

IF NOT YOU, THEN WHO?

By Justin R. Heim

The problem was the Eagle Fire Department [EFD], WI is an aging organization that lacks the ability to effectively recruit and retain new volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians. The purpose of this research was to develop a public education campaign that could be used as a recruitment tool for new personnel who are interested in serving their community as volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians. By acknowledging the problems that Eagle, and other fire departments in Wisconsin, faces in recruiting and retaining new volunteers, this research would illustrate the importance of developing a public education campaign as a recruitment tool.

This was an action research project that used a literature review, survey and focus group to determine the essential components necessary in an effective public education campaign geared towards recruitment. This research project sought to answer the following questions: (a) what are other like-sized volunteer / combination fire departments in Wisconsin doing to combat recruitment and retention problems in their organizations. (b) What are methods that communities employ to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and other ancillary staff? (c) What factors are precluding residents who live in Eagle from volunteering their time to EFD? (d) What are the ancillary roles that volunteers can fill within the organization that do not include scene response? (e) What should be included in a public education campaign to recruit members to EFD?

Through this research, the foundation for an effective public education campaign to identify and recruit traditional volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians, as well as ancillary support personnel was developed and will be implemented in the community. Long-term studies will need to be completed to determine the program's effectiveness.

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Justin R. Heim

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COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Karl Nollenberger Advisor

11/19/11 Date Approved

[Signature] Member

11/19/11 Date Approved

PROVOST
AND VICE CHANCELLOR

[Signature]

12/13/2011
Date Approved

FORMAT APPROVAL

[Signature]

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Date Approved

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Chapter I

Introduction

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) estimates that there were approximately 1,148,100 firefighters in the U.S. in 2009. Of the total number of firefighters 335,950 or 29% were career firefighters and 812,150 (71%) were volunteer firefighters. Most of the volunteer firefighters (73%) are in departments that protect fewer than 2,500 people. There are an estimated 30,165 fire departments in the U.S. Of these, 2,457 departments are all career, 1,752 mostly career, 5,099 are mostly volunteer and 20,857 are all volunteer (Karter & Stein, 2010).

In Wisconsin alone, of the state's 870 fire departments, some 800 are served by volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians (Greenburg, 2010). The increased daily demands of life have interfered with volunteer fire departments' ability to recruit and retain high caliber individuals who are intrinsically motivated to help their neighbor and, in effect, pay it forward.

Problem Statement

The problem is the Eagle Fire Department [EFD], WI is an aging organization that lacks the ability to effectively recruit and retain new volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians. The purpose of this research is to develop a public education campaign that can be used as a recruitment tool for new personnel who are

interested in serving their community as volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians.

Research Questions

This research project would conduct action based research to answer the following questions: (a) what are other like-sized volunteer / combination fire departments in Wisconsin doing to combat recruitment and retention problems in their organizations. (b) What are methods that communities employ to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and other ancillary staff? (c) What factors are precluding residents who live in Eagle from volunteering their time to EFD? (d) What are the ancillary roles that volunteers can fill within the organization that do not include scene response? (e) What should be included in a public education campaign to recruit members to EFD?

Background and Significance

Eagle, Wisconsin is a diverse community located in rural southwestern Waukesha County, Wisconsin, approximately 35 miles from downtown Milwaukee. The community is surrounded by the pristine lands of the Southern Kettle Moraine state forest, which is regionally revered for its miles upon miles of hiking, biking and snowmobiling trails. Because 40% of Eagle is state Department of Natural Resources or nature conservancy land, the community is stifled by its inability to grow to the west and north. As a result,

Eagle retains much of its small-town quaintness and charming appeal to residents looking for an escape from the hustle and bustle of big city life.

Eagle is 36 square miles and is comprised of two separate municipalities: the Town and Village of Eagle, each of which retains full autonomy from one another but works together and funds several joint community ventures such as the fire department, library, and park and recreation programming. The combined population of the community is 5,471.

Like many small southeastern Wisconsin communities, Eagle is considered a bedroom community for the Milwaukee metropolitan area as most of the residents work outside of the community during the day. Eagle is home to many businesses and industries and has a strong tourism base due to the state forest and *Old World Wisconsin*. Old World Wisconsin is a “living museum” tourist attraction that depicts the history of rural life by procuring historical buildings and then moving them to the museum site. Actors and actresses depict Wisconsin settler life to curious and often bewildered guests.

The community is served and protected by the predominantly volunteer Eagle Fire Department [EFD]. The department operates out of one fire station that is centrally located within the community and responds to all emergencies within the Town and Village of Eagle, as well as provides mutual aid assistance to neighboring communities through the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System [MABAS]. The Eagle Fire Department protects critical infrastructure which includes State Highways 59 and 67 as well as the Wisconsin and Southern Railroad, each of which bisects and transverses the entire community.

According to fire department archives, the Eagle Fire Department was organized in 1927 as a 100% volunteer fire department. In those days, able-bodied men who were willing to serve their community were elected to the department by a vote. Most of the volunteers of that time worked within the community or were farmers who could leave for emergency calls. When the fire department was first conceptualized, firefighters only responded to put out fires. Emergency Medical Services were not added until approximately 1978 (Eagle Fire Department, 1927 - 2011).

During the department's first five decades of operation, there was frequently a waiting list to join the organization with the roster filled to authorized capacity at 50 members. Since the mid-1970's, there has been a steady decline in the number of volunteers who are willing or able to join the organization.

The department is managed by a career Fire Chief and is staffed for twelve hours a day by part-time paid staffing. During the evening and nighttime hours, the community is wholly protected by its dedicated paid-on-call workforce. Because the current staffing model relies so heavily on the paid-on-call workforce, it can be extremely difficult to predict after-hours staff availability. In 2010, the department relied on a small, but dedicated workforce of 30 volunteers / paid-on-call members to answer calls for service.

To combat the downward staffing trend, a paid-on-call staffing model was implemented on January 1, 2011 whereby members of the organization would be compensated for time spent answering opportunities for service and while training. It was hoped that compensation would allow the organization to actualize new members. At the

time of this writing, it is not known if a financial incentive will be enough to entice members of the community to volunteer.

This research project sought to determine if a public education campaign could be developed that the Eagle Fire Department could utilize to recruit and retain new volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians. This research project also aims to address the United States Fire Administration's (2009) operational objective of responding appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues. The goal is to create a public education campaign that can be used to recruit new volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Young (2006) notes that volunteerism in the United States is neither a new concept nor an uncommon activity. Historically, America has long recognized the importance of “a societal responsibility to join in, to give freely of one’s time to assist or aid others.” This responsibility is frequently iterated in the literature. For example, Alexis de Tocqueville (2000), in 1831, stated in his seminal work, *Democracy in America*, that the U.S. was a “nation of joiners” that regularly formed groups to meet or accomplish common goals.

Young (2006) and Tugend (2010) also discuss the benefits of volunteering in one’s community. They argue that in the most positive light, such service teaches children and teenagers to look beyond themselves and understand the role they can play in their community and country. In the most negative light, it is one more activity to tick off en route to college. However, the past century has seen many notable examples of volunteerism, particularly those associated with federally sponsored programs. For example, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), during the 1930s, worked to plant trees, build bridges and roads, and restore public lands and buildings throughout the United States (Young, 2006). In the 1960s, the Peace Corps began work to assist the poorest countries in the world by constructing schools, treating the sick, and assisting in agricultural needs (Young, 2006).

Sittleburg (2010) affirms that recruiting new members and retaining the members departments have are two of the biggest challenges the volunteer fire service has been facing in recent years. It is an ongoing battle that is made even harder as the nation continues to struggle with the effects of an economic crisis. With volunteers making up 71 percent of the fire service, it is clear that the fire service needs to keep the volunteer workforce strong so it can continue to protect our nation's communities.

Based on data obtained from the National Fire Protection Association [NFPA], the National Volunteer Fire Council [NVFC] estimates that there are nearly 85,000 fewer firefighters under the age of 40 protecting our nation's smallest communities today compared with in 1987 – a drop of approximately 30 percent. Conversely, in 2009 there were more volunteers over the age of 50 serving communities of 2,500 or less than ever before (27.4 percent) (Stittleburg, 2010).

Volunteer emergency services are a long-standing tradition in the United States that often encompasses families' generation after generation. It is also a tradition in danger of weakening. Many fire departments across the nation today are experiencing more difficulty with recruiting and retaining members than ever before. Although there has been a decline in the number of active volunteer firefighters nationally from a high of 897,750 in 1984, the trend has changed in the last few years. The number of volunteers dipped to a low of 770,100 volunteers in 1989. While the number has increased since then, the problem of recruitment and retention is still serious in many areas. The most recent figures (2009) indicate over 812,150 volunteer firefighters, almost 73 percent of the United State's firefighting forces (United States Fire Administration, 2007).

Swinson (2006) argues that the days of the long-term volunteer are gone. Today's volunteers are more reluctant to commit to a scheduled, weekly block of time. They are looking for flexibility, special projects of limited duration, and short-term commitments. Administrators of volunteer programs will be challenged to look at current recruitment methods and think outside the box. Organizations may need to offer options for flexible shifts, possibilities for both short- and long-term time commitments, and opportunities for family and couple volunteering.

Is volunteerism on a decline as related to the whole of the United States population? According to the National Conference on Citizenship (2010), during 2009's hard economic times, more than one-fifth of unemployed Americans regularly volunteered. More than one-fourth of Americans regularly volunteered through an organization, serving mostly through religious organizations, and the most educated led the way. Between 2008 and 2009, volunteering saw the largest increase since 2003, but the overall volunteering rate still remains lower than it was in 2001-2005.

Is there a benefit that can be derived from volunteering beyond simply feeling good for helping one's neighbor? Both Swinson (2006) and the Corporation for National and Community Service (2007) argue that there are tangible health benefits that can be actualized from volunteering. They found that volunteers had lower mortality rates, reported lower rates of depression if over the age of 65, and enjoyed greater senses of self-worth and trust. A study by Brown, Consedine, and Maga (2005) found that a large, ethnically diverse sample of older adults showed no association between receiving social support and improved health; however, the study did find that those who gave social

support to others had lower rates of mortality than those who did not, even when controlling for socioeconomic status, education, marital status, age, gender, and ethnicity.

Windsor (2008) agrees that there is substantial benefits to a person that can be realized but relates that in his study, he found that those who volunteer at a moderate level – between around two and 15 hours per week – show high levels of well being compared with non-volunteers. However, with those who volunteer for more than 15 hours a week the pattern of results is quite distinct and counterproductive to one's health. Those people showed lower levels of mental health and well being. Windsor's findings indicate that volunteer managers need to ensure that volunteers aren't being overburdened. Adequate government and community support of the volunteer sector is important to ensure that the burden of responsibility doesn't fall to just a few, but is shared by many.

The burning questions typically revolves around how can organizations effectively recruit quality, capable individuals who are willing to give selflessly to serve in their community? Ellis (2007) argues that recruiting volunteers to contribute their time and effort to your organization puts *you* in the middle of an implied promise. By issuing the invitation to participate, managers are representing that volunteers 1) will be working towards a meaningful mission and 2) will be valued partners in that work. When new people agree to volunteer, they initially commit because they believe in the genuineness of that invitation.

Ellis further relates that it's not enough to engage volunteers solely because of the importance of the long-term goal. For many organizations that goal is decades away, if

attainable at all. None of us will wipe out all diseases or hunger in our lifetimes. And not all missions are to end something. *How* an organization treats its participants (employees, volunteers, and clients) matters every single day, right now. It's imperative to create the most welcoming and productive environment for everyone – for the long haul. That's why a leader of volunteers is ethically bound to tackle any issue that violates the promises made in recruitment.

The International Erosion Control Association [IERC] (2008) relates that the most successful volunteer programs use multiple avenues to promote the opportunities available and to entice participation. Recruiters must effectively get the word out about the volunteer opportunities available and how to apply. This can frequently be accomplished by using the association's publications and web site. Publicity can be achieved by featuring active volunteers in the newsletter and on the web site while including instructions about how to volunteer.

Another popular method used to recruit new volunteers can be actualized by surveying existing members to determine what roles are unfilled within the organization and then develop strategies to fill those roles. This accomplishes two tasks. First, it allows volunteer managers the opportunity to engage with the existing membership and second, it allows them to glean information on how the membership perceives the organization and its internal faults.

The use of volunteers in non-traditional roles within an organization is encouraged in many cases. Volunteer recruiters and managers should develop detailed job descriptions for each volunteer position. The job description should spell out exact

duties, the timeframe for service, what training will be provided, who the volunteer reports to and the financial considerations. The description also should describe the purpose of the position, expected outcomes and how success is defined. Having all of these points in writing helps avoid misunderstandings and gives volunteers clear direction and purpose. Most importantly, though, thanks and recognition are critical factors in motivating and retaining volunteers. There has never been a volunteer who has been thanked too often, the authors argue. Recognition before peers can be a powerful tool not only for providing a fulfilling experience for current volunteers but for recruiting new ones who want to bask in the limelight as well (International Erosion Control Association, 2008).

Lloyd (2011) agrees and relates that similar to position descriptions in for-profit businesses, a job description should be written for each volunteer position offered within a non-profit organization. Job descriptions enable the volunteer and the organization to agree on the skills needed by the volunteer and the tasks that will be undertaken by the volunteer. Specifying tasks and skills can also assist non-profit organizations to better match the volunteer and the opportunity.

Lloyd further describes that in some non-profit organizations, certain positions will require the intending volunteer to apply for the position, such as board members, treasurers, marketing consultants and other technical or professional roles. In these cases, asking intending volunteers to submit applications in consideration of the position description provides the human resource department or other individual or committee charged with determining the status of volunteers with a means of assessing each

intending volunteer's strengths, skills, experience and qualifications on a standardized basis.

Snook, Gasaway, and Holman (2011) describe how recruitment may also aim to find specialized volunteers—those who fill functions as support personnel with the department. The authors relate that these volunteers may not be in good physical condition or may not be available throughout the week. Such recruits might include elderly persons, handicapped individuals, and members of the community who are not physically capable of fighting fires.

The authors suggest that response support activities such as rehabilitation functions, fire prevention specialists, training, reports, and records and data collection are all areas of a modern fire department that can use specialized recruits who may not have any desire to engage in firefighting or emergency medical services activities.

To find these recruits, the authors recommend departments taking a proactive stance in being highly visible in the community such as by taking an active role in civic functions. Maintaining a positive, enthusiastic attitude towards the department and the activities it offers the community and its membership is an essential sales technique and should be exploited to attract new volunteers.

A 2005 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report agrees with Snook, Gasaway, and Holman and affirms that people will volunteer at your organization for many reasons, but their perception of your organization will attract them initially. The authors caution organizations into not assuming that the public knows what the organization is and what it does. Managers must be cognizant of recent publicity, existing

marketing materials, and public perception of the client group and cause. It is important that people associate an organization with value to the community.

Recruitment messages should be inviting and encourage people to become involved with your organization. There can be multiple recruitment messages tailored to the different volunteers an organization requires, such as students, professionals, and neighborhood residents. Each message should identify the specific needs of the organization, the ways in which a volunteer can address the needs, and the benefits to the volunteer.

Volunteer recruiters and managers should look beyond immediate needs. While one might be looking for volunteers to help with an event, a computer programmer or financial advisor might be willing to share his or her valuable technical skills. By the same token, some people want a diversion from their careers. A physician might want to help teach as part of a health education program rather than provide medical care. Volunteer managers should talk to people about their skills and interests so that they can be attracted to an organization in the best way (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2005).

The issue of volunteers being a primary driving force to an organization is not isolated to the United States. Canadians are pushing for tax code reform that treats volunteers who give in-kind donations to an organization through participation on the same level as someone who forks over cash, which is typically tax deductible. According to Volunteer Canada (2009), people who selflessly stuff envelopes, stack food bank shelves and drive countless distances to help others should get the same tax benefit as

people who crack open their wallets for a cause, say volunteer groups. The group is calling on the federal government to consider bringing in a tax break for volunteers - something they say would be recognition that donating time is just as valuable as donating funds.

Other developed nations, such as Ireland, support exploring tax benefits for volunteers as a mechanism for recruiting and retaining volunteers. In a 2005 landmark report, the European Volunteer Centre recommends establishing a national campaign to promote volunteering and its positive effects, especially appealing to young people to come forward. The report also demonstrates the potential benefits to business. Furthermore, the report states grants for any in-service training of volunteers should be made available and should be ring-fenced so that they cannot be used for other services within the organization (del Cid & Hurley, 2005).

Summary of Literature Review

The literature review allowed the author to review the findings of others, which acknowledged and solidified that recruitment and retention is a problem across all disciplines that deal predominantly with volunteers, independent solely of the fire service. Furthermore, the literature review revealed that volunteer managers must seek creative ways to attract new volunteers by demonstrating the self-value that the individual has to the organization and how the organization can provide mutual benefit to the volunteer. By articulating these points, it is generally accepted, that volunteers will be happier and more willing to undertake additional responsibilities within an organization.

Finally, the literature reviewed that it is acceptable to utilize people's strengths and abilities in non-traditional roles within the organization. In this fire service, this will undoubtedly be an organizational culture paradigm shift as volunteers are currently expected to participate in life safety activities as firefighters and emergency medical technicians. Fire service leaders must take heed of the changing dynamics of their organizations and create new ways for people to participate.

Chapter III

Methodology

Research Design

The original research for this project was initiated at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center where a cursory review of literature related to volunteer recruitment and retention, public education campaigns, and managing volunteers was conducted. Then, research was conducted via internet search engines and the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh's online database to determine if other organizations both intrinsic to and external of the fire service have problems recruiting and retaining volunteers and how they are combating the issue.

Next, data was analyzed via the 2007-2008 edition of the Wisconsin Blue Book to identify communities in Wisconsin that have a population similar to Eagle. According to the Blue Book, the Village of Eagle had a 2006 estimated population of 1,801 and the Town of Eagle had an estimated population of 3,555.

The researcher then identified villages in Wisconsin that had a population range of 1,301 – 2,301 and towns that had a population range of 2,555 to 4,555 (Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau, 2007). After the list of 135 like-sized municipalities was compiled, Eagle Fire Department personnel were assigned the task of compiling addresses for the fire departments that service the municipalities. Eighty fire departments that protect the like-sized municipalities had addresses which were identified and a survey was developed to determine how those fire departments were staffed (career,

combination career and paid-on-call, or paid-on-call/volunteer) and whether or not identified departments had volunteer recruitment and retention problems, and if so, how the departments were combating the problem.

On December 17, 2010 the surveys were mailed to departments for response. A cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey was enclosed and respondents were asked to return the information by mail or electronically by January 14, 2011. Twenty surveys were returned and the data was compiled by the researcher. The complete results of this survey can be found in Appendix A. From this data, the researcher was able to identify that recruitment and retention is a problem for most of the surveyed fire departments in Wisconsin. Based on the information gleaned from the surveys, problems that other departments were facing could then be considered when developing a public education campaign for EFD.

On January 7, 2011 a roundtable forum was conducted at the Eagle Fire Department to brainstorm reasons why recruitment and retention of new volunteers is a problem in the organization. Six current volunteer members of the organization participated in a two-hour discussion. The participants had varying years of service commitments to the organization, ranging from one year to 23 years. The researcher facilitated the conversation and the goal was to identify and discuss what factors motivate people to join the organization and what factors are precluding people from joining. Further, information was gleaned from participants to ascertain their opinion on what roles, if any, volunteers could provide within the organization that did not necessarily

include scene response. The outcome of the forum discussion are detailed in the 'results' section of this project.

One unexpected finding occurred while conducting the original research for this project. Chief Dan Birenbaum of the Belgium (WI) Fire Department posed an interesting question to the researcher. He opined that an interesting question for the survey would have been to inquire what the average age of the members currently on a volunteer fire department is. To answer this question, a telephone survey was conducted with the original 20 respondents during the week of June 13, 2011.

Eagle Fire Department personnel were assigned the task of contacting the twenty departments to determine the average age and longevity (years of service) of the volunteer members of the organization. The results from this telephone survey can be found in Appendix A.

Methodological Limitations

Several limitations were encountered while conducting research for this project. First, the sample that was selected was based on data from the 2007 Wisconsin Blue Book of statistics. It is acknowledged that the population of each community may have changed since then. The sample is a true and accurate depiction of like-sized communities based on 2007 data. It is acknowledged, though, that any change would most likely be statistically insignificant and would not drastically change the results of the sample population.

Further, the research revealed limited qualitative data on the roles of non-traditional volunteers in public safety. While there is an entire non-profit sector that is primarily driven by a volunteer workforce, the dynamic of these types of organization relies on volunteers to conduct operations based on a business model of operation—meaning, there are secretarial, board, and other management positions available for volunteers that are mission driven. The volunteer fire service, on the other hand, relies primarily on volunteers to participate in essential life safety actions such as firefighting and providing emergency medical services. There is limited research on utilizing volunteers in non-traditional roles within the public safety sector.

Due to budgetary limitations it was impossible to send a survey to every fire department in Wisconsin; therefore the survey was limited to only like-sized fire departments. It was believed by the researcher that like-sized departments would also be organized similarly to the EFD in that they would be predominantly volunteer or paid-on-call organizations.

Chapter IV

Results and Discussion

Results

The first research question inquired as to what other like-sized volunteer / combination fire departments in Wisconsin are doing to combat the problem of recruitment and retention within their organizations, if it is in fact a problem. The research revealed that recruitment and retention is a significant concern for most organizations. Secondly, the research further revealed that the primary mission of organizations is public safety and that new recruits are expected to become certified as firefighters and/or emergency medical technicians. In Wisconsin, students must complete a 96-hour course to become eligible to test for a Firefighter I certification, the basic level the state offers.

Since most Wisconsin fire departments also provide emergency medical services to their community, recruits generally also take an emergency medical technician course. In Wisconsin, the course is a minimum of 144 hours of combined didactic and field training for students to become eligible to take test for certification.

Fire departments in Wisconsin typically send recruits to their regional Wisconsin Technical College for this training and training is generally held two evenings a week for a college semester. This can be overwhelming to many potential recruits as they face a nearly yearlong commitment to an organization just to obtain the basic training. The burden of this commitment is not just actualized by the recruit himself. Rather, time away

from family during training and necessary “department time” is a huge detractor for many from volunteering.

One respondent lamented how many community residents do not realize that their fire department relies predominantly on a volunteer workforce. In many areas of the state, small communities are bedroom communities for larger, urban centers. People who relocate to escape the hustle and bustle of the big city frequently think incorrectly that their fire protection and emergency medical services are provided by a full-time career staff.

A second respondent described how his department has a core of active members but it is hard to replace members when they retire. Several other respondents related that long-term retention is the problem—volunteers come and go and in many cases, those that do apply are unqualified for a position due to legal issues that the potential recruit has faced in his or her personal life.

The second research question inquired as to the methods that other communities employ to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and other ancillary staff. To combat this problem, many departments have attempted to utilize pay as an incentive for people to join their organization. Organizations are transitioning from employees receiving no compensation to paying employees a stipend or hourly rate for time spent participating in department activities and responding to calls for service. Though the use of stipends or hourly pay has been considered an end to the means, it is not always successful. As one respondent to the survey lamented, departments do not pay

enough, nor can they afford to pay enough to make the job worthwhile to a resident who is seeking a dual income to pay their bills.

Wisconsin operates a Length of Service Award (LOSA) program, which is a partnership between state and local government to provide a retirement benefit to volunteers who give selflessly to their communities. Under the program, each municipality establishes guidelines by which volunteers must actively participate in their organization each year. If volunteers accumulate enough “points” each year, they are eligible for half and full match status. Once a volunteer reaches this level, the municipality contributes funds towards the volunteers’ retirement and the state matches the amount. Historically this has ranged between \$200 – 400 a year depending on whether the volunteer achieved a half or full match status.

Though it appears that long-term recruitment and retention is a problem, if departments can effectively combat this dilemma and demonstrate the benefits of volunteering to potential applicants, LOSA appears to be a unique program that will allow volunteers to become vested within the department and the community. Through the survey, it was learned that six departments (30%) participate in LOSA. Several respondents acknowledged that their departments requested to participate in the program as a means of using it as a recruitment and retention tool but the idea was not funded by their local municipalities for reasons that were not explained.

In compiling the data from the survey, a significant number of organizations utilize direct marketing techniques to entice people to volunteer within their communities. Most departments surveyed utilize their website, local newspaper, open

houses, and community events such as fairs to seek new volunteers. Sixteen respondents (75%) believed that these methods were effective in recruiting new volunteers. One respondent remarked that word of mouth was their most effectual means of recruitment and that the organization frequently relies on friends of existing members to join the organization.

Another respondent described an effective partnership that the department has forged with its local technical college. He mentioned that internships are available for volunteers and that getting the youth engaged has proven to be successful because the younger members talk about the organization and build camaraderie within the community. This excitement translates into others wanting to be a part of the organization.

Of the remaining 25% who believed that direct marketing methods were not effective, one respondent described how the department continually has open houses, advertises in municipal newsletters and local newspapers, and has started a Boy Scout Explorer program to entice younger members of the community to pursue firefighting as a passion. However, these methods have proven largely ineffective because of the time commitment. The respondent lamented that people do not volunteer like they did years ago and in his experience; nobody likes to get involved within their community.

It appears that direct marketing has had some success in other organizations, though each community is inherently different and response to this form of advertising will vary based on the demographics and dynamics of the community. Partnering with community leaders to establish a means of disseminating information appears to be

important and constant, continual recognition in the media will undoubtedly draw interest to the organization. Further, many respondents encouraged the formation of explorer units or junior firefighter programs to keep high school students interested and involved in the fire service. Many junior firefighters have gone on to serve their community as regular volunteers upon completion of the program.

The third research question would seek to identify the reasons that preclude residents of Eagle from volunteering their time to EFD. Through the open discussion forum held on January 7, 2011, many of the ideas that were brought forth from the survey were confirmed as being a problem within Eagle. Several long time members of the Eagle Fire Department confirmed that the dynamic of the community has evolved over time. During the 1950's and 1960's, the community was primarily a farming town. The membership of the volunteer fire department was drawn from the farmers and local business owners who operated their storefronts in downtown Eagle. Since the 1970's, many of the farms have given way to subdivisions that now occupy the same land. Many of the old storefronts sit vacant, an ode to a bygone era that was centric on local sustainability. Several members remarked that with the building of some of the subdivisions, many homes require a dual income to pay the mortgage. This, coupled with increased family demands and children in sports does not allow for disposable time to be spent volunteering with the fire department.

Discussions also focused on whether or not people truly understood the dynamic of the Eagle Fire Department. Some members felt that the older residents of the

community knew that the fire department was predominantly staffed by volunteers, but many who moved into the community in the past decade probably did not realize this.

From the discussion it was gleaned that the department typically relied on word of mouth or advertising in municipal newsletters for volunteer recruits. These methods, like in many other communities, have only produced moderate success and more would need to be done to spread the mission of the organization in an effort to attract new members.

All participants agreed that the time demands of the organization itself have historically increased over time. The department has evolved from a volunteer signing up and immediately responding to help his neighbor in distress to now where state and federal mandates require hours upon hours of training for certification and continued education. All were in agreement that these requirements were desperately needed to promote a safe and efficient fire department and were in no way suggesting that training standards and requirements be relaxed. Rather, it was acknowledged that the demands of the organization will create a burden upon some people and will limit their ability to participate actively in the organization in a response capacity.

The fourth research question sought to identify if there were ancillary roles that volunteers could fill within the organization that do not include scene response. During the discussion forum held on January 7, 2011, this question was posed to the participants. There was a significant amount of discussion on whether or not it was effective use of volunteers' time to volunteer for ancillary roles. One resounding question heard was how someone could represent the department without having received firefighter or emergency medical services training.

The facilitator then asked what qualifications were needed for someone to be an effective life safety educator. Comments were made that a person must be patient, a good teacher, and work well with kids. The facilitator then asked if firefighters and emergency medical technicians were all good at fulfilling that role and the answer was a resounding “no.”

It was then asked again, if there were roles within the organization that could be filled by non-response personnel. It was determined, then, that volunteers without merit appointed status could be used to fulfill life safety educator roles as well as be used in an auxiliary role for fundraising or marketing. It was discussed that a physician who resides in the community may not want to participate as a responder but may be willing to provide training at no charge to the community several times a year. Further, a graphic artist or multimedia engineer could be sought to volunteer some time in helping with information technology and marketing functions of the organization.

The discussion forum would form the basis by which survey responses could be compared. It was noted that three respondents to the survey (15%) employed volunteer personnel in non-tradition roles, or had employed them in the past. One respondent mentioned that his organization used to utilize babysitters who would be dispatched to the fire station to watch children while their parents responded on calls for service. Another respondent mentioned that non-response personnel are utilized as life safety educators. A third respondent described his department’s use of clerical staff who did not respond to calls for service. Each of these thoughts were in line with what the discussion forum participants felt would be an appropriate use of ancillary volunteers’ skills.

The survey also revealed that two departments surveyed (10%) operated a senior program by which volunteers could retire from the organization but still participate in other limited service roles such as driving and operating water tenders.

The final research question was to identify the necessary components of a public education campaign that could be used to recruit members to EFD. The literature review, survey, and discussion forum each revealed several key components of a successful public education campaign. The most important component of a public education is brand identity. The department must continue to foster and cultivate a positive image in the community by taking on roles that do not always revolve around scene response. For example, the Eagle Fire Department participates in several community events each year independent of the organization itself. Members should seize these opportunities when participating to seek out potential recruits, explain the organization's mission, and answer questions. Building community camaraderie and equity is important to the success of any organization but is paramount in one that is driven by volunteers.

Fire departments should utilize direct marketing techniques by utilizing word of mouth to attract interested people to the organization so that they can learn more about the organization and the benefits of volunteering. Administrators and members should strive to be highly visible in the community through presentations, speeches, and involvement in other community activities. Applications for membership should be on-hand so that interested citizens can fill them out and follow-up can be conducted shortly thereafter.

Printed material should be prepared that explains the mission of the organization and the criticality of utilizing volunteers to fulfill the mission. This material should be distributed in highly visible places such as partnering with local libraries and business that are highly visible. Partnership with these organizations greatly assists in building community equity. Above all, any recruitment material that is used must be concise and state exactly what the organization is looking for in volunteers and what the requirements are for continued participation. For this reason, preparation is paramount to success. Ancillary roles that will be staffed by non-traditional personnel in the fire service must have job descriptions that outline what the organization expects of the volunteer and what the volunteer can expect from the organization.

When the original research data was compiled, Chief Dan Birenbaum of the Belgium (WI) Fire Department inquired as to the average age of a Wisconsin volunteer firefighter. He further related that Belgium Fire Department's average age is 43 (Birenbaum, personal communication, January 8, 2011). To further investigate this question, a telephone survey was conducted which revealed that the average age of volunteer firefighters amongst like-sized fire departments averages 37. Of these firefighters, the average longevity is 10 years.

The data that Birenbaum presented and the data that was revealed during the survey does correlate with Sittleburg's (2010) data. The average age members of like-size fire departments in Wisconsin are increasing along with average longevity. For many people, supporting their family and keeping their homes becomes their main concern, and volunteering for their local department must take a backseat. These problems are not

simply anecdotal. Firemen's Fund Insurance Company (2009) conducted a study of nearly 9,500 fire departments to see how the economy was affecting the nation's fire service. Among all volunteer departments that responded, 57 percent said they are losing volunteers who need to look for other jobs.

Discussion

Most predominantly volunteer and combination fire departments in the United States bemoan the number of volunteers on their rosters. The notion of people helping their neighbor seems to be a bygone era in many communities as the daily demands of life seem to outpace the needs of the local volunteer fire department—the world is a busier place today than it was fifty years ago and people's time must compete between increased job responsibilities coupled with children's athletic and social events. In the hierarchy of life, many people simply do not have enough time to juggle all of these events while maintaining membership in a volunteer fire department.

As Schabbel (2003) opined, as the responsibilities of the local fire department continue to expand, a major emphasis must be placed on the need to find and attract exceptional individuals into the fire service. Fire administrators must begin to understand the importance of proactively recruiting high-caliber individuals who may be interested in the fire service profession.

Expounding on Schabbel's observations, finding and attracting those individuals is one thing, but retaining them long-term seems to be the problem in many of the surveyed departments in Wisconsin. Ellis (2007) relates that it's not enough to engage

volunteers solely because of the importance of the long-term goal. For many organizations that goal is decades away, if attainable at all. None of us will wipe out all diseases or hunger in our lifetimes. And not all missions are to end something. A museum or a park expects to continue forever, give or take a century--how an organization treats its employees, volunteers, and clients matters every single day, right now.

Seeking and engaging volunteer personnel is a challenge in and of itself in the volunteer fire service. The research has shown that many departments in Wisconsin continue to use word of mouth as their primary recruiting tool. In some cases it has proven to be an effective means of finding new members but in most cases, it has had little effect. Departments must seek new and creative ways to spread the message of the organization. Embracing technology and utilizing it as a medium for communicating with the masses of the community such as Facebook and Twitter will appeal to younger members of the community.

Traditional methods of recruitment should not be abandoned. Many departments have had great success recruiting via newsletters, direct mailers, and use of the fire department information sign as a means of advertising for new volunteers. People will volunteer at an organization for many reasons, but their perception of the organization will attract them initially. Do not assume that the public knows what your organization is and what it does. Think about recent publicity, existing marketing materials (do they include information on volunteer involvement?), and public perception of your client group and cause. It is important that people associate your organization with value to the

community (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2005).

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service (2007), the connection between volunteering, social psychological factors, and social networks has been captured by what has been termed “social integration theory,” or “role theory,” which holds that an individual’s social connections, typically measured by the number of social roles that an individual has, can provide meaning and purpose to his or her life, while protecting him or her from isolation in difficult periods. However, research also suggests that volunteer activities offer those who serve more than just a social network to provide support and alleviate stress; volunteering also provides individuals with a sense of purpose and life satisfaction.

Departments should seek to identify tangible benefits that volunteers can relate to outside of pay incentives and the like. Societal benefits can be discussed that will benefit the volunteer such as reduced anxiety and depression, improved personal self-regard, increased mental functioning, and reduced self-concern (Swinson, 2006). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010) agree in their published study on the importance of physical activity, stating that volunteer programs play an important role in promoting physical activity and that those benefits can help to control weight and high blood pressure.

The use of volunteers in non-traditional roles within an organization might appear to be a unique concept in the fire service but other non-profit organizations frequently rely on volunteers to participate in many facets of the organization that is outside the

direct scope of the organization's mission. However, fire departments who are considering a recruitment drive that are looking for volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians should undertake a review of current operations prior to commencing a volunteer recruitment. It is important to have a thorough understanding of the organization in order to determine the number of volunteers needed and the types of skills they require. Administrators may need to increase the number of volunteers that are working in fundraising and marketing; however, without specifying this in the recruitment drive, organizations may get large numbers of people wishing to volunteer to work in a different area of the organization. Be specific about what you're seeking (Lloyd, 2011).

The survey revealed that the use of volunteers in non-traditional roles can have a very positive impact on an organization. Finding quality candidates for any role can be difficult, though. Snook, Gasaway, & Holaman (2011) recommend that regardless of the role sought, the best candidates will exhibit several specific characteristics. First, volunteer recruits should exhibit leadership experience, as this can be an indicator of a person's ability to eventually step into a fire officer role in the future. Second, candidates should demonstrate maturity in their ability to accept constructive criticism. The fire service is extremely regimented and people must be able to accept discipline and follow commands. Third, a candidate must demonstrate commitment which can be ascertained by asking the candidate about other organizations he or she has been involved with and to what extent they participated. Fourth, candidates must demonstrate a team attitude because the fire service places a heavy emphasis on teamwork. Finally, candidates must

exhibit characteristics of conscientiousness, moral character, initiative, and problem-solving ability. The fire service is a complex industry to work in, regardless of whether a person is performing fire prevention activities or is actively fighting a fire. The personal characteristics described are all desirable and seeking these types of individuals will make a better match for the individual to the organization and the organization to the individual.

The purpose of this research was to develop a public education campaign that can be used as a recruitment tool for new personnel who are interested in serving their community in both traditional and non-traditional ways.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

As a result of this research, it is recommended that the Eagle Fire Department develop and implement a formal volunteer recruitment plan that is targeted towards residents in the community who may not have had exposure to the organization. Further, it is recommended that the department actively seek volunteers who are interested in joining the organization by filling a non-traditional role in the fire prevention bureau or by performing other non-emergent functions. Expanding the organization's mission to include non-traditional support staff must be ingrained in the organization's culture of acceptance. This will only be actualized by creating and fostering a collaborative environment that solicits ideas from all current members of the organization which will identify the support roles that are needed and articulate position descriptions prior to engaging in a recruitment effort.

New avenues of recruitment should be explored through the use of social networking and other community events that have been typically used to merely showcase the department's abilities and equipment. Embracing technology will undoubtedly appeal to younger members of the community.

Finally, the department must continue to identify and acknowledge the factors that are precluding current residents from volunteering with the organization. Administration should form a committee comprised of officers and members of the organization to determine if any department policies can be updated or expanded that would make it

easier for people to volunteer while preserving the mission of the organization. It is not recommended, however, that training requirements be sacrificed in an effort to fill the roster.

The fiscal impact in implementing a public education campaign is negligible and can readily be accomplished with existing personnel and talent. It is acknowledged by the researcher that the organization currently budgets funds to new member recruitment and these funds should be expended to facilitate any new programs that are developed.

Subsequent studies that are conducted should be undertaken with a full understanding of the demographics and dynamics of the community served as well as the organizational culture within the fire department seeking to recruit and retain new volunteers. The dynamics of the locality will vary and public education programs must be tailored to fit the specific needs of an organization.

Appendix A

Survey of Like-size Wisconsin Fire Departments' Staffing and Recruitment

December 17, 2010

Dear Fire Service Colleague:

I am working on an applied research project entitled, "If not you, then who?" which will focus on recruitment and retention in Wisconsin's volunteer / combination fire service.

Specifically, the problem is the Eagle Fire Department is an aging organization that lacks the ability to effectively recruit and retain new volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians. The purpose of my research is to develop a public education campaign that can be used as a recruitment tool for new personnel who are interested in serving their community.

My research focuses on four specific questions:

- (a) What are other like-sized volunteer / combination fire departments in Wisconsin doing to combat the problem of recruitment and retention problems in their organizations?
- (b) What are methods that communities employ to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and other ancillary staff?
- (c) What factors are precluding residents who live in Eagle from volunteering their time to EFD?
- (d) What are the ancillary roles that volunteers can fill within the organization that do not include scene response?

Enclosed you will find a brief survey that I ask you to fill out to help me in my research as I work to better my department, community, and Wisconsin's fire service. The survey should take no more than 5 - 10 minutes of your time.

In order to complete my research, I ask that responses be returned to me by January 14. Surveys can be returned to me by USPS, or can be completed online by browsing to:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YLQTZDC>

Your help in assisting me is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Justin R. Heim
Fire Chief
Eagle Fire Department

Wisconsin Volunteer Fire Department Assessment

1. Department Name: _____

2. Is your department...

- Volunteer (includes Paid on Call)
 Combination of Volunteer and Career
 Career

3. Is volunteer recruitment and retention a problem within your organization?

- Yes No

4. How many volunteers were rostered in the following decades/years? Approximate if necessary.

1970 _____

1980 _____

1990 _____

2000 _____

2005 _____

2010 _____

5. What method(s) are you using to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians? (i.e.: direct mailing campaign, safety fairs, open houses, etc...)

6. Have these method(s) been successful?

- Yes No

7. Does your organization participate in Wisconsin's Length of Service Award program (LOSA)?

- Yes No

(Over please ->)

8. Do you utilize volunteers in non-traditional roles such as public educators, secretaries, et cetera? (In other words, could I join your department to ONLY do public education and not respond to emergency calls?) If so, what roles do people volunteer for in your organization?

9. If your organization is facing a shortage of volunteers, why, in your opinion, do they not volunteer? For example, in one community, the scale of economy demands dual-income households to pay the mortgage. Is this, or are there other mitigating factors, that you feel prevent people from volunteering? (time commitment? training requirements? et cetera)

10. If you would like a copy of the applied research project when it is completed, please fill in the information below. If you have any other insight you would like to provide on the problem that many organizations are facing with regard to recruitment and retention please fill in the lines below or email it to me at jheim@eaglefiredepartment.com Thank you for your help in my project!

Name: _____
Company: _____
Address: _____
City / Town: _____
State: _____
Zip: _____
Email Address: _____

Surveys can be returned to: Justin Heim · Eagle Fire Department · 126 E. Main Street · Eagle, WI 53119 or can be emailed to jheim@eaglefiredepartment.com or completed online at www.surveymoney.com/s/YLQTZDC

The following pages represent the data that was collected through the survey instrument which was distributed on December 17, 2010. Results were calculated on January 15, 2011 after the survey instrument closed.

Department Profile

	Response Percent	Response Count
Volunteer (includes Paid on Call)	80.00%	16
Combination of Volunteer and Career	20.00%	4
Career	0.00%	<u>0</u>

Is volunteer recruitment and retention a problem within your organization?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	70.00%	14
No	30.00%	<u>6</u>

Have current recruitment methods been successful?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	80.00%	16
No	25.00%	<u>5</u>

Does your organization participate in Wisconsin's Length of Service Award program (LOSA)?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	30.00%	6
No	70.00%	<u>14</u>

Department	How does your organization recruit?
Spencer Fire Dept	Word of mouth, committees -- we involve people on at least one committee so that they have information. This helps us gain buy in
Bristol Fire Dept	We are part of our technical college system helping with internships. I think our best tool now is our younger members talk about your organization and our striving for excellence. People want to be part of our department.
Butler Vol. Fire Dept.	Open house / National night out. Word of mouth
Rice Lake	Website, newspaper, word-of-mouth, educational fairs
Beaver Dam	Occasionally advertise in local paper.
Grafton Vol. Fire Department	Open house, citizens safety academy, safety fairs @ stores. Fire dept. sign downtown, newspaper ads, word of mouth, explorer program
Denmark Vol. Fire Dept.	Word of mouth, friends of existing members, co workers, families
Belgium Fire Dept	We have open houses, we tried putting a fire academy class together. Advertise in village newsletter. We have the LOSA program. Advertise in local newspaper. Started a explorer program.
Troy Center Fire Dept.	Word of mouth, street dance. Long term retention is our problem
Ellington Fire Rescue	Town newsletters, local papers, our annual fund raiser, parades - hand out pamphlets. Word of mouth.
Hollandtown Fire Department	Point system. Accumulate points for attending drills, fires, fire clean-up, additional training, etc.
Lyons Fire Department	Part of our information letter that goes out with our fundraiser/raffle ticket mailing invites interested people to contact us. Also we have an explorer program through the boy scouts and several former explorers are now regular members.
North Prairie Fire	Open Houses, Web Site, And public Education
Greenbush Fire Department	Word of mouth. Request for volunteers in annual letter to residents.
East Troy Fire Department	open houses, media ads, fund raisers
Sparta City Fire Department	Usually word of mouth or a notice in the local paper.
Milton and Milton Township FD	Posters, Open house
Mazomanie Fire Dept	Annual open house, direct mail (included with fundraising, word of mouth (seems to be most successful)

Somerset Fire/Rescue	word of mouth, open house
Rome Fire Dept	Open House, ads,

Department	Do you utilize volunteers in ancillary roles?
Spencer Fire Dept	No
Bristol Fire Dept	Public education
Butler Vol. Fire Dept.	No but we have alternatives (EMT Only, MPO only, limited service "retired).
Rice Lake	No
Beaver Dam	Not yet but we have not actively looked into it.
Grafton Vol. Fire Department	No
Denmark Vol. Fire Dept.	No
Belgium Fire Dept	Not at this time but looking to start a program
Troy Center Fire Dept.	No
Ellington Fire Rescue	No - All are line personnel
Hollandtown Fire Department	No. We did when the department was established in the early 50's but not in later years.
Lyons Fire Department	No
North Prairie Fire	NO
Greenbush Fire Department	No
East Troy Fire Department	not typically but would be willing to try
Sparta City Fire Department	no, everyone is a state certified firefighter. We do public education year round.
Milton and Milton Township FD	No.
Mazomanie Fire Dept	We used to have a clerical person and also babysitters who would respond to the station to watch firefighters' kids. We had a little success with this, but not lasting success.
Somerset Fire/Rescue	no
Rome Fire Dept	Some are allowed to do just medical and drive apparatus. Two are allowed for dispatch and administrative work

Department	In your opinion, why don't people volunteer with your organization?
Spencer Fire Dept	N/A
Bristol Fire Dept	N/A
Butler Vol. Fire Dept.	The village is only 1 square mile. It used to be a heavy blue collar community. However it now is an older community. The good paying jobs are gone. As new people move in their lives are crazy enough without being on call 24/7. Also the time needed for school has gotten out of hand.
Rice Lake	Time commitment, training requirements and primary employer restrictions all play a significant role in Rice Lake. Young people are not staying -- they are moving out to find higher paying employment.
Beaver Dam	Big commitment in training and time away from family. Too many other demands on time and the time of family members (kids).
Grafton Vol. Fire Department	Time commitment. Training requirements. Kids. People do not realize that we volunteer.
Denmark Vol. Fire Dept.	Training seems to be a big problem in all departments. Being volunteers people want their weekends off.
Belgium Fire Dept	Time commitment. People don't volunteer like they did years ago. Nobody likes to get involved with their community.
Troy Center Fire Dept.	I think people are turned off by the time commitment of training. Also we are becoming more of a bedroom community, lack of daytime people.
Ellington Fire Rescue	Yes, I feel we do. I feel training is extremely important but it is hard to get new FF to buy into the required schooling. Our dept. does pay for schooling but our town board is always threatening to cut training / schooling wages. More people work outside our town and just dont have time after work and kid's sporting events to commit to the FD
Hollandtown Fire Department	People do not want to commit to the initial FF I of 60 hrs. If it gets changed to 120 hrs, it will be more difficult to recruit. Plus family & jobs is a major part. We do not pay nor can we afford to pay enough to make this a dual income.
Lyons Fire Department	We faced a declining roster around the mid to later 90's. We implemented a reimbursement program which provides a flat rate per call. This provided a little incentive for joining and responding as most who can leave work for calls get nothing from their employers. I think people are more busy now than ever and feel they cannot commit any more time.
North Prairie Fire	Time Commitment, training requirements, Dual Income Households.

Greenbush Fire Department	Our township is a rural agricultural area with tight control on any new residential zoning. Farms are getting larger which does not allow time for farmers to participate. Housing is very limited so young people move out of township.
East Troy Fire Department	The officers of our department also notice that our younger members have different values. They value their time more and are not willing to volunteer any extra time. Also the young members who remain in our township do not have any post high school education and work entry level jobs. These guys do not understand the importance for additional training or care for it.
Sparta City Fire Department	i believe it is coming down to time commitments and more people having familiestrining commitments on boyh fire and ems also
Milton and Milton Township FD	not a problem at this time. Have a waiting list.
Mazomanie Fire Dept	Hours needed to volunteer
Somerset Fire/Rescue	Time commitment is the big reason, even though we don't have many calls. "somebody else will do it"
Rome Fire Dept	honestly just seems our Village/Township doesn't respect the FD and doesn't care to help

Department	Avg. Age	Avg. Longevity
Eagle Fire Department	38	14
Beaver Dam	33	13
Belgium Fire Dept	36	7
Bristol Fire Dept	41	8
Butler Vol. Fire Dept.	33	14
Denmark Vol. Fire Dept.	37	11
East Troy Fire Department	36	9
Ellington Fire Rescue	41	13
Grafton Vol. Fire Department	39	12
Greenbush Fire Department	36	15
Hollandtown Fire Department	42	12
Lyons Fire Department	34	8
Mazomanie Fire Dept	38	14
Milton and Milton Township FD	39	6
North Prairie Fire	35	5
Rice Lake	32	7
Rome Fire Dept	39	12
Somerset Fire/Rescue	35	9
Sparta City Fire Department	35	6
Spencer Fire Dept	32	11
Troy Center Fire Dept.	36	11
Averages	37	10

Appendix B

Eagle Fire Department Volunteer Recruitment Program Standard Operating Guideline

EAGLE FIRE DEPARTMENT Standard Operating Guideline

Number: 291

Volunteer Recruitment Program

Effective date: April 1, 2011

Expiration date: Indefinitely

Total pages:

Revision: 1

Approved By: _____ Date: January 15, 2011
Fire Chief

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline a public education campaign for recruiting new volunteer / paid-on-call firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and other ancillary personnel.

Scope

This policy shall apply to all personnel of the Eagle Fire Department. All personnel shall follow the requirements of this guideline.

Policy

The Eagle Fire Department recognizes a deficiency in the area of long-term recruitment and retention of new volunteer / paid-on-call firefighters and emergency medical technicians. The department also recognizes that the economics of the local community cannot support or sustain career staffing to augment the current staffing model that the department employees.

As a result, the department must take proactive steps to identify the root issue of *why* people do not volunteer with the organization and then take action to correct it. Furthermore, the department recognizes that it must seek creative ways and create non-traditional avenues for people to volunteer in the organization which will allow response personnel to focus on their jobs more effectively and efficiently.

The department participates in many public education and community events each year. Typically these events are utilized to showcase the department's apparatus and equipment but rarely are the events used as a means of recruitment.

The department must take proactive steps to capitalize on these events as a tool for potential recruitment of both line and ancillary personnel.

Therefore, upon implementation of this policy, a recruitment committee will be established. This committee will consist of five employees of the organization including two officers, one fire and one EMS, and three members of the body. A committee chairperson shall be elected by the committee annually. The chairperson will report directly to the Fire Marshall.

The recruitment committee shall meet monthly at a time convenient for the committee. All meetings will be compensated at the approved training rate.

The recruitment committee will be responsible for the following:

- Identification of issues that are precluding residents from volunteering with the organization
- Identifying ancillary roles within the organization that can be held by non-line personnel
 - Recommending to the Fire Marshall job duties and requirements for holding such a position within the organization
- Drafting promotional material that can be disseminated during Kettle Moraine Days and other fundraisers that the department participates in
- Disseminating and maintaining promotional material in businesses and government offices around eagle
- Maintaining a position in the media every 90 days promoting something positive within the department or the department's involvement in the community
- Conducting open houses for potential recruits, explaining the mission of the organization and outlining the commitments required
- Coordinating the staffing of booths at community fairs and Kettle Moraine Days
- Drafting quarterly news articles for each municipal newsletter
- Conducting semi-annual recruitment drives
- Maintaining a presence on the Eagle Fire Department website and social media networking accounts

It is believed that the recruitment committee will wish to maintain a vested interest in the organization and ensure its long term success. The recruitment committee will have significant latitude to conduct operations including preparation and printing of promotional material. Such disbursements must be approved by the Fire Chief prior to signing a contract.

This policy will become a living, breathing document that can be modified or expanded by the recruitment committee as needed, with approval and revision by the Fire Chief.

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