

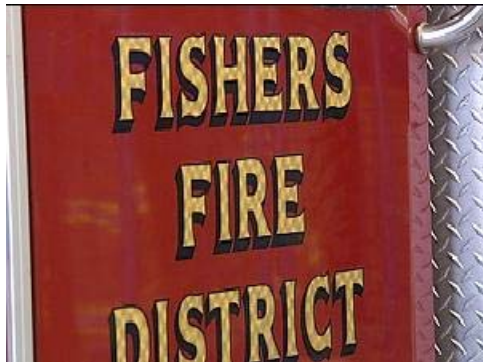
Schmittendorf, Earl

From: FASNYDAVID@aol.com
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Subject: article

Fishers to Drop 'Volunteer' From Fire Dept.?



Reported by: *Jecoliah Elli*
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A shortage of volunteer firefighters in a local community has the department scrambling to fix the problem. The Fishers Fire Department in the Town of Victor is used to responding to calls for help, not asking for help. But it's in trouble.

It desperately needs volunteer firefighters. Currently 26 firefighters protect homes and businesses over 26 square miles. They say that's not enough. Like most volunteer fire departments, the Fishers Fire District in Victor needs more help. "All the volunteer fire departments are recruiting where in the past they've had waiting lists for volunteers they've had to many. We don't have that anymore," said Maureen Bills, Fishers Firefighter.

Years ago, volunteer firefighting was a family tradition. "You grow up as a kid and your buddy next door his dad was a volunteer firemen and his uncle and the guy across the street we all joined the fire department pretty much that's what you we're going to do," said Lieutenant Andy Stromfeld, Fishers Firefighter.

But with a weak economy and more demands on all of our time, people have less free time and can't rise to the challenge. "I know they're out there though and hopefully we can get some people that do have a little free time that can come give us a free hand," said Lt. Stromfeld.

Not only do they need more volunteers. They need volunteers who are willing to take the training to go inside the fire. People who are willing to risk their lives. "If we did have an emergency and you needed 10,12, 15 to go into a fire. We don't have that kind of manpower," said Stromfeld.

The numbers aren't gigantic. If Fishers could recruit just ten more firefighters they say that would provide sufficient fire protection. "There's just so much more in our district to protect so it's very difficult when you have a shrinking number of volunteers to protect a larger commercial base," said Bills.

For now, Fishers volunteers respond the best they can, and rely on neighboring departments to help in emergencies. But as the Town of Victor grows so does the concern of how the department will answer the call to help in the future. One solution to the shortage is to hire full-time firefighters, but that's costly to tax-payers. There's a public hearing on that Tuesday night at 7:30 PM at the fire department on Main Street, Fishers. They're considering hiring four full-time firefighters.

There's nothing funny about the volunteer shortage, but the Fishers Fire Department is trying something unique to raise awareness and money. On Saturday, October 4th at 7 PM they're backing the trucks out of the fire hall and having a comedy night. Two professional comedians from New York City have been hired. It will be held

at Firehouse #1 on Main Street, Fishers. Tickets are \$25 in advance or \$30 at the door.

For tickets call (585) 924-3451.

For more on the Fishers Fire Department log onto www.fisherfd.org