



CITY OF GERMANTOWN

# Nomination Form

Date: November 1, 2010

Employee's Name: Howard Thompson

Department: Fire

Nominator's Name: Dennis Wolf

*Describe how the nominee demonstrates the core values of service excellence, producing A+ results, initiative, responsibility, innovation and teamwork. Please attach this form to your statement which should include detailed examples and be no longer than 2 pages in length. Forms will be accepted by Michele Betty, Executive Secretary.*

### SPIRIT AWARD – RATING

*This section to be completed by Spirit Committee Members Only*

Evaluators: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- |                         |             |       |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------|
| 1. SERVICE EXCELLENCE   | Score #1    | _____ |
| 2. PRODUCE "A+" Results | Score #2    | _____ |
| 3. INITIATIVE           | Score #3    | _____ |
| 4. RESPONSIBLE          | Score #4    | _____ |
| 5. INNOVATIVE           | Score #5    | _____ |
| 6. TEAMWORK             | Score #6    | _____ |
|                         | Total Score | _____ |

Howard Thompson has been serving the community as a member of the Germantown Fire Department for over 37 years. He joined the fire department as a volunteer on September 15, 1973 as one of *Filthy Phil's Fearless Fire Fighting Fanatics* and was hired full-time on March 15, 1977, the day the Germantown Fire Department began staffing the fire stations with paid fire fighters on a 24-hour basis. His contributions to the development of the department into the well trained and professional organization it is today are many and cannot be overstated. He has contributed to the development of numerous training programs, oversaw the instruction of hundreds of people in basic firemanship, taught many people how to pump a fire engine, including this nominator, fought hundreds of fires and made thousands of medical calls.

Preferring to go by the name of Jelly (by which he is known across the state and elsewhere), he works diligently to satisfy the needs of our residents. On fire and EMS calls he is empathetic and always supportive in helping the resident return to a state of normalcy. For example, when the house is on fire it is not possible for a homeowner to enter the structure, but Jelly has gone into the home and retrieved important documents and other items that helps the homeowner begin the recovery process. He always demonstrates a caring attitude and is respectful and courteous. I have heard him answer phone calls for service requests outside of Germantown (we get a lot of calls where people call directory assistance and ask for the fire department and directory assistance connects them to us), and instead of telling them "you've got the wrong department," he will answer their question or look up the correct phone number.

Jelly serves on several committees and also serves as a technical advisor to other departments. For example, his knowledge about two-way radio systems has helped fire, police, and public services specify and maintain their radio systems. He is serving on the radio system committee that developed the RFP to select a consultant to take a comprehensive look at the radio system needs of the entire city, and will be one of the evaluators when the RFPs are received. He works with Vehicle Maintenance on technical issues on the complex electronic and mechanical systems on fire engines. His knowledge and expertise on air packs was instrumental in the recent purchase of new self-contained breathing apparatus. He is adroit at using city resources efficiently and effectively and at saving money whenever possible. For example, the fire department uses thermal imaging cameras that cost \$10,000.00 each. In October, one camera quit working. It was out of warranty and the repair quote was \$3,000.00. Jelly took the camera apart, found and fixed the problem, and the camera works. This one initiative saved the city \$3,000.00. A second camera, also out of warranty, had a broken lens. He contacted the manufacturer and convinced them to ship a replacement lens to the city at no charge, thus saving several hundred dollars. Because he reuses items on the department, like tools, equipment, and fire hose, I think he is one of the people that invented recycling! His frugality at getting every last use possible out of something helps the city be economically sustainable.

Jelly is very proactive in doing his job. As the technical services/safety officer he is responsible for many projects where he supervises and directs his own work. Examples include the fire department radio system, the emergency outdoor siren warning system, and the repair and maintenance of specialized tools and equipment, which includes everything from nozzles to the breathing air compressors we use to fill SCBA tanks. He is proactive in preventative maintenance and anticipating equipment failures. He is prompt in repair and takes a direct approach to solving problems. He is innovative (see above about the repair and cost-savings on

the thermal imaging camera) and not afraid to make suggestions and recommendations for new approaches on how to do something. Jelly is a self-starter and does not look for compliments: He is the type of person who would see a broken swing, recognize that there was a better way to hang the swing so it wouldn't break again, fix the swing, and never mention what he had done. As an example, a lady came by Station 3 to pick up a vial of life. She mentioned that she had burned the bacon she was cooking for breakfast and that her smoke detector did not go off. Upon hearing this, he went to her home and checked her smoke detectors, replaced dead batteries in three detectors, and replaced one detector that would not function. I never would have known about this had the lady not called the mayor's office to say how much she appreciated the fire department's service, and how courteous he was.

In testimony to his willingness to say yes whenever possible, to be better prepared to help others, to help him make sound decisions, and in taking responsibility for his personal development, he possess many qualifications and certifications, and continues to pursue educational experiences. He is a certified Fire Fighter, Fire Driver, and Fire Instructor through the State of Tennessee. He has two Associate's Degrees, one in General Technology and one in Fire Science, and is enrolled in a Bachelor's Degree program at Columbia Southern University. He is a hazardous materials technician, is certified in rope rescue, confined space rescue, urban search and rescue, water/swift water rescue, and, for flexibility, he is a certified industrial truck operator. He is a COML (Communications Unit Leader) with Tennessee Task Force One and a COML instructor in the FEMA USAR system. In all of these endeavors, he does his job with integrity and treats everybody fairly.

Another example of innovation was his idea to become a licensed fire extinguisher specialist. Under state law, fire extinguishers must be tested and maintained by a technician licensed by the state. The fire department uses portable fire extinguishers frequently, and sending them out to be serviced and refilled was costly. Jelly passed the state exam and received a license that allows him to maintain the portable fire extinguishers used by the fire department. This saves money, as the city purchases the refill material directly, and reduces the turnaround time to get an empty extinguisher back in service. He is also able to tell when an innovative idea is not cost effective. The department explored the option of hydrostatically testing compressed gas cylinders, and Jelly acquired used equipment at no cost, but the cost to maintain the license and equipment precluded any cost savings, so he recommended canceling the in-house program.

Jelly constantly exhibits teamwork on the fire ground, in fire prevention, or in working with other departments. He is the technical wizard behind the department's LAFS clown program, providing the sound system and special effects for their performances. He is also Sparky the Fire Dog in public education programs. He readily assists other departments, such as police, building maintenance, and vehicle maintenance, on special projects.

Jelly has been honored outside the fire department as the Germantown Kiwanis Fire Fighter of the Year in 1984 and the Memphis Claims Association Fire Fighter of the Year in 1994. I have said that if I had a cloning machine Jelly would be one employee that I would definitely want to clone for his daily practice of the SPIRIT of Germantown.