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EDITORIAL

Thank you first responders

It's a Saturday morning. You may be slowly rolling out of bed or relaxing on the couch in your PJs with a cup of coffee, not yet ready to greet the world.

A few miles away, is a packed firehouse where local EMS agencies and first responders are taking courses, required for them to be able to do what they do, even in many cases as unpaid volunteers.

They cover the costs and sometimes travel great distances to receive this training, on top of a large amount of time they already give, being there for us at our worst moments, when we need them the most.

This level of sacrifice among our first responders isn't uncommon, whether it be fire, EMS or police.

It's been said many times, but we truly cannot thank them enough.

Each year, Catskill-Delaware

Publications produces this special section to highlight these amazing departments and agencies that protect us and give so much to our community.

It is the least we can do.

We not only appreciate all that they do responding to calls, but also their professionalism. We've always had pleasant experiences with first responders when reaching out for info on incidents in an effort to keep the public informed.

While there are several ways to show your appreciation to the many local men and women who are members of the first responder community, here are just a few ideas.

- **Support their fundraisers.**

Whether it is a pancake breakfast, raffle, etc., participate.

While there, thank them for

their service. Also, we can personally attest that the food is often really good and in today's economy, you'd be hard pressed to find as good a breakfast at an affordable price. It's also a good place to put a name to a face of the men and women in uniform.

- **Pay it forward.** There probably isn't a police force, fire department or EMS agency that couldn't use a few more people. Reach out to them for more information and consider joining.

- **Buy them a cup of coffee or pay for their meal.** While first responders don't seek accolades for what they do, it never hurts to feel appreciated. This small gesture could truly make someone's day.

These are just a few ways you

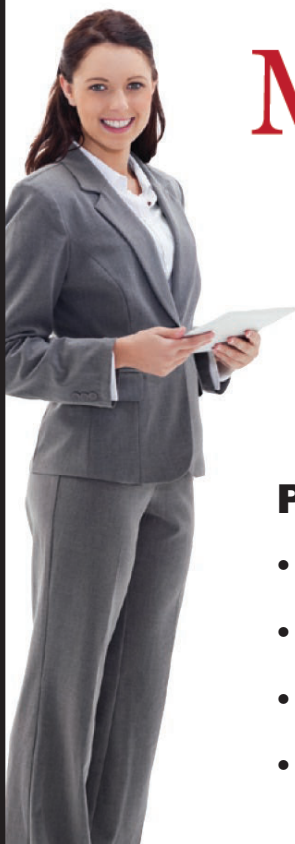
can show your appreciation to our first responders.

This publication will give you a small glimpse into what they do.

You'll find two anniversary stories, profiling the Highland Lake and Neversink Fire Departments, both of which are turning 75 this year. Congrats to both departments on such a storied history!

We also have an interview with a local police chief, preview of this September's Sullivan County Volunteer Firefighters Association Firemen's Parade, a local at a recent EMS Education Day, as well as a special documentary showcasing the men and women who volunteer with their local fire departments.

We hope this section is something they will find proud, and once again, we are so appreciative of all you do!



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FIRE DEPARTMENTS & THEIR CHIEFS

Info was current as of March 25, 2023. The phone numbers are direct lines to the firehouses. In case of emergency, please dial 911.

Beaverkill Valley FD
1524 Beaverkill Rd.
Lew Beach, NY 12758
Doug Cummings • 439-4199

Bloomingsburg Fire Company
117 Godfrey Rd., PO Box 1039
Bloomingsburg, NY 12721
Bill Tobin • 733-1000

Callicoon Vol. FD
9305 Route 97, PO Box 806
Callicoon, NY 12723
Willie Maxwell • 887-4233

Callicoon Center FD
1669 Gulf Rd., PO Box 144
Callicoon Center, NY 12724
Austin Ihlefeldt • 482-3020

★ Claryville Vol. FD
★ 1500 Denning Rd., PO Box 146
★ Claryville, NY 12725
★ **Glenn Vandenberg • 985-7270**

★ Fallsburg FD
★ 10 Railroad Plaza, PO Box 1075
★ South Fallsburg, NY 12779
★ **Jordan Kozachuk • 434-2008**

★ Forestburgh Fire Company No. 1
★ 2539 State Route 42
★ Forestburgh, NY 12777
★ **Zachary Petrowsky • 794-7899**

★ Grahamsville FD
★ 205 Main St., PO Box 331
★ Grahamsville, NY 12740
★ **Michael Kelly • 985-2260**

★ Hankins-Fremont Center FD
★ 20 Newman Hill Rd., PO Box 164
★ Hankins, NY 12741
★ **Dennis Nash • 887-2028**

★ Highland Lake FD
★ 144 Highland Rd., PO Box 65
★ Highland Lake, NY 12743
★ **Warren Wagner • 557-8788**

★ Hortonville Fire Company
★ 100 Main St., PO Box 71
★ Hortonville, NY 12745
★ **Darryl Emmett • 887-5177**

★ Hurleyville Fire Company
★ 166 Main St., PO Box 357
★ Hurleyville, NY 12747
★ **Charlie Payne • 434-4161**

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 Jeffersonville, NY 12748
Jonathan Mall • 482-4202

Kauneonga Lake E&H
 3574 State Route 55, PO Box 411
 Kauneonga Lake, NY 12749
Tim Blais • 583-4700

Kenoza Lake FD
 485 Old Taylor Rd., PO Box 51
 Kenoza Lake, NY 12750
George Slater • 482-5676

Lake Huntington Fire Company
 70 County Rd 116, PO Box 352
 Lake Huntington, NY 12752
Mike Pomes • 932-8444

★ Lava Volunteer FD
 ★ 7898 Route 52, PO Box 456
 ★ Narrowsburg, NY 12764
 ★ **Jesse Campfield** • 252-3375

★ Liberty FD
 ★ 256 Sprague Ave.
 ★ Liberty, NY 12754
 ★ **Mark Johnstone** • 295-0236

★ Livingston Manor FD
 ★ 43 Main St., PO Box 867
 ★ Livingston Manor, NY 12758
 ★ **Chris Tuleweit** • 439-4490

★ Long Eddy FD
 ★ 4 Church St., PO Box 73
 ★ Long Eddy, NY 12760
 ★ **Kevin Eaton** • 887-5926

★ Loch Sheldrake FD
 ★ 1280 State Route 52, PO Box 1005
 ★ Loch Sheldrake, NY 12759
 ★ **Pete Carey** • 434-2710

★ Lumberland FD
 ★ 1088 County Route 31, PO Box 91
 ★ Glen Spey, NY 12737
 ★ **Eric Robles** • 856-2041

★ Monticello FD
 ★ 23 Richardson Avenue
 ★ Monticello, NY 12701
 ★ **Jose Mora** • 794-6330

★ Mountindale Fire Company
 ★ 132 Main St., PO Box 49
 ★ Mountindale, NY 12763
 ★ **Andy Millman** • 434-3425



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Narrowsburg Fire Company
203 Bridge St., PO Box 184
Narrowsburg, NY 12764
David Casey • 252-3328

Neversink FD
7486 State Route 55, PO Box 627
Neversink, NY 12765
Mike Congelosi • 985-7198

North Branch FD
20 North Branch-Callicoon Center
Hwy., PO Box 28
North Branch, NY 12766
Alan Welton • 482-5134

Rock Hill FD
61 Glen Wild Rd., PO Box 116
Rock Hill, NY 12775
Robbie Green • 794-8961

★ Roscoe/Rockland FD
★ 1964 Old Route 17, PO Box 202
★ Roscoe, NY 12776
★ **Guy Baker** • 607-498-4292

★ Smallwood/Mongaup Valley FD
★ 181 Ballard Rd., PO Box 28
★ Smallwood, NY 12778
★ **Charlie Kalinowski** • 583-5487

★ Summitville FD
★ 3978 Route 209
★ Summitville, NY 12781
★ **Mark Wharton** • 888-5531

★ Swan Lake FD
★ 52 Stanton Corners Rd., PO Box 177
★ Swan Lake, NY 12783
★ **Don Sherwood** • 292-6918

★ Westbrookville Vol. FD
★ 39 Pine Kill Rd., PO Box 263
★ Westbrookville, NY 12785
★ **Bo Tunno** • 754-8848

★ White Lake Fire Company
★ 1596 State Route 17B, PO Box 51
★ White Lake, NY 12786
★ **Josh Cunningham** • 583-5170

★ White Sulphur Springs FD
★ 3352 State Route 52, PO Box 86
★ White Sulphur Springs, NY 12787
★ **Scott Austin** • 292-5468

★ Woodbourne FD
★ 355 Firehouse Rd., PO Box 45
★ Woodbourne, NY 12788
★ **Keith Unger** • 434-6763

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Woodridge, NY 12789
Nolan Akerley • 434-6893

★ Youngsville FD
★ 1822 Shandeleo Rd., PO Box 78
★ Youngsville, NY 12791
★ **James Bingay • 482-3600**

Wurtsboro FD
54 Pine St., PO Box 457
Wurtsboro, NY 12790
Dustin Graham • 888-4611

★ Yulan FD
★ 216 Airport Rd., PO Box 127
★ Yulan, NY 12792
★ **Phil Deyermond • 557-8483**



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+ its fire chief, Warren Wagner (*also a vital member of
The Eldred Preserve team*), for keeping our community safe!



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Highland Lake FD sees 75 years

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY DEREK KIRK



- HLFD Chief's List**
- 1948-1955 – Anthony Renneberg
 - 1955-1956 – George Clouse
 - 1956-1957 – Charles Bosch
 - 1957-1961 – Conard Broadmerkel
 - 1961-1962 – Joseph Mellan, Sr.
 - 1962-1963 – Joseph Edward Brague
 - 1963-1974 – Joseph Mellan, Sr.
 - 1974-1975 – Robert Maas
 - 1975-1976 – Edward Mellan
 - 1976-1978 – Harris Myers
 - 1978-1987 – Joseph Mellan, Jr.
 - 1987-1990 – James McKean
 - 1990-1991 – Richard McKean
 - 1991-1992 – Charles Schroder
 - 1992-1995 – James McKean
 - 1995-1997 – Charles Hallock, Jr.
 - 1997-1998 – David J. Mellan
 - 1998-2010 – Richard McKean
 - 2010-2013 – Charles Hallock, Jr.
 - 2013-present – Warren Wagner

The Highland Lake Fire Department oversaw its 75th anniversary as a company this year.

This year marked the three quarters of a century timestamp for the dutiful line firefighters and their chiefs at the Highland Lake Volunteer Fire Department (HLFD), located in the Town of Highland.

It all adds up: countless moments of rushing out the door to help a stranger, endless hours of waiting in the right spot just in case something goes wrong, and years spent honing skills required to fight fires to a tee

created the backbone of a fire department for 75 years.

HLFD was formed in 1948 due to the desire and need for a fire protection agency following the boom of the hotel and rooming house industry in the area post World War II.

The coverage area for Highland Lake includes all of the Town of Highland. The department also provides mutual aid for fire in the towns of Lumberland and Shahola, PA. For their water

rescue and dive teams, a number of members of Highland Lake serve within the County Dive Task Force, which oversees all of Sullivan County, and parts of Wayne and Pike counties in Pennsylvania.

The current Fire Chief is Warren Wagner, who took up the prestigious mantle in 2013. The fire district's line of past fire chiefs have offered their

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10E

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for 75 YEARS OF SERVICE

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Facebook: Highland Yoga & Dance

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9E

time and service to the protection of the coverage area – alongside hundreds of men and women dedicated to the same cause.

Because of this long line of diligent leaders within the community, the servicemen and women of the Highland Lake Fire Department have upheld the service and are always moving forward to fight the fires that threaten their coverage area.

As one of the four volunteer fire departments in the town, Highland Lake currently has about 25 members. Like many of the volunteer-based emergency services in Sullivan County, they are always looking for dependable, qualified men and women to assist.

Former Fire Chief (1978-1987) Joseph Mellan Jr., noted that those who are interested in signing up should stop by the fire hall for regular meetings on Mondays around 7 p.m., located at 144 CR-47 in Highland Lake.



Former Highland Lake Fire Chief Joseph Mellan Jr. ('78-'87) next to an oil painting by Ken Bosch of his father, former Fire Chief Joseph Mellan Sr. ('61-'62, '63-'74).

Congratulations to our Neighboring Fire Department!

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Happy 75th birthday to our neighbor, the Highland Lake Fire Department!



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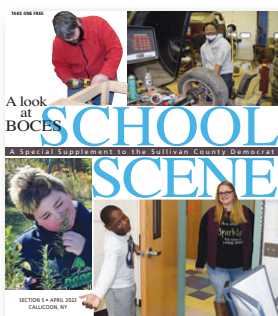
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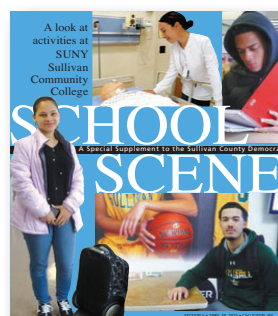
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EDUCATION



BOCES School Scene
"A Look at Activities in the BOCES District"

Advertising Deadline: **March 31**
Publication Date: **April 7**



SUNY Sullivan School Scene
"Taking you inside Sullivan County's Only Community College"
Advertising Deadline: **April 10**
Publication Date: **April 18**

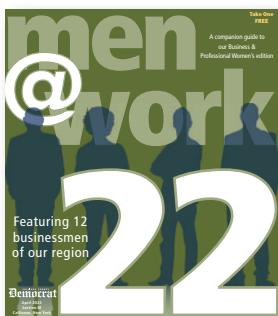
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Publication Date: **April 21**

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Publication Date: **May 15**

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NEVERSINK FIRE DEPT.

CELEBRATES 75 YEARS OF SERVICE

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY NIC BIRGLER

Members of the NFD are, from the left, Chief Mike Congelosi, Cole Shamro, Bryan Rogerson, Johnny Munoz, Anthony Chevaliel, Logan Congelosi, Idris Incarnacion, Briar Knight, Jayden Siegler, Ken Bivins, Yelixa Incarnacion, Sharon Doyle, Jake Edwards (behind Sharon), Erin Skinner, Ann Bivins (EMS Captain), John Skinner (past Chief) and Tom Brown

In 1941, 1,500 people were forced to evacuate from the old towns of Bittersweet and Neversink due to the construction of New York City's benchmark reservoir. Neversink was moved and is still on the map today in a new location.

After the mass relocation in 1941, many of the displaced people moved to what is known as the current Town of Neversink. In 1948 the Grahamsville Fire Department started to discuss fire protection for the new Neversink, asking town residents to start covering

the area. When budget restrictions prevented the Grahamsville Fire Department from placing a truck in Neversink, the town's people decided to create their own town department, starting the Neversink Fire Department (NFD) 75 years ago on May 6, 1948.

Back then, the town of Neversink had "nothing to speak of," according to Past Chief Herb Lepke. "The first big fire we responded to was the Healy Warehouse in the valley. It was a storehouse for all sorts of machinery from the excavation of the reservoir and burned for



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hours. The more water we poured onto it, the worse it became,” continues Lepke.

In 1956, the department began to grow with the addition of their first real firetruck, and newly built firehouse. That same year, the NFD implemented their EMS squad, only the second to exist in Sullivan County.

Present

Led by current chief Michael Congelosi, the NFD today provides both Fire and EMS protection to about 1,000 people, covering approximately 50 square miles. That number almost quadruples in the summertime due to the influx of tourists.

In the center of Neversink’s community, still stands the Neversink Fire Department Firehouse and Community Hall that sponsors annual community breakfasts and dinners, offering free trainings and promoting youth involvement in local events.

The NFD prides itself on being

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



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District 3 Legislator

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

Old NFD fire equipment on display in the NFD community hall.



Cadet and Junior firefighters with the NFD fire engine.



a family-oriented organization. It is not at all abnormal to find many members of the same family serving with the NFD, including both Chief Congelosi's sons, Firefighter/EMT Austin and Junior Firefighter Logan, following in their father's footsteps.

"The Neversink Fire Department is proud of our 75-year history of protecting our town. We look forward to celebrating our many years of service at this year's Annual dinner, the arrival of our new truck next year, and the continued protection of our community," says Congelosi.

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Congratulations to the Neversink Fire Department on 75 Years of Service!



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Thanks for all you do & congratulations Neversink FD on 75 years!

Grahamsville



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August 18th-20th



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Future

With such a strong history, the NFD makes sure to continue to grow through the education and empowerment of their community's youth. Along with the many community-oriented events the department holds, the NFD also offers young adults the chance to prepare to become a firefighter/EMT if they desire.

With the addition of the Cadet and Junior firefighter programs, the NFD teaches young adults ages 14-17 what it's like to protect and be a part of the NFD before they turn 18.

"This is our future," says Sharon Doyle, 1st Lieutenant of the NFD EMS Squad, when speaking of the Cadet and Junior squads. The programs instill morals of courage, devotion, and dedication in the youth of Neversink before the age they can become full-fledged firefighters and EMTs. The education and mentoring these young adults get through these programs help to ensure that the NFD's legacy lasts much longer than 75 years.

Past Presidents and Chiefs

Past Presidents

- 1948 ... Edward Slavin*
- 1949 ... Joseph Raffa*
- 1950-51 ... Robert MacLenna*
- 1952-58 ... Harry Knox*
- 1959 ... George Rubenzahl*
- 1960-66 ... French Harris*
- 1967-75 ... George Marshall*
- 1975-77 ... Carl Johnson*
- 1977-78 ... William Deagle*
- 1978-81 ... Donald Hotchkin
- 1981-84 ... Herb Lepke
- 1984-85 ... Steve Hill*
- 1985-87 ... Mike Wolfe
- 1987-88 ... James Nash
- 1988-93 ... Tom Mitchell
- 1993-96 ... Bill Moore
- 1996-03 ... Jesse Noren
- 2003-05 ... Paul Lepke
- 2005-10 ... Brian Edwards
- 2010-13 ... Jesse Noren
- 2013-15... Tom Brown
- 2015-16 ... Jesse Noren
- 2016-Present ... Tom Brown

Deceased*

Past Chiefs

- 1948-53 ... Moe Rubenzahl*
- 1953 (4 months) ... Harry Knox*
- 1953-61 ... Arthur Pomeroy*
- 1962-64 ... Herman Huffman*
- 1965-67 ... Milton Van Keuren*
- 1968-69 ... Milton Kortright*
- 1969-77 ... Carl Denman
- 1977-80 ... Nelson Donovan
- 1981-82 ... Carl Denman
- 1982-84 ... Steve Hill*
- 1984-86 ... Tom Nash
- 1986-90 ... Hank Samyn
- 1990-93 ... Bill Moore
- 1993-95 ... Herb Lepke
- 1995-96 ... Tim Dexheimer
- 1996-98 ... Paul Essex
- 1998-00 ... Paul Lepke
- 2000-02 ... George Pennell
- 2002-05 ... John Bankich
- 2005-08 ... John Skinner
- 2008-11 ... Russell Turner
- 2011-12 ... Ralph Hornbeck
- 2012-13 ... Bill Cockshutte
- 2013-14 ... John Skinner
- 2014-17 ... Ralph Hornbeck
- 2017-Present ... Michael Congelosi

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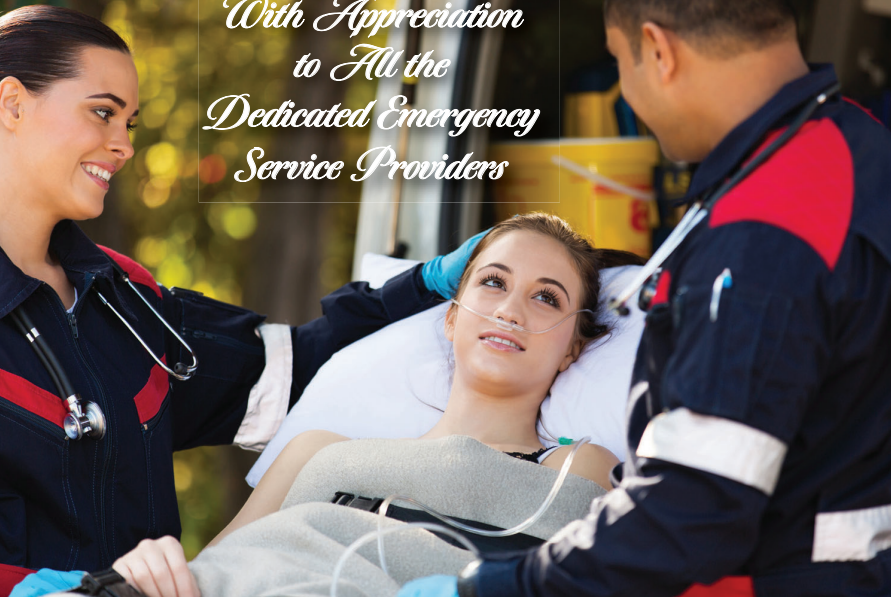
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SULLIVAN LIFELINES EDUCATES FELLOW FIRST RESPONDERS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY NIC BIRGLER



A Roscoe-Rockland EMS rig parked in front of the Neversink Fire Department.



A lecturer discusses child safety.

The Neversink Fire Department hosted the annual Sullivan Lifelines Conference promoting and providing continuing education for EMS professionals and volunteers in Sullivan County. The event featured multiple lecturers from the state, and county speaking on a variety of upcoming or new EMS-related topics.

This is the third year the day-long EMS education event has taken place in Sullivan County giving providers the opportunity to earn six and a half of New York State approved continuing education

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

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A NYS Presenter receives a
gift from NFD EMS Squad
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credits while providing network-
ing opportunities with other
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Put together by Neversink Fire
Department (NFD) EMS Captain
Ann Bivins, Sullivan Lifelines' goal
is to better the standard of care
provided countywide by promot-
ing continuing education on new
or upcoming EMS topics.

Presenters varied from local and
regional EMS experts that covered
topics from childbirth to fireman
down CPR.

Providing extra trainings and
continual educational opportuni-
ties, like Sullivan Lifelines, helps
to keep local EMTs keep up to date
with changing statewide protocols
and improve patient outcomes in

the future.

All EMT's in the State of New
York have the opportunity to
renew their certifications through
continuing education furthering
the need and value for events like
Sullivan Lifelines to exist.

"Events like Sullivan Lifelines
help make Sullivan County EMTs
stronger because they give EMTs
like me the opportunity to gain
new knowledge from some of the
greatest providers from the county
and the state," said local EMT Lee
Karasiak. "It has been a longtime
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Sullivan

'The Fire Documentary'

BY PATRICIO ROBAYO



Photo by Patricio Robayo
Cinematographer and Volunteer
Firefighter, Chris Ramirez, has embarked
on a journey to tell the stories of fire-
fighters of Sullivan County.

Volunteer firefighters are among the most important people in our communities, yet far too often they are overlooked.

It's a conclusion Chris Ramirez, a cinematographer and photographer, came to after serving alongside Sullivan County's volunteer first responders, and he hopes his newest film and photography project - "Sullivan Fire: the Documentary" - will shine a light on their valuable contributions. Ramirez, a volunteer interior firefighter with the Rock Hill Fire Department, has taken a hiatus from active service to work on the project.

The idea for his documentary was inspired by his work with the county-wide Join Sullivan Fire initiative, a recruitment and retention task force organized by the Sullivan County Bureau of Fire.

Sustaining the numbers needed to crew-up a volunteer fire department requires innovative thinking, and departments are seeking new



Kelly Taggart, Captain of the Westbrookville Fire Department who has been a firefighter for 11 years, is one of the dozen firefighters featured in Chris Ramirez's film, "Sullivan Fire: the Documentary."

ways to attract and retain members, Ramirez said. The demands of modern life have made it increasingly difficult for people to commit, but without robust fire departments, residents are left vulnerable.

"(The Join Sullivan Fire Task Force) is reaching out to a wider array of people, people with diverse backgrounds, people who perhaps never even considered the volunteer fire service," Ramirez said. "We're working hard to help people discover the rewards of serving your local fire department and realizing the vital contributions they can make."

"Sullivan Fire: the Documentary," Ramirez said, will provide insight into the courageous decisions our volunteers make, and introduce audiences to these first responders who, literally, are also their neighbors.

"On call 24/7, volunteers can go from playing catch with their daughter to carrying someone else's child to an ambulance,"

Ramirez said. "They leave their jobs, families, and beds, stepping out of their everyday lives and into bunker gear, racing to the rescue."

As a member of the Join Sullivan Fire Task Force, Ramirez and its members work to inspire others to join. He added that serving doesn't always involve going into a burning building; there are many ways to support fire departments. Helping out at the station, driving the trucks, and aiding at the scene are also part of the volunteer job.

Ramirez admits that he can get anxious when the pager tones go off. He's fought fires, and he understands the risks. Initially, he said, it's fear of the unknown, not knowing what the conditions you'll encounter.

"On the way you visualize the scenario through experience and training," he said. "You go over a check list of things you may have to do to mitigate the risks. Focusing on the job is our coping mechanism."

But for those who do answer the

Chris Ramirez, a cinematographer and photographer with over three decades of experience, including working for The New York Times, is producing portraits and profiles of volunteer firefighters from 40 fire departments across Sullivan County. The project is part of a campaign for the Sullivan County Bureau of Fire Recruitment and Retention Task Force called Join Sullivan Fire. The social media campaign expects to profile 60 plus firefighters.

Each portrait and profile will roll out once a week on social media Facebook and Instagram.

call, being part of a fire department becomes more than just a job or a hobby – it becomes a way of life, a source of pride, a second family, and a vital service to the community, Ramirez said.

As he pivots from the role of firefighter to documentarian, Ramirez will capture those experiences through his camera. He'll interview firefighters at all stages of their careers, from first-timers to those

who have been in the service for more than half a century, capturing their unique perspectives and experiences.

A preview of the documentary will be shown at the Narrowsburg Union's digital gallery space this July and August. It will also be shown on a 16-foot screen and multiple monitors throughout the gallery, creating an immersive experience.

Brendon and Kathy Weiden, proprietors of the Narrowsburg Union, have been "very supportive of the project, allowing me to conduct interviews in their space," Ramirez said. Also supporting the social media campaign is the Sullivan County Volunteer Firefighters Association.

Ramirez's project is a testament to the power of art and storytelling in creating social awareness and appreciation for the unsung heroes of our communities. By sharing their stories, he hopes to honor and celebrate the bravery and ded-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24E

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ication of Sullivan County's firefighters and encourage others to join.

"Real-life superheroes are hiding in plain sight, and their story should be told," Ramirez said. "They include a retiree working out at a gym, the parent in the stands at the high school game, and the tired office worker in line behind you at the convenience store. Some of your neighbors are strangers, but if things go wrong with you and you need help, they're firefighters, and they will do their very best to save the day."

Ramirez expects that the production of "Sullivan Fire: the Documentary" will take more than a year or so, during which he'll be responding to scenes with his camera gear, documenting his firefighter colleagues as they take on whatever emergency they are called to.

Ramirez said, "I can't wait to get back to active duty."



Chris Ramirez photographing Daryl Prescott, who serves in the Rock Hill Fire Department, as part of his documentary project "Sullivan Fire: the Documentary."

 The advertisement features a colorful illustration at the top showing children playing musical instruments (a girl with a tennis racket, a boy with a guitar, a girl with a trumpet, and a boy with a saxophone) and a sailboat on the water. Below the illustration is a photograph of a lake with a swimming area, a dock, and people swimming. The text reads:

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Members of the Sheriff's Office Color Guard march (front), and the Sullivan County Volunteer Firefighters Association can be seen in the distance.

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Above: Sergeant Poppo talks to local youth at Hanofee Park.



Steve D'Agata has been at the helm of the Village of Liberty PD for the past two years.

Talking policing with Chief D'Agata

STORY AND PHOTO BY JOSEPH ABRAHAM

It's been almost two years since Steve D'Agata took over for Scott Kinne as the Village of Liberty Police Chief. The Sullivan County Democrat recently sat down with him to talk about changes he's brought to the department, as well as policing topics in general.

The summer of 2020 was a challenging time to take the reins of a police department, between

COVID, civil unrest and anti-police sentiment in the wake of the death of George Floyd in Minnesota. An Executive Order by then NYS Governor Andrew Cuomo soon followed, mandating police reform, which D'Agata said kickstarted a few initiatives he was already looking at bringing to the department.

D'Agata is thrilled with the partnerships the department formed with various community organizations during that process including Sullivan Allies Leading

Together (SALT) and their Committee for Equity and Justice, whom the department meets with on a regular basis.

D'Agata has also encouraged more non-incident interaction between his officers and the public. This has been done through increased foot patrols, as well as by appointing one of his officers as a "community liaison," who plans "Coffee with

a Cop" and "Pedal with Police" events, litter plucks, etc.

"Doing these activities, you're no

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9-1-1

'A look inside the Emergency Services of our Area'

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26E



longer just an officer [to the public]," D'Agata said. "[For example they'll also know me as Steve]. Then the next time maybe they have an incident, it's not the best day of their life, and the police get called, now they know Steve. If they are anxious or upset, rather than trying to explain themselves to officers they don't know, they can talk with Steve, starting a bad situation off on a better foot."

The police department has also partnered with the Liberty CSD to offer student internships, giving these young people, with an interest in the criminal justice field, an opportunity to gain valuable experience. In turn, Liberty PD builds a relationship with these students who may one day return to work as a dispatcher or police officer.

Opioid Crisis

One of the biggest issues in Sullivan County is the ongoing opioid epidemic. In fact, the County has the highest opioid death per capita rate in the state outside of NYC. D'Agata said he has a two-prong approach to combat it.

Officer Jones with some young visitors who paid a visit to the Village of Liberty Police Station on Main Street. Who knows, they might develop an interest in criminal justice and intern at the department when they're in high school.

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On one hand, D'Agata said they are "laser focusing" their criminal investigations, looking at those selling drugs that are causing people to have both non-fatal and fatal overdoses.

"As opposed to just scattershot techniques at narcotics investigations, we're really zeroing in based on criminal intelligence on the people that are selling the drugs that are the most dangerous. We're trying to get them off the streets and further discourage people from pushing dangerous opioids, especially fentanyl," said D'Agata.

On the other side, D'Agata and the Village of Liberty PD have been active participants in the Hope Not Handcuffs program, getting those with substance use disorder the help they need. It's a partnership he said he's "most proud of."

"It's a win-win and great community building tool," said D'Agata. "When people see that the officers are there, other than to arrest them or respond to the call, but instead they're just of-



A Liberty PD officer shows off their defensive skills on the basketball court during a pick-up game with local youth.

fering help, it really changes the dynamic with the public."

He added that the "angels" in the program, who volunteer in the process of getting those individuals help, are also working with the police in a different way, creating new and positive relationships.

As for what's ahead in battling

the opioid crisis, D'Agata said the Hope Not Handcuffs program is looking to create a Quick Response Team. Usually someone comes into the police station looking for help, but the new team would bring the program to the front door of someone who has a non-fatal overdose, within 24-72 hours of the incident.

Mental Health

D'Agata said another area he's focused on is mental health, stat-

ing that the number of people experiencing an acute mental health crisis since the pandemic have exploded.

"Police officers, although we're the ones that go [to a call], really are not the best tool for that situation," he said. "So what I can do is train my officers in critical incident training so they can kind of become Mental Health First Aid for the situation. But we've been working very closely with the County, Garnet health and SALT to try and work on the entire sphere of assisting people who are in crisis."

D'Agata, although not entirely sure what it will look like, sees the partnership between law enforcement and social workers growing in the future.

"We have been working with the County and state office of mental health to expand the mobile mental health team because they are really excellent professionals, but there's [currently] not enough personnel or adequate resources

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31E

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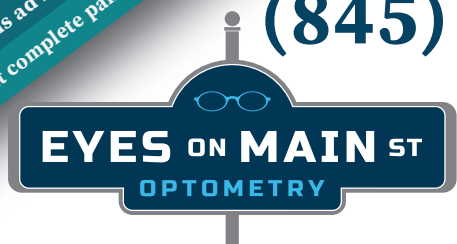
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29E

to meet the needs of the County," said D'Agata.

Future of policing

The use of body cams by police has increased in recent years, and the officers of the Liberty PD recently became equipped with them as well, after receiving an \$80,000 grant that assisted with their purchase. After the trial run, D'Agata said any of his officers that may have had initial reservations about the devices were completely on board with the switch.

In addition to his more seasoned officers, Liberty PD had an influx of young hires who were hired since D'Agata took over in 2020.

But D'Agata notes, "What they lack in experience, they make up for in intelligence, work ethic, and they get the mission and what we're trying to build here."

As for what else the future holds, D'Agata noted that he's seen more change in the past five years than his first 10-12 in the profession.

He hopes to see more of a focus on evidence-based practices, looking at the science and why things are done a certain way, as opposed to just saying "that's how we've always done it."

"So looking at if an initiative is actually producing tangible, measurable results ... and if it's not, let's try and find a new way to get that done," said D'Agata.

He also believes programs like Hope Not Handcuffs will continue to play a huge role, noting the shift in addressing the war on drugs from how things were looked at in the 90s and early 2000s, which D'Agata said was "punitive."

"Someone was a drug user, they were a criminal, we arrested them. Now, we're realizing that some of the science is coming around on addiction and how it's a disease and the end user is not really a criminal justice problem. It's a health problem," said D'Agata. "And that's an example of an evidence-based practice that I think policing is going towards."

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Captain Mike Bruce • 932-8138

Grahamsville First Aid Squad, Inc.
PO Box 152
Grahamsville, NY 12740
Captain Sean Lewis • 985-2331

Jeffersonville Volunteer First Aid Corps,
Inc.
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Jeffersonville, NY 12748
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Lumberland Fire Department, Inc.
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Glen Spey, NY 12737
Captain Terry Knibbs • 856-7515

Mamakating First Aid Squad, Inc.
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Wurtsboro, NY 12790
Captain Peter Goodman • 888-2544

Mountandale Fire Department First
Aid Squad
PO Box 203
Mountandale, NY 12763
Captain Norman Prentice • 434-3425

Neversink Fire Department, Inc.
PO Box 468
Neversink, NY 12765
Captain Ann Bivins • 985-7198

Roscoe & Rockland Volunteer
Ambulance Corp
PO Box 321
Roscoe, NY 12776
Captain Karrie Jara • (607)498-4600

Rock Hill Volunteer Ambulance Corps,
Inc.
PO Box 1
Rock Hill, NY 12775
Captain Jessica Epifania • 794-6985

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Captain Tony LaRuffa • 557-8915

Tusten Volunteer Ambulance Service, Inc.
 PO Box 34
 Narrowsburg, NY 12764
Captain Jason Welton • 252-3336

Upper Delaware Ambulance Corps, Inc.
 PO Box 258
 Hankins, NY 12741
Captain Connor Duffy • 887-6070

Volunteer Ambulance Corps of
 Livingston Manor Inc.
 PO Box 1
 Livingston Manor, NY 12758
Captain Joel Sherwood • 439-4150

Woodbourne Fire Company No. 1, Inc.
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★ Civil Division: 791-7979
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★ Town of Fallsburg
★ 19 Railroad Plaza
★ PO Box 2019
★ South Fallsburg, NY 12779
★ (845) 434-4422

★ **Chief Simmie Williams**

★ Village of Liberty
★ 159 North Main St.
★ Liberty, NY 12754
★ (845) 292-4422

★ **Chief Steven D'Agata**

★ Village of Monticello
★ 2 Pleasant St.
★ Monticello, NY 12701
★ (845) 794-4422

★ **Chief Robert Mir**

★ Village of Woodridge
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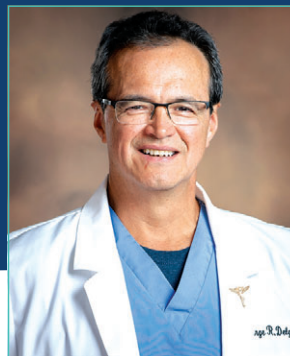
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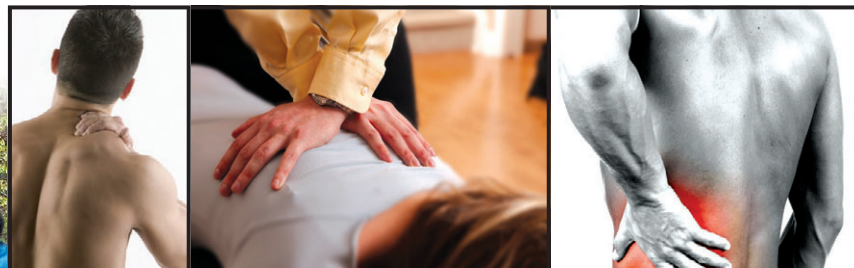
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Roscoe hosting county fire parade



DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTOS

The Roscoe-Rockland Fire Department marching as parade hosts in 2018.

BY JOSEPH ABRAHAM

One of the biggest events in the County each year is the Sullivan County Volunteer Firefighters Association's Firemen's Parade. This year the Roscoe-Rockland Fire Department will once again have the honor of hosting the annual parade, which is slated for Saturday, September 9.

This marks the second time they are hosting the event, with the first time being in 2018.

"I'm sure I can speak for all of the members when I say we are extremely proud to have been asked to host the Parade again," said Roscoe-Rockland Fire Chief Guy Baker. "We focused on tradition and family last time and by all accounts the parade was a huge success. We will be building on the foundation we made this year and hopefully it will be even better than the first time."

The **Democrat** will have more details to come in September's parade preview special publication.



Longtime Roscoe-Rockland Fire Department member George Kinne was one of the grand marshals of the 2018 SCVFA Firemen's Parade.

★ CALENDAR ★ OF ★ EVENTS ★

APRIL

- Sun., April 2 - Woodbourne FD, French Toast Breakfast
- Sat., April 8 - Roscoe FD Ladies Auxiliary, Easter Bunny
- Sun., April 16 - Claryville FD, Pancake Breakfast
- Sun., April 23 - Hortonville FD, Takeout Chicken BBQ
- Sun., April 30 - Livingston Manor FD, Pancake Breakfast

MAY

- Sun., May 7 - S.C.V.F.A. Memorial Service, Government Center, 2 p.m.; Forestburgh FD, Pancake Breakfast
- Sun., May 14 - Claryville FD, Mother's Day Breakfast
- Sun., May 21 - Callicoon FD, 1st Annual Car Show, Youth Center
- Sun., May 28 - Beaverkill Valley FD, Chicken BBQ; Mountaintale FD Pancake Breakfast
- Mon., May 29 - Roscoe FD Ladies Auxiliary Memorial Day Parade

JUNE

- Sat., June 3 - Loch Sheldrake FD, gun Raffle; Callicoon Center FD, Sportsmen Raffle
- Sun., June 4 - Neversink FD, Horseshoe Tournament; Fallsburg FD, Pancake Breakfast; Rock Hill FD, AACA Car Show
- Sat., June 10 - Livingston Manor FD, Trout Parade/Chicken BBQ
- Sun., June 11 - Callicoon FD, Pancake Breakfast Tractor Parade 12 PM.
- Sat., June 17 - Hurleyville FD, Bass Fishing, Morningside Park
- Sun., June 18 - Claryville FD, Father's Day Pancake Breakfast

JULY

- Sat., July 1 - Roscoe Ladies Auxiliary, Basket Raffle, July 4 Parade/Fair
- Tues., July 4 - Roscoe Ladies Auxiliary, Circus
- Wed., July 5 - Roscoe Ladies Auxiliary, Circus
- Sat., July 8 - Hortonville FD, Golf Tournament
- Sun., July 16 - Rock Hill FD, French Toast Breakfast
- Sat., July 22 - Kenoza Lake FD, Chicken BBQ
- Sun., July 23 - Claryville FD, Pancake Breakfast
- Sat., July 29 - Kauneonga Lake FD, Chicken BBQ

AUGUST

- Sat., August 5 - Fallsburg FD, Chicken BBQ
- Sat., August 12 - Neversink FD, Chicken BBQ
- Sun., August 13 - White Sulphur Springs FD, Chicken BBQ
- Sat., August 19 - Hurleyville FD, Bill Carlson Golf Outing, Tarry Brae
- Sat., August 25 - Neversink FD, Co-Ed Softball
- Sat., August 26 - Claryville FD, Open House & Craft Fair/Yard Sale; Hortonville FD, 89th Field Day/Parade; Neversink FD, Co-Ed Softball
- Sun., August 27 - Neversink FD, Co-Ed Softball

SEPTEMBER

- Fri., September 8 - Roscoe/Rockland FD, Mardi Gras Parade, 6:30 PM
- Sat., September 9 - S.C.V.F.A. 94th Annual Parade - Roscoe
- Sun., September 10 - Rock Hill FD, Jim Cavello Golf Outing
- Sun., September 17 - Woodbourne FD, Chicken BBQ; Claryville FD, Pancake Breakfast
- Sat., September 23 - Monticello FD, Gun Raffle
- Sun., September 24 - Neversink FD, Horseshoe Tournament

OCTOBER

- Sun., Oct. 1 - Callicoon Center FD, Chicken BBQ
- Sat., Oct. 14 - Kenoza Lake FD, Roast Beef Dinner
- Sun., Oct. 15 - Claryville FD, Pancake Breakfast; Monticello FD, Breakfast
- Sat., Oct. 21 - Jeffersonville FD, Roast Beef Dinner
- Sun., Oct. 29 - Roscoe FD, Ladies Auxiliary, Designer Bag Bingo; Neversink FD, Breakfast; Livingston Manor FD, Pancake Breakfast
- Tues., Oct. 31 - Roscoe FD Ladies Auxiliary, Halloween Party; Hurleyville FD, Halloween Parade

NOVEMBER

- Veteran's Day Parade; Hurleyville FD, Pancake Supper; Forestburgh FD, Roast Beef Dinner
- Sun., Nov. 5 - Swan Lake FD, French Toast Breakfast
- Sun., Nov. 12 - Hortonville FD, Breakfast
- Fri., Nov. 24 - Jeffersonville Holiday Parade
- Sat., Nov. 25 - Claryville FD, Spaghetti Supper; Highland Lake FD, Xmas Trees/Wreaths
- Sun., Nov. 26 - Highland Lake FD, Xmas Trees/Wreaths
- Wed., Nov. 29 - Claryville FD, Pancake Breakfast

DECEMBER

- Fri., Dec. 1 - Roscoe FD Ladies Auxiliary, Tree Lighting
- Sat., Dec. 2 - Highland Lake FD Xmas Trees/Wreaths
- Sun., Dec. 3 - Highland Lake FD Xmas Trees/Wreaths; Roscoe Ladies Auxiliary, Winter Craft Fair
- Sat., Dec. 9 - Highland Lake FD Xmas Trees/Wreaths
- Sun., Dec. 10 - Highland Lake FD Xmas Trees/Wreaths
- Sat., Dec. 16 - Highland Lake FD Xmas Trees/Wreaths
- Sun., Dec. 17 - Highland Lake FD Xmas Trees/Wreaths
- Sat., Dec. 23 - Highland Lake FD Xmas Trees/Wreaths
- Sun., Dec. 24 - Highland Lake FD Xmas Trees/Wreaths



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The annual SCVFA Firemen's Parade is a wonderful tribute to some of the area's finest each September. The parade returns on Sept. 9 in Roscoe.



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Wurtsboro FD celebrating 125 years



JOSEPH ABRAHAM | DEMOCRAT

The Wurtsboro Fire Department is celebrating a milestone in 2023, having served their community for 125 years. One of the more significant events in recent history was the building of their new firehouse at 54 Pine Street. Keep an eye out for a story on the history of the department which will run in our Firemen's Parade tab this September.



A Very Big "Thank You" to the Mamakating First Aid Squad & the Wurtsboro Fire Co. who's celebrating 125 years of service!

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This year we would like to congratulate Highland Lake FD and Neversink FD on their 75th Anniversaries. There's no greater gift than selfless service to humanity. A lot of people forget that first responders like firefighters work tirelessly to protect us every day. Your commitment to our communities never ceases, no matter how tired you are, physically or mentally. Thank you for saving lives and property. We hope you know how much we love and appreciate you, especially in this year of your momentous **75th ANNIVERSARY!**



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