

Fire chief retires after 35-years

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One of John deHooge's most memorable days as a firefighter was attending a call where a home had been completely decimated, and the lady who lived there was trying to find her engagement ring.

At a time when someone had lost everything, deHooge and his team were able to find the precious item.

"The rest, to her, didn't matter," said deHooge. "It's the most rewarding career. At people's worst moment, you're there."

The Town of Halton Hills is bidding farewell to fire Chief John deHooge, who spent two years at the helm of the Halton Hills Fire Department.

The Toronto native spent over 35 years in fire services across Ontario, starting as a firefighter in Oakville in 1979.

As a young man entering a career in policing, de-

Hooge heard that Oakville Fire was hiring.

"I jumped at the opportunity," he said, where he spent the majority of his career, before moving to Waterloo, where he spent five years as fire chief.

His ability to lead fire departments took him across Ontario, moving to Ottawa in 2010 to serve as fire chief in the country's capital.

He came to Halton Hills in 2016 and played an instrumental role in having the department accredited with Fire Accreditation International.

DeHooge also introduced key mental health policies in the department following a tragedy in November 2015, where firefighter Trevor McNally murdered his wife and took his own life after struggling with mental illness.

"We deal with a lot of tragedy," said deHooge, adding that the department has worked hard over

the past two years to reduce the stigma around mental illness and open up a dialogue about available services.

"I commend them for embracing the opportunity," he said, adding that the aim was to help firefighters heal from previous traumatic incidents.

"Ask more targeted questions," he said, talking about different approaches his staff take when they see a co-worker down and struggling. "Keep a better eye on your brothers and sisters."

He says like any fire chief, his hope is to leave the department better than when he got there.

"Halton Hills has a great fire family," he said.

In his retirement, deHooge is moving to Thornbury, Ont., and plans on spending more time with his older parents and three grandchildren.

He will be succeeded by Harry Oliveiri. His last day is Aug. 10.

KNOWLEDGE IS KEY

According to the book of Hosea 4:6 the Lord said "My **people** are destroyed for **lack of knowledge**: because thou hast rejected **knowledge**, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

God wants us to have knowledge of Him, His words and His kingdom. He wants us to have good knowledge of His promises and that with Him nothing is impossible. Without the understanding of a problem, solution may be far. The solution to the challenges you are currently going through can be found in Jesus. Are you facing challenges in your marriage, health, job? The word of God to you today is that, that situation will end in joy. John 15:11 and John 16:24 says that your joy may be full. 1 Timothy 1:7 says He has not given us the spirit of fear but of love, power and sound mind. Have faith in Him, His word, His name and in His promises, trust Him and He will make a way for you. You are blessed. Rejoice.



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Should you have any question or comments, please feel free to contact us at the address below, and we also invite you to worship with us. Thank you, and God bless you, amen.

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