

THIS CAPTAIN AIMS HIGH FOR HIGHLAND BEACH

By John Shoemaker

In a continuing effort to recognize those military Veterans who live in Highland Beach or serve our community, we share a short story of each and post it on our town website: www.highlandbeach.us and specifically [Veteran Heroes of Highland Beach | Highland Beach, FL](#)

Please visit this tab to read stories and profiles of our citizens who have served or are serving our country and our town. Prepare to be amazed by the incredible stories of our Veterans. Whether their enlistments were dramatic or routine, their contributions came with sacrifice and hard work to maintain the security and safety of our nation.

Without exception, they all served with the utmost honor and dedication, for which we are deeply grateful.



Let me introduce you to Captain Michael Benoit, a member of our own Fire Department. His story started when he was born in Cocoa Beach, FL. After graduating from Cocoa Beach High School, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps, going to Parris Island, S.C., and Camp Lejeune. After an uneventful enlistment and an honorable discharge, he decided to enroll in the EMT Program at Brevard Community College, now known as Eastern Florida State College (EFSC), in Cocoa, FL. It offers an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Applied Technology Diploma (ATD) through its Public Safety Institute. This marked the beginning of Mike's career in emergency medical services, with the primary prerequisite for Paramedic training and certification.

After getting his EMT certification, he signed up for Firefighter minimum standards Training School at Daytona Beach State College's training facility. The mission of the school is to provide our emergency personnel with current, high-quality training and education that enables them to perform their duties safely and effectively.

Next, Captain Benoit began his career working for Jacksonville Fire Rescue where he held an assignment on their Special Operations Team. Captain Benoit decided he would further his training and education, so he enrolled in paramedic school at Florida Medical Training Institute in Jacksonville.

To clarify, an EMT provides basic life support (BLS), while a Paramedic provides advanced life support (ALS) with significantly more education, training, and scope of practice. The primary difference lies in their training, capabilities, and procedures. Paramedics must first become EMTs and complete additional, rigorous training, which enables them to administer medications, perform invasive procedures such as intubation and IVs, interpret EKGs, and manage critical emergencies.

Now a certified Paramedic, he moved to Indian River Shores Public Safety Department and took on the role of Firefighter, Paramedic, and Law enforcement officer. Captain Benoit spent time as a SWAT medic, training instructor, and was a company officer during his time at IRSPSD.



Continuing his skills improvement process, he holds a bachelor's degree, and is currently pursuing his master's degree in public administration from Columbia Southern University in Orange Beach, AL, with graduation scheduled for November 2025. Today, Mike is enrolled in the prestigious "Executive Fire Officer Program", a two-year program at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, MD.

Not long ago, he noticed a new job listing for a fire department being created in an obscure town called Highland Beach. They needed to bring in experienced Captains that could hit the ground running. The opportunity was attractive, especially since it is rare for a brand-new Fire/EMS operation to be established in Florida. Additionally, career promotions for firefighting crews are typically from within the organization.



After his hiring by Chief Glenn Joseph, Mike and his family moved to Wellington in 2024. His wife, Amanda, is now an elementary school teacher at the Saddleview Elementary School in Wellington. They have three children: Mikayla is attending FAU, Michael II is enlisting in the Air Force, and Charlie is in middle school.

As a fire captain, Mike is responsible for a 7-person shift, comprising of one Captain, two drivers and four Firefighters/Medics. He loved the idea of coming to a brand-new station and building a team and culture where he could mentor his team members and focus on skills training and improvement.

Regarding his experience in Highland Beach, his face lit up with fond expressions as he described how the residents are so welcoming, often beeping their horns and waving as they pass by the station. Residents are given tours of the station and trucks. Visitors stop by from all

areas of the U.S. and even the World. Most recently, firefighters from Brazil visited our station to see how things are done.

With all that Captain Benoit has done, I asked what else he has planned. He said he was considering advancing his education, possibly even entering a Doctorate program in business.

Our fire department, led by Chief Glenn Joseph and his two deputies, Tom McCarthy and Matt Welhaf, has created an incredibly skilled, professional, and experienced crew to ensure our security and safety twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. All firefighters are also certified Paramedics.

As a result, Highland Beach is high on its newly created town assets outfitted with a new station, new equipment, vehicles, and team members that have tremendous value for all our residents.

