

# Pursuing a new career track



Colonial Heights Deputy Fire Chief David Salot will be hanging his helmet after 35 years with the department to pursue a career in NASCAR. (KELSEY REICHENBERG/PROGRESS-INDEX.COM)

Deputy fire chief Salot decides to hang his helmet after 35 years with the department to pursue a career in NASCAR.

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COLONIAL HEIGHTS  
After a successful 35 years in a career he has loved, Deputy Fire Chief

David Salot has decided to hang up his helmet and follow a new dream. He will be retiring from the department on Oct. 1 and pursuing a new career track — with NASCAR.

Over the past few weeks, Salot has been juggling

working for the fire department with a part-time job with NASCAR as a competition technology technician.

"It handles some of the setup and tear-down at the track — some of the electrical testing and repairs," explained Salot, who holds a degree in engineering. "There's a lot of behind-the-scenes in NASCAR that a lot of people don't realize. Hopefully, down the road that expands into a full-time position."

While he has been an off-and-on-again fan of NASCAR for years, Salot's desire to work with the stock car racing organization was sparked by conversations he had with a man he met on a cruise ship several years ago.

"I've always had some interest in it, [but] I became more passionate when a fellow I had met on a cruise ship years ago worked for Hendrick Motorsports," Salot recalled. "He was their director of administration and he really piqued my interest in some of the behind-the-scenes and logistics of NASCAR."

"So that's what piqued my interest, and I knew when retirement came that's where I wanted to be," he added. "So I started watching the ads once I hit 50 years old and started feeling out what opportunities might be in NASCAR."

Salot first began volunteering with the Fire Department as a cadet back in 1993 when he was 16 years-old, and he continued to volunteer until he left his Colonial Heights hometown to study electrical engineering at Virginia Tech. Even

the department's budget from an Excel spreadsheet standpoint, and he's just done a great job with it."

Salot believes his success in the department stems from his overwhelming passion for helping people and giving back to his hometown. He encourages others to go into careers they're truly passionate about.

"When I left engineering, when I was telling some of the fellow engineers that I was switching careers, everyone of them said they wished they had the guts to do what I was doing ... to follow something they're passionate about," he said. "That's my advice to everybody — find something you're passionate about and work in that field. You're really not working; you're going and enjoying your career. It's not just going to work. So that was why I did that career change. And I'm glad I did — looking back, I have no regrets at all."

Salot reflected on some of the unforgettable, life-changing moments he's experienced in the department, including two tornadoes and his time spent as a flight medic.

"I've had some pretty cool experiences while I've been here. I got to experience time on med flight as a flight medic ... I had some pretty interesting calls along the way," Salot said.

"I was part of the Walmart tornado; when that happened, I was on duty that day. Then there was the other tornado in 2008."

While he has been trying to join NASCAR for over a year, things really started to fall into place in January. Now he can't wait to see where the journey takes him.

"It's been a passion of

mine to get to NASCAR, a little bit like that switch from engineering to the fire department," Salot said.

"I'm a little bit of a dreamer, [and] I was following that dream. This opportunity has come, [and] it's another dream of mine, so I'm trying to get to my next career... hopefully another 15- to 20-year career."

"It's hard to work until you're in your 60s and 70s in the fire service, so [I'm] just trying to make the plan now to retire and start on one that I

can continue for another 15 to 20 years," he added.

His new career path isn't the only large change ahead for Salot. In about 10 months, he and his wife plan to uproot and move to Florida.

"My wife is a school teacher at Tussing Elementary, and she's already let them know she's going to be retiring after this school year, and then our goal is to relocate to Florida," he said.

"There's so many things we're excited about."

We're excited about the career, we're excited about the move, we're excited about retirement. It's a lot of change happening for me and my wife, so we're excited."

As Salot's retirement quickly approaches, the department is in the process of hiring a new deputy fire chief. Applications close today, and Moore isn't sure when the hire will take place.

"He's out of here October 1. I think the

ideal situation is to go somebody in here before he goes, but I'm not sure we'll be able to make that deadline," Moore said. "So we're going to find a replacement for him. I say replacement, but it won't be."

"We're going to lose a lot with him leaving, but our loss is NASCAR's gain," he added.

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