

# Steve Schreiber, Black River Falls F.D.



**By Jennifer Krueger**  
WFJ Staff writer

Earning the Charles B. Conway Lifetime Achievement award is Retired Chief Steve Schreiber of the Black River Falls Fire Department. Active in Fire and EMS services, and serving his local community for decades, he started in 1984 and continued until his retirement in 2020.

“A man who truly has an extensive lifetime of achievements, there is not an individual more deserving of this award. Steve’s professionalism and leadership has been extraordinary. His skill, knowledge, and dedication have positively impacted the department and community,” said Fire Chief Jody Stoker.

With an impressive list of accomplishments in both fire service and in

the local community throughout his lifetime, he has earned many awards including EMS/EMT of the Year, Life-Saving commendations, Wisconsin State Assembly Hometown Hero’s award, and many more, culminating in this prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award.

Chief Stoker went on to say, “He has given his life in others’ service, and I am honored to have worked with him for 20 plus years.

In recognizing Chief Schreiber’s decades of dedication and outstanding performance at all levels of the fire service, I can think of no one more deserving of this prestigious honor.”

A man dedicated to his work, he has gone above and beyond in many areas.

In 2011 Chief Schreiber worked with ATF Forensic teams to investigate an incendiary fire that destroyed the Rustic Mill; a historic restaurant and tavern formerly located in Black River Falls. From the outset, he set himself apart, by remaining engaged and supportive with all aspects of the criminal investigation. While it is seldom the type of work that attracts the interest of local fire chiefs, Chief Schreiber was a notable exception.

“Chief Schreiber distinguished himself from his peers in understanding that arson is not only a crime against property, but a greater assault on the community itself; adversely affecting not only the tax base, employment opportunities and business development but compromising the very quality of life experienced by local residents,” said Edward M. Clark, Forensic Auditor of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives.

“In my view, part of what made Chief Schreiber so effective throughout his career of service was his ability to understand that “fire protection” can never be just one thing. To be effective, of course, fire protection must transcend mere fire suppression and rely on teams of dedicated professionals working across disciplines and levels of government to protect communities from the devastating effects of arsons and excessive fire loss.”

Also involved in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Fire Department Advisory Council (FDAC), his leadership was essential in solving a lack of DNR staffing. With his involvement, a DNR Duty Officer and toll-free phone number used across the state was created to ensure sufficient staffing and equipment for wildland fires.

Chief Schreiber also was an ardent proponent of the Forest Fire Protection (FFP) program, which offers 50% cost share grants to purchase personal protective gear, suppression equipment and fire prevention supplies for wildland fires. This program has provided more than \$13 million dollars to support Wisconsin fire departments over his tenure with the FDAC.

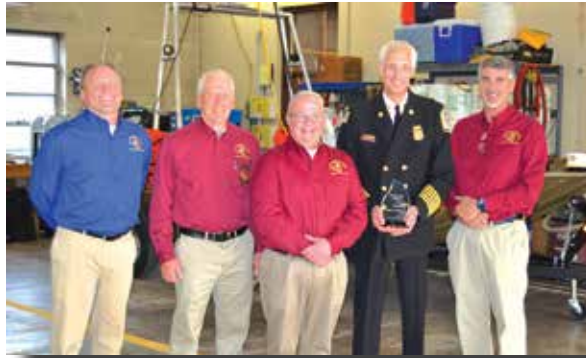
(continued on page 10 )

## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

(continued from page 8)

One of his most important leadership roles has been with the Wisconsin Local Area Support Team (LAST), in association with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. LAST supports Wisconsin Fire Departments and their families in the event of a line of duty death of a firefighter or first responder. Serving as the Team leader, he expanded the role of LAST to also include support for fire departments with any death of a member.

“I have had an affiliation with retired Chief Steve Schreiber for many, many years as a neighboring Chief, as a member of the Fire Department Advisory Committee, LAST, and as a highly regarded friend. His involvement while Chief, and his continued involvement with LAST is most honorable. As a neighboring Chief he has always been there for answers or just the sounding board that we all need,” said Chief Gerald (Jerry) Minor of the Pittsville Fire Company. “His choice



*Steve is joined by WSFA directors at his award presentation.*

for the Lifetime Achievement award would be most appropriate and deserving in my opinion”

He also continues after retirement to maintain a list of any member, active or retired to ensure their service is recognized and honored at various ceremonies including the memorial service at the Wisconsin State Firefighters Association convention every spring. He volunteers on his own time, serving as a family escort on the National Fallen Firefighter

weekend at the US Fire Administration Campus. As a family escort, he works as a guide, counselor, mentor, and compassionate assistant for the families of these fallen heroes.

“This important task has been filled by Chief Schreiber with dignity and grace to

those families who continue to lean on him for friendship and support,” said retired Christopher J. Klahn, Deputy Fire Chief with the Montello Fire Department and retired DNR Fire Management Specialist.

“His valuable contributions to the well-being of all firefighters and first responders are impressive and significant. This award is an appropriate capstone for Chief Schreiber’s career, and I can not think of a more worthy and deserving candidate.”

## FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR

(continued from page 9)

After each call he takes the opportunity to have a discussion with the crew, seeing it as an important learning opportunity.

An innovative training officer, and EMS service coordinator, Captain Witte leads the department with training and continuing education. He was sponsored by Gateway Technical College to attend the Blue Card Instructor training in Phoenix, Arizona in 2019. This training program provided the skills to improve the structure of the Incident Command System within the department.

In August 2020 Captain Witte played an important role in the civil unrest that took place in Kenosha. As

the Service Director for the Kenosha County Tactical EMS team, he worked countless hours strategically planning. He successfully coordinated a full scale TEMS operation with multiple mutual aid companies and operators, perfected procedures in the potential rescues of officers or citizens and coordinated the response to several incidents throughout the unrest. He coordinated a very large operation with multiple departments to keep a constant rotation of ambulances on standby for law enforcement officers and National Guard soldiers.

“Without his expertise during these times operations could have been much more complicated and less efficient and safe,” said Mark Ericson, Bristol Fire Department EMS Coordinator. “I could not recommend

a stronger, driven, and hard-working firefighter/paramedic for this award. I truly rely on his wisdom and expertise to assist with everyday operations.”

The recent riots taxed the team in unparalleled fashion, and Captain Witte set an example for others during the tumultuous time.

“Captain Jason Witte is a well rounded, professional, and determined Firefighter/Paramedic that comes highly recommended from the Department for this award. The Salem Lakes Fire/Rescue Department is honored to have such a hardworking and caring individual working on our team,” said Chief Slover. “Captain Witte’s leadership and inspiring attitude will continue to move the Department in a forward direction.”