

**2021 NACO Achievement Award Program
Nomination Summary
York County, Virginia**

**Program Title: Hampton Roads Fire Academy (HRFA 23 & 30)
Collaboration with York County Department of Fire and Life Safety Fitness
Ambassador, Larry D'Shawn Wright, Body by D Gym**

Program Category: Personnel Management, Employment and Training

1. Abstract of the Program

Through a successful partnership between the York County Department of Fire and Life Safety and Larry D'Shawn Wright, owner/operator of Body by D Gym, firefighter entry level recruits in training, as part of the Hampton Roads Fire Academy, have improved their physical fitness ability to exceed the standards set forth by the academy. As part of this process, these recruits are trained by Mr. Wright two to three days a week, typically for an hour each morning. The training goes beyond pure physical fitness activities in that it pushes the recruits from a mental perspective, as well. This is critical because every firefighter needs to know their physical and mental limitations and how to continue to work past their desire to quit.

2. The Problem/Need for the Program:

Historically, the York County Department of Fire and Life Safety collaborates with fire departments across the Virginia Hampton Roads region, often resulting in the recruit schools being multi-jurisdictional academies. Due to class size and limited availability to conduct a multi-jurisdictional school, the department found it necessary to host the academy with York County recruits only. This standalone academy presented challenges with the staffing/coordinating of the physical fitness component. Typically, each academy is staffed with a physical fitness trainer from one locality. Unfortunately, there was no one certified in York. Therefore, the department sought a unique partnership and requested assistance from a recognized community business leader, Larry D'Shawn Wright (owner of the Body by D Gym). Mr. Wright is known as a well-respected community advocate who was more than willing to assist our department. Firefighters in recruit school are required to be physically and mentally capable of performing specific job functions under stressful conditions. When recruits are hired, they are assessed to perform the minimum standards to begin training as a firefighter. One of the many goals of the academy is to teach and train personnel to excel physically over the 18-week program.

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County Department of Fire and Life Safety Fitness Ambassador, Larry
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3. Description of the Program

Beginning with the first week of the academy, recruits are taught about physical fitness and nutrition in the classroom. Soon thereafter, recruits are trained by Mr. Wright at his gym to begin to meet the physical demands of firefighting. Recruits continue throughout the academy with training at the Body by D Gym. Prior to beginning this partnership, Mr. Wright consulted with our fire instructors and observed various agility processes and skills that firefighters perform. Through this exposure and education of the skills necessary as a firefighter, he developed a specific training program to optimize their strength development to perform as firefighters.

4. Cost of the Program

There is no cost of the program. D'Shawn Wright trains the recruits two to three times a week at no charge.

5. The Results/Success of the Program

Hampton Roads Fire Academy 23 was the inaugural class that trained with Mr. Wright, graduating in May of 2020. Hampton Roads Fire Academy 30 was the second collaboration and graduated in March of 2021. Instructors from both academies noticed significant improvements to the recruits' strength and skills throughout the programs. Academy instructors were impressed at the difference when compared to former academy recruit development. The improvement from the initial physical fitness evaluation of the new recruits to the last evaluation (near the end of the both academies) was remarkable. All students passed with ease and demonstrated significantly improved physical capabilities that are critical to safe and effective firefighting activities.

6. Worthiness of an Award

The York County Department of Fire and Life Safety and Larry D'Shawn Wright collectively deserve this prestigious award due to the benefit of the community and firefighters. The creative collaboration to effectively accomplish the goal by an expert and respected professional in the field of physical fitness is an attribute to all who developed and encouraged the program. This program will continue in the future to help make all of York County's firefighters as fit as they can be.