

# CBS Firefighter was a 'superstar rockstar'

Krista Parsons-Butler chokes back tears as she speaks about her colleague and good friend Debbie Rideout.

About 15 women who took part in this year's Camp GLOW at the Offshore Safety and Survival Center on Foxtrap Access Road were riveted in their seats by Parsons-Butler during a graduation ceremony as she explained the 'how and why' they're able to take part in the camp that began with a simple idea approximately nine years ago. Debbie Rideout was one of the very first firefighters in Newfoundland and Labrador. "She was an incredible firefighter," says Parsons-Butler, "She was an incredible person, and she is the reason today, why, I'm a firefighter. She's also the reason why we're all here today."

The group of

women, donning bright orange t-shirts, sat in the front rows of a classroom at the Marine Institute. The words 'Fire Camp' are written in white with smaller letters underneath that read 'Group Learning for Outgoing Women'. On a big screen in front of them is a picture of CBS Firefighter Debbie Rideout wearing her firefighting attire. She's smiling softly back at them. Debbie's parent's Mr & Mrs David Rideout sit in the front row with the other dignitaries including Fire Commissioner Fred Hollet and MHA Dianne Whalen.

Parsons-Butler says she and Rideout often talked about starting something to get more women into firefighting. One day after their chat, the Executive Director of the Marine Institute came to the OSSC and spoke

about his vision of the Institute in 2020 and asked staff for ideas. "A lightbulb went off in my head and I said 'Debbie, Debbie - we need to write that proposal!' So away we went and we wrote the proposal. We had about a hundred different names for the camp. We, Debbie and I, came up with "Camp GLOW" Group Learning for Outgoing Women, and we presented it to the MI and then it went to WRDC (Women in Resource Development Committee). Debbie was part of this right from the start. She and I used to talk about what we had hoped this would become." Parsons says of this being the fifth year of the program, "This is what we hoped it would become, a camp to empower women. We hoped to make them feel like they could do anything. Whatever they dreamed to do. That's really what we hoped to do."

The very first Camp GLOW was held in July of 2005 as a pilot project. "Debbie at that time, summer 2005, was quite ill and unfortunately even though we had hoped for her to come, she never ever got to come to the camp. It was too bad because it would have brought it all together for her to see where it all went. That being said, I am confident that she knows how successful this has been," Rideout passed away October 31, 2005 at age 35. Parsons decided she was going to keep Rideout's memory alive by honouring one of the graduates of the program with a memorial award in her name. "We call it Superstar Rockstar because it's the nickname that I called Debbie. I used to say, (to Debbie) 'you're a superstar rockstar' you can do anything." Parson's said her friend faced a lot of challenges being one of the only women in the fire department and persevered despite those obstacles.

Each year the 'Debbie Rideout 'Superstar Rockstar Memorial Award' is given to the Camp GLOW graduate that displays the same style of determination and attitude as Parson's friend. This year, Susan Mason was given the honour and chosen as the most enthusiastic participant who best exemplified the qualities of a firefighter. Choking back tears of her own as she accepted the award from Debbie Rideout's parents Mason said, "This really really means a lot to me."

Parsons said choosing one person was extremely difficult as all the girls outfitted in their firefighting gear remind her of her late friend.

"I'm proud that you even considered Camp GLOW," says Parsons, "and I hope that it brings you further than you ever thought it would - for Debbie."



**CAMP GLOW VISIT CBS FIRE DEPARTMENT-----** From August 10-14, a group of women from all over Newfoundland took part in 'an amazing firefighting camp for women' this week at the Offshore Training and Survival Centre in Foxtrap. The free program designed to offer women an opportunity to experience a non-traditional career in firefighting. It's offered in partnership with Women in Resource Development Committee (WRDC) and the Marine Institute of Memorial University. In the photo; Left to right bottom row; Glenn Blackwood - Executive Director Marine Institute, Chief Richard Murphy, - CBS Fire Department, Brenda Seymore, Jane Colbourne, Krista Parsons Butler - Camp GLOW Leader, Nicole Peddigrew, Jennifer Riggs. Top Row left to right (on and in the truck); TA Loeffler, Brandy Ralph, Susan Mason, Jessica Waddleton, Sherry Butler, Allison Samson, Jackie Frampton, Debbie Hussey (sitting on top).