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MEDIA RELEASE

VOLUNTEER COUPLE FIND LOVE ON THE COMPETITION TRACK

Fire brigade championships help volunteer firefighters to develop their skills and improve their fitness...and sometimes they help people find true love.

Chris and Grace Dent met through fire brigade competitions and volunteering with the CFA remains a big part of their lives.

Chris is now the Stanhope CFA captain and is a Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) support officer. Grace is also a volunteer member of the Stanhope brigade.

Their competition continued at the weekend at Bendigo in the VFBV state urban senior championships.

Grace started running at age 11 with Kangaroo Flat Fire Brigade's junior running team. Her father Perry Vanstekelenburgh was part of the brigade as was her brother Will.

Chris and Grace met through fire brigade running in 2009 when Chris moved from Stanhope to Kangaroo Flat to start and apprenticeship.

Chris ran one season for Kangaroo Flat, which he thinks was the sealer on their relationship!

They returned to Stanhope six years ago. Chris is now captain of the brigade, following his father Peter who spent 12 years in the role. Grace is also a member, helping out behind the scenes.

Chris was just 26 when he took on the responsibility of captaincy last year. The urban brigade responds to about 70 to 80 incidents a year, including many support calls to boost the CFA's surge capacity across the region. The brigade has about 30 members and has recently recruited several younger people.

VFBV CEO Andrew Ford said volunteers are essential to public safety and provide a professional service that is effective and affordable.

“Our dedicated volunteers are trained to national professional standards, are highly experienced and always improving what they do continuing a great Australian tradition that is justifiably valued and well respected in our communities,” Mr Ford said.

“Our volunteers provide about \$1 billion worth of service each year and contribute to the CFA’s well-established ability to mobilise huge numbers of highly trained and experienced volunteers to deal with major incidents,” he added.

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