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Romeoville Fire Academy Lands a Starring Role

On an overcast day in mid-October, you may have seen someone rappelling down one of Romeoville's water towers. That someone was producer Dean Bushala, who was putting his Romeoville Fire Academy training to work. Dean did the water tower decent four times that day, each one being caught on camera. He's making an independent documentary and the fire academy has played a big part in it.

Dean Bushala has been in television for twenty years. The Chicagoland native was the director of photography on *Ice Road Truckers*, worked on *Deadliest Catch*, and has spent the last five or six years with National Geographic. "In this project, I'm learning different skills," he said. "I'm trying to get a better understanding of how firefighters do what they do. I was here in Romeoville for a week to do some work with the recruits and do some rappelling on the training tower." Dean was part of a project years ago with PBS and worked with the Downers Grove Fire Academy. He kept in touch with those firefighters, many of which are now instructors at the Romeoville Fire Academy. "Honestly, you'll never find better people. The Romeoville Fire Academy was the first place and the only place we wanted to go and we were lucky enough to get in."



Even during the interview, Dean was learning. In between questions, academy instructor Fabio Puccini was showing him how to tie a knot that is used to climb rope. It wasn't just a show for the camera either. In fact, the cameras were being broken down as this was happening. This was genuine interest.

Steve Carlsen, the academy instructor who was stationed at the top of the water tower, emerged from the tower base to start packing away the repelling gear. He stopped over for a few quick photos with Dean and, if their interaction during the shoot was any indication, this project has been an enjoyable experience on both sides. Fire Chief Kent Adams certainly likes what he has seen. “The project brings some notoriety to what we’re doing at the academy. We’re well known in the fire service for what we do, but this will give the department some recognition outside of the fire service too.” Chief Adams credits the quality of the academy with bringing this unique opportunity to Romeoville. “Having the academy has opened some doors that are traditionally not opened to smaller departments.”

“We’ll be back. We’re going to do more before we do the final act of the film,” reveals Dean. “That will probably be in March. It’s an ongoing piece.” The project is aiming for a late summer 2018 release.