

From the Fire Chief's Desk ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

John R. Flynn, Fire Marshal

Who Are Your Firefighters?

Let me start by painting a picture for you... It's a beautiful, warm evening and the whole family is together. You are at your favorite restaurant having a great time laughing and catching up on life. The waiter comes over and everyone orders their favorite meal; you order a \$26 steak dinner. A little while later, the waiter brings your hot food and sets it in front of you. Your eyes are wide, your mouth is watering and the smell is what you have been craving all day. With fork and knife in hand ready to devour



it..... "BEEP BEEP BEEP", the fire pager goes off, "Report of a structure fire". Without hesitation, you jump up, give a nod to the family and off you go; leaving behind once again that great meal and the special time with your family (another cold meal, another ride home your family will have to

find). Can you or would you do this? There are some very special people in our community that do it all the time without complaint or hesitation.

These are your Hermitage and Patagonia Firefighters... dedicated to our community and the people they serve. These are the men and women who respond when you are in need. These are the people who will risk a lot (their lives) to save a lot (your life and your loved one's life). These are the people I am honored to stand next to and have them in my life.

Some of the responsibilities and training a firefighter has to go through is very time consuming. They train every Thursday

night for 3 hours, not including the specialized training several weekends during the year, attend and conduct public education and special events, fund-raise to offset expenses, maintain all the fire department equipment including 22 pieces of apparatus and, on top of all that, respond to emergency calls. Most of our firefighters have reached the level of Firefighter I which they have

to complete a 196 hour training course before they can be certified. But here is the kicker; they do all this for "FREE!!!" The Hermitage and Patagonia Fire Departments are comprised of over 50 active volunteer firefighters with three paid staff: Chief, Deputy Chief and a secretary. They cover approximately 35 square miles of residential, commercial and industrial areas with a population of over 35,000 people on any given day.

I am writing this in honor of all the past and present firefighters who have served our community with pride and honor. I am very proud of all the accomplishments that these men and women have achieved. I ask you, the public, the next time you encounter one of these heroes, thank them for what they do and for putting their life on the line for complete strangers. Thank them for enabling you to sleep at night knowing if something happens they will come and solve your problem. Thank them for saving you thousands of dollars in taxes by being a volunteer. Thank them for eating a cold meal and leaving their families when you are in need. These men and women deserve to be on a pedestal. "Volunteers are unpaid not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless".

