

# TWO MORE CHAINS



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## “Opportunity” *What It Means, How to Recognize It, Why It’s Important*

By Kelly Woods  
Director, Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center

**A**s you may recall from our last issue of *Two More Chains*, this year as we recognize the 20-year anniversary of the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center, we want to highlight our foundational principles of learning. These principles are outlined in the publication [Learning in the Wildland Fire Service](#) and give us a framework which we can apply to leverage our experiences for personal, organizational, and cultural growth.

In this issue, we continue our deep study of each of the three pillars of learning—Inquiry, Opportunity, and Dialogue. Specifically, we explore the pillar of Opportunity—what it means, how to recognize it, and why it’s important.

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***Do you actively try to learn something every day?  
Do you support a climate that values learning? How do you respond to failure?***

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Every firefighter learns every day, or at least they should. The opportunity certainly exists. Consider the complex system in which we work. The variables are endless—fuels, weather, topography, personality, experience, perspective . . . the list goes on. With all the variables come a myriad of potential outcomes on any given day during any given task. Regardless of whether the outcome is expected or unexpected, each scenario offers an opportunity for learning. We cannot know everything, but we can continuously learn and find opportunity in difficulty and the unknown. In this issue of *Two More Chains*, we ask you to consider how you approach these opportunities. Do you actively try to learn something every day? Do you support a climate that values learning? How do you respond to failure?

In our “One of Our Own” segment, George Risko from the Florida Forest Service describes how his agency is determined to learn from tragedy. His story touches on the power of experiential learning and how it can foster healing.

Dive into this issue and ponder how you will make the most out of the learning opportunities you encounter.

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# GROUND TRUTHS

By Travis Dotson  
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## Not Knowing

Like a lot of us Lower 48ers, I recently spent some time in Alaska—the land of the most formal “things are different here” briefing. I love that briefing. I wish more places would do a version of it.

For those of us who don’t work regularly in the biggest state in the union, AK can be a great perspective giver. I guess it’s no different than getting assigned to any place outside your normal rotation. For some it’s that coveted roll to the Boundary Waters for Canoe Ops or down to the southeast to experience some fan boat firing fun. For others it’s a chance to go “out west” where steep is no joke. Wherever your “different” is, a trip there presents a chance to test your humility and flex your ability to learn.

Will you pretend you know when you aren’t really sure? Will you ask questions even if everyone else is nodding their head? It’s easy to brag to yourself about how humble you are and tell tall tales about not caring what others think. But it turns out the ego is real and we are social animals. Saying “*I don’t care what anyone thinks*” is you trying to influence what someone thinks—but it’s OK, I pretend too.

We want to be seen as competent and capable. This can present a dilemma when we are unsure. These situations vary in degrees of urgency and consequence. Maybe you forgot exactly how to pdf your Crew Time Report for the Finance folks or maybe you got some classroom instruction 22 years ago yet never once performed an actual hover hook-up when—Surprise!—here comes the ship with no long line (both recent experiences of mine).

Obviously, those situations are on different ends of the time wedge (getting time in is clearly more pressing—right?). But the intense desire to not look dumb rises

immediately for me in both scenarios. You’d think I’d be OK with looking dumb by now (or at least accustomed to it), but I still prefer my learning stumbles to be off the main stage.

Sometimes the fear is not about looking dumb, it’s about not wanting to fail in the moments that matter. Calling in a Medical Incident Report or getting the depth needed on real-life CPR compressions are things I really want to do correctly. Those particular scenarios are instances where training reps will save you from your prefrontal cortex. Other serious scenarios just don’t have a set play to practice, like delivering really bad news. There isn’t a script for everything.

Let’s return to the point: Uncertainty. We don’t know how to do everything, and surprises will occur. Both in the moment and afterward, not knowing is an opportunity. We will all eventually

be forced to make the best decision we can with the information and skills we have at the time. We need to recognize that moment as a chance to do hard things and trust that learning will arise. We also need to be compassionate with ourselves and others when looking back at how it all went down.

My wrestling coach liked to say “*You just earned an opportunity to improve*” whenever we faltered—maybe forgot our headgear or lost our temper. The “opportunity” was an extra 20 minutes of Hit-It drills after practice.

At the time I didn’t think much about why coach called it an opportunity. I just tried to keep my mouth shut and not to “earn” anything else. Looking back, I see the wisdom.

Opportunity hides in the hard stuff. Get good at seeing it that way.



# The Conditions We Create

By Travis Dotson  
Analyst, Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center

## The three chief pillars of learning within the wildland fire service:

- ❖ **Inquiry.** We seek to understand.
- ❖ **Opportunity.** We create conditions for learning.
- ❖ **Dialogue.** We constructively exchange ideas.

[From page 9 in *Learning in the Wildland Fire Service.*]

## Why is Opportunity a pillar of learning?

**B**ecause it plays a critical role in supporting our learning culture. If we as a workforce don't consciously identify and exploit opportunities for learning as part of everyday work, we are failing to foster the constant growth required to navigate the dynamic environment in which we operate.

Easy to say fancy words. But what does "exploit opportunities for learning" look like around the console in Dispatch or out on Division Delta?

Sometimes it's very simple. Like taking the time to say: "Hey, come over here. Let me show you something" during the morning rig check. That statement often sets up a "lesson session" of some sorts. Maybe it's a quick tip on getting the saw to fit just right in the compartment, or maybe a real eye-opener on why it's important to actually check the batteries on the AED.

Either way, it's always an option to bypass the learning moment for the sake of efficiency. But taking the time to foster learning is how we improve the culture we have and build the culture we want.

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*Opportunities are everywhere. We have to get good at seeing them in time to act. Once you make a commitment to learning as a value, chances to live out that commitment are revealed with regularity.*

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Exploiting learning opportunities on the fireground can be more difficult. Especially if you don't even recognize the situation as an opportunity to begin with. Big deal firing show? Who gets the torch? Likely one of the saltier folks who knows what to do without much direction. Fair enough. But viewing this as an opportunity for someone might inspire you to throw an up-and-comer in with them to shadow for a bit and then take the torch with some oversight.

We don't want to put folks in too far over their head or complicate a crucial operation for the sake of training. But we do want to constantly be on the lookout for any chance to plug our people into new experiences. Like anything else, finding a way to fit learning in is a matter of practice.

Opportunities are everywhere. We have to get good at seeing them in time to act. Once you make a commitment to learning as a value, chances to live out that commitment are revealed with regularity. Remember, this applies to yourself as much as anyone you might be mentoring. If the operational tempo allows,

don't hesitate to ask if you can follow along, get some instruction, or take a swing at whatever is happening that you could learn from.

Whether it's running the pump, giving the briefing, or helping out in the Finance Section—look for ways to expand your own knowledge set.

On page 12 in [Learning in the Wildland Fire Service](#), notice the descriptive text associated with the pillar of Opportunity: "We create conditions for learning". Creating conditions for learning requires creative action. How you view an event or situation really drives whether or not any learning will take place—for yourself or anyone else.

As outlined in [Learning in the Wildland Fire Service](#), these are the tenets that support the pillar of Opportunity:

- ❖ **Be Consistent** – Make learning part of everyday operations for yourself and your team.
- ❖ **Create the Climate** – Make time for learning a part of all operations.
- ❖ **Embrace Failure** – Approach unintended outcomes with learning in mind.

These tenets are the "how to" in relation to maximizing opportunity.

### Be Consistent

We all know the value of consistency.

A related sentiment is the popular saying: "train like you fight because you will fight like you train."

If you save learning for specific occasions, you may forget to include it or not allow it the time that it requires.

This can be as easy as getting in the habit of asking: "How can we incorporate learning into this day?" This may lead to an official trainee assignment, pile building 101 before project work, or taking more than six minutes for safety.



### Create the Climate

Climate matters—for all sorts of stuff, including learning.

This is the section on "Command Climate" from [Leading in the Wildland Fire Service](#) ([Learning in the Wildland Fire Service's](#) companion publication):

#### **Command Climate**

*Command climate refers to the environment within the influence of a particular leader or chain of command.*

*Team members develop a perception of the command climate based on their understanding of how they are expected to perform, how they are treated, and how they must conform to their leader's individual style and personality.*

*Fire leaders strive to create command climates based on trust in which people feel comfortable raising issues that may be problems and engaging in healthy debate over potential courses of action.*

*Establishing a positive command climate demonstrates respect for our teams and subordinates and generates far-reaching benefits: unity of effort, increased initiative among subordinates, and more timely error mitigation.*

*A positive command climate not only helps to avoid error but also enhances the team's ability to recover from error when it occurs. Direct communication with open interaction among teams and their leaders—a key attribute of an effective command climate—is the first line of defense against error chains.*

*Good command climate is characterized by open communication, mutual trust and respect, freedom to raise issues and engage in debate, clear and attainable goals, and teamwork.*

Not coincidentally, a healthy command climate fosters a healthy learning environment.

### Embrace Failure

This is least intuitive of the tenets. A charge to embrace failure might first be interpreted as somehow lowering high standards. However, this is not at all the spirit of this tenet. We must remember the overriding pillar is *Opportunity*. This core value reminds us to remain focused on learning in the midst of failure.

Emergency response is a dynamic endeavor. The consequences of failure run the spectrum from no impact to catastrophic. Regardless of outcome, every failure holds valuable lessons. But discovering and sharing them can be impeded by our approach and attitude.

## Learning to Learn from Accidents

[From the “Desire and Responsibility to Learn” section of *Learning in the Wildland Fire Service*.]

Accidents—and the reviews and investigations that follow—have been part of the wildland fire service since the time before the pulaski. And over the years, the focus and the tone of accident reviews have changed.

In the wake of the Thirtymile and Cramer fire investigations, a shift in post-accident reviews began to take shape. This shift was also occurring in other high-risk industries as well. We all want to figure out why our employees were hurt or killed and what—if anything—can be learned to prevent a similar occurrence.

Beginning with a firefighter entrapment review on the Balls Canyon Fire in 2005 and a Peer Review the following year on the Little Venus Fire in Wyoming, a fundamental change emerged in the way accidents are reviewed and lessons are captured. In 2007, the first Facilitated Learning Analysis (FLA) Guide laid the foundation for today's learning-focused accident reviews.

Prior to this effort, accident reviews tended to describe “errors” and what firefighters should have seen, understood, or done. This recent shift makes an effort to understand how those involved “made sense” of the situation given the information available at the time.

This view seeks to acknowledge and describe the conditions, pressures, motivations and restrictions present in the situation. In this view, a full accounting of the conditions allows for genuine dialogue regarding potential lessons and learning.

In a learning organization, every member of a team is responsible for leading themselves in learning and sharing what they know with their peers.

Firefighters are responsible to help their captains and chief officers design effective learning opportunities. Captains and chiefs are responsible for creating a command climate where learning is valued and learning initiatives from firefighters are encouraged.

We all experience communication failures on a regular basis. Each instance is an opportunity to investigate *our own part* in the break down. Evaluating the difference between what was intended and what was received without slipping into blame is good practice for keeping learning as the focus.

Genuinely approaching unintended outcomes with learning in mind can be difficult. The wildland fire service has made an intentional effort to pivot away from a blame-focused accident review culture to one focused on understanding and sensemaking.

Individually and collectively, we have great influence on the cultural conditions we operate in. Our pillars of learning remind us to put conscious, intentional effort into creating conditions that support learning.



George Risko



George Risko

## Reflections and Insights on Opportunities for Learning in the Wildland Fire Service

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*"It's all about the people—not the process."*

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By Alex Viktora  
Assistant Director, Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center

**Alex:** George, could you start by telling us a little bit about your background in the world of wildland fire?

**George:** Yes, sir. Thank you, Alex. I'm currently the Fire Training Officer for the Florida Forest Service. I've been with the agency over 25 years. I started in fire as a Forest Ranger, then a Senior Forest Ranger, and now I'm in my current position, beginning in 2015.

And I'm also very fortunate to work on the NWCG (National Wildfire Coordinating Group) Leadership Committee.

Before my career with the Florida Forest Service, I served in the United States Marine Corps, in which I became a non-commissioned officer. I learned a lot about life and leadership.

My first taste of wildfire was an impromptu, fairly quick class I took when I was at Camp Pendleton in the early 1990s. Some U.S. Forest Service folks came in and taught us how to use wildland fire hand tools. It made a positive impression on me. In 1996 when I got out of the Marines, I happened to go in and talk to the Florida Forest Service—and the rest, as they say, is history.

**Alex:** Awesome. Thank you for that background. Can you talk to us about what the phrase "*Learning in the wildland fire service*" means to you?

**George:** For me, the [Learning in the Wildland Fire Service](#) publication—which I love—and the [Leading in the Wildland Fire Service](#) publication, both illustrate that learning in wildland fire is a never-ending process.

Just last week we taught S130, Firefighter Training; S190, Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior; and L180, Human Factors in the Wildland Fire Service. We've taught these classes many times. The other facilitators and I will always discuss how we learn something new in every class because the fresh sets of eyes are coming in with different questions. Like I say, it's a never-ending process—that we need to always be open to. I think you can always learn from anybody—whether it's the "old hat" or the newest person.

And, of course, the flipside of learning is to ensure that you pass it on.

**Alex:** Let's shift gears here a little bit and talk about one critical component of learning in the wildland fire service: Staff Rides. Could you tell us about the Florida Forest Service and what inspired your agency to build your Blue Ribbon Fire Staff Ride?

**George:** Our inspiration behind the Blue Ribbon Fire Staff Ride was overarching. It's a phrase that folks in the Florida Forest Service know well: *"Train them right and don't let them forget"*. That was a challenge that was given to us by Mollie Burch, Joshua Burch's mom. Joshua and Brett Fulton lost their lives on the 2011 Blue Ribbon Fire. Mollie challenged us with that heartfelt vow—to learn from her son's line of duty death. [See adjacent sidebar.]

Our director at the time, Jim Karels, also really inspired our organization to do this staff ride. In 2013 when Jim was leading the Yarnell Hill Fire's Serious Accident Investigation Team, one of the recommendations in that report was that they would do a staff ride on this fatality fire.

Jim is one of those folks who believes that if you're going to ask somebody else to do something—in this case, a staff ride—you should also do so for your own. That's when it was decided we would do our Blue Ribbon Fire Staff Ride. Fortunately, we were given access to several staff ride SMEs (Subject Matter Experts) through the NWCG's Leadership Committee, the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center, and the National Staff Ride Development Workshop—including a whole lot of help from the fire community on how to build our staff ride. And then it just went from there.

Through our Blue Ribbon Fire Staff Ride we wanted to share our lessons learned—passing on valuable information to our current and future teammates. At the same time, we wanted to provide an emotional and healing process, honoring the ultimate sacrifice of the brothers we lost in 2011.

**Alex:** Can you talk about how your organization has changed with this new tool—the staff ride—in your toolbox. Reflecting on the potential differences in learning before and after the staff ride?

**George:** It has always been prevalent in this agency that we learn. I think it's also important to note that we have the Florida Fallen Wildland Firefighter Memorial where I'm stationed here at the Withlacoochee Training Center in



**George at the Florida Fallen Wildland Firefighter Memorial.**

Brooksville, Florida. There are 12 individuals honored on that memorial who paid the ultimate sacrifice on wildland fire in Florida. Four are cooperators and eight are our own folks from the Division of Forestry and Florida Forest Service. We've always honored all of them and tried to learn from their line of duty deaths.

We've always gone in and asked: *How can we learn? How can we pass on the knowledge when we've had these near misses—or God forbid—the fatality fires?* The development of Blue Ribbon started with an LCES working group. LCES is an amazing tool that Paul Gleason gave to us.

So really, we were doing the things that we had done when we've experienced our other unfortunate circumstances dealing with line of duty deaths in the past, prior to exploring staff rides.

But in 2011, with the Blue Ribbon fatalities of Brett and Josh we had this "new" experiential learning tool, the staff ride. We saw the opportunity to take our learning a step farther than we had in the past. And we developed this staff ride with all of our fallen in mind.

I'm a little biased, but I think staff rides might be one of—if not our best—tool for experiential learning.

The ["Living Legacy of the Blue Ribbon Fire"](#) video is dedicated to Joshua Burch and Brett Fulton, the two Florida Forest Service tractor/plow operators who lost their lives on the 2011 Blue Ribbon Fire.

An important component that I've seen with staff rides in general, but especially on Blue Ribbon, is there's a lot of healing. This staff ride has really helped give some people some closure. And I think it's helped people personally and professionally as well as helping the overall organization.

When you're facilitating during the staff ride and we're talking about things, you suddenly see folks have this special moment—especially when you do the Integration piece.

Of course, the staff ride experience is different for each person who attends. But everybody ends up getting something out of it. And the healing seems to be one of the keys.

**Alex:** From your seat, what is a “learning opportunity” and how do we get better at seeing them?

**George:** I think learning opportunities are all around us. I'll bring up Paul Gleason again. I love that [“Leaders We'd Like to Meet” interview with Paul](#) in the Wildland Fire Leadership Development program's online toolbox. He talks about mindfulness. I think this is a concept that we don't talk enough about. I think that there are always “lessons” all around us. We just have to be open and receptive to them.

I like to say that there's no “born on” date. When you hire into forestry, we might have gotten somebody that retired from the military. Or, just this last week, I had somebody sitting in this class that retired from Disney. There's a lot of lessons there. There's a lot of good things to hear—and learn.

It's all about the people, not the process. The process happens, but I think it's about the people. If we're open minded, the learning opportunities are always there. And, of course, it works both ways. Not only the new folks that have been around for a minute learning from us, but us learning from the new folks, too. I think that's super important.

Our learning—God forbid—doesn't have to come from a tragedy fire. I think having that fantastic prescribed burn that went really well, or even the things we normally do, like those RT-130 Annual Refresher Trainings and coming up with something creative and tying-in with WFSTAR or whatever. They're all learning opportunities. They're all around us.

**Alex:** How do you respond to the phrase that there's opportunity in tragedy?

I think the initial reaction by some people might be negative. Because when there's a tragedy you want to honor the fallen. I'm a member of the Florida Forest Service Honor Guard. We want to honor our fallen. Therefore, it might be difficult for some people to connect those two words “opportunity” and “tragedy” together.

As my doctor would say: It's in the delivery of what we're trying to get across.

If you look at the word “crisis” in the Chinese language, I've heard that there's two characters that are used for this term: “danger” and “opportunity”. With tragedy, there's high-risk danger, but there's also an opportunity to learn.

Unfortunately, in the last couple years, I've learned that tragedies happen to all of us, whether it's personal or whether it's professional. In 2020, over a three-month period between October and December, I lost my parents and my wife. I have been on my own mental health journey. And, honestly, it's kind of redefined “resilience” and how I perceive it.

Once these events happen to us, we need to try to learn how we can best honor those who are no longer with us—and keep trying to push forward. That's something a good friend of mine keeps telling me: *“Just push forward; always forward”*.



George, shown here, is a member of the Florida Forest Service Honor Guard.



**George confides how his dog, Dakota, has become his emotional support/therapy support teammate.**

We owe it to ourselves, and we certainly owe it to our fallen, to take that tragedy and transition into the opportunity of saying: How do we keep this from happening again? Fortunately, I'm around the families of our fallen and it's a blessing. I think they sometimes end up helping us more than we try to help them. And the biggest lesson I keep hearing from them is that same thing—don't let it be for nothing. Don't let them be forgotten. Pass it on because it's their legacy. If we can help somebody else, then they—the fallen—are still helping us.

**Alex:** Another word we grapple with in the wildland fire service, among other places, is this word "Failure". Recently, one of our staff described failure as the "seven letter F-word". What is your reaction when you hear the phrase "Embrace failure. Approach unintended outcomes with learning in mind"?

**George:** That's a tough question. When you look at it at face value, you say, okay, "Failure". The word just kind of jumps out at you. And I think that we're action oriented, if you will. We approach everything from a standpoint of wins, right? You often hear that talked about: We got to get this win. We've got to talk about this win. And when you throw "failure" in, it's almost the opposite, right?

The question becomes, how do we go about embracing that?

I recall a quote from Mark Stanford (the now retired Fire Chief of Texas A&M Forest Service) that was something to the effect of: *"My folks have a servant's heart with a bias for action"*. I think, when you look at it from that standpoint, and you wonder how you embrace failure, it's with that servant's heart. Even though we are hurting, we owe it to our fallen and their families and to our

teammates to "serve"—to continue to find a way to find the "wins" in our failures. Investing in our people, making sure we do all that we can to help even just one person, we must find a way to do that. Our bias for action in this case becomes finding a way to capture and share those lessons for the greater good.

And there's some other appropriate words. Ironically, the letters for the following words can be found in the word "Failure": "fire", "fear" and "life". I think that, unfortunately, some of the hardest lessons that you face in life, you have to learn through resilience in how we come out the other side—and what that process looks like. That's where we learn the most from "failure".

It's definitely a hard word to swallow when you hear it, because—like I previously mentioned—I think our culture is based on wins. But we need to flip that around and say, how do we find the win in the failure? How do we mitigate it? How do we best move forward from here?

**Alex:** What's the biggest, most important, perhaps most surprising, lesson you've learned on your journey in the wildland fire service?

**George:** The biggest lesson that I think I've learned, and it's been reinforced, is how you can look at the L Curriculum from L180 to L580 and it is really all about relationships. All of it. I mean, you look at communications, you look at teamwork, you look at our incident management teams, and everything really all boils down to relationships. Once again, it's the people, not the process, right? It's the people in the process. For instance, our Florida Forest Service's Basic Fire Control Training. I'm super proud of our cadre. We've been able to do four iterations of our basic training during the pandemic.

And the cadre members came up with a plan for that and implemented the training. But when we were trying to figure that out, the one thing that I knew would work, was the team. I knew the people on that team would be able to work together when faced with these new challenges.

Throughout my career, it's been reinforced over time that it is the relationships that count. Whether you're dealing with loss, whether you're pushing forward—it's the resilience, the endurance that you find through relationships.

Those special people in your lives who are more like family—the small community represented by the Florida Forest Service—those folks who rally to you.

I wouldn't say that's been a surprising lesson. But it's my biggest one. How people and relationships are tied into just about everything.

**Alex:** That's excellent. After all this time in wildland fire, you might presume you have something that jumps to the top that's associated with weather or the physics of fire or something like that. I think plenty of folks, for whatever reason, don't want to acknowledge that this is a human endeavor, first and foremost. It's about the people you do the thing with, right? The human topography.

**George:** Absolutely. What we call the "human factors", or maybe the "soft skills", the people stuff. I think that it's the soft skills that hold the hard wiring together. Like you just mentioned, Alex. You could consider weather or equipment or tactics. But, to me, it keeps coming back to the people doing it and their relationships.

**Alex:** Do you happen to have a funny lesson that's emerged in your experience over the years?

**George:** I'm a big proponent of the concept of "leaders are readers" and I always say please support your local public libraries. There's a reason for that, very near and dear to my heart. My late wife, Michelle, "Misty", was a librarian. The library system is my family. So one of the lessons that I've been laughing about lately is how people who know me know that I'm a Harry Potter super fan.

One of the lessons that came out of the book "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" is embraced in this quote from the book: "*Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light*". I think when we're going through these tragedies and difficult times, you have to find those learning opportunities. You have to find those quote/unquote, silver linings, and turn on the light—or those "wins" we discussed earlier.

And I've also adopted some new activities that are outside of my "normal" box that have helped the most. I'm now doing a lot more selfcare with yoga. I'm going road biking. And I'm taking care of plants and opening my office up and putting some plants in the office—this has also helped.

Spending time with my son, Eli, and our dog, Dakota, is also very important to me. Dakota—or "Snip Snap" as Misty nicknamed him—has become my emotional support/therapy support teammate.

I don't always have much of a beard or much hair—but, for various reasons, I do now. I find myself going to hair stylist appointments and, believe it or not, that little bit of selfcare, that little bit of an escape, has been probably the quote/unquote funniest lesson.

So just trying to find those lighter moments has been kind of an amazing thing for me. My selfcare and some knowledge in Harry Potter just might be the funniest things I've got to offer here.



George with his son, Eli, when Eli recently took the Florida Forest Service S130/S190/L180 week-long training.

Your feedback is important to us. Please share your input on this issue of *Two More Chains*:

[bit.ly/2mcfeedback](https://bit.ly/2mcfeedback)

## Three Individuals and One Group Receive the 2021 Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award

The annual [Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award](#) was created by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Leadership Committee to remember the late Paul Gleason's contributions to the wildland fire service.

### Bea Day, Incident Commander, Portland NIMO

**Award Category: Mentoring and Teamwork**

Bea is recognized for her leadership with the Incident Management Remote Response (IMRR) working group, most notably assisting the wildland fire service to navigate incident response during the pandemic response. Leading one group is hard enough, but she kept nine workgroups functioning in unison to provide coordination and consistency across incident management teams. Through her leadership and strong leader's intent, unity of effort was possible during a very active and complex fire year.



Bea receiving her award from NIMO Logistics Chief Stu Rodeffer.



Jason with Beth Martinez, Deputy Forest Supervisor, Stanislaus National Forest.

### Jason Kuiken, Forest Supervisor, Stanislaus National Forest

**Award Category: Initiative and Innovation**

Jason is commended for his involvement with the Forest Service's Coordinated Response Protocol process, the Risk Management Assistance group, the S-520 and M-582 courses, the Incident Management Remote Response (IMRR), and the Interagency Hotshot Crew National Programmatic Review. Jason's passion and energy have proven to be relentless. His leadership will influence the wildland fire service for years to come.

### Greg Smith, Superintendent, Aravaipa Veterans Interagency Hotshot Crew

**Award Category: Motivation and Vision**

Greg is recognized for the incredible sacrifice he made to voluntarily preserve the life of another member of the wildland fire family. His willingness to put another before self—donating a kidney—took great discernment, courage, and personal risk. Greg's example has motivated all of us to be better humans—to take compassion to a higher level. Greg's vow to uphold the values and principles of Duty, Respect, and Integrity are more than words; they are bold actions. His long career has shown a dedication to making teams and organizations better. Through personal sacrifice and loss, he has shown resiliency and a steadfast commitment to the greater good. That willingness to think greater than self exemplifies the tenets of a mission-driven culture and will remain an inspiration for years to come.



Greg Smith, on right, receiving his award from Tommy Hayes, Fire Management Officer, Upper Colorado River Interagency Fire Management Unit.



Grassroots Wildland Firefighters representatives (from left) Lucas Mayfield, Vice President; and Kelly Martin, President—with Maeve Juarez from the NWCG Leadership Committee.

### Grassroots Wildland Firefighters

The Grassroots Wildland Firefighters group is commended by the NWCG Leadership Committee "for its successful efforts to establish a federal fire series, implement pay improvements, and bring about OWCP reform. These efforts are a welcome relief to a weary federal wildland fire service. Their vision through the Tim Hart Act, if enacted, would dramatically impact the wildland fire service in terms of pay, recruitment/retention, and the health and mental well-being of the federal wildland firefighter."

Know any firefighters who are good mentors? Provide motivation or vision? Initiate or innovate? Now's the time for their special recognition by nominating them for the Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award! Simply fill-out this form: [LBE Award Nomination Form](#).