How Brockport Fire District went from 17 to 44 interior firefighters in 3 years

Declan Stablow News10NBC Updated: September 20, 2026 - 7:05 PM

BROCKPORT, N.Y. — Fire departments across the country are dealing with lower volunteer numbers, but the Brockport Volunteer Fire District says it's seeing the exact opposite.

The Brockport Fire District was dealing with staffing issues up until about three years ago. Then it began turning things around, going from 17 interior firefighters in 2023 to 44 now.

One of the reasons for the gain is a state-funded bunkhouse. College students interested in a career in firefighting can apply to live in the bunkhouse in exchange for 20 hours of duty time each week.

The bunk-in program began during the 2025-26 school year. There's one student living in the bunkhouse right now, and the district received another two applicants in the last month.

The district also began a social media campaign to recruit younger members back in 2024. Brockport Fire Chief Adam Leggett says the average age of firefighters in New York is 50, but at Brockport it's 36.

News10NBC's Declan Stablow spoke with Tyler Lamendola, who is getting his master's degree at SUNY Brockport while living at the bunkhouse.

"I want to eventually go career in. This really helps with that because I'm seeing so many different places and how other departments run so this really helps me and even with like college and stuff like that that helps me get through college with not having to pay rent or something like that. It's just a great program all around," Lamendola said.

BFD also has a restricted access member program, which allows kids ages 16-17 to get experience with the department. Back in 2023, Brockport Fire District had four firefighters responding per call, but this month it's more than nine.

BFD has also been advising other districts about how they can boost their numbers. Next Saturday, the Brockport Fire District is hosting its first annual Fire Fest as part of its community outreach.

It'll highlight the work it does and give people of all ages a chance to learn about becoming a firefighter.