



## Venice Fire Department honors its best

Several Venice firefighters were honored for their service to the community. From left, Firemedic Rich Lanigan, Lt. Scott Blanchard, Firemedic Justin Cammarata, Chief John Reed, Firemedic Chris Ripo and Firemedic Eric Putnal.

Five City of Venice firemedics were honored at the Jan. 8 Venice City Council meeting. Eric Putnal was awarded the 2007 Firefighter of the Year Award. Chris Ripo was presented the 2007 EMT of the Year Award, and Richard Lanigan, Justin Cammarata and Scott Blanchard received the Gold Life Saving Medal.

Putnal was selected Firefighter of the Year in recognition of his commitment, professionalism and dependability. He joined the City of Venice Fire Department March 1, 2004. He serves as an aerial operator and rescue driver.

"He is a great asset to our department and a true role model for our younger firemedics," Chief John Reed said.

Putnal is known to go above and beyond to help others, a trait that carries over from emergency response to fundraising for worthy causes. He has extensive knowledge and experience in construction and electrical wiring, an asset at many emergency incidents.

The Firefighter of the Year program recognizes a department member whose attitude, character, outstanding service and dedication to the fire service is in keeping with the highest traditions of the Venice Fire

Department.

Chris Ripo was honored as EMT of the Year due to his outstanding performance as a provider of emergency medical service. The Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) of the Year program provides special recognition for a department member whose attitude, character, outstanding service and dedication to the emergency medical division of fire service is in keeping with the highest traditions of the Venice Fire Department.

"He has great compassion for those he serves. His professionalism and knowledge serve as a model for the department." Reed said.

As an example of his dedication and training, recently he was the first to reach a cardiac arrest patient. After properly assessing the condition and determining the correct immediate response, he began to administer it and relayed important information to the arriving paramedic crew. His actions in the first minutes of his arrival on the scene made the difference in saving a life.

Lt. Scott Blanchard, and Firemedics Rich Lanigan and Justin Cammarata received the Gold Life Saving Medal at the Venice City Council meeting on Jan. 8.

The recognition was for an event that took place on a Sunday in June, 2005, when they were dispatched to a fire in a house where a 9-month-old baby and the child's 81-year-old great-grandmother were trapped.

Heavy smoke and flames poured from one side of the house. As firefighters advanced on the flames with the charged hose, Blanchard and Cammarata forced a window leading to the baby's room and began the search and rescue.

Cammarata heard the cry, located the child and handed him through the window to waiting paramedics. In the meantime, Lanigan used the thermal imaging camera to locate the elderly

woman in another smoke-filled room. He carried her to the front door and transferred her to paramedics.

Both lives were saved that day because of the trained professionalism and courage of these three men.

