

Two Valley women volunteer firefighters get the job done

By
Annette McGee Rasch
IVN Contributing Writer

Volunteers serve as the backbone of the Illinois Valley Fire District, which has only four paid firefighters on staff. Women fulfill many crucial roles within the district, including that of full-fledged firefighters.

“These women are trusted and valued members of the team,” said Fire Chief Dennis Hoke.

While some assume women might not possess enough strength for the job, countless able-bodied women in fire departments worldwide utilize leverage and balance to get the job done. Women working in many traditionally male roles say if a task requires more strength than they have — and many are very strong — it is just a matter of technique, of applying that “other” muscle, the one between their ears.

Bravery comes in all shapes and sizes. When Sandi Humphres was ten years old, she hopped on her pony and herded panicked horses out of burning field.

“A field was on fire and the horses were trapped behind barbed wire,” said Humphres, a volunteer with the district since 1998. “There were full-grown men on their horses who wouldn’t go in, so I just galloped past everyone and got the job done.”

“I work side-by-side with men in all kinds of roles,” said Humphres, who is also an EMT and a sheriff’s deputy. “It’s still a male-dominated world, so you have to learn to work with them, to earn and keep their trust. You could lose that trust in one call and never get it back, but that can happen with anybody, male or female.”

Humphres says sometimes she steps back so one of the bigger men can handle a task requiring brute strength, just as a smaller man would, but adds that she has held up parts of vehicles or lifted chunks of trees out of the way.

“I know my physical limits, and won’t put myself in a position to get myself or someone else hurt,” she said.

Sometimes being smaller comes in handy. Women can be better able to navigate tight corners and wriggle into wreckage to stabilize accident victims while the vehicle is cut apart.

“One incident years ago sticks in my mind,” Humphres said. Firefighters were called to a remote location and had just one four-wheel-drive truck loaded with gear. “A man was trapped under his truck. We used air bags to lift the truck, but could only get it up so far. Because I was smaller, I crawled under the truck to get the guy out.”

District firefighters respond to

wide range of calls and are first on the scene for medical calls and traffic accidents in the Valley. Responding to fires is actually a smaller part of the role.

“Too many people think they can go faster than they should along 199,” said Lieutenant Kathy Koontz, a volunteer firefighter for almost ten years. “It’s a tragedy how many accidents could be avoided if people would just slow down.”

Koontz, who became a volunteer when she was 40, says it takes a certain kind of individual to see the kinds of things firefighters see and stay physically and mentally strong. After traumatic calls, firefighters have de-briefing sessions, where they process all aspects of the incident, to help everyone accept that everything possible was done to save lives, Koontz said.

“To stop and think about what you’re actually doing, you might think you could never do it. But once we’re on the scene, we do what we need to do to save lives,” Koontz said. “Helping people, making a difference in someone’s life when it counts the most, that’s what motivates me.”

Koontz’s favorite call was when she helped deliver a baby in the back of an ambulance.

“That was so awesome, very rewarding,” she said. “A real flip-side to the horror stories we also have to

deal with.”

“There’s tragedy, and that’s hard, but there’s triumphs too,” Humphres said. “In life, if you don’t try, you’ve already defeated yourself. It’s okay if you find out it’s not for you, there’s no shame in that. But having tried is the thing.”

Another benefit to volunteer firefighting is the camaraderie participants experience.

“It’s like a huge family, such an awesome bunch of people,” Koontz said. “We’re very close and we’re really there for each-other.”

Humphres said that raising her children while in fire service has taught them to appreciate life and people as well.

“My son is carrying on the tradition,” Humphres said. “He’s a full-time field medic in Afghanistan and he takes good care of his guys.”

Sargent Jonathon Riley is a 2004 Illinois Valley High School graduate who is finishing up his second tour of duty.

Two young men in Riley’s unit do not have family, so Humphres’ colleagues, people in the IV Fire District and the Josephine County Sheriff’s Office, have “adopted” them and send boxes of goodies.

“That’s what working in a high-stress environment does,” Humphres said. “We look out for each other and that camaraderie extends far. If some-

thing happens, you’re guaranteed that someone is going to be there for you. It drives that home.”

New volunteers for the I.V. Fire District are sought to attend an upcoming Fire Academy that begins September 7. For more information call Recruitment Officer Robert Sitton at 541-592-6632 or stop by the district office at 681 Caves Highway to learn more.



Kathy Koontz



Sandi Humphres

WHERE’S THE ALARM?

*The volunteers and staff of the
Illinois Valley Fire District
responded to these recent Emergency calls...*

08/19 - Monday

32400 block REDWOOD HWY, Medical Emergency
34000 block REDWOOD HWY, Traffic Accident
100 block PATTON BAR RD, Medical Emergency
MADRONA DR / DOGWOOD LN, Open Burn

08/20 - Tuesday

300 block S REDWOOD HWY, Trash Fire
5200 block TAKILMA RD, Outdoor Smoke
100 block KRAUSS LN, Large Vehicle Fire
4700 block WALDO RD, Medical Emergency

08/21 - Wednesday

20000 block CAVES HWY, Medical Emergency

08/22 - Thursday

600 block E RIVER ST, Fire Alarm
6000 block ROCKYDALE RD, Grass Fire
1200 block ARROWHEAD DR, Fire Alarm

08/23 - Friday

900 block WESTSIDE RD, Outdoor Smoke
300 block ARROWHEAD DR, Outdoor Smoke
19000 block CAVES HWY, Medical Emergency
200 block OLLIS RD, Medical Emergency
4000 block CAVES HWY, Grass Fire

4400 block ROCKYDALE RD, Grass Fire
300 block FINCH RD, Grass Fire
1500 block ROCKYDALE RD, Medical Emergency
200 block OLLIS RD, Medical Emergency

08/24 - Saturday

5900 block WESTSIDE RD, Medical Emergency
2500 block CAVES HWY, Medical Emergency
1000 block IDLEWILD DR, Lift Assist
1000 block IDLEWILD DR, Medical Emergency

08/25 - Sunday

TAKILMA RD / WALDO RD, Medical Emergency
700 block ALTHOUSE CREEK RD, Medical Emergency
600 block CAVES HWY, Medical Emergency, 08/26
3300 block CAVES HWY, Medical Emergency
8500 block Outdoor Smoke, Outdoor Smoke



IVFD responded to a fire on property filled with scrap and debris on Krauss Ln.

Southern Oregon Alternative Medicine



Will be returning for the monthly clinic
to their Cave Junction location at the

Jefferson State Trading Post

SEPTEMBER 12 & 23, 2013

LOCATED SOUTH OF CAVE JUNCTION AT 27893 REDWOOD HWY

IF YOU ARE TIRED OF BEING TREATED WITH PILLS, STOP BY AND SIGN-UP TODAY.

For more information, please call 541.592.6647 or visit
southernoregonalternativemedicine.com

seasons n time

Featuring Art,
Handmade Gifts,
Quilts, Yarn &
Sewing Supplies

24342B Redwood Hwy
Kerby, OR
Open: Tues-Sat, 10 to 5
seasonsntime.com

Look for the Sign!

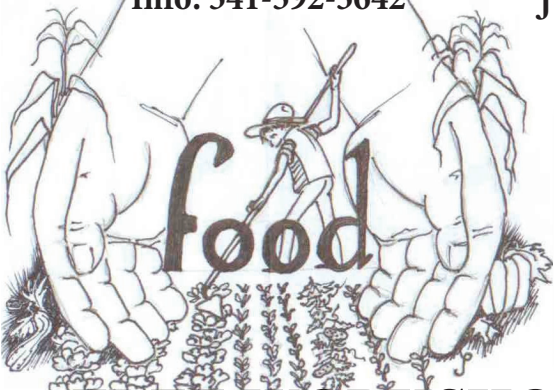


Illinois Valley Farm & Garden Festival

Saturday, September 7th, 2013 10AM to 4PM

Info: 541-592-3642

Jubilee Park, Cave Junction



FREE WORKSHOPS AND MUSIC!

PLEASE GIVE A BIG THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS:

GOLD: Wheels A'Turnin' Garden Supply (541) 592-2605, Oregon Builder's Guild LLC (541) 592-6014, Southern Oregon Beekeepers Association, Illinois Valley News, Bonnie's Botanicals (541) 592-6487, The Good Earth Organics (541) 450-3341, Chinook Bar Ranch, Betsey Norton, The Valley Times, Illinois Valley Community Development Organization & Illinois Valley Business Entrepreneurial Center, www.ivcdo.org

SILVER: Siskiyou Alpaca, The Eisner Family, Kalea's Childcare (541) 659-8870, Hope Mountain Nurseries, Waggledance Farm, Forest Edge Farm, Treesong Permaculture

BRONZE: Wild River Organic Farm, Jefferson State Trading Post, CJ Curves, Siskiyou Mountain Herbs, Frog Farm, Polly Orr, Hope Mountain Organic Garlic, IV Soil & Water Conservation District, Rowan Tree Church, Rising Dragon Martial Arts

Live Music:

10:00 - abuck63
(Irish Celtic Music)
11:30 - J Barley Band
1:00 - Guppy
2:30 - Lonesome Road



Stop in and see
Kate or Mamie!

12235 Redwood Hwy
Wonder, OR
541.476.8990

“Serving the Best Cheeseburger, with an Attitude!”

**Tuesday - Sunday
Noon - Close**

KITCHEN CLOSSES AT 8

**NOW OPEN SUNDAY’S!
RIB-EYE MADNESS NIGHT AUG. 30**