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BX-Swan Lake Fire Rescue Appoints Four Junior Chiefs for a Day

Fire trucks require a lot of specialized equipment, but one thing they don't usually have onboard is booster seats. On November 5, however, most of the crew onboard Engine 1 were safely strapped into booster seats on their ride from school to lunch and back. The new crew members were four kids that the BX-Swan Lake Fire Rescue named Junior Fire Chiefs for a day as part of their school fire education program.

In the month of October, BX firefighters taught over 600 kids from BX Elementary, Hillview Elementary, Heritage Christian Homeschool, and Vernon Christian School how to stop, drop and roll and how to exit a building in the event of a fire. Teachers were dressed up in full firefighting gear and breathed out of air packs. Having a trusted teacher transform into a firefighter assured the kids that firefighters, although they may appear scary, are there to help.

At the end of the sessions, the kids who finished their fire safety homework were put in a draw, and one student from each school was drawn to be a Junior Fire Chief for a day. So, after riding in a fire truck to the restaurant, the tiny chiefs swapped stories over chicken nuggets with Chief Bill Wacey, Captain Kevin Dalgarno, and Firefighters Aaron Ens and Ashton Hickson.

When asked what the best part of her day was, six-year-old Violet Sawyer said, "my favourite part of the day was recess, but my favourite part of the day was riding in the fire truck. I want to be a firefighter when I grow up!"

As the kids packed back into the fire truck after lunch, one parent was glowing as she thanked the firefighters and told them that her daughter would have these memories for a lifetime.

"Seeing how excited and happy the kids were has been the best part of the day for me," said Ashton Hickson, Firefighter with BX-Swan Lake Fire Rescue. Hickson has been with the fire department for one-year now and says he "hopes to take part in this event every year."

After 14 years of running this program, Dalgarno stated that one of the largest benefits of the program is keeping the kids excited about fire safety, which ultimately is shared by their classmates and families.

"The kids go home and remind their parents to check their smoke detectors, and they tell their friends all about their fun day out. We hope that it has lasting effects and creates good habits that they will carry with them," said Dalgarno.



(L to R: Captain Kevin Dalgarno, Grace Harder, Gage Bech-Hansen, Violet Sawyer, Ashton Hickson, and Aaron Ens)



(Gage Bech-Hansen riding co-pilot in the BX-Swan Lake Fire Rescue Truck)