

Mountaintop Hose Co. No. 1



Between Alarms

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NOVEMBER 2018

NUMBER 55

WELCOME

Welcome to our 55th edition of *"Between Alarms"*.

We have much news to share with you in this edition. We hope you enjoy reading it and catching up on our activities.

CHRISTMAS EVENT PLANNED / CHRISTMAS TREES TO BE SOLD

On the weekend of December 8th and 9th we will be conducting a Christmas Tree Sale and Visit with Santa on our Bazaar grounds. The hours will be 11:00-2:00 each day. Santa will be present for photos with young and old. Bring your camera to capture Santa with your family.

A light menu of hot food and beverages will be offered.

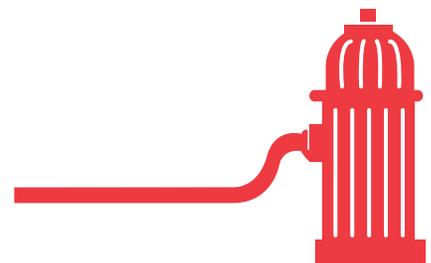
The Christmas trees will be 5' to 6' in height and will be sold for \$10.00 to \$15.00. We believe that the low cost will assure that anyone in our Township that would like a live tree will be able to have one for Christmas.

Sunday after 2:00 Santa will tour our Township subdivisions on a fire truck to greet the children.

There is no cost for the Santa photo opportunity. A donation canister will be present should anyone want to donate. If you want to receive a tree, please call Jared Aigeldinger at 570-239-3393.



P.O. Box 163, 14 Woodlawn Avenue
Mountaintop, Pennsylvania 18707



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT / 40th ANNIVERSARY RECOGNITION

In August, our Fire Chief, Peter J. Kohl, completed his 40th year as our Fire Chief. In recognition of Pete's years of service a gathering of his family, our members and friends was held at Cavanaugh's to acknowledge and thank Pete for his leadership. Pete was presented with a custom designed plaque from the fire company. Pete was honored with citations from the Commonwealth and our new Rescue truck is also dedicated in Pete's honor.

Pete joined the fire company at age 16 in 1976. He immediately displayed leadership and talent. Pete aggressively took available classes and learned about the fire service and firefighting techniques quickly. He was elected as an Assistant Chief the following year. In 1978 the person serving as Fire Chief moved from the area and Pete was elected as Fire Chief. At the time, the fire company was in its new facility for just a few years. Pete began to plan a strategy to expand and modernize the vehicles and equipment that the firefighters needed. The first new engine in 16 years was purchased in 1979. Modern equipment with new technology began to be purchased.

In the early 1980's Pete recognized that a "Jaws of Life" system was needed for the Mountaintop area and he participated in a committee to raise the funds from the community to purchase them. The "Jaws" were acquired and Pete then sought to purchase a light duty rescue to carry the "Jaws", which was added in the Fall of 1982.

Over the years, Pete recognized the need to be prepared for whatever services may be needed in the rapidly expanding Mountaintop community. In 1984 a fund drive was conducted to raise money for an engine to replace the aging 1963 engine. A third engine was added through another fund drive in 1988. In the early 1990's the Hose Company was called upon frequently to perform rescue services and had far outgrown the available space on the rescue. A heavy duty was purchased in 1992. Pete led the effort to form and train the rescue team and help be prepared for whatever emergencies the Hose Company would face. Since that time, the Hose Company under Pete's guidance has been able to keep its fleet of vehicles current, providing the latest technology and safety enhancements for the firefighters.

The Annual Bazaar became the primary source of funds for the Hose Company. As the Bazaar expanded and grew in popularity, the Bazaar grounds were greatly expanded. Pete provided extensive help in both constructing the buildings and also in providing the electrical needs for them at no charge as he is a licensed electrician. In addition to the Bazaar grounds, Pete has undertaken extensive work on the firehouse building needs and additionally repairing and maintaining all of the equipment that the firefighters use in the operation of the Hose Company. There is nothing that Pete cannot fix.

Pete aggressively educated himself in the fire service and attained the status of a State Fire Instructor. He has taught courses to both our firefighters and at the State Fire Schools for many years. Pete was also a founding member of the Luzerne County Technical Rescue Task Force which consists of six rescue companies from the County that are called in for specialized rescue operations, such as trench rescue or confined space rescue.

Respected for his dedication to the fire company and his great knowledge, Pete is the "go to" guy when someone has a question or situation from other fire companies throughout a wide area.

Pete is a lifelong resident of Mountaintop. He is married to his wife, Jina, and they have four children. A friend to all, Pete Kohl is a unique individual that the current and past members of the Mountaintop Hose Company No. 1 are proud to work with and privileged to call him their friend.

OUR LEADERSHIP

In August we held our annual election for officers. Our officers are:

Dave Hourigan	President
Red Lines	Vice President
Jason Menghini	Secretary
Shawn Prohaska	Treasurer
Tim McGinnis	Trustee
Mike Herron	Trustee
Doug Guignet	Trustee
Peter J. Kohl	Fire Chief
Todd Wagaman	1 st Asst. Chief
Josh Antosh	2 nd Asst. Chief
Jared Aigeldinger	Captain
Steve Taylor	Captain

NEW RESCUE TRUCK DELIVERED

In late September, three of our officers travelled to Pierce Manufacturing in Appleton, Wisconsin to perform a final inspection of and make payment for our new rescue truck. It is customary to go to the factory for a final inspection to verify all of the specs of the truck are in order. Our members found a few items that needed to be addressed while the truck was at the facility. The truck was then shipped to dealer Glick Fire Apparatus in early October. Glick made final inspection and prepped the truck for us to pick up on October 12th. Over the weekend driver training was conducted for our firefighters and later Sunday the equipment was transferred from our old truck to prepare it for duty. On Tuesday additional training was conducted by Glick, and that evening the truck was placed in service.

The major improvements of the new Rescue is that the body is 3'6" longer than the old Rescue providing needed storage and with a dual axel in the rear the weight carrying capacity is increased by 13,500 lbs. Additionally, with the increased weight the horsepower of the vehicle is increased to 525 HP as compared to 450 HP in our 2004 Rescue. Another upgrade to the truck is that all of the lighting is LED. This includes all of the emergency lights, scenic lighting, light tower and compartment lighting.

Other features of the truck are an Amkus Hydraulic System with two pumps capable of operating 4 rescue tools simultaneously, a 15' high rotating light tower and a 35KW generator. There are permanent racks to house our cascade system which is used to refill air bottles and racks for the air bottles. There is a 9,000 lb. portable winch that can be connected to any side of the truck for use. The cab of the truck provides seating for six firefighters, has many built-ins for storage and features a communication headphone system for our firefighters to use while enroute to a call. The

electronics of the truck are extensive, with displays and warning devices to provide needed information.

The final cost of the truck was \$805,160.00. A pre-pay for the chassis discounted the truck by \$10,950.00, so our net price was \$794,210.00. This price included the purchase of the new Amkus system with hose reels and hoses that were \$88,656.00 of the price.

We decided to purchase a new Amkus system as the technology of the system changed significantly in 15 years, the availability of replacement parts in the future was questionable and the time frame to remove from the old Rescue and re-install the system was lengthy, which would have left us without a Rescue for the period.

We borrowed \$300,000.00 to complete the purchase. \$200,000.00 was borrowed from the Pennsylvania Volunteer Fire Company Loan Assistance Program at 2% interest. We borrowed an additional \$100,000.00 from Luzerne Bank at 4.67% interest. We immediately reduced this amount by \$5,000.00 when we applied our grant from the First Federal Foundation to the principal owed.

We anticipate paying the loans off well before the terms end.

OLD RESCUE SOLD

As in the past of the planning process for our new Rescue, we contacted Command Fire Apparatus in Landisville, PA. Command has purchased several of our trucks in the past. A deal was made in January to sell the truck to Command with delivery to Command negotiated to correspond with the delivery of our new Rescue. At the time, the delivery date for our new truck was January 2019. A purchase price of \$175,000.00 was agreed to and deposit was made on the truck.

Command marketed the truck and sold it to the Old Fort Fire Department in Old Fort, North Carolina. Interestingly, the truck was sold by us to Command and then Command to Old Fort sight unseen. Extensive photos and complete specs were provided and this process created the sale. Command knew that our trucks were well maintained with low mileage, so the sale was easily consummated.

In our experience of selling our used trucks we have found that selling it to a dealer is our best option. The dealer accepts the truck, does whatever rehab or retro-fitting the new user wants and then sells the truck to the user with a warranty. Although all of our vehicles have been low mileage and in great condition, should something unforeseen develop after the sale, it is warranted by the dealer and a non-discussion for us.

The old Rescue was purchased for \$405,000.00 in May of 2004. We were satisfied with the sale price having used it for 14 ½ years. The \$175,000.00 was a significant down payment on the new vehicle.

DESIGNER PURSE BINGO – HUGE SUCCESS

Member Jared Aigeldinger brought the idea of conducting a Designer Purse Bingo to the fire company membership as a way to make some money for the fire company and also bring the community together. A Designer Purse Bingo is an event where the Bingo games are played to win a purse and has become a very popular activity. The purses are all new and are either donated or purchased with donations that are given to purchase them. There are also separate games played to win either a premium purse or a special prize that was donated. Additionally, at the event there are drawings for donated baskets, food is sold and door prizes awarded.

Our first Designer Purse Bingo was held October 21st. It was well attended with 150 players and it was extraordinarily successful. For the day the event netted \$6,813.10 for the fire company. Just as importantly, the event was immensely enjoyed by all in attendance. Plans are already being discussed for another event in the Spring of next year.

Our thanks to all that contributed to or attended the event and special recognition to Michelle and Jared Aigeldinger for chairing the event.

COMMUNITY YARD SALE

In August we conducted a Community Yard Sale on our Bazaar grounds as a community event. Space was rented in the Bazaar stands or on the grounds for people to set up and sell their household treasures no longer needed.

Thirty people set up shop for the day. Our members served food and refreshments. For the day the fire company netted nearly \$300.00 and the community was well served.

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK VISITS

As customary, during Fire Prevention Week we visited Fairview Elementary School to show our fire trucks and equipment and to give a talk on fire safety to the young students in grades K-3. This visit is always greeted enthusiastically by the children as they listen and ask a lot of questions.

After our visit we received dozens of handwritten thank you notes, which included drawings and coloring by the children. One note read *“Thank you for coming to our school with the fire truck. I like learning fire safety.”* Another wrote *“I love that you are alive because you save peoples’ lives. I am glad that you guys were born.”* A touching note reads *“Thank you for saving people from our community. I am very happy. You should be happy about yourselves.”*

All of the notes were sincere and are appreciated by our firefighters. These messages make us very proud of what we do and are very rewarding.

WINTER WEATHER / CAUTION ON THE MOUNTAIN

With the reality of Winter just around the corner, it is important to note that driving too fast for conditions is the greatest cause of accidents in the Winter.

The Mountain is particularly susceptible to dangerous driving conditions. Snow and ice storms are always a hazard. However, in our experience, the road was glazed over with a thin and nearly invisible ice coating caused by atmospheric conditions mostly at day break or sunset on nice days. In addition to cold temperature related incidents, extreme water runoff from heavy rain has caused numerous accidents, particularly in the southbound lanes or the final corner ascending the Mountain.

The hazardous storm conditions exist year round. Recently Pat Rushton wrote an article in the Citizens voice that there were 15 reportable crashes on the Mountain in Fairview/Hanover Townships between July 1st and October 31st. Three of these crashes were in one day caused by water runoff.

Speed is almost always the cause of these accidents. Our Police Chief, Phil Holbrook, cites driving too fast for conditions as the cause in many of the accidents.

Just this past Saturday night on November 10th, there were a number of accidents as the water runoffs on roads in various locations froze over as the temperature dipped below freezing for the first time. If the rain doesn't slow or worse yet turns to snow, caution will be the operative word as we head deeper into Winter.

Chief Holbrook has asked that we include a message in our newsletter stating that state law required drivers to change lanes where applicable in the event that emergency vehicles (including tow trucks) are operating in an area with their lights on. If there is not a lane to move into, certainly move as safely away from the vehicles involved as far as possible and slow down until you pass. The safety of those operating at a scene is of paramount importance.

THE ALARMS

In the period of April 1st through October 31st we responded to 179 calls for assistance. The calls were as follows: Automatic Fire Alarms – 57; Motor Vehicle Accidents – 42; Assist EMS – 14; Structure Fires – 11; Vehicle Fires – 9; Trees Down – 9; False Alarms – 7; Gas Leaks – 5; Wires Down – 4; Smoke Investigation – 4; Brush Fires – 3; Lawnmower Fires – 3; Dumpster Fire – 2; CO Alarm – 2; Pump Basement – 2; Fuel Spill – 1; Child Locked in Car – 1; Missing Person Search – 1; Water Main Break – 1; and Tornado Response – 1.

82 of the calls were in Fairview Township, 63 of the calls in Wright Township, 23 in Rice Township, 4 calls were in Nuangola, 3 calls in Slocum Township, 2 calls in Dennison Township and one call in Dorrance Township and Wilkes-Barre Township.

The vast majority of the automatic fire alarm responses were in the Crestwood Industrial Park. A number of these alarms were related to water pressure surges.

On the night of June 13th we responded to the Mundy Street area in Wilkes-Barre Township after the tornado hit. We assisted with search activities for possible victim. Although the destruction was massive, miraculously there were no serious injuries as a result of the tornado.

A growing number of calls are trees down on roadways. Fortunately our responses have only involved clearing the roadway. To date they have been non-injury. However, there are many dead or seriously diseased trees along the roadways and in homeowner's yards. Where or when possible, these trees should be removed to protect property and lives.

Although our new Rescue has been in service for just a month, it has been actively used in motor vehicle accidents where the "Jaws of Life" were needed in three of the responses in the first month. This is an extraordinary amount of engagement for the tools in just a month's time.

FIRE TAX INCOME

Year to date we have received a total of \$107,355.86 from the fire tax that was enacted this year. The amount received year to date meets our projections as to what our income would be from the tax. We will receive two more payments for 2018, and expect the second payment to be significant as people pay their taxes prior to December 31st. Receiving the "guaranteed income" as generated by the tax has made managing our operations an easier task from a financial standpoint.

We want to acknowledge and thank our Tax Collector, Karen McGinnis, for not charging the commission she is entitled to on the fire tax. This is a big help to our operations.

NEW RESCUE GRANTS / DONATIONS RECEIVED

With the cost of the new Rescue being nearly \$800,000.00 we proactively sought grants from Foundations and individuals who have donated to us in the past. We are thrilled to announce that we received \$26,500.00 in response to our request to help with the purchase. The donors are: The Nesbitt Family Charitable Foundation - \$10,000.00; The F.M. Kirby Foundation, Inc. - \$7,500.00; and The First Federal Foundation - \$5,000.00. We received grants of \$1,000.00 from The PNC Foundation and The Marquis George McDonald Foundation. Our long time donor and loyal supporter Anneliese Moghul donated \$1,000.00 and "A Friend" donated a \$1,000.00. Additionally, friends in Glen Summit contributed \$1,520.00 in response to a request made to the community by our President, Dave Hourigan.

All of these funds were applied to the purchase price, reducing the borrowing needed to complete the purchase.

RELIEF ASSOCIATION ALLOCATION

Our allocation to the Relief Association from the State this year is \$24,174.96. This money is made available through a tax on premiums paid to non-Pennsylvania based homeowner insurance companies. The money is to be used to provide for the safety and welfare of our members, including premiums for accident and disability insurance, protective gear, safety equipment or safety features

on our vehicles. We applied \$20,000.00 of this money toward the purchase of our new Rescue. The balance will be used for the insurance premiums and savings.

END OF YEAR DONATIONS WELCOME

Although the fire tax replaced our Annual Fund Drive and we no longer make direct mailing appeals for funds, it is important to know that donations are most welcome and most appreciated. With the cost of our vehicles and equipment escalating annually, donations help create the reserves that are needed to accomplish major acquisitions.

It is also important to consider that every penny we receive goes directly back into our operations. There are no financial incentives, perks or benefits for our firefighters. Our members do what they do for the good of the community and the self satisfaction of knowing they have helped others.

With the close of the year, and many considering end of the year contributions, we ask that you consider us in your giving plans. No donation is too large or too small. All donations should be mailed to: P.O. Box 163, Mountaintop, PA 18707.

AMAZON SMILE

As you complete your holiday shopping be reminded that we are registered as a designated charity in the Amazon Smile Program. When shopping on Amazon, please consider us as your designated charity. To use the program, simply shop on Amazon Smile and designate us as the charity to benefit. There is no additional cost to you to shop in this fashion.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

It was with great pleasure that I planned the gathering to recognize Pete Kohl for his forty years of service to the fire company. Pete readily deserves the recognition for all that he has done; however with his humble character he doesn't seek any recognition. It is extraordinary that he has shared his time, talent and treasure with the fire company and led us to be the well equipped and well prepared organization that we are.

I have worked with Pete for 36 years of his 40 years. Over the years we have shared many ideas, implemented many plans and done a lot of good. We have always respected one another's opinion and we have always agreed on what our next step would be. It has been a great relationship both through the fire company and personally.

Our new Rescue is dedicated in his honor. Our 2004 Rescue was dedicated to honor his then 25 years of service. A fitting tribute to a very special individual. Thank you Pete for your years of service, the friendship that you have shared with me, all of our members and our community. No one could ask for a better friend.

I have said to many that the price that we had to pay for our new Rescue was stupid. It was. Although the truck is somewhat larger than the old Rescue, we downgraded some features as compared to the old Rescue to lower the price. It is unimaginable that the price would double in 14 ½ years. Since we ordered the truck in December there have been two price increases. One the typical year end increase and the other increase due to the tariffs.

My real concern is that the upward spiral in prices truly threatens the ability of volunteer fire companies to purchase adequate vehicles and be prepared for the challenges we face. The volunteer fire service is already in a crisis with declining membership. The rising costs exasperate the situation, creating another layer for the dedicated men and women who provide service.

There is no question in my mind that for the volunteer fire service to continue, it must be properly funded. Simply stated, the costs now exceed the ability of the organizations to raise the money necessary to operate. The need to do fundraising greatly impedes the ability to recruit new members, which is the layer I am referring to. Thank you again to our Fairview Township Supervisors for implementing the fire tax to fund our operations and guarantee our financial stability.

I am proud of our members undertaking new events to both engage our community and create funds for our fire company. A variety of new events will continue to bring people to our facility and maintain an interactive presence with the public. Already our weekend with Santa and our Christmas tree sale is being met with great enthusiasm. It will be a nice event and with the low cost for a tree, helps assure that any family who wants a tree will have one for Christmas. We look forward to a well attended and successful event.

Over the years I have ended this column with the expression “*The Best is Yet to Come*”. Recently I read a quote from John Wesley that has really impacted me, particularly in these controversial times. The quote is “*Do All The Good That You Can*” is most impactful. I think we do “*all good*” at the fire company. I also think that everyone doing good wherever or whenever possible is often simple and very meaningful as it affects our everyday lives.

So, as I close this column, my best wishes to all in your Holiday and family gatherings, be cautious and safe in all that you do and “*Do All The Good That You Can*”.

Dave Hourigan