

fire department

For the first time in 77 years, there was no Fireman's Ball in Meridian. Instead, the firefighters decided to have a barbecue to raise money for the victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Adapting to a different kind of world has been a high priority for the Fire Department since the attacks. Two firefighters have been called to active duty by the National Guard, while those here at home have been developing and fine-tuning plans to deal with terrorist attacks and other crises through a strong training program.

A new training program located at the Public Safety Training Center is the Southeastern Transportation Safety Center. Operated by a non-profit corporation, the center will train public safety workers from a six-state area in dealing with incidents such as train derailments and hazardous materials spills. With a \$350,000 Federal Railroad



Photo: Marianne Todd, *The Meridian Star*

Meridian Firefighters Gerald Mabry and Bobby Fason pray during a community-wide memorial service two days after the Sept. 11 disaster.

Administration grant this year and an additional \$475,000 earmarked for next year, the center will teach responders the latest techniques in passenger rescue and hazardous materials abatement.

The loss of even a single home to fire can be devastating for the residents, so our firefighters are reaching out with their After the Fire program that offers assistance to victims of fire. Through arrangements with private businesses, the Fire Department can offer temporary shelter, clothing and food to families who need immediate help. The firefighters even provide plywood to cover holes in roofs and windows so no further damage is done before repairs can be made.

Rush Foundation Hospital cafeteria worker Sabrina Clark helped prepare meals for Red Cross volunteers. West Hills second grader Alanna Hall donated supplies for the relief effort. Jesse P. Barnett, Jr., worked long hours as a volunteer and board member of the Key Chapter of the American Red Cross. Little Caesars Pizza, of which Dixie LaBruyere is a co-owner, held regular fund-raisers for the Red Cross.



Ladder truck displays large flag.



Sabrina Clark



Alanna Hall



Jesse P. Barnett, Jr.



Dixie LaBruyere

a different world



Photo: Marianne Todd, The Meridian Star

Meridian firefighters battle a blaze at a building under construction on the grounds of East Mississippi State Hospital.

Marking the first anniversary of the new Central Fire Station, firefighters responded to more than 3,000 calls for emergency service and completed more than 1,200 commercial inspections. They continued community outreach through the Company Inspection Program and the installation of 500 smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in the homes of senior citizens.

With \$140,000 awarded through the Fire Act Grant, the department purchased self-contained breathing apparatus and a computerized performance tester. Each firefighter is being fitted for his own mask, eliminating the problem of firefighters having to share masks that didn't necessarily fit each firefighter properly.

The canine addition to the department has proven to be a valuable asset. Schroeder, an accelerant-detecting dog, worked with his human partner to investigate 22 fire incidents during the year.

Justin Stewart helped his father, Gordon, who is administrator of health and safety for the Key Chapter of the American Red Cross. Tina Weil is a member of Midway Baptist Church's new Disaster Relief Shelter. Jamal McMillian is a student at Witherspoon Elementary School, which collected money for children in Afghanistan.



Justin and Gordon Stewart



Meridian Fire and Rescue



Veterans Day Parade



Tina Weil



Jamal McMillian