

WASHINGTON (February 7) – Congressman Spencer Bachus (AL-6) spoke at the annual Fire Department Banquet for the Brierfield and Dry Valley Volunteer Fire Departments on Saturday, February 5.

The banquet was held at Anna Irving Hall at the University of Montevallo.

*The following article on the banquet was published by the Shelby County Reporter on Monday, February 7.*

### **Fire banquet honors local heroes**

**By CHRISTINE BOATWRIGHT / Staff Writer**

**MONTEVALLO** – The University of Montevallo’s Anna Irvin Hall was full of men and women who serve their communities as volunteer firefighters on the evening of Feb. 4.

The annual Brierfield and Dry Valley Combined Annual Recognition Banquet held a host of familiar faces as U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus, state Sen. Cam Ward, R-Alabaster, and state Rep. April Weaver, R-Brierfield, offered encouragement to the hometown heroes.

“You guys are truly neighbors helping neighbors,” Weaver said. “All the stories I’ve heard of things you guys do as first responders are truly, truly amazing.”

Ward said the awards night was well worth the effort, as all of the firefighters are “heroes.”

Bachus recognized the fire fighters’ families.

“I appreciate the families,” he said. “You sacrifice too and support your husband for what he does. When he goes out in that fire, he may not worry about his life, but you are.”

UM President John W. Stewart III said as the firefighters are in the business of changing and saving lives, the university holds a similar mission in changing lives.

Keynote speaker Allan Rice, executive director of the Alabama Fire College, spoke of his experiences with the April tornadoes.

“I have lived for 23 years in public safety in a little bubble,” Rice said. “We’d be there, but it would never get too close to me.”

“We’re ready to do whatever it takes for someone else. We’re ready to respond into these situations, but what about when we’re in them?”

Brierfield Fire Chief Spruce McRee said the fire fighters are in a “most honorable profession.”

“Tonight is a night we get to say thank you for what you do for your communities,” he said. “You’re all heroes, not necessarily for what you have done, but for what you will do.”

McRee recognized the following with awards from Brierfield Fire and Rescue: Bill Brown, Firefighter of the Year; Joe Owings, EMT of the Year; Stephanie Smitherman, Auxiliary Member of the Year; Tommie Carlee, Firefighter Rookie of the Year; Craig Bice, Jim Seaman Chief’s Award; Randy Smitherman, Best Drill and Training Attendance; Kenneth Harbison, Best Fire Call Attendance; and EJ Chandler, Best EMS Call Attendance.

Dry Valley Fire Chief Kevin Lucas recognized the following members of the fire department with awards: Board Member of the year – Charlie Goggins, Board Member of the Year; Barbie

Johnstone, First Responder of the Year; Greg Cooner, Officer of the Year; Cory Alexander, EMT of the Year; Tammy Wilson, Firefighter of the Year; and Jake Barefiled, Chief's Award. The Dry Valley Fire Department also gave an appreciate award to Tim Lohan of New Hope, Penn.