

## Graduate following in his family firefighting footsteps

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Since he was about 8 and saw his dad emerge from a burning building during a training exercise, Joshua Dixon has wanted to be a professional firefighter.

Firefighting is in his genes. Not only is his dad, John Dixon, a firefighter, but his mom, Teresa, is an emergency medical technician and administrative assistant for the City of Salem Fire & Emergency Medical Services.

On April 16, Joshua Dixon officially graduated from the Roanoke Valley Fire-Emergency Medical Services Recruit School. He is assigned to A shift at Roanoke City's Station 7 on Memorial Avenue in the Grandin neighborhood. His dad

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is a Roanoke City firefighter and works part time for Salem Fire & EMS. So does Joshua.

"I wanted to be a firefighter when I was little. I think I actually knew when I saw my dad come out of the burn building when he was going through training and I saw the flames come around him," said the 22-year-old who graduated from Salem High School in 2006. He took time for an interview after coming off work Tuesday morning, and was just finishing eating breakfast with other firefighters who went through training with him.

Dixon didn't wait until he went through the fire academy to start fighting fires and helping out on rescue calls, though.

"I started off volunteer-

ing as an EMT with Salem Rescue Squad, and when I graduated with a paramedic degree from Jefferson College of Health Sciences – the same place my dad got his paramedic degree – I started working with the City of Roanoke and City of Salem fire departments part time," he explained.

His first day as a full-time firefighter was the same day he started the academy, on Jan. 4.

Dixon likes everything about his job. "There's nothing I don't like. Everything is so sporadic. I could be sitting down doing training, and the next minute I could be running a three-alarm fire or going on a medical call where everybody is looking to you for help," he explained.

The majority of his time on the job is medical, he said, "but there's a little bit of both medical and firefighting.

Dixon's friends support him in his choice of career, and at least one is planning on doing the same thing.

"Nick Love, who hung around the fire station with me and my dad, is volunteering with Roanoke County's Cave Spring Station right now until he can get on full time with the fire department," Dixon said.

Another Salem High School graduate, Adam Lester, also graduated the same day with Dixon. He is employed by the City of Salem as a firefighter-EMT Basic, Dixon said, and is

still taking at least one more class through the academy. Lester and Joselyn Meredith, who Dixon said is also taking classes, work at Salem Fire Station 1, where Dixon usually is when he's working with Salem.

Dixon said his younger sister, Jordan Dixon, is talking about getting into the medical field, as well. The 15-year-old attends Salem High School. Their grandparents are Bill and Janis Dixon of Salem.

The April 16 graduation ceremony was held at the Roanoke Civic Center. Twenty-two men and women from Roanoke County, Salem and the City of Roanoke graduated. There were two from the Salem, and nine from Roanoke County Fire & Rescue and 11 from Roanoke City Fire-EMS.

Roanoke County graduates and their station assignments were: Fort Lewis – Chance Campbell, Andrew Goodpasture; Cave Spring Station – Melissa Miller, Benjamin Martin; Hollins – Reese Baumann, Cameron Heflin; Clearbrook – Rachel Meagher, Kenneth Malloch; Back Creek – Robert Dickinson Jr.





Submitted photo

**Salem EMT Teresa Dixon, and her husband, John, a Roanoke City firefighter, with son Joshua Dixon.**