For Immediate Release – Oct. 27, 2026

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HFD's Stehle completes Virginia Women's Municipal Leadership Institute

Program prepares local government officials for future leadership opportunities

HARRISONBURG, Va. – A long-time leader in the Harrisonburg Fire Department and regular presence at local schools and community events was recently recognized for furthering her efforts to help move Harrisonburg forward.

(Above) Lt. Erin Stehle

Lt. Erin Stehle, HFD's Fire Prevention Education Supervisor, has completed the Virginia Women's Municipal Leadership Institute – a premier leadership development program designed specifically for women in local government who aspire to serve as chief administrative officers. The program, with curriculum that focuses on organizational politics, communications and engagement, finance and budgeting and leadership, is a collaborative effort between the organization Virginia Women Leading Government (VWLG) and Virginia Tech's School of Public and International Affairs.

"Erin's commitment to professional development for the benefit of our community is simply amazing," HFD Chief Matthew Tobia said. "Her actions reflect a level of engagement that is not only remarkable, but also exemplary. Every day, Erin is making a positive impact that will affect generations to come. She makes us better every day and is a role model for everyone who sees themselves in her."

Stehle has served as a member of HFD for nearly 16 years, leading a number of key initiatives – such as Camp L.I.T., the annual HFD Pizza Night smoke alarm event, the Community Fire Academy and more – and helping others in the department grow and succeed. Participation in the leadership institute challenged Stehle to reflect on her leadership approach, recognize areas for improvement and identify opportunities for continued growth. As a public servant who is deeply committed to the Harrisonburg community, Stehle is using what she learned from the program to think more critically, broaden her perspective and approach challenges with greater intention.

"To me, leadership is not defined by a title, but by actions," Stehle said. "It is demonstrated through a commitment to continuous learning, a willingness to grow and the courage to hold yourself to a higher standard. As a community leader, I believe leadership means consistently putting those values into practice to make a meaningful difference in the Harrisonburg community."

VWLG in part works to ensure local government leadership reflects the diversity of the community it serves, according to the organization's website (www.vwlg.org). Those values mirror Stehle's, who develops and implements fire safety and wellness community outreach programs that relate to the needs of diverse groups, in addition to leading efforts at HFD to get more women interested in a career in the fire service.

Learn more about HFD at https://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.*

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