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WELLESLEY

From biology major to deputy fire chief

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By Matt Rocheleau, Globe Correspondent

A biology major in college, Jeffrey Peterson was inspired by his father-in-law to become a firefighter. Now, he has been named Wellesley's new deputy fire chief.

Peterson, who has spent 18 of his 24 years with the fire department as a shift captain, was appointed to his new post June 29 by a unanimous vote of the Board of Selectmen.

"You're always looking to be able to move up and take on new challenges," said the 54-year-old Wellesley resident. "I'm definitely excited."

After graduating from Framingham State College with a bachelor's in biology, becoming a firefighter was not something Peterson had necessarily envisioned.

He put his interest in science to work when he started a job in Braintree at Haemonetics Corp., which markets automated blood processing systems.

But seven years later, Peterson's career path changed under the influence of his retired father-in-law, Thomas Kelly, a life-long Wellesley resident who served on the town's fire department for 31 years. Kelly has since passed away.

"We would sit and talk, and he would tell me about the runs he would go on and the people he encountered on the job and it interested me," Peterson said.

In 1985, three years after Kelly's retirement, Peterson passed the exam to become a firefighter and joined the town's fire department

"I'm glad I did that kind of work," said Peterson referring to his time at Haemonetics. "It was fun, but I'm very happy with the job I have now."

As deputy chief, his role will involve more administrative duties and less time in the field than his work as a captain. The new position will also allow for a more conventional work schedule, though he will remain on call 24/7.

Peterson replaces former deputy chief Richard DeLorie who took over as chief in February after former chief Kevin Rooney retired. Both DeLorie and Rooney had worked at their previous posts since 2001.

Peterson's son-in-law Matt Corda, 29, is also a member of Wellesley's Fire Department. Corda is married to Peterson's daughter, Kelly Corda, 27.

Peterson was born in New Jersey and moved to Wellesley to be with his wife and lifelong town resident, Doreen. The couple married in 1978, and they also have a 23-year-old son, Jeffrey Jr.

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