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MEDIA RELEASE

JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS INSPIRE VOLUNTEERS

Eldorado Fire Brigade is already enjoying the benefits of a strong junior brigade and this year it has 16 potential firefighters in the wings.

The brigade will have 16 juniors competing in the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV)/CFA rural junior championships at Mooroopna on March 28-29, along with three teams at senior level.

The junior brigade has been a strong source of volunteer firefighter recruits over the years.

Brigade captain Brian Bowman said the junior competition gave young people a taste of volunteering.

“It’s good for a small town because they get a taste of firefighting skills and then hopefully when they are old enough, they can move on and become actual firefighters for the brigade,” Captain Bowman said.

“It helps to promote the volunteer side of things.”

The junior system has worked well for Eldorado and other local brigades.

“We’ve had a number of juniors go on to become firefighters; you’ve got to keep encouraging young people and this is a good way to spark their interest.”

The head coach of the junior team is Captain Bowman’s son Matthew. “He started as an 11-year-old when we set up the team and he’s now junior head coach and an active firefighter,” he said.

Smaller brigades in the region also benefit. “We canvas neighbouring brigades for juniors to run with our team and then they go back to their own brigades and when they turn 16, they become firefighters,” Captain Bowman said.

The junior team will take part in three regional competitions in the lead-up to state championships at Mooroopna on March 28-29.

The team also organised a training session at Milawa Primary School to hopefully inspire the next generation of competitors.

For the first time, VFBV and CFA are running a combined championship event, bringing together rural senior and junior championships and urban seniors. The rural and urban championship events will run separately on their own competition tracks, but alongside each other.

VFBV CEO Adam Barnett said the championships were much more than just a competition.

“The championships develop practical and leadership skills and promote teamwork, while showcasing the skills and commitment of our volunteers,” Mr Barnett said.

Mr Barnett said the junior competition gave young people a grounding in volunteerism, public service and being part of an emergency services team.

“They give young people a taste of what it’s like to be a volunteer firefighter and hopefully as soon as they old enough they will go on to finish their training and become fully qualified volunteer firefighters,” Mr Barnett said.

Competition events replicate firefighting skills and showcase the important role of CFA volunteers.

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