

For Immediate Release

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## **Fire chiefs learned their trade at CMC College programs train area EMTs, paramedics, firefighters**

**By Mike McKibbin**

You likely could not turn around in a room full of Roaring Fork Valley firefighters and emergency responders and find one without at least some training from Colorado Mountain College. That goes for two retired and one current fire chief.

Retired Carbondale fire chief Ron Leach noted CMC has been the main emergency medical technician training provider on the West Slope for decades and the college program provides a stable hiring pool of new personnel.

"I know for the Carbondale Fire Department it's been a win-win situation," he said. "We're both publicly funded and we serve the same taxpayers, so it's been positive all around. CMC's dedication to public safety has been outstanding."

Leach took one of the first CMC emergency medical services courses in 1976 that spurred him on to a long career with the Carbondale department. After 37 years, Leach retired as fire chief in March and is now a volunteer firefighter for the Marble Fire Department. He continues to teach EMS classes for CMC in Carbondale and Aspen. Leach was named the college-wide adjunct faculty of the year recipient in 2010 and 2018.

Leach estimated around 90 percent of the EMTs, paramedics and firefighters at the Carbondale department while he was chief were trained by CMC.

"I'd say that's probably a pretty common number up and down the valley at all the departments," Leach added.

Around 10 percent of the department had also completed the CMC fire science technology program based in Leadville, Edwards and online, Leach noted.

Darryl Grob was a volunteer firefighter for the Aspen Fire Department when he took his first CMC class in the 1970s. A Vietnam War veteran, Grob left Los Angeles after dropping out of college when he grew disenchanted with how he and fellow veterans were treated. After moving to Aspen and finding work in the construction industry, Grob was nominated and elected to the Aspen Volunteer Fire Department.

"I realized I needed to validate my qualifications, so I looked into regional training and started going to CMC part-time," Grob said.

He earned his associates degree and was named Student of the Year upon graduation. Grob became the Aspen Fire Department's first full-time, paid fire chief in 1995 and is now retired. Grob called his education "life-changing for me as a person, not just a fire chief. It helped me establish my academic standards and contributed to my personal development."

Rob Goodwin replaced Leach as Carbondale fire chief and took a similar path. Goodwin took an EMT class at CMC in 1987 and was soon a volunteer for the Carbondale department. Goodwin completed the college's EMS services and fire science technology programs.

"I never wanted to be a fireman as a kid," Goodwin said. "But I always had this urge to help people whenever we would see an accident on the highway."

Goodwin recalled a 1982 accident on then two-lane Colorado Highway 82 where he was in a

vehicle that stopped to help but was "frustrated to no end" because he didn't know what to do. "I went home and told my wife that was never going to happen again and I was going to take an EMT class at CMC," Goodwin said. "That led me to this career and it's been a really great thing to volunteer and help my community."

Now a 32-year veteran with the Carbondale department, Goodwin has taught EMT classes for CMC and helped Leach teach classes as well.

"Those classes are vital, helping produce new EMTs and making sure we have enough qualified people to provide ambulance service across the district," Goodwin said. "From a fire chief standpoint, CMC has been and remains an integral part of providing these services."

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Carbondale Fire Chief Rob Goodwin talks to department firefighters and emergency responders during emergency medical technician testing. Goodwin credits Colorado Mountain College for its longstanding dedication to helping train the majority of the department's emergency responders. Photo courtesy Rob Goodwin.

180925 Goodwin 02-

Carbondale Fire Chief Rob Goodwin credits Colorado Mountain College for its longstanding dedication to helping train the majority of the department's emergency responders. Photo courtesy Rob Goodwin.