

# NEIGHBORS

WHAT'S UP NEXT DOOR AND AROUND THE CORNER

## 'Another person in our arsenal to help'

Rabbi Greenspan named associate chaplain of OFD

By JOSEPH KELLARD

From his days living in Tennessee and Pennsylvania, Rabbi Mark Greenspan involved himself in some type of civic organization, whether it was working for a child and family service or a hospice.

Today, Greenspan, rabbi of Oceanside Jewish Center since he moved to town five years ago, is continuing his civic work for the Oceanside Fire Department as an associate chaplain, a recently-created position that he volunteered for following Sept. 11, 2001.

"I never really thought much about the fire department," Greenspan told the Herald. "But I did after 9/11. The fact that on Long Island the firefighters are volunteers is, from my perspective, really awesome, considering that they give so much of their time."

After learning about the rescue efforts at the World Trade Center of New York City fire chaplains Father Mychal Judge, the Franciscan priest killed in the terrorist attacks, Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, and the firefighters, Greenspan viewed them all as role models. So much so that they inspired him to learn more about fire departments.

At a post-9/11 Simchat Torah celebration, he approached special guest Ed Scharfberg, then chief of OFD, who was honored as a representative of firefighters.

"I approached him and asked if the department had a Jewish chaplain, which they didn't, and I said, 'I'm volunteering,'" Greenspan recalled. "Over the course of the past year, I became a fireman and now I'm also the associate chaplain."

A member of Columbia Engine Co. No. 1, Greenspan describes himself as a "non-structural" firefighter, meaning, for example, that he doesn't fight fires by entering burning homes, but instead performs simpler tasks such as connecting hoses to hydrants.

While the duties of associate chaplain are still being defined, Greenspan has already been involved with fatal car accidents and fires, giving support to the families and firefighters associated with these intense circumstances.

"Being that we have a lot of Jewish firefighters, Rabbi Greenspan is another person in our arsenal to help the members along with any problems they have," said John Traverso, chief of OFD.

Adopting the philosophy that it is important for a rabbi to be involved in both Jewish and broader organizations in his community, Greenspan serves as chairman of Oceanside's Interfaith Council, whose purpose is to foster respect between people of different faiths, races and backgrounds.

Meanwhile, Greenspan seeks to expand on his position of associate chaplain, as he plans to offer more specialized counseling for crises that may arise. Currently, he is



RABBI MARK GREENSPAN, who decided to become a firefighter after the atrocities of 9/11, was recently named Associate Chaplain of the Oceanside Fire Department.

taking a course in crisis intervention at the New York Board of Rabbis in Manhattan, and he plans to take courses on the integration of clergy and fire departments.

"At this point, I anticipate learning a lot," Greenspan said about his new position. "This is a different type of civic work than I've ever done before. I want to learn the

ropes of what is involved with being a volunteer firefighter. I think to be a good chaplain for the fire department, you have to be a part of the fire department."