



# January 2009 Newsletter

**NEXT MEETINGS** are: **February 2, 2008 @ 8:30 AM OR**  
**February 3, 2008 @ 7:00 PM**

## Mayor's State of the City Address:

At 6:00pm on Thursday February 5<sup>th</sup> the Mayor will present his "State of the City Address at the Columbia Convention Center.

This is one of the most important events any member of this association can attend. The executive board has meetings scheduled with the Mayor and councilpersons throughout the month, but it is up to the general membership to send the message that we are unhappy with the city's recent actions and are watching their every move.

Your attendance is critical to communicate to the city government that you care what you are paid, what health benefits you have available to you and whether you receive health care insurance in your retirement. PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE attend. This is not time taken away from your family, this is time spent fighting for you and your family's well-being. The city government has made it very

clear that the employees and the residents of this city are at best a secondary concern. Remind them that we should be their primary concern.

If you plan to attend please e-mail me as soon as possible at [cfdaholloway@columbiasc.net](mailto:cfdaholloway@columbiasc.net)

The association will provide pizza at the union house prior to the event to anyone who intends to attend. Please let us know as soon as possible.

## City Calls Employee Focus Group to Review New Healthcare Plan:

In December employees representing each of the city's service departments met to receive information regarding health insurance plans that the city is considering adopting.

The plans that were presented are significantly different than the plan we have now. The city states that the cost of our health care under the current system has more than doubled this year.

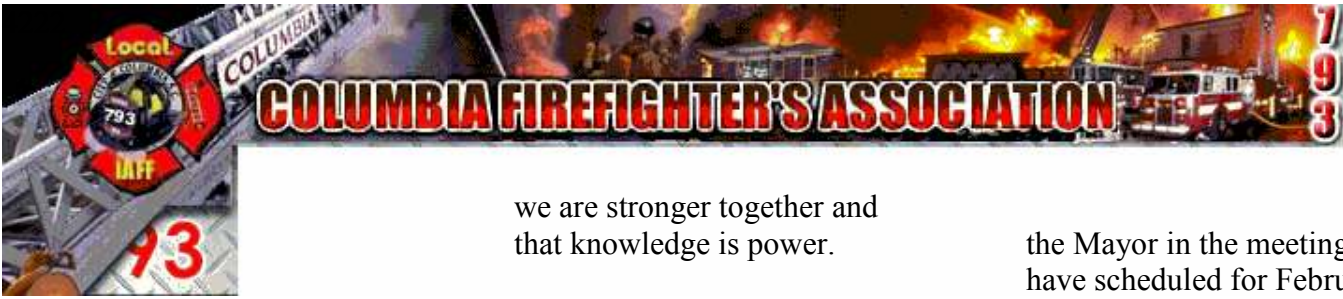
The nation's health care system is in crisis and the insurance industry is reporting record increase in costs which they are passing on to city governments, businesses and the privately insured across our nation.

The face of insurance in this country is changing and the days of PPO systems like the one we have now are in all probability numbered.

That being said the 3 proposed plans that the city has presented offer far less coverage, higher premiums for employees, and higher co-pays at point of service overall.

The purpose of the meeting was to ask the participants which of the 3 plans they would prefer the city adopt. Local 793 members Mike Cosola and Chris Kip attended the meeting representing the interest of all City of Columbia firefighters.

After listening carefully to the information being offered by the city's representatives, Mike and Chris expressed deep concern about the proposed programs and advised the city that the adoption of any one of



the three without at least some improvements was not only unacceptable to our firefighters but would likely result in the separation of a significant number of firefighters and officers from the city.

Members of Columbia Firefighters Association will be meeting with the mayor and members of city council to request additional information regarding the costs involved to the city and to suggest cost savings measures that may allow the city to increase their contribution the plan.

The executive board is working to build our own knowledge of this new direction in the health insurance industry and where possible will use this newsletter as a platform to educate our membership.

The International Association of Fire Fighters website, ([www.iaff.org](http://www.iaff.org)) is a great resource for keeping up with changes in the world that effect firefighters and specifically new health insurance terms.

Your executive board strongly urges you to check the IAFF website often and to explore the many information pages they offer to firefighters. The basic principles of this union is that

we are stronger together and that knowledge is power.

### **Under Pressure from City Manager and Consultant Group, City Council Votes to Go Forward with Proposed Insurance Plans:**

To the surprise of many at a recent City Council workshop on employee benefits, The City Council voted unanimously to allow a consultant firm hired by the City Manager to put out to bid 2 programs they created.

Under pressure from the City Manager and his consulting firm, the City Council voted to go forward with plans that they had very little knowledge of. The consultant firm hired by the city made several statements to City Council that we clearly intended to mislead council members.

In addition, the consultant submitted a summary of the one and only employee focus group that was held that did not reflect the strong objections expressed by the representatives of Columbia Firefighters Association.

The unethical practices of the consulting firm and the City Manager will be discussed with

the Mayor in the meeting we have scheduled for February 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The one council member that seemed concerned with the well being of the city's employees was councilman Cromartie. Councilman Cromartie questioned the consulting firm and the City Manager for better than 30 minutes on the consequences of the plan changes.

Councilman Cromartie was brave enough to call the act just what it is "the balancing of the city budget on the backs of its employees"

Ultimately, the council's plan appears to be to make the city's employees and its residents pay the price for the gross mismanagement of the city's finances that has occurred under the current city manager and his finance department.

The Columbia Firefighters Association's executive board is preparing for the February meeting with the mayor and intends to offer information regarding the insurance package recently adopted by Richland County as well as possible sources of funds and revenue that would allow the city to reduce or eliminate the employee contribution for health care.



## Local 793 Election Results:

Thank you to all that attended the January meetings and cast their vote in the annual election. The president proudly announces the swearing in of three new officers:

**Captain Chris Kip** is our new treasurer.

**Captain Terry Capone:** has been elected to a 3 year term as trustee

**Marquis Solomon:** has been appointed to complete the remaining year of a trustee position and will be eligible for election next January.

Each of these men take on great responsibility and a workload equivalent to another full time job. Please reach out and thank them for their willingness to serve their brothers and sisters in such a meaningful way.

## City States: “Second Installment of Fire Department Raises Secure”

The second installment of the 10% raise that the association negotiated last year is due in August 2009. We have all been concerned about the possibility

of that installment not being paid.

In these economic times nothing is certain until it is in your bank account, however, we have had the Mayor, Councilmen Rickenman, Finley and the City Manager publicly and privately state that they fully intended to fulfill their commitment of the second part of the 3 part raise.

## Local 793 Participates in Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Event:

The executive board is working hard to make meaningful ties throughout the communities that make up the City of Columbia.

We are proud to have been invited this year to participate in the events held to commemorate the life works of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The Columbia Firefighters Association was the only organization to assist the NAACP in the work to set up for the event on the rainy Sunday that preceded the event.

We were also able to send representatives to almost all of the planning meetings and the actual event on Monday.

The following members and their families represented our organization:

Charles Boone  
Devon Ellison  
Todd Scott  
Marquise Solomon  
Rahem Batts (son of Capt Capone)  
Devon Smith (nephew of Capt Capone)  
Anthony Holloway

Thank you to all for your time and effort. The NAACP expressed their sincere appreciation for our assistance in setting up for the event.

## New Members!

Local 793 welcomes our new Brothers:

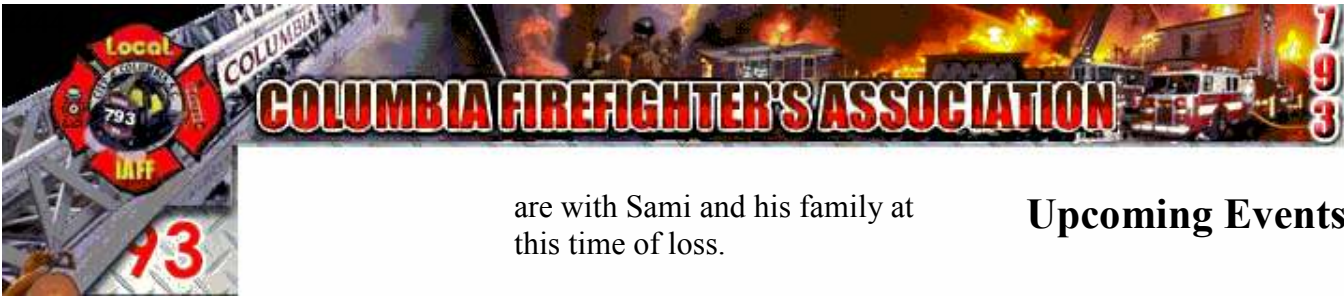
**Sami Sekou Sanders,** Hazmat 1  
1<sup>st</sup> shift

**Kenneth Lanigan,** Engine 9 3<sup>rd</sup> shift

Please shake their hands and welcome them to our organization when you see these men.

## Union Brothers that Deserve a Pat on the Back this Month:

Thank you to Jack Powers for his long and dedicated service to the association as treasurer. Jack has served in the position of treasurer since the 80's



Thank you to Steve Turner for his service to the association as trustee. We are grateful for his hard work with our retirees

Thank you to Brantley Hanna for his service as trustee. Brother Hanna stepped up at a time when not many were willing to. His service is very much appreciated

Thank you to all that attended and worked on the firefighter benefit dinner in November. Special thanks to Captain Moyo and Erik McElheny for their very hard work in making it happen.

Thank you to all that donated their holiday cards to injured engineer Willis. You truly represent the spirit of this organization.

### **Good and Welfare:**

**(If you know of a brother or sister who has experienced fortune or hardship please contact the secretary ASAP so that we do not leave anyone out)**

Captain James Martin's mother and sister were seriously injured in a motor vehicle collision. Both are recovering well. Our prayers remain with each

Sami Sekou Sanders lost his mother. Our hearts and prayers

are with Sami and his family at this time of loss.

Congratulations to Chief Alma Hill on his retirement. We thank Alma for his career of honor and dedication and wish him good health and fortune in his retirement.

### **Look for Yellow Insurance Cards to Arrive in the Mail:**

All members will be receiving a yellow life insurance card from AIL. As a member of the Columbia Fire Fighters Association we are all members of the South Carolina Professional Fire fighters Association.

As members we receive \$2,000.00 in free life insurance. This is in addition to the \$10,000.00 of life insurance we receive through Local 793.

This is a different company than the life insurance provided by Local 793 and is not related to the "blue card" we all complete for that benefit.

Please fill the card out promptly and drop it in the mail. No postage is necessary.

### **Retiree E-mail List**

Any and all retirees that have e-mail are encouraged to contact the secretary at (803) 600-0349 or at [aholloway@columbiasc.net](mailto:aholloway@columbiasc.net) To have you e-mail added to our contact list. This will greatly improve our ability to deliver important information in a timely manner.

### **Upcoming Events**

**MAYOR'S STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS:  
Thursday February 5<sup>th</sup> 2009  
6:00pm at the Columbia Convention Center**

**THE NEXT UNION MEETINGS WILL BE HELD:**

**Monday February 2 @ 8:30 AM**

**Tuesday October 3rd @ 7 PM**

**Local 793 Travel Coffee Mugs are Available:**

We have red travel mugs with the LOCAL 793 logo stenciled in gold.