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## PRESS RELEASE

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### INAUGURAL CLASS OF CITIZENS FIRE ACADEMY GRADUATES

**Burlington, NC** – The homemade dinner, [commemorative video](#), challenge coin, and mini patch were not the only things that the inaugural class of the Burlington Citizens Fire Academy walked away with after their graduation ceremony at the Burlington Fire & Police Training Center on Monday, June 8<sup>th</sup>. The 14 graduates left with new skills, new perspective, new friends, and a new understanding of the fire service and the Burlington Fire Department.

Once a week for 6 weeks, participants gathered to get an insider's view of the Burlington Fire Department. They were able to tour all five fire stations, eat a fire-house meal, see an arson dog demonstration, see downtown from the bucket of the ladder truck, pull fire hoses, run the firefighter's physical agility test, drive a fire truck, use thermal imaging cameras in a smoke house, cut into a car with the jaws of life, slide the fire pole, tie rescue knots, learn the history of the Burlington Fire Department, and so much more.

The graduation ceremony proved to be an emotional event as multiple participants approached the podium to reflect on their experience. "The dedication and commitment of the members of the Burlington Fire Department is amazing," said Liz Gore. "I know it takes a special person to choose this career and I'm so appreciative to those who have. Rest assured that if or when the need arises for an emergency response in Burlington, the finest, most selfless, and well trained and caring individuals will step up to answer the call."

"I learned about the culture of the Fire Department. It's truly amazing what I've learned and what our firefighters do," said Mark Podolle of his experience in the Citizens Fire Academy.

Not only did the firefighters have an impact on the Citizens Academy participants, but the participants left an obvious impression of the Fire Department staff. "Every Thursday night I got to spend time with you all... you energized me with your enthusiasm, your participation, your questions; it is really encouraging," said Deputy Chief Michael Willets.

Applications are currently being accepted for next year's Fire Citizens Academy. Interested individuals must be at least 18 years old, willing to attend at least one 3 hour course per week for six weeks, and have no prior felony convictions or misdemeanors that would question the applicant's moral character. More information about the program can be found at [www.BurlingtonNC.gov/BFDCitizensAcademy](http://www.BurlingtonNC.gov/BFDCitizensAcademy) and an online application can be obtained [here](#).

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