

Between Alarms

Fall 2010

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The GRFD'S 2009 Retirees with Chief Knapp and President Dubay

The biggest crowd in recent memory (totaling almost 200 people) gathered together at the GRFF Union Hall on September 24, 2010 to honor Local 366's latest batch of retirees. Pictured L-R: Chief Knapp, William Westveer, Ron Truer, Rick Schaefer-Space, Tim Schellenberg, Steve Playter, John Frueh, Mary Johnson, Dan Niedzwiecki, Denny Balkon, Jeff Ehlert, President Dubay. Not pictured: Harry Damon, Mark Danley, Doug Miller, Jeff VanDellen, and Dave VanHolstyn.

Many friendships were renewed over hors d'oeuvres and conversation about the "good old days" could be heard during the sumptuous catered meal. After dessert was served, everyone took their seats for the formal ceremony.

Chief Laura Knapp and Union President Joe Dubay each took the floor and spoke from the heart about some of their fondest reminiscences of the honorees; both of them had worked their entire careers side-by-side with most of the group- a subtle but significant difference from previous years' retirees.

Each honoree was greeted with loud cheers and applause as they were called up to receive their City plaques and other awards; some taking the opportunity to offer thanks or say a few words. After the ceremony, the revelry was again in full swing. Hearty exchanges, laughing and joking, drinking and dancing prevailed until the closing hour, with some stating it is the most fun they have all year!

Hello and Happy Holidays! On behalf of the Grand Rapids Firefighter's Building Corporation, we are pleased to have the "Between Alarms" to help stay connected with our members.

2010 has actually been a busy year here at the "building", and yet somewhat uneventful. Our tenant situation is positive in that Family Video signed a 3 year option on renewing their lease. Senior Meals successfully moved from their existing 3500 square feet to the 5000+ square feet space immediately to the north. We assisted with some of the build-out costs and are very happy with how their new space helps in making our whole complex look updated. They should be in place for the next 10 years. The space that they left is currently unoccupied, but we have a few positive leads for prospective new tenants.

It's hard to believe, but 10 years have passed since our remodel. Unfortunately, the flooring in the Hall is showing it's age. During the first two weeks of January, most of the flooring will be replaced, along with some painting and a general interior spruce up.

This year's Annual Building Corporation Meeting/Dinner is as always, the 4th Wednesday in April and falls on April 27th (B-10). As a reminder, this is open and free to all members, active and retired. Come on out for a great time of fellowship.

The Directors for 2010 are Jeff Smith, Tony Rohloff, Dave Noorman, Larry Hayden, Jeff Vanderwall, Dave Olivier, and Union Rep. Todd Vanderwall. The Facility Manager is John Frederick and can be reached at 616-485-1172. Any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me or any of the directors. I can be reached at 616-560-7999. Also, don't forget, our website is: www.grfirehall.com

Thanks, President Jeffrey G. Smith (Smitty)

Hello Brothers and Sisters. I was asked to give a synopsis of the fundraising event at the firefighter's hall for injured and now retired brother, Bryan Blattert. I couldn't think of a better recap than the one that brother Ryan Sparks wrote to say thanks to the donors. So what follows is the thank you letter that was sent to give our appreciation to those who gave. (After all was said and done, the total raised was over \$20,000 and Cole's, VanEerdens, Family Fare and Pepsi contributed in a major way). Many people volunteered their time to make the event successful and Bryan, his girlfriend Michelle, and their family were awestruck by the support. Thank you very much. Red (Steve MacBride)

Recently, you were asked to donate to a cause that perhaps you knew nothing about. Bryan Blattert, a Grand Rapids Firefighter, was tragically injured, leaving him paralyzed from the chest down and ending his career as a firefighter. Fittingly, we felt September 11 was a perfect day to honor our wounded brother, as our nation also paused to remember those who paid the ultimate price for their service. Generously—even despite this tough economic climate—you sacrificed by contributing to someone you didn't even know; just like our nation pulled together after that horrible day nine years ago.

Our goal was to honor Bryan and raise some money. The night included a spaghetti dinner, bake sale and silent auction. Over 350 people from across the state attended. Throughout the night, the look on Bryan's face was one of complete bewilderment; he was truly overwhelmed by the expressions of love and support from so many. For someone so dedicated to helping others, it is very difficult and humbling to be on the receiving end. Yet he pulled it off with class, never losing his sense of humor along the way. Because of you—and dozens of other kind-hearted, like-minded individuals and businesses—we were able to raise nearly \$15,000 that night! Every penny will go to Bryan to help defray the ongoing medical care expenses he will incur. His most pressing need is to retrofit his pick-up with hand controls so that he can drive again. (Probably straight to his hunting blind with crossbow in hand!) As he begins to adjust to the major life changes he is facing, the freedom to transport himself will be a huge boost to his self-confidence as he regains his independence. The money raised is more than enough to cover that expense!

We wanted to take the opportunity to express our deepest gratitude for the part you played in making the fundraiser a phenomenal success. It is said that firefighters have a unique bond that links them together—a brotherhood. We welcome you into that brotherhood as partners who stood with us to support one of our own and made that night one he will never forget. Bryan committed his life to serving others. Though he may not have known you, you can bet that if you needed help, he would have been there for you. Thank *you* for being there for *him*.

With sincere appreciation, The firefighters, friends and family of Bryan Blattert

RETIREE CORNER

For all retirees who were not able to attend our fall meeting, we would like to bring you up to date on some of the Association activities over the past year; and subsequently we'll do 6 month updates.

Meeting October 12, 2010, called to order by Pres. Vander Wall at 10:10AM with 78 members signing in Minutes and Treasurer's report were approved as published. Treasury has \$2,043.70

Don Poll reported on the health conditions of several members followed by a brief discussion.

Pres. Vander Wall reported on health plan changes and asked if we need to hold a special meeting with insurance representatives to get information, as the plans and premiums are getting confusing. We agreed to set a meeting in late October or early November and notify the entire membership once the date is finalized.

Marty Staal told of a new government rule requiring us to sign a slip telling the government we are giving an insurance rep. permission to talk to us, and that rep may only discuss the ins. listed on the Scope Of Insurance form developed by our new federal administration.

Pres. Vander Wall told us we are getting a 13th check this year but probably not for the next 2 or 3, or maybe longer. It will be in the low to mid \$400 range.

Tony Pruzinski asked if we must pay income tax on the amount the city pays for retirees insurance. Evidently, for those retirees who are under 65 and do not pay for their health insurance, there may be a tax liability.

Jack Schooley commented on the wonderful editorial in the Oct. 9 Grand Rapids Press written by Steve Adamczyk.

Pres. Vander Wall told us that Local 366 is presently not working on any medical supplements for retirees.

Motion by John Ball, Second by Walt McVeigh directing us to send a registered letter to our Mayor and each Commissioner asking them to respond to our request for representation on the G. R. Police And Fire Pension Board. Passed unanimously (Sent on Oct.28, delivered and signed for Oct. 29, 7:42 AM. No response as of Nov.19 that I've heard of.)

Motion to adjourn by Earl Tefft, Second by John Datema to adjourn at 11:20 AM. Passed unanimously.

Additionally, Pres. Vander Wall has asked City Human Resources Director Mari Beth Jelks that the City do what is necessary to enable some of our retirees to take advantage of a law that allows public safety retirees to pay their hospitalization costs directly from their pension. This would mean they could pay with pre-tax dollars and therefore be cheaper for the retiree. The police retirees have also been discussing this with the city.

More to come!!

GRFD Relay for Life Team Fighting to raise \$25,000

By Kristy Kehl

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to spend some time in the hospital with 6-year old Allison Pyle (daughter of Lt. Dave Pyle) after her latest surgery to remove a new cancerous "bump" from her lung. The day I arrived, she and mother Joanne were waiting to be discharged. While they were all packed and anxious to leave, there was still a long wait for the hospital to run their gamut of tests, produce the necessary paperwork and finalize the discharge. Allison was her normal cheery self. A ball of energy as she towed "Harvey" (her IV pole) down the hallway, walking laps around the hospital and checking every accessible hallway. After she completed her rounds, we returned to her room for some good ole' fashioned cards. While I always enjoy a good card game, I'm not always a fan of losing. I proceeded to lose almost every game we played for the next hour or more.

While Allison makes the most of her hospital visits and remains quite a little trooper, her cancer is a disease that's hard for me to comprehend. When thoughts of her enter my mind, the first thing I think about is her smile and her always cheerful attitude, but as my mind starts to wander, I often think about the struggles that she and her family have faced over the last 2 years of her life. I think about: 1) the amount of times she's been "poked" with a needle. Something that none of us find pleasant, especially a 6 year-old. 2) the number of trips they've made to different Doctors' Offices, Emergent Care Centers, and to the Hospital for "sleepovers". 3) the number of pills that she has to take to stay healthy, for her Chemo Treatments, and to keep her Blood Pressure from skyrocketing out of control. 4) the number of school days she's missed as she was too sick or lacked the energy to attend. Everything on this list is something that children and their families should never have to deal with. Allison's list could even be longer than this, but I want to get to my point.....

Allison is without a doubt, a Fighter. Many other members of our Fire Department have also been Fighters as they've fought and won their battle against Cancer. We all have family members and friends who are struggling with Cancer and while there are great advances being made as they work to find a cure, there is still much work to be done.

In order to help with this work, **I challenge you to step up and join our Relay for Life Team as we fight together to help find that cure.** For the past 2 years, the GRFD has had a team in the Relay for Life, an annual fundraiser for the American Cancer Society. While we have done well in our fundraising efforts, there is much more that we can do to help. **This year's Relay for Life event takes place on June 10-11, 2011 near the Gerald R. Ford Museum in Ah-Nab-Awen Park.**

Our fundraising goal for this year is **\$25,000** and we'll be kicking off our campaign by donating the proceeds from the Christmas Crawl to get us rolling. While this will be a good start, we can't accomplish our **\$25,000 goal** without your help. **Joining the team and raising money is simple and this is all we ask of you:**

- 1) **Commit to walk 1 hour during the event** (*the event starts on June 10 @ 1:00pm and lasts until June 11 @ 1:00pm...one of the only events that we're ALL off-duty for at least a portion of the event.*)
- 2) **Join our Team and commit to Raise \$100** (*team captains will help you set-up your own personal internet page to send e-mails to your friends and family...you never even have to verbally ask them for money....**super easy**).*)
- 3) **Get your spouse and children to join the team....**what a great way to have your entire family working together for a great cause!

There are tons of family-friendly events going on during the Relay for you to enjoy. You're also welcome to bring your tent to camp-out with us overnight. We will be serving dinner, breakfast and plenty of snacks throughout the night. On Friday evening, we are hoping to have a "Battle of the Fire Stations Chili Cook-Off" with a traveling trophy and bragging rights going to the winning station. There will undoubtedly be card games going on and maybe even a little Texas Hold-Em' Tourney if someone volunteers to be the organizer.

We have all witnessed what great things can happen when we all work together as a family and as a team. **If you would like to join our Relay Team, please contact Kristy Kehl (616.644.6820) or Ed DeMaagd (616.633.3086) for more information.** *We look forward to having you join us as we Fight for a Cure!*



For a complete list of Local 366 activities, visit the Local's website www.iaff366.com

2011 JANUARY 2011

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1 ₂
2 ₁	3 ₃	4 ₂	5 ₂	6 ₃	7 ₃	8 ₄
9 ₄	10 ₅	11 ₄	12 ₆	13 ₅	14 ₅	15 ₆
16 ₆	17 ₇	18 ₇	19 ₈	20 ₇	21 ₉	22 ₈
23 ₈	24 ₉	25 ₉	26 ₁₀	27 ₁₀	28 ₁	29 ₁₀
30 ₂	31 ₁					

MARCH

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1 ₁	2 ₁	3 ₂	4 ₂	5 ₃
6 ₂	7 ₄	8 ₃	9 ₃	10 ₄	11 ₄	12 ₅
13 ₅	14 ₆	15 ₅	16 ₇	17 ₆	18 ₆	19 ₇
20 ₇	21 ₈	22 ₈	23 ₉	24 ₈	25 ₁₀	26 ₉
27 ₉	28 ₁₀	29 ₁₀	30 ₁	31 ₁		

MAY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1 ₁	2 ₁	3 ₂	4 ₂	5 ₃	6 ₃	7 ₄
8 ₃	9 ₅	10 ₄	11 ₄	12 ₅	13 ₅	14 ₆
15 ₆	16 ₇	17 ₆	18 ₈	19 ₇	20 ₇	21 ₈
22 ₈	23 ₉	24 ₉	25 ₁₀	26 ₉	27 ₁	28 ₁₀
29 ₁₀	30 ₁	31 ₁				

JULY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1 ₁ 2 ₃
3 ₂	4 ₂	5 ₃	6 ₃	7 ₄	8 ₄	9 ₅
10 ₄	11 ₆	12 ₅	13 ₅	14 ₆	15 ₆	16 ₇
17 ₇	18 ₈	19 ₇	20 ₉	21 ₈	22 ₈	23 ₉
24 ₉	25 ₁₀	26 ₁₀	27 ₁	28 ₁₀	29 ₂	30 ₁
31 ₁						

FEBRUARY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1 ₁	2 ₂	3 ₂	4 ₃	5 ₃
6 ₄	7 ₃	8 ₅	9 ₄	10 ₄	11 ₅	12 ₅
13 ₆	14 ₆	15 ₇	16 ₆	17 ₈	18 ₇	19 ₇
20 ₈	21 ₈	22 ₉	23 ₉	24 ₁₀	25 ₉	26 ₁
27 ₁₀	28 ₁₀					

APRIL

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1 ₂ 2 ₁
3 ₃	4 ₂	5 ₂	6 ₃	7 ₃	8 ₄	9 ₄
10 ₅	11 ₄	12 ₆	13 ₅	14 ₅	15 ₆	16 ₆
17 ₇	18 ₇	19 ₈	20 ₇	21 ₉	22 ₈	23 ₈
24 ₉	25 ₉	26 ₁₀	27 ₁₀	28 ₁	29 ₁₀	30 ₂

JUNE

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1 ₂	2 ₂	3 ₃	4 ₂
5 ₄	6 ₃	7 ₃	8 ₄	9 ₄	10 ₅	11 ₄
12 ₆	13 ₅	14 ₇	15 ₆	16 ₆	17 ₇	18 ₇
19 ₈	20 ₈	21 ₉	22 ₈	23 ₁₀	24 ₉	25 ₉
26 ₁₀	27 ₁₀	28 ₁	29 ₁	30 ₂		

AUGUST

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1 ₂	2 ₂	3 ₃	4 ₃	5 ₄	6 ₃
7 ₅	8 ₄	9 ₄	10 ₅	11 ₅	12 ₆	13 ₅
14 ₇	15 ₆	16 ₈	17 ₇	18 ₇	19 ₈	20 ₈
21 ₉	22 ₉	23 ₁₀	24 ₉	25 ₁	26 ₁₀	27 ₁₀
28 ₁	29 ₁	30 ₂	31 ₂			