



Janie Johnson in a rescue vehicle

Staff photo by Randy Davey

For Onslow's top rescuer, the workday is never done

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WEST ONSLOW BEACH — The workday for Janie Johnson is never over.

Just when everything has settled down and dinner is on the table, her pager sounds and she's off to another life-saving mission in West Onslow Beach.

As if being a wife and mother of two weren't enough, Mrs. Johnson, 56, also serves as the chief firefighter and paramedic for the West Onslow Beach Volunteer Fire and Rescue Squad.

For Mrs. Johnson, being a responsible citizen means "protecting the community in which one resides." She considers her job on the rescue squad both protective to herself and her community.

It is because of such an attitude that Mrs. Johnson was recently chosen as rescue squad member of the year by the Onslow County Association of Rescue Squads.

"At one time, West Onslow Beach was served by rescue squads from Surf City and Sneads Ferry. Though we are midway between both towns, people in West Onslow Beach wanted service from a rescue squad that was still closer to their community," Mrs. Johnson said. "A year after the West Onslow Beach rescue squad was organized, I was asked to

I'm doing.

"We answer all calls, regardless of the nature. And it's in getting to the scene when all the thinking is done. You're thinking about what kind of call you've received and how to prepare yourself for it," Mrs. Johnson continued.

One of the worst things to deal with, according to Mrs. Johnson, is drownings. "You get the call that there's been a drowning. And you go to the scene, expecting to see a body wash up to shore, and it never appears, but yet, you wait. I really sympathize with the families of drowning victims," she said.

Adding a word of advice to beach-goers, Mrs. Johnson says to be especially careful of deceptive tides, and never make a go of the ocean alone.

The average week for Mrs. Johnson is unplanned, consisting of both early-morning and late-night emergency calls. "Sometimes, just when everything seems to have settled down for the day, my pager goes off. I could be at the dinner table, or if I'm about to bake a cake, I just can't bake . . . whatever you're doing, you just drop it, and then it's time to do your job," Mrs. Johnson said.

"You see a lot of unpleasant things in my line of work. I don't think you're able to become used to certain things, but you do get to a point where you're