

Agenda

The 2026 Twentieth Annual Austin Firefighter's Ball

“A night of elegant dining and dancing”

*Saturday February 7th, 2026
6:00pm – 1:00am
Holiday Inn Midtown
Austin, Texas*

*Mistress of Ceremonies
Quita Culpepper*

*Keynote Speaker:
Michael Lofton—Founder/CEO for the African
American Youth Harvest Foundation*

*Featuring Entertainment by:
Quan Tha DJ*

- ♦ *Presentation of Colors - Austin Fire Department Honor Guard*
- ♦ *National Anthem - Ladonna McCray*
- ♦ *Invocation - Elzie Felton*
- ♦ *President's Welcome - Cameron Anguiano*
- ♦ *Dignitaries and Firefighter Acknowledgement*
- ♦ *Fallen Firefighters Tribute/Prayer - Austin Fire Department Honor Guard*
- ♦ *Dinner (7pm-7:45pm)*
- ♦ *Scholarship Presentation - Robert McCray*
- ♦ *Key Note Speaker - Michael Lofton*
- ♦ *Awards Presentation - Retired Fire Chief Richard Davis*
- ♦ *Closing Remarks - Darren Hyson*
- ♦ *Group Photo (All active and retired Firefighters)*
- ♦ *Entertainment (9:30pm) - Dance*

Please visit our vendor and sponsor tables in the foyer area, we appreciate their support and they will appreciate yours.

Couple, and individual photos available in the foyer area.

Please leave comments on our website about your experience.

“Serving our community, Serving our Firefighters”

Ed Bridges Scholarship Award



The primary purpose of tonight's event is to support the Ed Bridges scholarship fund. A little about Ed Bridges, Ed's energy and enthusiasm has touched many lives young and old throughout the Austin Area. He worked diligently in AFD with everything from encouraging youth to participating with the AFD Explorer Post, LBJ's Fire Academy, to the coordination of the AFD Smoke Alarm and Fan Drive during Austin's hot summer just to name a few. Ed's hard work even resulted in AFD receiving UT's "Outstanding Community Partner" Award.

Firefighter Ed Bridges was one of the past Presidents for the Austin African American Firefighter Associations and was an active member for several years. AAAFFA named the association's scholarship program after him in respect to his service to the organization, AFD, and the city of Austin.

This year' we are pleased to share that we are awarding 3 scholarships. Our 2025 winners are: Drew Nickerson, Ty Wilson, and Elan Reed. You can still donate to our fund with the QR code below.

Austin African American Fire...
@AAAFFA



Scholarship Award Recipients



Drew Nickerson



Ty Wilson



Elan Reed

"Serving our community, Serving our Firefighters"

"Serving our community, Serving our Firefighters"

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Mistress of Ceremonies

Quita Culpepper, KVUE News Austin, TX



Quita Culpepper is the 6 and 10 p.m. anchor for KVUE News in Austin, and is one of the city's most celebrated and trusted TV journalists. Since moving to Austin at the age of 13, the city has become her home; sharing the stories of the community has become one of her biggest passions.

Quita began her journalism career at KAZI FM, Austin's listener-supported, community radio station. She then went to work for News radio KLBJ-AM. She joined KVUE in 1998, and during her time on the air she's been honored with numerous awards and accolades. She first landed on the Austin Chronicle's "Best of Austin" list in 1999, when she was named "Best TV Reporter." She's been on the list a dozen times since then and in 2015, Austin Way Magazine named her one of its "8 Influential Austin Women."

With more than 20 years of journalism experience, Quita has met everyone from the President of the United States to the man who works behind the counter at her favorite restaurant. She's even made a few appearances on the silver screen in the movies, "Bernie," "The Quiet," and "Booth." She has also appeared in numerous television series, including "Killer Women" and "Kevin Probably Saves the World."

When she's not behind the desk or chasing a story, Quita enjoys live music, traveling, and spending time with her family.

If you have story ideas, you can email Quita qculpepper@kvue.com

"Serving our community, Serving our Firefighters"

Keynote Speaker

Michael Lofton

Founder/CEO for the African American Youth Harvest Foundation

Michael Lofton's journey in the community service and philanthropy began in 1993 with the launch of the "Michael Lofton Talk Show," which aimed to educate disenfranchised communities and instill positive attributes like self-esteem, respect, and equality. His activism led to the creation of the African American Men and Boys Conference (AAMBC) in 2005, which served as a mentorship program for African American men. This initiative was followed by the African American Women and Girls Conference in 2007, further demonstrating Lofton's commitment to community engagement and mentorship.

In 2011, Lofton opened the African American Youth Resource Center (AAYRC), which serves as a central hub for programs such as summer camps, technology and STEM training, and overall academic enrichment. The center has been instrumental in providing support to nearly 9,000 youth and adults, addressing mental, physical, and social well-being, and promoting professional development.

Lofton's leadership has been recognized with the Distinguished Alumni Award from Austin Community College District (ACC), highlighting his transformative impact on the community and his dedication to equity and education. His work at the African American Youth Harvest Foundation and the Harvest Trauma Recovery Center exemplifies his commitment to creating a supportive environment for at-risk populations and empowering future generations.

Austin Community College District

Michael Lofton's biography is a testament to his dedication to serving and uplifting the African American community, with a focus on providing comprehensive services and support to those in need. His efforts have not only improved the lives of individuals but have also fostered a sense of community and collaboration that continues to benefit the greater Austin area.

aayhf.org

“Serving our community, Serving our Firefighters”

The Austin African-American Firefighter’s Association



A proud South Central Region chapter of the International Association of Black Professional Firefighters



Our mission

To actively participate in promoting, encouraging, advising and producing professional competent African American firefighters while ensuring equality, and promoting diversification in the fire service and the community.

Our objectives

- Work with the city of Austin's goal and efforts to have a diverse Fire Department
- Provide community mentors and role models
- Provide information and career guidance
- Aid in communicating firefighter opportunities within Austin Fire Department to the public
- Provide advice and assistance

Organizations we’ve worked with include: National Society of Black Engineers, NAACP, Black Professional Alliance, and the African American Men & Boys Harvest Foundation, to name a few.

We are a chapter of the International Association of Black Professional Firefighters.

Community involvement is very important to us. Some of the programs we have supported in the Austin community involve:

Elgin Humane Society	Assisting with voter registration
Neighborhood clean-ups	Providing School Supplies
Scholarship Programs	Community Assistance programs
School/Community mentor programs	Pass the Torch youth basketball camps and fire academies

Our membership is open to individuals of any race, gender, or nationality that agree to adhere to our bylaws and are willing to support our mission.

“Serving our community, Serving our Firefighters”



The Austin Fire Department has a rich history, dating back to our founding on September 25, 1857, by John Bremond, Sr., a prominent merchant and former New York fireman.

The past and present members of this department have given a great deal to get us to where we are today; some have made the ultimate sacrifice. To the future generations of the Austin Fire Department: we hope that you continue to perpetuate the high ideals, compassion, and selflessness of this organization. We are counting on you to protect what Mr. Bremond founded all those years ago.

The Austin Fire Department was first organized as a volunteer department on September 25, 1857 by John Bremond, Sr., a prominent merchant and former New York fireman. In 1912, the fire department purchased its first motorized fire truck, ending the era of horse-drawn fire apparatus. In May 1916, the citizens of Austin voted to create an all-paid, career fire department and on June 1, 1916, 27 firemen, including Chief Clarence Woodward, ushered in a new era of firefighting in Austin, Texas.

Our uniform personnel number just over 1,000, with our civilian staff hovering around 50. Call volume from year to year averages approximately 58,000. We are proud to announce and recognize our current, only, and first female Fire Chief Rhoda Mae Kerr.

We are proud to serve the community of Austin and remain committed to keeping our customers uppermost in mind. Our goal is to ensure we assist our fellow citizens as efficiently, effectively, and compassionately as possible.

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	<p>BEST WISHES! AUSTIN (AAFFA) 20TH ANNUAL FIREFIGHTER BALL FEBRUARY 7, 2026</p>	
		
		
		
		

SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

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Special thanks to KAZI 88.7 radio station for their support

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