



Serving those who serve

FCE Clubs prepare meal for firefighters

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(McMinnville, Tennessee)

Most of us would risk our life and limb for those we love, but can you imagine placing your health in peril to save someone else, even a stranger?

The 32 members of McMinnville Fire Department and the numerous members with the area's seven volunteer fire departments step up to the challenge on a daily basis. Those volunteer units include Centertown, Collins River, Midway, Rock Island, Harrison Ferry, Morrison, North Warren and Viola. It's estimated over 70 percent of Tennessee's fire service is provided by volunteers.

In a way to show appreciation to those dedicated individuals, the ladies of the area Family and Community Education Clubs (FCEC) provided a free meal for them at McMinnville Fire Department.

"These guys are so important to the community, and we are very thankful for their service," said FCEC member Donna Dunlap. "We honored the law enforcement groups earlier this year, and felt we needed to do the same for the firefighters."

They were expecting approximately 65 fire personal to stop by for the meal of hot dogs, chips and a large selection of homemade desserts. It's common knowledge the ladies are good cooks and can come up with very creative desserts.

McMinnville Fire Chief Kendall Mayfield was on hand for the festivities, offering his appreciation. He has been in the industry for 33 years, with three of them as fire chief.

"We really appreciate the ladies preparing this meal for us," said Mayfield. "We don't get that much recognition, and we certainly appreciate it."

He went on to say he is very proud of all his men, as well as the volunteers.

They receive extensive training, most above the required 64 hours. Many are commissioned firefighters, receiving commercial training and completing both level one and two training.

"Our guys complete 40 hours of in-service training each year, plus more," said Mayfield. "We like to mix it up and change the training methods for variety."

Their daily regime keeps them busy at the station, maintaining the trucks, cleaning the building and on-site training.

When asked about cooking at the station, all nod to Drew Simpson as the best cook. He is quick to say he doesn't cook every day, but does provide a home-cooked meal for the group on occasion.

"I like to cook, usually fixing chicken, lasagna or maybe meat loaf," said Simpson. "My dad cooks, and I have learned a lot from my grandparents. I cook and the guys always clean up."

Mayfield stresses the fact he tries to keep his guys and the department visible in the community, attending most of the downtown functions, as well as participating in various school activities, such as using the tower truck to spray water down for the children.

They also deliver Meals on Wheels each Monday, using the first responder vehicle, and give tours of the facility to both groups and walk-ins.

To answer the question, "Do firemen rescue cats out of trees," the guys laugh and say definitely they do when absolutely necessary. They shared a story about how co-worker Ethan Mabe went to the extremes to cut trees down in order to get to a trapped cat. The amusing part was that when he put the cat on the ground, it ran off.

Mabe smiled and said, "It was an indoor cat that had never been outside so it was spooked. No one gave me that little bit of info. I do think they found the cat, though."



Margaret Hobbs photos

Yes, you do need another hotdog, says Bonner FCEC president Teresa Priestley to McMinnville Fire Chief Kendall Mayfield. The groups came together last week for an appreciation dinner provided by local FCE clubs.



Bonner FCEC member Brenda Mitchell makes sure fireman Kevin Sparkman gets a large serving of the delicious volcano cake.



A few of McMinnville Fire Department's 32 employees, from left, are Marty White, Adam Whitman, Colby Pearsall, Kevin Sparkman, Drew Simpson, Jason Driver (partially hidden), Ethan Mabe and Josh Brock. They enjoy a complimentary meal provided by FCEC members.



Always ready and waiting for the call to service are the fire engines of McMinnville Fire Department. One of the many duties of the 32 employees is to maintain the vehicles and fire station.