

I Knew You'd Come

By: Dr. David Griffin

As I sat in a packed room of over 8,000 firefighters and heard the words “I Knew You’d Come” from Chief Bobby Halton, I was motionless, but my mind was racing. This phrase that was etched on every FDIC challenge coin, plastered on every FDIC poster, advertised in all forms of social media, echoed throughout the halls of the convention center on April 9, 2014. Chief Halton had brought this phrase to life while he passionately strode from one side of the stage to the other, finally ending at the podium, striking it with a closed fist like a hammer exclaiming, “WE DEMAND IT”. When this took place, a room full of thousands of firefighters sat silent, in awe of the energy and inspiration that we were witnessing.

At the conclusion, I speeded through the crowd on my way to the next class of the day. When I arrived, I hurried to sit in my chair to stare at the brilliantly designed challenge coin so I could find its real meaning. On the front center, the text read “2014 Fire Engineering FDIC”. Around the top curvature of the coin read, “Training the Fire Service for 137 Years”. On the bottom curvature, “Where Leaders Come to Train”. Powerful statements that indicate the historical significance of Fire Engineering and FDIC. Now flip the coin over, and we have a highly detailed depiction of a firefighter carrying another firefighter out of a smoky environment. The words next to the depiction read, “I Knew You’d Come”. Now at first glance and without any reflection, one may think this is a simple meaning. The down firefighter is saying “I Knew You’d Come” to the firefighter that saved them. But look closer and think deeper. You will see the essence of what being a firefighter is all about.

As I studied this coin, I thought about all of the times this phrase is used in our profession without us even knowing it. My mind was filled with examples. This is when I realized that in every action that we perform as firefighters, this phrase is applicable. How? Read on.

Think about it. When we respond to a structure fire with victims entrapped and make our way through extreme conditions to make that rescue, whether conscious or not, that victim knew we would come. When we arrive on a full arrest and a family is pleading with us to help their loved one, they are doing so because they knew we would come. When we respond to a diabetic that needs medicine and food, they may lay motionless, but they knew we would come. When a new mother is giving birth and can't make it to the hospital, a husband calls 911 for help because he knows we will come and deliver that child. When an individual overdoses on drugs and falls close to death, someone makes a call in a panic because they know we will come. When there is an active shooter incident taking place and people are wounded or killed, 911 is called because they know we will come. When a family is in an automobile accident and a loved one is pinned, the family members scream for us to help the others. What do we do? We come and we reunite them. In the darkest moment of a fellow firefighter's life, they call a mayday. They do this because they know we will come and give our last breath to save them. When one of our brothers or sisters faces a tough time in life, feels lost, and has nowhere to go, we open our hearts to them. No matter how deep their pain is, they know we will come. And most importantly, when a firefighter loses their life, we flock to them and their organization by the tens of thousands to give support. Every one of those firefighters knew that we would come.

It's in our DNA. It's what we became firefighters for. We serve in every capacity possible because we want to help others that know we will come on the worst day of their life and give it our all to make it right. This will not always be possible, but if we train hard, increase

our education, and remember that this profession is about public service, not ourselves, we will be successful.

Each shift when we arrive and place our gear on that rig, we must understand that this phrase is going to be uttered to us by someone in some form or fashion over the tour of duty. They don't do this because they are bored. They don't do this because they hope we are ready to help them when the time comes. They don't do this because they want to do. They do this because they DEMAND that we are ready and they know that WE WILL COME. We must live this phrase in everything that we do because it's who we are as firefighters. If we do, our careers will be full of examples of times when we saw others with fear in their eyes, but deep down inside they felt a calm because in their mind they are saying to themselves, "I Knew You'd Come."

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