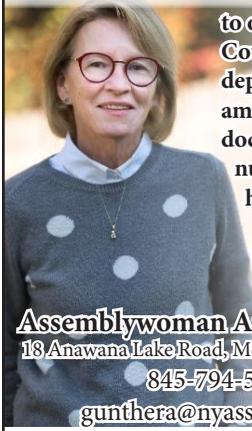


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‘You’ve got to keep ‘em busy’

The training center grant, the need for firefighters and the range of jobs to be done

By TED WADDELL

SWAN LAKE, NY — The big news in the Sullivan County Bureau of Fire during the past few months is the recent announcement of a \$250,000 grant.

In published reports from January 2022, the county and New York State assemblywoman Aileen Gunther announced that the Sullivan County emergency training center was awarded the grant to rebuild the training tower, in which firefighters learn to fight interior structure fires, and to construct a much-needed on-site storage facility.

The grant is in two parts: \$55,000 in upgrades to the tower to make it safer for the firefighters, and \$195,000 to build a pole barn as the existing garage is maxed out in capacity.

In addition, the county will kick in \$54,000 for in-kind services of labor and materials. That has been allocated in the current budget.

With the assistance of Gunther’s office, the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York, and the Municipal Facilities Assistance Program, the county stands to be reimbursed for up to \$250,000 of the projected total cost of \$304,000.

“Importantly, this facility is used by first responders across the county,” said Gunther earlier this year. “They do a tremendous job



John Hauschild, Sullivan County fire coordinator and Sullivan County emergency services training coordinator, was the introductory speaker at the “Setting Our Volunteers Up for Success” training seminar at the Kartrite on February 12.

of keeping our county safe and need the ability to train in a proper facility.”

John Hauschild, Sullivan County fire coordinator, who also serves as the Sullivan County emergency services training center

coordinator, said the rehab to the fire-training tower will provide updated fireproofing, including replacing stainless steel panels. The new storage building will provide housing space for donated fire apparatus from the Rock Hill and Monticello fire departments.

Reflecting on the recent training seminar, he said, “It was great; the attendance was awesome... We had 105 people registered from 25 in-county fire departments, 11 departments outside Sullivan County, seven ambulance corps and two out-of-state fire departments—one from Pennsylvania and one from New Jersey. The interaction was unbelievable; a lot of people opened up and participated, gave their point of view... It was noteworthy in that people from fire departments and EMS picked up so much... It was huge.”

The course was presented at the Kartrite in Monticello by two veteran firefighters representing the Professional Brotherhood: assistant chief Brian Soller of the Rock Hill Fire Department, and his training partner Tom Andryshak, the assistant chief of the Florida Fire Department in Orange County, NY.

The Sullivan County Bureau of Fire picked up several new recruits last August at the Bagel Festival in Monticello and at the Little World’s Fair in Grahamsville. This year it is planning a repeat showing, hoping to get more folks to sign up as volunteer fire-

fighters in service to the local community.

Rural volunteer fire companies and ambulance corps are struggling to find volunteers. In Sullivan County, the local bureaus of fire and EMS are constantly trying to add new members to the ranks of approximately 1,750 volunteer firefighters in the county.

Asked about the state of local volunteerism, Hauschild replied, “Like everybody else we’re trying to get people to come in, and the biggest thing is that when you get them in the door, it’s keeping them.”

He went on to explain that without strong leadership at the top of the departments, “People are going to leave, because you’ve got to keep ‘em busy and active. If you have somebody who wants to join, you’ve got to jump right on it, don’t say, ‘I’ll get back to you,’ or ‘Come back in two weeks’ [but instead say] ‘Come on in, look at the station to see the equipment. Here’s an application.’”

Hauschild stressed that if you volunteer with a fire department, it doesn’t automatically mean that you’re going to be rushing into blazing structure fires.

“A lot of people think that if you join a fire department, you have to run into a burning building,” he said. “You don’t. You can learn to drive apparatus, operate the pumps, become a SCUBA diver, or be fire police. There’s a job for you!”

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‘We need help desperately; everybody does’

By TED WADDELL

HIGHLAND LAKE, NY — Like most volunteer fire departments in the country, the Highland Lake Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) is struggling to retain its roster of active firefighters and to recruit new members into the fire service.

New firefighters would join a long, honorable tradition.

As recounted in the history of the department compiled for the 50th anniversary in 1998, “After much discussion and planning on the process of forming a fire department by members of the Highland Lake Chamber of Commerce, an organizational meeting was held at the Pinehurst Casino on May 26, 1948.”

The motion to form a department was approved, and “Twenty-one men signed up to be firefighters.”

In short order, at a second meeting on June 1, 1948, Anthony Renneberg was elected chief and Robert Ferero was selected as president, a 1923 American LaFrance fire engine was purchased from the Ellenville Fire Department, and in the fall of 1948, Joseph and Mary Mellan sold the department land for \$1 to erect a firehouse.

The 1923 chain-driven American LaFrance apparatus rode on solid-rubber tires. It was placed into service in July, 1948, while construction of the firehouse—using all-volunteer labor—started in May of 1949, and was completed in September 1950.

In recalling a bit of local early history, Chief Warren Wagner said, “The guys were telling us stories; that if there was a fire call, the phone rang into one of the neighbor’s houses across the street, next door to the old fire house, and that activated the fire siren.”

Outgrown

As time passed, the department outgrew the original station. Things were so tight that trucks had to be parked so close to the walls that operators were forced to get into them through the passenger’s side doors, climbing over the passenger’s seat into the driver’s seat.

About 12 years ago, a new fire house was built using department funds, aided by a loan from the New York State Emergency Services loan program. It’s a fixed two-percent loan only available to fire departments and ambulance corps.

The chief’s story

In 1978 Wagner joined the Port Jervis Maghogomock Hook & Ladder Company at the age of 18. “A couple of my best friends in high school had joined because their fathers were members there, and I had relatives there also.”

Noting that he has dedicated a total of 42 years to the local fire services, Chief Wagner left the hook and ladder company after 20-some years, and following a break, joined the Highland Lake VFD, first as a firefighter, then rising up through the ranks to captain, assistant chief, and finally the



RR photo by Ted Waddell

Chief Warren Wagner also serves as the co-captain of the Dive & Water Rescue Team.

head of the department.

Help is badly needed

As he talked about the problems facing volunteer fire departments, Chief Wagner noted that the membership at Highland Lake is rapidly “aging out... we only have two members that are under 40 years old. About six are in their 40s, a couple in their 50s, and the rest are 60 on up,” That includes two 83-year-old active firefighters.

“The fire services and ambulance services, everybody, are in desperate need of people,” said Wagner. “The whole culture and environment has changed; people just don’t have the time to commit, or they just take it for granted. It’s coming to a head. We’ve seen it coming for years. We need help desperately; everybody does.”

Wagner said that residents of the area “can’t afford paid departments,” as the cost of paid firefighters and equipment is beyond the reach of local municipalities. “Unless some-

How much does equipment cost?

Asked about the cost of equipment, Wagner said that a basic set of turnout gear for a firefighter ranges from **\$3,500-\$4,000**, air-packs go for upwards of **\$10K** each, the price of hose has jumped dramatically to an additional **\$800** over last year’s prices for a 500-foot section, a new pumper goes for between **\$450,000** and **\$800,000** and a new ladder apparatus will set them back **\$1 million-plus**.

The Highland Lake VFD divers pay for their gear—a basic set costs **\$4,000 to \$5,000**; while dry suits sell for **\$1,800 to \$2,800**.

“It’s all their personal equipment,” said Wagner of the dive team.

thing changes, it’s not good... we need young people who can commit to fire schools, and also people who might be retired to drive trucks, pump the trucks.

“People have the misconception that in order to be a fireman, you need to go into a burning building, but there’s a ton of other jobs: driving a truck, fire police, surface support for a dive team, boat operation... we need help with everything,” he said.

Wagner is a member of Highland Lakes VFD Dive & Water Rescue team, a highly trained unit of the department that specializes in water rescue and diving recovery operations. He is the co-captain.

“Last year we were incredibly busy; 90 to 95 percent of the calls were on the Delaware River, and between the river and a couple of lakes it seemed like it was nonstop from the beginning of May right through the end of October,” he said.

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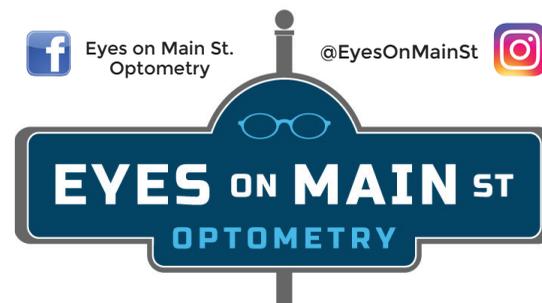
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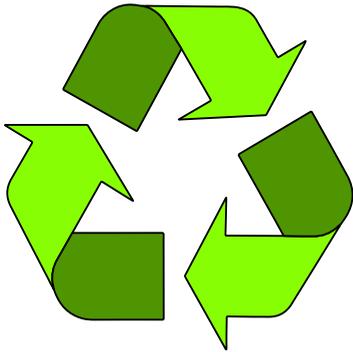
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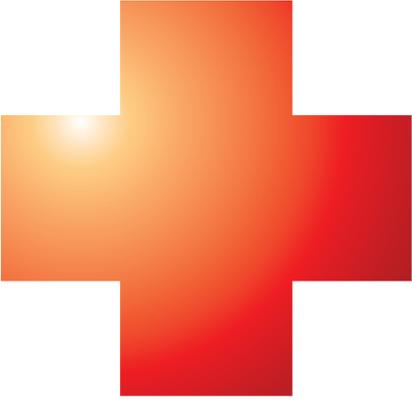
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The first first responders

By TED WADDELL

WHITE LAKE, NY — The Sullivan County E-911 Communications Center, a centralized dispatch service, located at the Sullivan County International Airport, was established in 1987.

In the early years, it operated in a small space, fielding calls from individual fire companies that answered their own landline phones, and then sent out the calls for help through an answering service in Liberty.

“Then some fire departments and ambulance corps determined it would be best to have a centralized dispatch system operating out of a single room at the airport, with two dispatchers who received calls on a seven-digit number,” said Alex Rau, the county’s E-911 coordinator.

For the record, this old number, 845/583-7100, is still active, but people in need of emergency assistance in case of fire, medical issues or law enforcement response should *always call 911*.

“As time went on and technology advanced, there was a need for Sullivan County to get on the bandwagon with 911, so in 1999 we flipped the switch, and in 2000 moved into this building, which became the 911 center,” said Rau, a 26-year veteran of the emergency medical services (EMS) community.

According to the center’s mission statement, Sullivan County E-911 is tasked “to provide all residents and visitors with professional, expedient and efficient 911 dispatch services for all fire, EMS and police emergency calls. To answer all non-emergency calls promptly, professionally and courteously and either resolve the caller’s issue or refer the caller to the appropriate person or agency that can resolve the issue.”

At present, the county’s E-911 commu-

nications center provides services to the area’s 40 fire departments, all 15 ambulance corps, and nine law enforcement agencies, including the New York State Police, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and officers of the New York Department of Environmental Protection.

Last year, the center processed 91,625 telephone calls and dispatched agencies to 39,280 of them, an increase of 4,011 calls.

That breaks down to 6,407 fire calls, 14,906 EMS calls and 17,967 police calls.

All categories saw an increase over 2020—18 percent, 12 percent and eight percent respectively.

In 2020, the center handled 35,269 calls, dispatched 5,445 fire calls, 13,228 EMS and 16,596 police.

And on top of that, “The call volume increases about four times in the summertime,” said Rau. “It can get pretty busy.”

One thing the center’s dispatchers don’t enjoy getting are those calls when folks put their iPhones in a back pocket, and if the pressure on a couple of buttons is just right, the smartphone autodial 911 as an SOS feature.

The dispatchers can’t determine if it’s a real emergency call, so agencies are dispatched just to make sure. Particularly if “there are suspicious sounds in the background or somebody is yelling,” he said.

“Be selective; try to be conservative,” said Rau, when it comes to calling 911. But when in doubt, don’t hesitate to call for assistance, making certain to give the answering dispatcher as much information as you can, including the type of emergency, exact location and your name and contact information.

On the flip side, if you have chronic back pain or a sore tooth that’s been giving you



RR photos by Ted Waddell

Alex Rau, Sullivan County EMS coordinator, is pictured with Megan Sauer, a firefighter from the Liberty Fire Department, at the February 22 memorial service for William “Billy” Steinberg. Steinberg, a veteran officer with the Forestburgh Fire Department, died in the line of duty while battling a structure fire that was allegedly sparked by an arsonist.

“The call volume increases about four times in the summertime,” said Rau. “It can get pretty busy.”

fits for a couple of weeks, think at least twice before dialing 911, as you’d be tying up emergency resources.

As noted on the county’s website posting explaining the communications center, “911 is the first link in the medical survival chain... Critical procedures such as CPR, airway management and childbirth, just to name a few, can be started before more advanced help arrives.”

The center employs 16 full-time dispatchers, along with three part-timers, all with at least three years of EMS, fire or police experience. They are, in Rau’s words, “active in the field of emergency services, so they have a flavor of what goes on in the field.”

Education for the cadre of highly dedicated dispatchers to become certified public safety communicators involves a basic 40-hour class and a three-month training period, followed by a six-week online class, CPR and Narcan instruction. There’s “a lot of on-the-job training,” and 21 hours of continuing education every year.

“Our compass for helping people is always to treat every caller like it’s your mom or dad, always do the right thing for the caller and the patient,” said Rau.

Noting that the current 911 system is still derived from phone company-monitored databases, Rau said that 911 will soon be entering into what he called the “next-generation 911.” A committee is looking into how “we are going to receive calls... pictures of evildoers sent to us as photos, then sent to law enforcement responding units... and text messages disseminated to people in the field.”

Asked why he got into EMS and later E-911 communications, Rau replied, “It’s a rewarding career to be able to help people in their time of need. We are the first interface with the public in an emergency... we are the first first responders.”



Control center. Alex Rau is head of the Sullivan County E-911 Communications Center. He is pictured with Ashley Gettel, a newly hired dispatcher.

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845/794-8961

Rock Hill Volunteer Ambulance Corps

96 Lake Louise Marie Rd., Rock Hill, NY
Captain: Neal Meddaugh
www.rockhillems.org/
845/794-6985

Roscoe & Rockland Volunteer Ambulance Corp

1969 Old Rte. 17, Roscoe, NY
Captain: Karrie Jara
Facebook: Roscoe-Rockland Volunteer Ambulance Corp
607/498-4600

Roscoe/Rockland Fire Department

1964 Old Rte. 17, Roscoe, NY
Chief: Guy Baker
Facebook: Roscoe Rockland Fire Department
607/498-4292

Smallwood/Mongaup Valley Fire Department

181 Ballard Rd., Smallwood, NY
Chief: Charlie Kalinowski
Facebook: SmallwoodMongaupValleyFireDepartment
845/583-5487

Sullivan Paramedicine, Inc. (MobileMedic, a commercial EMS provider)

266 Main St., Hurleyville, NY
Captain: Albee Bockman
www.mobilemedic-ems.com
845/436-9111

Summitville Fire Department

3978 Rte. 209, Summitville, NY
Chief: Robert Hufcut
Facebook: SummitvilleFireCompany
845/888-5531

Swan Lake Fire Department

52 Stanton Corners Rd., Swan Lake, NY
Chief: Don Sherwood
845/292-6918

Tusten Volunteer Ambulance Service

6509 State Rte. 97, Narrowsburg, NY
Captain: Jason Welton
Facebook: TustenVolunteerAmbulanceService
845/252-3336



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Thank You for your continued support for the last 76 years of fire service to our community.

Officers & Members of
The Yulan Fire Department Inc

Remember: in an emergency, always call 911.

Upper Delaware Ambulance Corps

26 Kellam Bridge Rd., Hankins, NY
 Captain: Connor Duffy
 Facebook: Upper Delaware VAC
845/887-6070

Westbrookville Volunteer Fire Department

39 Pine Kill Rd., Westbrookville, NY
 Chief: Bo Tunno
 Facebook: Station34Fire
845/754-8848

White Lake Fire Company

1596 Rte. 17B, White Lake, NY
 Chief: Josh Cunningham
 Facebook: whitelakefirerescue35
845/583-5170

White Sulphur Springs Fire Department

3352 State Rte. 52, White Sulphur Springs, NY
 Chief: Scott Austin
 Facebook: WSSFD36
845/292-5468

Woodbourne Fire Department

355 Firehouse Rd., Woodbourne, NY
 Chief: David Brundage
845/434-6763

Woodbourne Fire Company No. 1 (EMS)

355 Rte. 52, Woodbourne, NY
 Captain: Moses Sprei
 Facebook: Woodbourne Fire Co #1
845/434-6763

Woodridge Fire Department

2 Green St., Woodridge, NY
 Chief: Nolan Akerley
 Facebook: woodridgefiredept
845/434-6893

Wurtsboro Fire Department

54 Pine St., Wurtsboro, NY
 Chief: Dustin Graham
 Facebook: wurtsborofd
845/888-4611

Youngsville Fire Department

1822 Shandalee Rd., Youngsville, NY
 Chief: James Bingay
 Facebook: YVFDPA61
845/482-3600

Yulan Fire Department

216 Airport Rd., Yulan, NY
 Chief: Phil Deyermon
 Facebook: yulanfd
845/557-8483

*Information correct as of January 1, 2022.
 Source: sullivanny.us/Departments/Fire, department Facebook pages and websites.*

In Pike County, PA:

Blooming Grove Fire Department—Main Station

484 Rte. 739, Lords Valley, PA
570/775-7355

Blooming Grove Volunteer Fire Department—Substation

605 Blooming Grove Rd., Hawley, PA
570/775-7122

Central Volunteer Fire Department

Westcolang Road, Rowland, PA
 Chief: Pete Luzier
570/685-7344

Delaware Township Volunteer Ambulance Corps

135 Park Rd., Dingmans Ferry, PA
 Facebook: dtvac
570/828-2345

Dingman Township Volunteer Fire Department #26

680 Log Tavern Rd., Milford, PA
570/686-3696

Delaware Township Volunteer Fire Company #28

131 Wilson Hill Rd., Dingmans Ferry, PA
 Chief: Michael Cairns
 Facebook: at dtvac
570/828-2223

Forest Volunteer Fire Department #81

1129 Towpath Rd., Hawley, PA
 Chief: Tim Knapp
 www.forestfirerescue.com
570/226-3491

Greeley Volunteer Fire Department #23

Route 590, Greeley, PA
 Chief: Billy Mckinnel
 Facebook: at greeleyfire23
570/685-7537

Hemlock Farms Volunteer Fire & Rescue Company #29

1053 Hemlock Farms, Lords Valley, PA
 www.hemlockfirerescue.com
570/775-6447

Lackawaxen Township Volunteer Fire Department

Route 590, Lackawaxen, PA
 Chief: Jim Johanson
570/685-7330

Lackawaxen Township Volunteer Ambulance Service

109 Rte. 590, Greeley, PA
 lackawaxenems.com
570/685-4022

Matamoras Fire Department

506 Avenue N, Matamoras, PA
 Facebook: at Matamoras Fire Department
570/491-4154

Milford Fire Department

107 W. Catherine St., Milford, PA
 Facebook: at Milford Fire Department & EMS
570/296-6121

Mill Rift Volunteer Fire Department

139 Bluestone Blvd., Millrift, PA
570/491-4850

Pike County Advanced Life Support

Dingmans Ferry, PA
570/296-2580

Promised Land Volunteer Fire and Ambulance

Route 390, Greentown, PA
 Chief: Terry Walck
 Facebook: Promised Land Volunteer Fire & Ambulance
570/676-3818

Shohola Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company

325 Rte. 434, Shohola, PA
 Chief: Jeff DeGroat
 www.shoholafirerescue.com
570/559-7525

Tafton Volunteer Fire Company

35 Rte. 507, Tafton, PA
 Chief: M. Miller
570/226-4273

Westfall Township Fire Department

101 Mountain Ave., Matamoras, PA
 Facebook: westfallfire
570/491-4717

Source: Pike County Chamber of Commerce website, Lackawaxen Township website, countyoffice.org, fire/ambulance company websites

In Wayne County, PA:

Beach Lake Fire Company

1033 Beach Lake Hwy., Beach Lake, PA
 Facebook: Beach Lake Fire Co.
570/729-7779

Damascus Township Volunteer Ambulance Corps

1290 Cocheton Tpk, Damascus, PA
 Facebook: Damascus Township Volunteer Ambulance Corps

Equinunk Volunteer Fire Company

2625 Hancock Hwy., Equinunk, PA

Greene-Dreher Volunteer Fire Association

460 Crestmont Dr., Newfoundland, PA
 Chief: Pete Mulcahy
 Facebook: Greene-Dreher Vol. Fire Assoc.
570/676-4207

Hawley Fire Department

10 Columbus Ave., Hawley, PA
 Chief: Scott Mead
 Facebook: Hawley Fire Dept
570/226-9820

Honesdale Fire Department

Mailing address: PO Box 385, Honesdale, PA 18431
 honedalefiredepartment.com; Facebook at HFDCO13

Chief: Steve Bates
 Deputy Chief: Brian Dulay

Honesdale Hose Company #1

540 Main St., Honesdale, PA
 Captain: Jerry Dulay

Alert Hook & Ladder Company #1

222 Willow Ave., Honesdale, PA
 Captain: Kipp Welsh
570/253-4060

Protection Engine Company #3

1205 Main St., Honesdale, PA
 Captain: Stan Pratt
570/253-1588

Texas Fire Company #4

Grove Street, Honesdale
 Captain: Deaver Swartz
570/253-5467

Lake Ariel Volunteer Fire Company

1381 Lake Ariel Hwy., Lake Ariel, PA
 Facebook: Lake Ariel Volunteer Fire Company
 570/698-5340

Lakeland Volunteer Fire Company

10 Daniels Rd., Lakeville, PA
 Chief: Dave Fillebrown
 lakevillevolfiredept.com
570/226-2607

Northern Wayne Fire Company

1663 Crosstown Hwy., Lakewood, PA
 Facebook: NWFCo3
570/798-2335

Pleasant Mount Emergency Services

161 Great Bend Tpk., Pleasant Mount, PA
 pmes28.com
570/448-2963

Seelyville Volunteer Fire Company

1200 Bridge St., Seelyville, PA
 Facebook: Seelyville Volunteer Fire Company
570/253-1425

Welcome Lake Fire Company

99 Cosgrove Rd., Beach Lake, PA
 Facebook: Welcome Lake Fire and Rescue
570/729-7331

White Mills Fire Department

695 Texas Palmyra Hwy., White Mills, PA
 Chief: Shane Farrell
 whitemillsfiredept.com
570/253-4433



Thank you to all our emergency medical service providers this week and all year round!



EMS WEEK

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Garnet Health Medical Center – Catskills
 68 Harris Bushville Road
 Harris, NY 12742
 (845) 794-3300

Garnet Health Medical Center – Catskills
Grover M. Hermann Hospital
 8881 NYS Route 97
 Callicoon, NY 12723
 (845) 333-6800

garnethealth.org

DIVING

search, rescue and recovery

By TED WADDELL

SULLIVAN COUNTY, NY — On February 20, a couple of young women riding an almost-new four-wheeler broke through the ice in White Lake during the annual King of the Ice festival.

By all post-event accounts, the riders narrowly escaped death in the frigid waters of the lake. But they managed to get to shore after struggling in the freezing water. There, with the help of an unidentified Good Samaritan, they were taken to the local firehouse.

Two weeks to the day after the near-fatal accident, members of the Sullivan County Dive & Rescue Team showed up in force at the scene to stage a recovery operation. At the same time, the operation served as a real-time training exercise for the divers and support staff.

That Sunday, the team gathered at the White Lake Fire Department for a pre-operation briefing, during which the trio of assigned divers was given pre-dive medical checkups, while the onshore support staff received detailed instructions.

Dan Tamburro, the father of Amanda, his 25-year-old daughter and the driver of the four-wheeler, was on hand to witness the recovery of the sunken vehicle.

“Amanda and her friend Nicole were out on the ice during the ice fishing contest two weeks ago, and they fell through the ice,”

he said. “They went under, my daughter got up on the ice, but fell through again, but was able to pull her friend out.” Luckily someone came along to take the shivering young women to the White Lake Firehouse, he added.

“Thank God for him,” Tamburro said, noting that his daughter and the Good Samaritan now share a common experience. When younger, the man once fell through the ice but lived to tell the harrowing tale.

Several local fire departments, some with their own specialized water rescue squads, as well as EMS teams, were involved in the recovery/training operation: White Lake, Kauneonga Lake, Youngsville, Wurtsboro, Bloomingburg, Neversink, Highland Lake, Narrowsburg and Lava.

Joseph Ratner of the Youngsville Fire Department serves as captain of the Sullivan County Dive & Rescue Team.

He said that the recovery operation was a good training opportunity. “Because if a person was in the water, like when if a motor vehicle went through the ice, we’d know how to get them out.”

Later on, after the vehicle was hauled out, Ratner explained the importance of immediately calling 911 for help in cases where people are submerged in cold water, as the mammalian diving reflex can automatically kick in, allowing rescuers to potentially revive victims after lengthy periods underwater.



RR photos by Ted Waddell

Thomas Davies, a volunteer firefighter with the Youngsville Fire Department and a member of the Sullivan County Dive & Rescue team, was designated as the primary diver during the recovery operation at White Lake.

“Especially in winter, if somebody goes through the ice and falls to the bottom, there’s a good chance we can recover people who have been submerged,” he said, noting that in water-related emergencies, fire departments must request the dive team through the Sullivan County Emergency 911 Center.

As with most first-responder agencies, “manpower’s always a problem... especially during the week.” Ratner said that the dive team often relies upon mutual aid from other departments with water rescue skills. “We all train together so we’re on the same page.”

The team can request assistance from water rescue units in Ulster County and Orange County in New York State, or Ledgesdale and Matamoras in Pennsylvania.

Ratner said the team is trained in vehicle underwater extraction, ice diving and recovery, surface ice rescue and what he called “regular water recovery.”

“I started out on this team even before I learned how to dive, he said.

Warren Wagner, chief of the Highland Lake Fire Department, is a certified rescue diver and serves as co-captain of the dive and rescue team.

While helping to handle safety lines attached to the divers in the water—and at times under the ice—he talked about the specialized techniques and unique hazards related to ice diving, as compared to the dangers of cave diving and the relative safety of open water diving.

“We operate with a minimum of three divers suited up: primary diver, a backup diver and a 90-percent diver, and at least two

What’s the mammalian diving reflex?

It’s a series of physiological responses to immersion that overrides the basic homeostatic reflexes, allowing air-breathing vertebrates—that’s us—to endure submersion for a long time.

support people [on shore],” he said, noting that the area has numerous lakes, ponds and rivers, all of which can prove suddenly deadly to the unwary or ill-equipped.

At the conclusion of the recovery/training operation, the four-wheeler, located approximately 105 feet from the shoreline, at a depth of 16 feet with good underwater visibility, was hauled back to dry land by the team. Lifting airbags and brute strength were used, with all hands on deck.

Thomas Davies, a volunteer firefighter and specialty rescue diver with the Youngsville Fire Department, was the primary diver charged with locating the sunken vehicle and attaching the first recovery line.

This was his reaction to the mission, and why he signed up as a volunteer 16 years ago.

“It was very cold. I’m glad we got the four-wheeler out of there, and volunteering helps keep the community together.”

For more photos, visit www.riverreporter.com.



Brian Hulstlander of the Bloomingburg Fire Department served as the backup diver during the operation to pull a submerged four-wheeler out of the ice-covered lake. He is pictured having his diving equipment double checked by Joe Ratner, captain of the dive and rescue team.

Ready to become a

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER?

Before diving into an intensive training program with your local fire department, it's important you're sure about becoming a volunteer firefighter. To better understand if becoming a volunteer firefighter is for you, ask yourself the questions below.

Are you willing to give up the occasional full night of rest to help others?

Do you find it important to give back to the community in meaningful ways?

Do you feel your mental health is robust and that you can perform responsibilities without experiencing undue stress and/or anxiety?

Are you looking for a community of others who enjoy helping people in times of fear or loss?

Do you meet all of the general and specific requirements for becoming a volunteer firefighter?

If you answered "yes" to these questions, you may be an excellent fit for being a volunteer firefighter.

The next step:

Contact your local fire department

One of the first – and most important – things you learn about being a volunteer firefighter is that you can't go it alone. Researching what volunteering entails and how you can get started is a great place to begin, but getting in touch with your local fire department is the best way to find out all the specifics. Try speaking with the fire chief and find out what it means to be a member of the department. Some of the questions you may want to ask include:

Are there residency restrictions?

What's involved in the screening process?

How many hours do volunteers work?

Does the department provide fire safety equipment or do I?



Duties of a volunteer firefighter

The duties of a volunteer firefighter span beyond putting out fires. Volunteer firefighters perform a multitude of important tasks to keep others safe, maintain their equipment and ensure the department can continue serving their community. Some of the most common duties are listed below.

Fire emergencies

Volunteer firefighters train and respond to fire outbreaks in the same way as paid firefighters. Some responsibilities include setting up ladders, connecting hoses to hydrants, fire suppression, and using methods to prevent fire spread. After responding to an emergency or incident, volunteer firefighters must prepare the engine for its next call and create an official report about the incident to file with the state.

Emergency medical services

Volunteer firefighters often administer first aid or CPR to individuals hurt in fire, accidents, or other types of emergencies, and transfer that duty to EMS personnel when they arrive on the scene. All volunteers receive training on basic life-support methods.

Search and rescue

When an individual or group of people go missing or are in imminent danger, volunteers may participate in search and rescue efforts. These may take place in bodies of water, remote spaces, mountainous areas, or even urban settings. Volunteers work in teams to cover larger areas of ground in shorter amounts of time.

Scene safety

After the outbreak of a fire or in the aftermath of a large wreck, volunteer firefighters who have been trained in fire police help reroute traffic, set up barriers to maintain a reasonable flow of traffic around the scene.

Training

When not responding to an emergency, volunteer firefighters train weekly at their department. Training might include equipment repair, vehicle and gear inspections and firematic skills, such as establishing a water supply and laddering a building, as well as fire suppression.

Fundraising

Fundraising represents a vital component of any fire department, and volunteer firefighters often take part in initiatives to bring money in. Activities they may participate in include barbecues, breakfasts, dinners, raffles and other events. They may also work in an administrative capacity to apply for grants.

**Call to find out
how you can
help today!**



Get involved

There will always be a need for people who care, who help, who heal. As new tragedies shake us and new problems challenge us, we do more than fight fires and staff ambulances.

Volunteer firefighters and emergency service personnel are trained and equipped professionally to serve and protect their communities with pride. From the birth of a nation to modern days, the volunteer emergency service personnel has been at its best when times are at their worst.

When you join a volunteer firefighting or emergency service family, you honor a great tradition of stepping up whenever and wherever help is needed while also improving yourself.

We teach

When you join a volunteer fire service or ambulance corps, you learn to use the most advanced technology and tools available to protect and serve your community.

We train

Ordinary men and women are trained to do extraordinary things when they join the volunteer fire service and ambulance corps. All at no charge.

We serve together

Teamwork is at the center of all this training and equipment. The brother- and sisterhood of the emergency services share the same basic training and rewarding experience in addition to the personal rewards of life-changing growth that you can only find in volunteering to provide emergency services.

In addition to the personal rewards of special service to the community, volunteers enjoy several tangible benefits.

- FREE TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT
- FREE HEALTH CHECKUPS
- SCHOLARSHIPS
- TAX BREAKS
- INSURANCE COVERAGE

Source: FireinYou.org