



CITY OF HARRISONBURG
FIRE
DEPARTMENT

101 NORTH MAIN STREET
HARRISONBURG, VA 22802
OFFICE (540) 432-7703

For Immediate Release – April 30, 2025

Contact: Lt. Erin Stehle
Public Education Officer
540-432-7703

Spots still available in HFD's all-girls fire camp

Annual Camp L.I.T. program helps empower tomorrow's leaders

HARRISONBURG, Va. – A beloved program that helps young women discover and develop their leadership abilities is getting ready to return in Harrisonburg, and space is still available for those looking for a unique opportunity this summer.

The sixth annual Camp L.I.T. will take place this year from June 16 to 20. The program, hosted by the Harrisonburg Fire Department (HFD) and Rockingham County Fire and Rescue (RCFR), focuses on the themes of Leadership, Integrity and Trailblazer (L.I.T.) and provides insight into the life of a first responder so more young women can consider public safety as a future career option. The free program is open to those 14 to 17 years old.

The five-day camp includes activities such as physical training, fire simulations and hands-on experience. Instructors cover a variety of topics throughout the week, such as use of fire gear, fire prevention, CPR certification, search and rescue, mental health awareness, fire behavior and more.



(Above) Camp L.I.T. participants at a past event. The program is for young women ages 14 to 17 years old across the Valley.

Despite the focus on fire and rescue activities, Camp L.I.T. is about much more than public safety for participants and their mentors in the program.

“This program is an opportunity to foster personal and professional development in our youth today,” Camp L.I.T. administrator Lt. Erin Stehle, HFD’s public education officer, said. “It allows participants to focus on empowerment, team building, communication and self-confidence, which will help them succeed in all aspects of their lives.”

Campers are exposed to a variety of agencies, including the Harrisonburg Police Department, the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communication Center and Rockingham County Sheriff’s Office, in addition to HFD and RCFR. More than a dozen former campers have gone on to pursue more training and education in public safety careers in past years.

There are more than 1 million career and volunteer firefighters in the United States, but only 9 percent are women, according to the National Fire Protection Association. One of the goals of Camp L.I.T. is to expose women to careers that have been notoriously male-dominated in hopes of recruiting passionate, driven, empowered young women into the fire service.

“In order to best serve our community and all who live here, it’s vital to have a public safety workforce that represents all who call Harrisonburg home,” HFD Chief Matthew Tobia said. “The fire and rescue service is a career that all people should feel they have the ability to participate in and be a leader in, and Camp L.I.T. is an amazing way to open those doors to some who may be called to public service.”



(Above) Camp L.I.T. participants with instructors (from left) Firefighter Kellie Sacksteder, Firefighter Leslie Pullen and Firefighter Bell Eyles.

Camp L.I.T. is open to participants in Harrisonburg, Rockingham County and any surrounding areas. Applications and more information can be found at www.harrisonburgva.gov/fire. Applications close May 9.

The Harrisonburg Fire Department is an ISO-Class II All-Hazards agency providing essential emergency and non-emergency life safety services to the public who live, work and travel in Harrisonburg. More information about the Fire Department is available on-line at www.harrisonburgva.gov/fire.

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 56,879 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.

###