



From the Fire Chief

Dear OCFA Family:

As Fire Chief, I have the responsibility of sharing the tragic news of a line-of-duty death with the family, sitting with and consoling them as they absorb and grieve their unimaginable loss.

And I have learned that of everything we do to honor their loved ones — from the bands we wear on our badges to the processions we orchestrate on our fireways — nothing provides them more comfort than the promise we repeatedly make in those first heart-breaking hours. We, the OCFA Family, are not just here for you in the immediate wake of your loss, we are here for you in the weeks, months, years, and even decades ahead.

We honor that promise when firefighters from Engine 30, Engine 5, Truck 49, and Battalion 6 show up for a high school graduation to stand with Captain Rob Culp's daughter at her first significant milestone without her dad.

We honor that promise when the crew of Engine 21 delivers flowers to Captain Tom Wall's daughter on every anniversary of his 1993 line of duty death.

We honor that promise when we join the family of one of our fallen for an annual fishing trip in his memory, a tradition now in its 15th year for James' Jimmy O' Owen.

We honor that promise when one of our captains and his wife accompanied Ken Caley's widow, Karla, and the Caley family to Yosemite to spread Ken's ashes.

And on June 26th, we honored that promise with our Fallen Heroes Memorial. Organized and led by Chief Sheehan, Chief Medina, and the Ceremony, Awards, and Protocol Committee, the event undoubtedly had a lasting impact on all attendees. For me, it was the affirmation of the deep ties that bind us as OCFA Family and the sense that this connection begins with — and is constantly strengthened by — our collective work to protect life and property.

Standing atop the ridge on the Rancho Fire in Laguna Beach on Monday, I was awash in the stunning excellence with which we do that work.

Yes, we were in unified command with Laguna Beach Fire Department, but let's be clear: the OCFA stamp of excellence was at every level of this firefight — from 18,000 feet where the FIRIS platform (a program we created and piloted), mapped the fire in real time, to the depths of the canyon where our boots-on-the-ground firefighters battled the blaze in treacherous terrain.

Between those layers of OCFA excellence, the hellfighters of the Quick Reaction Force (another program we spearheaded), and our OCFA aircraft repeatedly hover-filled, often from a Helipod we opened just last year, ultimately dropping more than 100,000 gallons.

Moreover, weeks before the fire even started, OCFA chief officers honed their wildfire strategies by participating in an emergency tabletop exercise based on this exact scenario in this exact region.

As a result of all this OCFA innovation, training, and execution, you could hear the community's cheers as their homes were saved. Standing atop the ridge with many of those residents, it was clear that, like me, they knew they were witnessing a special response from a special agency.

As an old wildfire guy, I follow the unwritten rule of never sharing it's your birthday with your fellow firefighters — good rarely comes from the admission. However, since I was "outed" by Chief Perkins in front of the entire Academy Cadre a few hours before the Rancho Fire started, I suppose it's safe to share that normally guarded information here.

Yes, Monday was my birthday, and while I enjoyed the good-natured ribbing and off-key singing from the Cadre, watching our personnel save lives and property that afternoon was truly the greatest gift of all.

For me, these are the incidents that strengthen our familial bonds beyond measure, and, as I shared at the memorial event, these are also the moments we breathe new life into the sacred oath our OCFA fallen heroes gave their lives to uphold.

As we approach peak fire season, let us continue to strengthen those familial ties by looking out for one another and building upon the public trust earned by those who came before us — especially those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Sincerely,

Brian Fennessy
Fire Chief

MONTHLY SPOTLIGHT - EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE

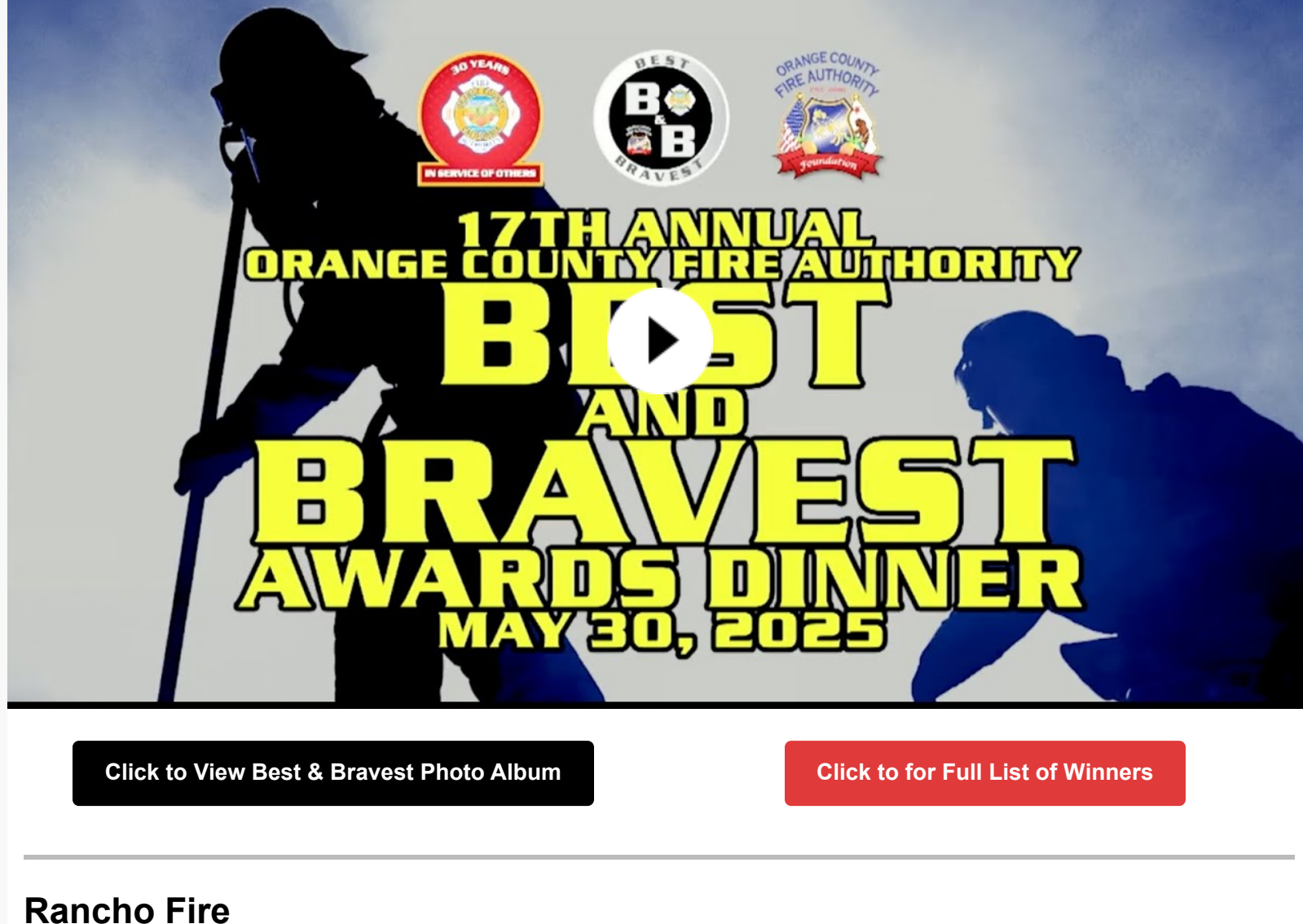
Ask the Chief - June 2025

June's Ask the Chief, which was released on YouTube on June 12th, covers a variety of topics — from the Ambulance Proposal and 5-Year Hiring Plan to our Reserve Fleet and the rebuild of Station 24. Click below for all that and more!



Best and Bravest

Thank you to everyone who joined us in person or tuned in online for the 17th Annual Best and Bravest Awards Ceremony, held on Friday, May 30. This year's honorees represent the very best of OCFA — those who consistently go above and beyond in service, leadership, innovation, and excellence. Click below to watch the full ceremony!

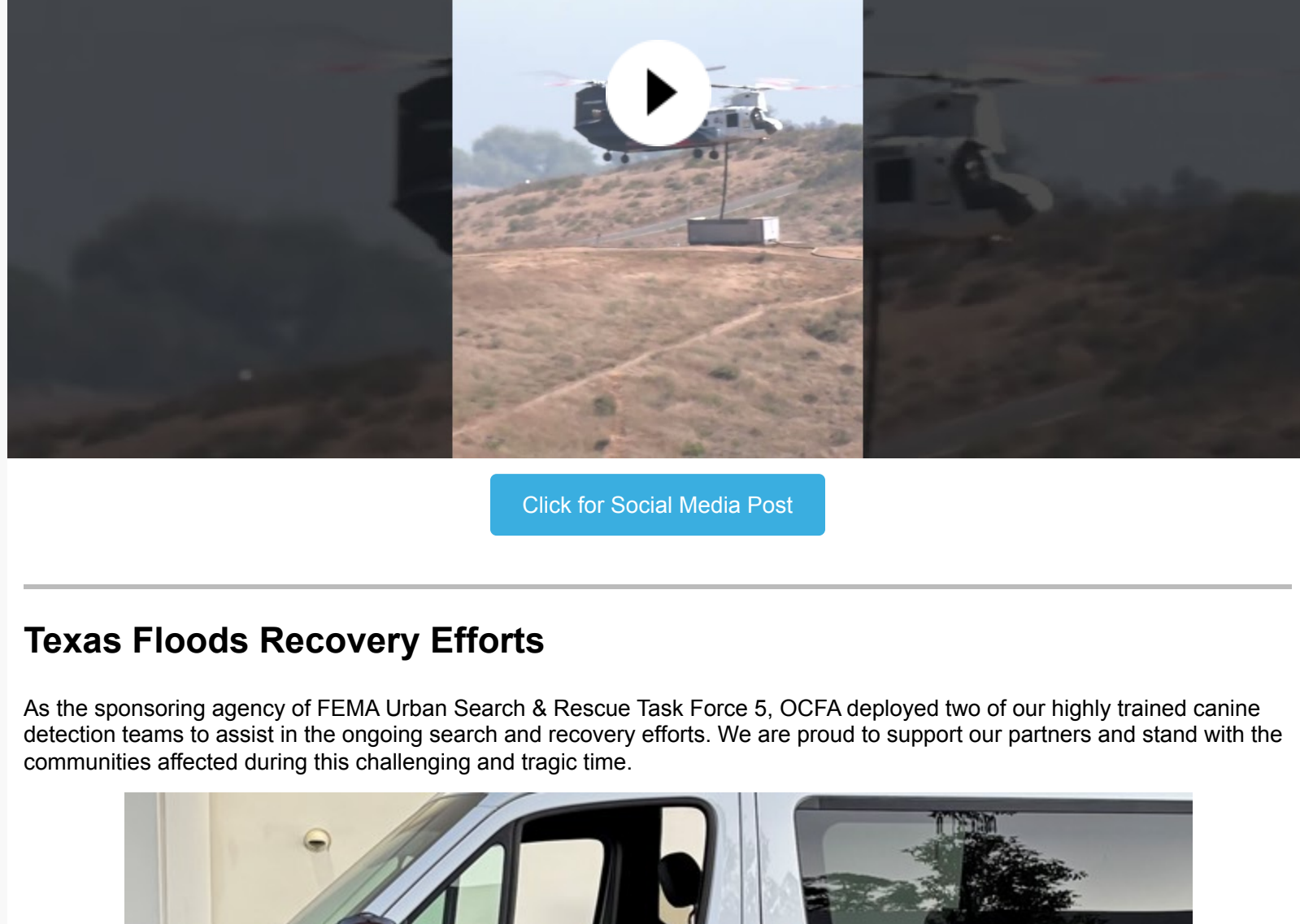


[Click to View Best & Bravest Photo Album](#)

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Rancho Fire

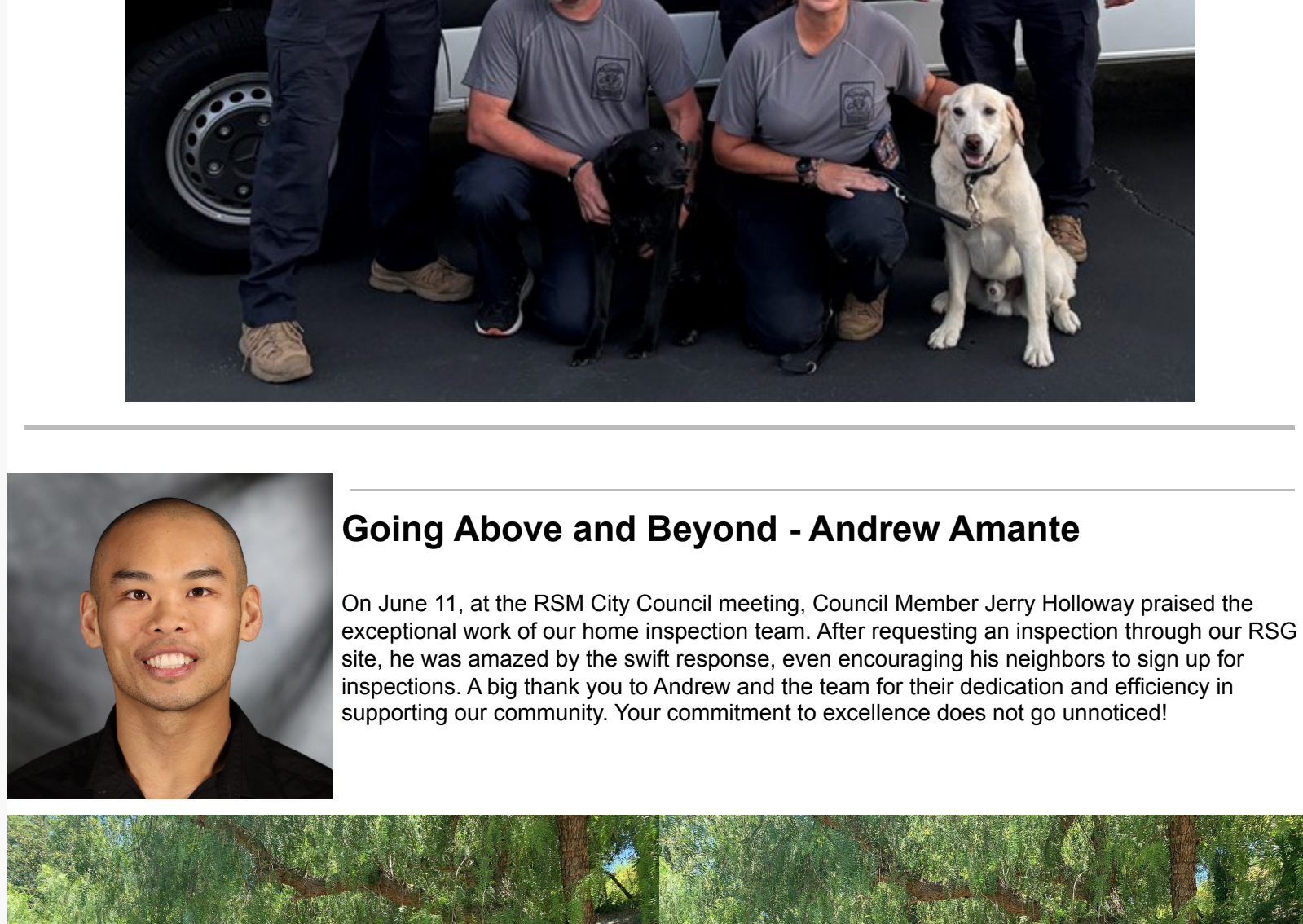
On Monday, June 7, just after 2:00 pm, Laguna Beach Fire Department (LBFD) received several 911 calls for a vegetation fire — quickly dubbed the Rancho fire — spreading uphill in Bluffton Canyon. Due to topography where the conditions were almost immediately threatened, making speed and force paramount to any hope of saving the community and preventing further spread. And that is exactly what the OCFA delivered — speed and force — in unified command with LBFD.



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Texas Floods Recovery Efforts

As the sponsoring agency of FEMA Urban Search & Rescue Task Force 5, OCFA deployed two of our highly trained canine detection teams to assist in the ongoing search and recovery efforts. We are proud to support our partners and stand with the community during this challenging and tragic time.



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