

Our 1st Distinguished Alumnus is John Thomas. John is a 1981 graduate of Mogadore High School. John has dedicated his life to service as a first responder and credits Mogadore for preparing him for this vocation. John noted he was a lieutenant for the Somers' Elementary School safety patrol and that got him started for a lifetime of service to others! John was a member of the wrestling team in junior high until a broken leg sidelined him. He became a manager for the high school football team and witnessed many regular season and playoff victories. John also recorded the high school basketball games during the days of video recorders! He was employed with the school district as a custodial helper starting at Somers and eventually moving to the old annex building where he was directly across the street from the Mogadore fire department. It is then he began his desire to serve others in fire service. John also attended Maplewood Career Center during his junior and senior years enrolling in the agriculture mechanic program. John began serving as a Mogadore volunteer firefighter in 1981 and served until 1984.

John moved to Hammond, Louisiana in 1984 where he eventually became fire chief in 2011 and was in charge of 5 fire stations, 65 firefighters, and a 5 million dollar budget. He was a leader of a Hazardous Material team where he assisted in training, computers and communications as well as manage the departments information technology infrastructure. John put together an emergency management plan for the entire city working with the city as well as the Federal government branch for Homeland Security.

John has written grants to FEMA to aid his fire department resulting in over \$404,000 to be used for firefighting equipment. He also wrote grants in 2002-08 to FEMA for Rural Development resulting in over \$200,000.

John continued his ongoing training through the University of Cincinnati, New Mexico Tech, and Peral River Community College. He holds many certifications including: Fire Fighter 1&2, Haz Mat operations and incident commander and technician, Emergency response to terrorism and many others.

In 2005 after Hurricane Katrina, John participated in the National review held by the National Fire Prevention association in Boston, Massachusetts of the devastating event.

John received the National Fire Mark award in 2016 from Liberty Mutual for his community service and public education and in 2018 received the Presidential Award from the Louisiana Emergency Preparedness Association.

John is now retired as chief of the Hammond Fire Department but continues to serve his community by writing grants, serving on the planning and zoning committees and serving other fire departments in the Hammond area. John is an active member of his community and is currently a candidate for a position on the town council. GOOD LUCK JOHN!

John has been married to his wife Susan for 34 years. They have 2 sons who both followed their father in fire service and he and his wife are proud grandparents of 4 grandchildren.

John was nominated by his wife Susan and the Mogadore Schools Alumni Foundation board unanimously approved his nomination.

John's compassion and his desire to serve others is that of a true "servant's heart".

Please join us in congratulating John Thomas on his outstanding service to others and for his being awarded The Mogadore Schools Alumni Foundation's Distinguished Alumni Award!