



Firefighters, doctors get kudos for saving captain

by *Michael Ferraresi* - Oct. 7, 2008 12:00 AM
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A Phoenix fire captain whose crew helped rescue him from cardiac arrest spoke Monday about the firefighters, paramedics and doctors credited with saving his life.

John Vardian, a 28-year veteran and ladder captain at Station 26 in Maryvale, said he hopes to return to duty early next year after recovering from a heart attack that left him in a coma for eight days.

Phoenix Fire first-responders and Maryvale Hospital doctors credited with saving Vardian's life were honored Monday in a ceremony at Station 26 near 35th Avenue and Rose Lane.

Vardian suffered the heart attack Aug. 4 as he and his crew ascended a 28-foot extension ladder to perform vertical ventilation on the roof of an apartment complex in Glendale that was on fire.

Vardian felt sick and ordered his crew off the roof. When he got to the ground, his crew noticed the chest pain was severe.

"It's a testament to them," said Vardian, referring to crews from Engines 26 and 930 that performed CPR at the scene.

"Most guys might say, 'Rub some dirt on it and

you'll be OK,' " he said.

Vardian, 47, said doctors told him he should have died. The father of three said he disagreed.

"That's not the way I want to go out," he said. "I want to go out on my own terms."

Kent Ofstie, a Phoenix Fire battalion chief who coordinated the scene, said he handed off the fire cleanup to Glendale Fire so he and others could rush Vardian from the fire at 43rd Avenue and Glendale Road to a hospital.

"Luckily, it happened after John got off the roof," Ofstie said.

"It's definitely an eye-opening experience seeing one of your own down and practically near death," he said.

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