

Local firefighter makes it into the top 10 on CBC Champions list

BY SCOTT HAYES
Staff Writer

First he was one of a few thousand fantastic volunteers across the country, and then he was shortlisted to be one of only 50. And now

the shortlist is even shorter for St. Albert firefighter Victor Fernandez.

It was announced Monday evening that Fernandez is in the top 10 for the *CBC Champions of Change*, a national program that promotes volunteerism, charitable

giving and sustainable change. It's a contest that celebrates all volunteers but also gives members of the public the reality show twist by allowing them to vote for their favourite nominee.

The 54-year-old member of the

city's fire department heads up his own charity called Canadian Aid for Fire Services Abroad (CAFSA), a major recycling operation that takes decommissioned fire equipment here and sends it to communities in need in Central and South America.

All the finalists and winners will be celebrated during a CBC News broadcast on Jan. 16, 2011. There will be two grand prize winners, one who works in the country and another who works internationally. Each will receive \$25,000 for their favourite charities.

The other eight finalists will each receive \$10,000. This means that Fernandez already has at least \$10,000 coming to him for CAFSA. That money would go a long way to helping ease some growing pains, he said.

"It would mean a lot. We function on donations. For example, we're in real need of some warehouse space right now. I have two fire trucks parked in somebody else's backyard right now and I have two more fire trucks coming up," he said with a laugh.

With a grand sense of humour, Fernandez does think this contest is a serious opportunity to help a lot of people.

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Fernandez will be profiled by Mike Holmes, TV host and celebrity construction expert, during a special edition of CBC's *Monday Connect with Mark Kelley*. That episode will air on Monday, Dec. 6

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VICTOR FERNANDEZ
St. Albert firefighter

at 8:45 p.m. A special edition of *Outpost Magazine* featuring the finalists was distributed in yesterday's *The Globe and Mail* newspaper.

The only other finalist from Alberta is Bob Davisson of Medicine Hat. For more information on Canada's Champions of Change, to view the 10 finalists and to vote for your favourite one, please visit www.cbc.ca/change.

Since its inception 10 years ago, CAFSA has greatly benefited the lives of thousands of people, both directly and indirectly. Just this May, it delivered two fire trucks and one sea container full of firefighter gear, personal protective equipment and various other tools and items to the town of Chillán in Chile. Fernandez and his team then provided training to the recipients.

CAFSA's next mission is to send 20 sets of personal protective equipment to Bomberos Malacatan in San Marcos, Guatemala. That one-week mission will begin Dec. 7.

To learn more about CAFSA, please visit www.cafsa.net.

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