

## St. James Fire Department dedication ceremony

# Bell rings for McGuire at Station No. 2

**By Eliot Duke**  
Staff Writer

Don McGuire became a fire chief at just 22 years old, and by the time he retired to St. James more than a decade ago, there wasn't much the former New Yorker hadn't accomplished.

But McGuire managed to find something else to dive head-first into — the building of Fire Station No. 2 — and now that project will bear his name for years to come.

St. James Fire Department (SJFD) held a dedication ceremony on April 12 at Fire Station No. 2 to honor McGuire for all of his contributions to the community. SJFD Chief John Dahill and former president John Young unveiled the new "Don McGuire Bell" that has been

mounted outside of Fire Station No. 2 in honor of the man who played a huge role in getting the department's newest addition built.

"When I say Don was one of us, he spent his career in emergency management but you wouldn't know it," Dahill said. "Don realized what was important was what he did when he was here. He accomplished a lot in his life, and if he hadn't been cut short he would've accomplished even more."

"This bell will be here as long as this building is here."

McGuire passed away last September while serving as SJFD president, leaving a sudden void within the department. At the ceremony, new SJFD President Mike Kiel praised his predecessor for not only being a master on the grill, but

as someone who wanted only the very best for the community.

Anyone involved in the St. James ground covering fundraisers knows that McGuire often was the one behind the grill as organizers loaded and unloaded truck beds full of pine straw and mulch. During his speech, Kiel presented a blown up picture of McGuire cooking on the grill.

"He was our grill master," said Kiel.  
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**Photo by Eliot Duke**  
**Former SJFD President John Young rings the bell five times in honor of his friend Don McGuire following the unveiling.**





Photos by Eliot Duke

**St. James Fire Department Chief John Dahill explains how the Don McGuire Bell mounted outside Fire Station No. 2 honors the man who played a huge role in getting the department's newest addition built.**

## St. James: bell honors memory of McGuire

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"He made one heckuva hotdog."

"When I think of Don, I think of the picture of him at the (Station No. 2) groundbreaking that we have on the (department's) website," said Kiel. "He was meticulously involved in every detail and aspect of the construction of this building. He was focused on making this the best possible station for our St. James community."

Former SJFD Chief John Young worked side-by-side with McGuire on the new station project and said, at the time, nobody knew in to what they getting involved. Young, who rang the bell in honor of his friend following the dedication ceremony, said McGuire left nothing to chance - and no stoned unturned - when it came to the building's construction.

"I remember the day we decided to build this place," Young said. "We needed someone to steer it, and I asked Don to take it over. He said he would but little did he know what a major project it would be for him. Don worked so diligently to get those guys to build it - and build it the way it should be. He was a go-getter."

"Even the people who built this building enjoyed working with him. He got things done."

McGuire became the building's project manager: selecting the builder, reviewing bids and overseeing construction. Fire Station No. 2 took approximately 18 months to complete before opening in June 2019.

"This was a great loss for his friends, his family, and the brotherhood and sisterhood with this department," said Dahill of McGuire's death. "From the point we broke ground, he did everything related to this building. We have been very fortunate to have presidents who cared more about the well being of the fire department than their own egos."

McGuire's daughter, Cathy McGuire-Groft, made the trip from Delaware to attend the April 12 ceremony.

"He loved this place," McGuire-Groft said. "If he was here, the first thing we would do is thank all of the volunteers for their service. He would really focus on that, especially for the service this morning."

"This was his life. He was a very young fire chief, and his whole career was dedicated to safety and volunteering for the community."

