

# CHIEF KRISTAN MAURER: “Just Keep Swimming”



*Kristan becoming a Lieutenant*

When the first “Finding Nemo” movie came out there was a line in the script that appealed to Assistant Fire Chief, Kristan Maurer. “It was when the character Dory said: “Just keep swimming, just keep swimming””, she said, doing her best impersonation of a cartoon fish. “That’s my motto...that’s my drive...just keep swimming.”

It wasn’t so much swimming when Kristan was a girl that exposed her to the notion of drive and competition, it was baseball. “I had the highest batting average at the Texas Spring league and was just part of the mix,” she says. So she didn’t notice that she was different than the other players—all boys. She didn’t think there was any reason a woman could not rise up through the ranks in the fire service. “I never realized that I couldn’t...and shouldn’t do what the guys did,” she says.

After an initial interest in pre-med at Central Washington

University, Kristan was attracted to the fast pace of being a Paramedic, and signed up for the four-year Paramedic program. After graduation she worked for a while at American Medical Response and then 17 years ago joined the ranks at Clark County Fire District 6. It may sound smooth and easy when you read it, but moving up in the fire service and starting a family is a challenge. “Jason and I were married on a Sunday and I was to report to the Fire Academy at eight o’clock Monday morning.”

This week Kristan took the next step in her fire career. She became one of just a handful (well, actually 1 of 146) of women in the US to achieve Executive Fire Officer certification from the National Fire Academy. “The Executive Fire Officer certification will help me immensely in my career, especially relating to budgeting, community risk, incident command, and leadership,” Kristan says.



*Thanksgiving at The Station*



*Kristan Showing Girls How to Use the Hose*

This extensive certification came with sacrifice, requiring Kristan to travel to Emmitsburg, Maryland for two weeks every year for four years—not easy when you’re raising a family and your husband is a Firefighter. And although women have made tremendous strides in gaining acceptance in the fire service, Kristan was still in the gender minority. “Women in the fire service tend to size each other up to make sure we’re serious,” Kristan explains. “My expectation of woman firefighters is higher than that of male firefighters because we have to work so hard to gain respect.”

Kristan is especially proud of the applied research project she was required to complete as part of the EFO certification. The assignment includes researching part of the fire district and writing a 40-to-70-page report, which—if scored high enough—is globally published in the Learning Research Center at the National Fire Academy. “That report is now on a database that is accessible by any fire department in the world,” Kristan says.



*Chief David Taylor, Chief Maurer, and Commissioners Casey Collins, Dean Bloemke with Chief Jerry Green*

Kristan is not done learning, not by any stretch. First of all, her role as a logistics planner is a continual challenge and another step in becoming a well-rounded Chief. “I have to understand finances, training, operations, logistics—all of it,” she says. “It would be hard to go into a Chief’s position without knowing every aspect of the position.”

Kristan hopes she is a role model to girls considering moving into what has traditionally been a male-dominated profession. And she hopes she’s an inspiration to everyone who wants to challenge themselves by going to school to become something better. “If you look back at my career I think that is

something that makes me stand out—my competition and my drive,” Kristan says. “Really, like I said...just keep swimming.”