

LPVFR Profile - Donte Gash

Robert Morrish



This month's profile focuses on the third member of our four-person "class of 2012" – Donte Gash, who joined the department in November 2011 and completed the CAL FIRE Basic Fire Fighter Academy this past April. Donte has lived in the Loma Prieta area since 2002 -- "right on Highway 17, at the Summit" -- although he did spend some time away, attending boarding school in Montana.

Donte currently works as a window-screen repairman, but intends to become a fulltime paid firefighter. He is also attending Mission College in Santa Clara, working on his Associate's degree in Fire Science as well as his EMT certification.

Donte says he joined the department to give back to his community while also furthering that goal of becoming a full-time firefighter. "To me, the most important thing in life is family, and being a firefighter would allow me to save lives and keep families together -- as well as becoming part of a close-knit firefighter 'family.'"

Donte has only had the opportunity to respond to approximately ten calls so far, but he already has a favorite -- a "double-play" call, so to speak. "Recently, we went to a vehicle fire on Highway 17," he explains, "involving a 1970s VW bus that was fully engulfed. I got to support that call and scout for spot fires. The old wagon had a magnesium block, which made for a good show (when burning, magnesium reacts violently with water). From that call, I went straight to another call, a medical situation where a man had fallen off his tractor and needed to be transported to the hospital."

Aside from going on calls, Donte's favorite part of being a volunteer firefighter is, "the camaraderie I feel when we all get together and train as a team. Everything from working at our annual BBQ to simply hanging out at the station is enjoyable. We all get along great and I love the frequent humor and jokes." In fact, Donte adds, "I love practical jokes and I have been cooking up some good ones." Department members should consider themselves forewarned.

Although Donte's work, volunteer and school schedules do not leave much time for other activities, he enjoys rock climbing, backpacking, tinkering with his home-built computer, and watching movies.

Donte's desire to be a firefighter is supported by his friends and family – in particular by his girlfriend, who attends UC Davis. "She's proud of me," he says, "although she worries about my safety sometimes."

In closing, Donte has the following suggestion for Summit residents, "when you turn your clock forward for Daylight Savings time, remember to change the batteries in your smoke detectors. Seventy-three percent of smoke alarm failures occur due to missing or dead batteries."