Eagle Creek in September and Napa in October.

“I enjoy it because I’m so used to it because that was what my career was all summer,” Cummings said of fighting wild fires.

“But it was hard on my girlfriend. She’s the most understanding person and totally supports everything, which made it easy.”

Cummings went to Napa with a crew of three other Keizer firefighters, one of which was a battalion chief and another was a captain. But since Cummings had the most experience dealing with wildfires, he led the effort.

“For wildland since I had the certification, I had to be put in the role where I was the officer,” said Cummings, who is 29 years old. “It was kind of a weird dynamic, especially as a young firefighter. I felt like I handled it well. I was super open with my communication and I’ve heard nothing but good things said to me. It made me feel good that the district feels comfortable enough in me and my experience that they were willing to let me go out there as our

engine boss.”



Submitted Sean Cummings, a full-time career firefighter in Keizer since 2015, was named Employee of the Year at the district’s award ceremony on Monday, Jan. 22. Cummings responded to wildfires at Chetco Bar, Eagle Creek and Napa, Calif.

engine boss.”

Employee of the Year is voted on by the district’s captains.

“None of us are truly comfortable receiving accolades or awards because we’re just doing our job. But it always feels nice to be recognized for doing a good job,” Cummings said.

KFD also gave the Volunteer Firefighter of the Year to John Fowler; EMT of the Year to Jacob Brinlee and Rookie of the Year to Matt Miller. Noah Murayma responded to the most alarms in 2017.

Ryan Russell was honored for his 15 years of service. Jared Caruth, Chris Waldrop and

Christina Wilson were acknowledged for their 10 years of service. Andrew Alderson,

Vickey Dosier and Aaron Pittis received five years of service awards.



Submitted Keizer Fire Chief Jeff Cowan gave firefighter/EMT Noah Murayma a plaque for responding to the most alarms in 2017.



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