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EDITOR'S PICK

SPOTLIGHT

TOP STORY

Tubac Fire District selects Cheryl Horvath as new chief

Logan Burtch-Buus, Tucson Local Media May 11, 2018

Golder Ranch Fire District's Cheryl Horvath will soon take over for Tubac Fire District.
Courtesy

The Tubac Fire District has found its new Fire Chief, though it comes with some bittersweet “goodbyes” for Golder Ranch Fire District.

Cheryl Horvath, currently the Executive Assistant Fire Chief at Golder Ranch, accepted the Fire Chief position in Santa Cruz County after the TFD governing board unanimously moved to offer her the role on Tuesday, May 8. The district chose not to renew the contract of current Chief Kevin Keeley in January. Horvath will take over July 1.

Horvath first moved to Tucson from Illinois in 2006, and worked for Northwest Fire District until joining then-Mountain Vista Fire District in 2016. Last July, Mountain Vista consolidated with the larger Golder Ranch, and Horvath assumed her current role under Fire Chief Randy Karrer.



Less than a year removed from the consolidation, and Horvath is on to the next step in her nearly three-decade-long career as a firefighter. In Tubac, the seasoned first responder sees opportunity and a chance to develop the same sense of place in Santa Cruz County as she has around Oro Valley and the surrounding region.

“The board is looking for some changes, and I think they really want some connection with the community down there, which I love to do,” Horvath said. “I just think it’s exciting. There’s a lot of work there—and I love that

kind of challenge. I think that the potential is there, though it's going to take some heavy lifting and some time to get there—and that's appealing—because it's different than your everyday 'Let's run a fire district.'"

Speaking on TFD, Horvath said that despite its relatively small size, the district provides a wide array of services to its residents. Established in 1974, the district spans 145 square miles near the Mexico border, and includes both fire and EMS services across four fire stations.

Though she hasn't fully acquainted herself with the region, Horvath said her interactions with district employees and the governing board were positive.

TFD Board Clerk Mary Dahl said that she was "extremely impressed" by Horvath's educational background, her years of fire service and her work to develop strong relationships with the local community.

Horvath is a co-founder of Camp Fury, a program for high school-aged girls designed to introduce them to careers in public safety. She is a past president of the International Association of Women in Fire and Emergency Services and board chair for Girl Scouts of Southern Arizona. An advocate of continued learning and professional development, Horvath's education includes a bachelor's degree in program management from the University of Illinois and a master's degree in public administration from Anna Maria College.

“I think she’s going to bring a bunch of fresh ideas, a new approach to managing our fire district,” Dahl said. “I think that she’s going to bring a new energy. We’re just pleased as can be to have Cheryl coming down here.”



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While Dahl is excited to begin working with her new fire chief this summer, saying “goodbye” is bittersweet for Chief Karrer, a longtime friend of Horvath’s. The two firefighters previously worked together for NWFD, and were reunited under one district last summer.

Karrer described his (soon-to-be) former coworker as an accomplished teambuilder capable of bringing about positive change and developing strong community ties wherever she works.

“She is structured and I like that, and she is a great team builder,” Karrer said. “I think that’s one of the things that is a feather in her cap. She can take a difficult situation and break it down so that people can understand it and get on board.”

Looking back at her time with Mountain Vista, Horvath said she is proud to have “gotten a lot of important work” accomplished in her 18-month stay in the department’s top spot. She said that her time with the district showed her that if the community knows its first responders care, then difficult situations can be managed much more easily.

“We wouldn’t have been able to do what we were able to do without the support we had,” Horvath said.



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A woman with glasses and a blue denim jacket is smiling and holding a laptop, with her fist raised in a celebratory gesture. The background is a teal gradient with abstract light patterns.



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