



MAY 2013

NUMBER 44

## WELCOME

Welcome to the 44<sup>th</sup> edition of "*Between Alarms*".

Our newsletter will bring you up to date on our activities and some coming changes on how we are able to conduct our Bazaar in July.

## 14<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL FUND DRIVE

The response to our 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Fund Drive titled "*Every Gift Matters, Every Year*" has been good. Through April 30<sup>th</sup> we received \$22,185.00 from 580 donors. The money received is slightly ahead of funds received to date in prior campaigns, with the number of donors about the same.

On May 7<sup>th</sup> we sent our follow-up mailing to those who have not contributed. We are looking forward to receiving donations from many more in our community and hopefully experience an increase in the number of donors, reversing the downward trend of the past several years.

Thank you to all of those who have contributed.

## RABIES CLINIC

Our Annual Rabies Clinic will be held on Saturday, June 1<sup>st</sup> from 1:00 PM 3:00 PM. Karen Spiece, VMD, owner of the Mountaintop Animal Hospital will dispense the inoculations.

Protect your pet and save money by attending our clinic. Inoculations are valid for one year for animals under one year old and for 3 years for pets older than one year.

Dogs and cats are welcome at the clinic. The cost is \$10.00 per inoculation. Plan to join us on the 1st to both provide for your pet's safety and help us with this fundraiser.



P.O. Box 163 Woodlawn Ave. & Lehigh Sts.  
Mountaintop, Pennsylvania 18707

## **MEMBER SPOTLIGHT**

Member Sam Hollock is among our younger group of firefighters. Sam has followed in the tradition of his family, being active members of the fire company over the years. Both his grandfather, Herbie, and his father, Tom, have belonged to the fire company and have been active participants in our activities.

Sam joined the fire company as a junior member at age 14. He currently attends college. Between his studies he volunteers his time to help around the firehouse and attend some of the training courses offered. He also works diligently at the Bazaar, spending three days running a busy stand.

Having younger members involved and interested in the fire company is important to all of us as members such as Sam are definitely the future leaders in the fire company.

## **MEMBERS WELCOME**

Our door is always welcoming to people who may want to join the fire company and assist us to the extent that they can. The jobs within the fire company are many. Firefighters can serve as interior or exterior firefighters and equipment operators. There are also roles as fire police associates and help is always appreciated in fundraising or property/equipment maintenance.

The younger people in the community can play a role in the fire company as junior firefighters. In this capacity they can learn the techniques of firefighting, help at an incident in returning tools and be part of the activities at the firehouse. Junior firefighters must be 14 years old.

Out activity night is Monday. If you are interested in learning more, stop at the firehouse any Monday night or contact any of our members.

## **SMALL GAMES OF CHANCE LAWS TO SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACT OPERATION OF THE BAZAAR**

In the course of the past few months we have become aware of requirements in the Pennsylvania Small Games of Change License Law that will significantly impact the operation of the Bazaar. The situation began to come to light in February when many organizations had to cancel their "Night at the Races" as it was learned these are not permitted under the SGOC laws. Information began to come available with regard to the license law and in April an informational session was conducted by Misericordia University by the enforcement division of the Pennsylvania State Police. Our Bazaar committee attended the session where we learned the following:

Although the original SGOC laws have existed since 1988, the laws were never understood by organizations and certainly never enforced as they apply to the operation of a Bazaar. However, with the new legislation passed in 2012, the subsequent media coverage and public information events offered, the laws are clearly understood.

In order to conform to the law, the following applies:

- No games of chance are permitted. Money wheels have always been illegal but overlooked. However by the law, any kiddie games where there is chance involved are also prohibited unless the value of the prize is less than the cost to play. Most kiddie games are 25 cents plays; therefore the sports wheel and 45 wheel, which award prizes from \$3.00 - \$8.00 in cost are illegal.
- Instant Bingo is allowed, however no one under the age of eighteen is allowed to sell or purchase tickets. Pic-A-Number games (the winner receives a prize for a tab ending in two zeros) are permitted. These games offer kiddie/teenager prizes (stuffed animals, characters, toys). The same 18 year old requirement applies.
- Separate accounting is required for all games of chance. Money received is to be deposited into a separate account as they are received. All winning tickets including fifty cent winners of Instant Bingo are to be retained for a period of two years.
- Raffles – Permitted with additional requirements. We mail tickets to the 1800 households and businesses in Fairview Township. The law states that we are to keep numbered sequential records of the tickets sent to each address and keep track of the numbered tickets as they are returned.
- Chinese Auctions - We conduct a Basket Auction that technically is a Chinese Auction. In order for these to be legal instead of a player putting their name and number on an inexpensive ticket stub, we have to print full tickets, including all of the licensing information and meet the full accounting and record retention requirements. The cost to provide the tickets to play will go from under \$40.00 to several hundred dollars for printed perforated tickets. The 18 year old rule also applies.
- Volunteer Workers – The must be 18 year old requirement to work in a game of chance diminishes our pool of workers. It also takes away the opportunity for teens to complete their community service hours. Not only are the organizers of the event responsible to follow the law, all of the volunteer workers also must do.
- Organization/Committee Personnel – Everyone is responsible to be sure the law is followed. The signor of the application for the SGOC license is particularly exposed. If we do not intend to comply with every aspect of the law, our members who are officers in law enforcement will have to resign.

This is a brief overview of the requirements and how they effect how we conduct our Bazaar. Meeting the requirements will create enormous time consuming tasks. Not meeting them can result in criminal charges being leveled against us.

In response to these requirements, we have contacted some of our state legislators. Although there is legislation pending to help with the situation, a bill passed by the House and now in committee at the Senate, there is no word on when there will be an agreement as to the changes. We are hopeful that perhaps a temporary reprieve can be granted for compliance, the same as was granted for 2012 reporting requirements as required by the law.

At this time, we plan to comply with the requirements of the law in conducting the Bazaar. In doing so, some of our costs will increase and an enormous amount of time will be involved. As far as what the public will see, there no longer will be any games of chance that are not authorized by law, and the games of chance that are authorized will require both the workers and players be 18 years of age. Signs will have to be made and posted throughout the Bazaar grounds stating the age requirement.

Conforming to the requirements of the Bazaar will take some of the fun away when you attend the Bazaar. We ask your understanding in this matter. Although some of the activities will be restricted or not available, we will continue to have the same great food and festival atmosphere that has sustained the success of the Bazaar for many years.

## **40<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL BAZAAR**

We are busily preparing for our 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Bazaar to be held July 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>.

Mountaintop DJs will provide music nightly. Friday night Tom Emanski will entertain, followed by John Reilly on Saturday and Sunday.

Our Firefighter's Parade will be held on Saturday at 5:00 PM and will tour many Fairview Township subdivisions. We will include the parade route in our June Bazaar mailing.

Pat Ward, popular Magician, will perform his magic show Saturday at 7:00 PM. Prior to, and after, his show Pat will be on the grounds to share his magic and balloons.

Our very popular New Merchandise Auction will be held on Sunday at 5:00 PM.

As always, we will offer a large assortment of food items and beverages, games and prizes. We will also have take out containers for all of our food items for those who cannot sit for dinner. Games will be featured from Fund Raising USA. Our Theme Basket Auction will once again feature many beautiful and unique baskets to win. The "Hose Company Store" will feature a variety of fun items to purchase, including our popular Bazaar theme T-shirts.

The Moon Walk Guy will return with their ever popular inflatable rides, including the giant bounce, giant slides and obstacle course.

The Bazaar opens at 5:30 PM on Friday, 5:00 PM on Saturday, and 4:00 PM on Sunday. Please mark your calendars to join us in July to enjoy the company of your neighbors and friends at this family oriented event.

## **HELP WANTED**

Running the Bazaar requires a lot of help. Fortunately we have many faithful volunteers who return year after year, however we always welcome additional helpers. Jobs are available in our food and game stands, and the shifts run for a few hours each day. Working at the Bazaar offers an ideal opportunity for students to obtain their community service requirements and we are pleased to have them help. Please contact Dave Hourigan at 715-7750 or 474-9381 if you would like to volunteer.

## **BAZAAR AUCTION AND THEME BASKETS**

Our New Merchandise Auction will be held on Sunday at 5:00 PM during the Bazaar. Frank Orloski, Jr. will return as an auctioneer this year. He will be joined by long time Mountaintop resident, Michelle Reilly. Frank and Michelle will interact well together. As dueling Auctioneers they will make the Auction fun while raising a lot of money for the fire company.

A list of the Auction items will be posted on our website, MTHC1.com, advertised in the Mountaintop newspapers, and posted on the Bazaar grounds. The Auction is at 5:00 PM. It will be held in the firehouse building with plenty of seating available.

Our Theme Basket Auction is enormously popular. Dozens of beautiful baskets are available, offering items of interest for all ages. Everything in the basket stand is donated. Bob and Mary Barley donate most of the baskets. Individuals or businesses of the Mountaintop area donate the contents. Several basket contents are also purchased through donations received from the industries in the Crestwood Industrial Park.

In order to conform to the Small Games of Chance requirements, we will be selling the tickets in a different format this year, and likely will raise the price to two tickets for \$1.00. In addition, you will need to be 18 years of age to purchase tickets.

If you would like to donate to either the Auction or organize/donate a basket, please call Dave Hourigan at 715-7750 during the day or 474-9381 in the evening.

## **BAZAAR CORPORATE SPONSORS**

A large part of the success of our Bazaar is the funds we receive from business or individual sponsors which offset the fixed expenses we incur in conducting the Bazaar. We acknowledge our sponsors in all of our advertising prior to the Bazaar and post signs recognizing them on the Bazaar grounds during the Bazaar. We also recognize them in our fall newsletter.

With the restrictions placed and the additional expense we will incur to conform to the Small Games of Chance License requirements, it would be particularly helpful if we had additional corporate sponsors for the Bazaar this year. The additional money will offset the expenses and the losses we will incur.

The minimum requested level of a donation for sponsorship is \$250.00. Please contact Dave Hourigan @ 715-7750 if you would like to become a sponsor.

## **BIG TICKET OPPORTUNITY**

Once again in 2013 we invite members of our business community to donate a prize for our Big Ticket. The Big Ticket contains approximately 50 prizes which are raffled off on the closing night of the Bazaar. Prizes can be an item, gift certificate or a cash prize.

The Big Ticket is mailed to over 1800 addresses in our township and is sold by our members prior to and during the Bazaar. Participating as a sponsor is a great advertising opportunity. If you would like to contribute a prize, please call Dave Hourigan @ 715-7750 by May 31<sup>st</sup>.

## **MOUNTAIN TOP FIRE COMPANIES DISCUSS REGIONALIZATION/BLENDED SERVICES**

In recent months there has been some media coverage of the future of some of the fire companies in the Mountaintop area. Below are statements provided to the Hazleton Standard Speaker by our President, Dave Hourigan, and Assistant Chief, Todd Wagaman. These statements outline many of the advantages and/or disadvantage in moving toward a regional fire department to serve the Mountaintop area.

The immediate concern is providing adequate fire protection in Rice and Dorrance, the townships that have very limited availability of volunteers. Discussions and planning are taking place between these fire departments and the Wright Township Fire Department which is strongly staffed and in immediate proximity to these townships. Wright Township also assists us in responding to our priority calls. However, know that we remain adequately staffed with volunteers to be able to provide adequate, reliable coverage. As outlined in the comments below, we will participate in the discussions and we will be part of the planning for the future of the fire service in the Mountaintop area.

Dave and Todd's statements are as follows:

### From Dave Hourigan – President:

*Yes, our fire company works with other fire companies through mutual aid. We envision that there is an eventuality that the fire service will need to consider some blend of a regionalized fire department likely including some paid staff at least in the daytime. The huge area of the size of the Mountaintop area necessitates having to maintain fire stations with firefighters living in some close proximity to the stations to offer an adequate response time on the initial call. There are budget considerations, operation procedures and a host of other challenges in putting together a plan for the future. The number of volunteers in the fire service has dwindled everywhere. Job and family commitments, along with children who are highly involved in activities, along with the commitment needed to train and learn the fire service make being a volunteer firefighter a difficult job.*

*We will be discussing what options may be best for us and our community within our organization. We plan to train more frequently with the other fire departments, along with making some of our buying decisions with the same manufactures so we are familiar with the equipment plus our equipment is compatible.*

*Unfortunately many do not realize the cost to operate a fire company nor do they realize that our Mountaintop fire companies are 100% volunteer. In our fire company, approximately 15% of our*

*operating revenue is provided by the Township. We raise the rest of the money ourselves. Regionalization would have economies but it would require a greater contribution from the municipalities which is also a consideration.*

*From Todd Wagaman – Assistant Chief:*

*We have gone to automatic Mutual Aid with Wright Twp. for all priority 1 responses to ensure we can provide adequate resources and personnel to handle the emergency. This has allowed both departments to be dispatched at the same time and reduce response time. Both departments are training more together and continue to evaluate how we can improve our service. Currently we are evaluating our recruitment process and how we can get more people involved, including JR fire fighters.*

*We also participate in the Mountaintop Mutual Aid Organization which meets monthly and includes every department in Mountaintop. This is a great forum for every department to share their needs and help us all serve our community better. We coordinate training classes where every department is invited and every department has input as to the classes we need to run each year.*

## **THE ALARMS**

In the period of November 1<sup>st</sup> – April 30<sup>th</sup> we answered 59 calls for assistance. The calls were as follow: Motor Vehicle Accidents – 23; Automatic Fire Alarms – 10; EMS Assists – 5; Brush Fires – 3; Tree Down – 2; Gas Leaks – 2; Flooded Basement – 2; Structure Fire – 1; Gas Smell Investigation – 1; Vehicle Fire – 1; Standby at Station – 1; Sink Hole Investigation – 1; Trash Fire – 1; and CO Alarm – 1. We also assisted other fire departments as follow: Wright Township – 3; Dennison Township – 1; and Slocum Township – 1.

A number of the motor vehicle accidents were weather related with most of these being on the mountain. One of our assists to Wright Township was to the devastating fire at the GentileSCO home prior to Christmas. Many hours were involved in battling this blaze, which resulted in a total loss to the family. As a result of the fire the Mountaintop community showed its caring nature with a generous outpouring of support for the GentileSCOs helping them deal with the tragedy.

## **GRANT RECEIVED FROM THE NESBITT FAMILY'S CHARITABLE FOUNDATION**

Late in 2012 we received a grant in the amount of \$10,000.00 from the Nesbitt Family's Charitable Foundation. The grant was used to purchase 5 sets of protective coats and pants for our firefighters.

This is the first grant we have received from the Foundation. The funds are much appreciated as they enable us to provide the very best protection for our firefighters.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

The recent information learned about the Small Games of Chance requirements creates a severe hardship for our organization. Complying with the requirements creates countless extra hours of work for us, an unknown amount of additional expense and possible lost revenue at the Bazaar due to the age restrictions imposed. Not complying with the laws can result in criminal charges being filed against us.

We find these laws to be crushing and disheartening to say the least. Over the past few decades several of us in the fire company have dedicated ourselves to running a very successful Bazaar that nets in the mid 30' for the fire company annually. In addition, we have built a first class bazaar facility with all of the construction and maintenance done by our volunteers over the years. Our initial discussion included deciding whether or not we should sponsor the Bazaar considering the enormity of the requirements needed and the consequences if we do not. Knowing that the Bazaar accounts for more than a third of our income, and knowing that over the years the public has supported us very well in all our requests, we decided to conduct the Bazaar. We are moving full speed ahead with our planning.

As the weeks pass, more organizations are learning of the requirements and there will be more media coverage of the matter. The same laws apply to all organizations conducting a bazaar. In addition, the laws currently prohibit conducting a "Night at the Races" as several area wide organizations learned in the past few months when they had to cancel their scheduled activities. Besides the organizations encountering or facing lost revenues, the primary supplier of fundraising equipment and prizes, Fundraising USA in Wilkes-Barre, is negatively impacted by the law which is a concern to us and others as they furnish the equipment and prizes for our Bazaar.

I know it was certainly not the intent of our legislators to create a situation that would place our organization or the thousands of volunteer organizations at risk in their fundraising or expose us, the volunteers, to possible criminal charges as we do our good intentioned work in the community. It is our hope that a solution will quickly be found and adopted so all of us can undertake with our planned fundraising activities without the burdens placed upon us.

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Nearly every volunteer fire company faces the challenge of recruiting and retaining members to be adequately staffed. People have many obligations with family and work, and the extra time is in limited quantities. The ranks of the volunteer fire service have fallen by hundreds of thousands in the past few decades. The prospects for seeing a resurgence in interest to significantly increase membership is not likely. People barely have enough time to meet their current obligations, let alone add/accept a new position requiring an extensive time commitment, often at unpredictable/inconvenient times.

Some of the fire companies in Mountaintop are facing an immediate dilemma with lack of personnel. Because of this, discussions and meetings are underway to provide for the best services for these communities. It is our plan to stay current with these discussions, participate when asked, train with the other fire companies and be part of the long term solution to provide reliable fire protection for the Mountaintop area.

Any changes in operations of the fire service in the Mountaintop area in the form of regionalization will take a long time to implement. As I stated to the Hazleton Standard Speaker, it is a complex process with many challenges to consider.



We remain adequately prepared and equipped to answer our calls. We will continue to call upon the Wright Township Fire Department for assistance on our priority 1 calls. We look forward to serving our community with pride and dedication as we have since 1939.

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Most of us at the firehouse have devoted a lifetime of service to our organization. We plan to work together to overcome the challenges we face, always with the intent that we do the right things in all that we do. Keep us in your thoughts, and please be patient with whatever changes we make in the months and years ahead.

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Although it is May, as I write this there are snow flurries outside. However, summer is really just around the corner. Enjoy all of the pleasant times and events that summer offers.

Be safe,

Dave Hourigan