

Vallejo, area Fire Departments to attend diversity training
21st Century Diversity Recruitment Workshop

By Irma Widjojo/Times-Herald staff writer/

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Representatives from at least a half dozen Bay Area fire departments will convene in Vallejo on April 19, to gather the tools for a more diverse workforce.

Vallejo and Benicia fire departments are co-hosting the day-long workshop presented by Firefighter's ABC's, a Gilroy-based company which offers tools and resources for fire departments to increase diversity, as well as to reach local community members.

"We are constantly looking for ways to increase the diversity (in the department)," Vallejo Interim Fire Chief Ray Jackson said. "We also are looking for more efficient methods to reach out to the community."

Jackson said he's interested in learning the tools to get the words out to the public about a firefighting career.

"A lot of people don't know what it's like to be firefighters, and maybe don't know anyone who is a firefighter," Jackson said. "It's important for everyone to have the opportunity to become a Vallejo firefighter regardless of gender, race or (social) background."

Joining representatives from Vallejo and Benicia fire departments will be those from Dixon, Marin County, Palo Alto, Cordelia and Stockton fire departments.

"We'll be talking about everything about recruitment, from legal and community standpoints... to get a more diverse (pool of) candidate," Russell Hayden, CEO and founder of Firefighter's ABC.

Jackson and Hayden agreed that a diverse crew allows for better service by the fire department, especially in Vallejo, a city with varied demographics.

"Diversity is not only about skin colors; It's the outlook in things, religions, genders... The more diverse the department is, the better they could handle different situations in the community," Hayden said.

Likening the training session to "a tool box," Hayden said it's up to the fire departments to implement the knowledge in their own communities.

"I hope it will create a better awareness of the importance of diversity," Hayden said. "It doesn't happen overnight, but hopefully they will do something that will foster a more diverse workforce."

The workshop will come soon after a \$3.2 million SAFER grant to hire nine more firefighters for two years is set to be approved by the Vallejo City Council Tuesday night.

Jackson said the April 19, training will not affect the hiring process of the nine firefighters. However, he added that the current list of candidates is diverse.

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What: 21st Century Diversity Recruitment Workshop

When: From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 19

Where: City Council Chambers, Vallejo City Hall, 555 Santa Clara St.

Cost: Open and free to community organizations, fire diversity organizations, fire unions, elected government officials, Solano County fire and police departments, and high school and college staff.

Registration: Deadline, April 16.

For more information: www.FirefightersABCs.com

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