

Volunteer firefighting: Commitment from the heart

BY JEFF VINYARD

We are lucky to live in one of the most beautiful places in the world, and we need to protect it.

I have believed in volunteering since I was very young. If you wait for a convenient time to help others, you may never make it happen. Especially with emergency situations—they don't wait for you to get off the couch.

My name is Jeff Vinyard. I have a six-year-old daughter who is fortunate enough to attend Ruch School. I moved here from Klamath Falls in 1983. I own and operate Oregon-Land.com, the real estate brokerage in the Applegate Store complex and have been in the industry since 1994, specializing in rural properties in southern Oregon. I have supported our community by providing school supplies to all the elementary students in Ruch, Williams, Jacksonville and Applegate schools, and have contributed to the American Red Cross. I'm currently an active member of APPLE, a committee formed to promote place-based education at Ruch School.

Since joining the Applegate Valley



Volunteer firefighter Jeff Vinyard and daughter Gracie.

Fire District #9 in June 2001, I have come to realize the benefits of my association with the district as a firefighter and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT).

Along with the camaraderie of being a member of this great group of dedicated volunteers and staff comes a degree of responsibility to help keep the residents of our district safe and out of harm's way whenever possible. This is a responsibility not taken lightly by the staff as well as the volunteers of our district.

Although the initial academy and training does require a small time commitment, the positive results are too numerous to list. The district's dedication to ongoing training and procurement of the most advanced equipment has propelled our district into one of the finest fire departments in the state.

The requirements to retain your standing as an active member of the Applegate Fire District Volunteer Association vary slightly depending on what station you are assigned to. The required drills and training are a very important part of being prepared for any number of emergencies. These emergencies range from wildfires to structure fires and from automobile wrecks to heart attacks and allergic reactions.

I have been a firefighter for nearly 12 years. I have been on as many as 109 alarm calls in one year, but I average in the area of 50 to 60 alarm runs a year, which is really not a huge time commitment. If

you think about it, that is only one alarm a week. Our district responds to 500 to 600 alarms a year. It gives you a feeling of pride driving back to the station with residents lining the streets with signs thanking the department for the efforts put forth in times of distress. It may not be everyone's cup of tea to run into burning buildings or forests, but you really don't know until you have had the opportunity to provide your neighbors with the potentially life-saving efforts for which you have trained.

I believe everyone who reads this either knows firsthand or knows of someone who was helped by the emergency response of a local fire district.

If you are interested in a rewarding career or would simply like to help out the community in which you live, please consider becoming a volunteer with Applegate Valley Fire District #9. It is very important for you to know that the district understands that a member's family always comes first.

For more information on our fire district or to find out more about the benefits of volunteering, stop by the headquarters at 1095 Upper Applegate Road, Jacksonville, Oregon, or call 541-899-1050.

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Fire safety lessons

BY CAREY CHAPUT

Fire Prevention Week is recognized nationally on the second week of October each year. This year's campaign message was "Know Two Ways Out."

The staff of Applegate Fire District delivered a challenge to both local elementary schools by asking everyone to participate in making family escape plans. Students were asked to complete a plan with their family, then turn it in to their principals by the end of Fire Prevention Week. A class from each school was chosen for outstanding participation. Mrs. Yerby's second-third grade blend class from Applegate School and Mrs. Hammers' second-third grade blend class from Ruch Elementary were the winners of this year's challenge. Firefighters from the Applegate Fire District drove a fire truck to each school and delivered pizzas and a safety message to the winning classes. We thank

all of the teachers and families who made this program such a success.

It's important that family escape plans show two ways out of each sleeping room and that smoke alarms have been checked for working condition. We ask everyone to have a properly operating smoke alarm outside each sleeping area; know two ways out; when you get out, stay out; and have a designated meeting place.

Fire Prevention Week is a great time to remember to practice your family escape plans, just as the end of daylight savings is a time to set your clocks back and check or replace smoke alarm batteries. Early detection is so vital to your family's survival.

Unfortunately, fires do happen, and too often they could have been avoided by just practicing fire safety.

Here are a few of the most common

fire hazards to watch out for while we enter our cooler season:

With the cooler days and nights, we will start using warming fires and space heaters again. Please be cautious of flammable material being too close to the heat source.

Please keep matches and lighters out of reach of children.

Candles are beautiful to enjoy, but should always be blown out when leaving or going to bed.

Have your chimney cleaned at the beginning of the season to reduce the hazard of having a flue fire and use well-seasoned firewood.

Many fires start in the kitchen and can be avoided by not leaving the area while cooking. Turn the stove off if you have to leave, even for just a minute.

By practicing your escape plans, you will know what to do in an emergency. Make sure that everyone in your household knows two ways out of each room. Stay low, and go to the designated meeting



Volunteer firefighter getting the best of a structure fire.

place. Call 9-1-1 as soon as you are safe, and never go back in for anything. Let us do what we train so hard to do: serve you in an emergency situation.

Please contact fire district office manager Carey Chaput at 541-899-1050 if you would like more information on any of these fire safety lessons.

Carey Chaput
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Applegate Valley Fire District

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