

## Teacher Serves as Volunteer Firefighter

By Marti Bennett

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Currently a volunteer firefighter, scuba-diver, full-time English teacher at NSU University School, and prior gold-medalist track athlete, Vanessa Moodley's passionate behavior drives her to endure a life of constant challenge and thrill.

Growing up in South Africa with a love of track, Moodley's desire to compete nationally came to a halt in consequence of Apartheid's ban on participating in international competition. Though she luckily resided in a well-established Indian community during Apartheid, she still had to live in a strictly segregated society and could not pursue her full potential as a track athlete.

As a result, Moodley's passion shifted from competitive track to scuba diving later in life. "I developed this bond with the ocean because of my late dad's love for the ocean as a scuba diver," said Moodley. "I feel closest to him when I am diving. It's a very special experience for me." From Bali to Bermuda, Moodley's diving expeditions allowed her to fuel her passion for travel. One of her greatest passions is photographing underwater microorganisms while diving.

Moodley has also worked as a Training Officer for Fitness and Health. She assessed candidates to determine if they were suitable to serve for active duty as firefighters and emergency personnel. In fact, to better understand both the physical and emotional demands of firefighting, Moodley decided to obtain a firsthand account of firefighting by attending Fire College. This decision led her to pursue a career as a firefighter, extricating people from burning homes and cars, and rescuing individuals trapped in elevators, among other scenarios.

Since moving from the Florida Keys to Broward County, Moodley continues to serve her community as a volunteer firefighter and NSU University School teacher. She attends firefighter training on a regular basis and responds to fire calls when she is not teaching or grading student work.

Currently educating Upper School students as an English teacher, Moodley hopes her students "can learn from their educational experiences, helping to mold them into the kind of people they want to be."

One may wonder how Moodley can find the time to pursue her multiple interests. She states, "If you're dedicated and passionate enough about something, you find the time, and at the moment, that's pretty much me. I'm dedicated to my career as a teacher and helping my students realize their dreams. Furthermore, I find the time to be a firefighter because I am passionate about helping people." She believes that her practice of regular meditation helps maintain her balance.

"I believe that failure is a stepping stone to success and I try telling my students that as well. If you fail the first time, do not give up. You must get up and try again."

