

Mayor of Souderton Dan Yocum Mayor's Memo!



Of all the Mayor's Memos I've written to date this is perhaps the most near-and-dear to me as it highlights the most incredible organization I know; **The Perseverance Volunteer Fire Company of Souderton.**

Harold Yocum, my grandfather, was a life member of the Souderton Fire Company so it was natural that I join with him. Even coming from a firefighting family, I was mystified when I first joined. How is it possible that all of this is *VOLUNTEER?!?*

Many people in the Indian Valley are civic-minded and community-oriented. But being a volunteer with your local Fire Company is an entirely different level of commitment. These incredible men and women respond to an average of 400+ calls a year, sometimes responding to three, four, and five emergency calls in any given day. These calls can come at any time of day or night, and our volunteers are ready at a moments notice.

Think about how many cups of coffee it takes you to be alert in the morning. In contrast, our volunteer firefighters are often awoken in the middle of the night, leave their warm bed and loved ones, and within minutes are racing toward an emergency scene ready to perform CPR, lay into a house fire, or pull a victim from a devastating accident. They leave dinner tables and family time. They sacrifice birthdays and holidays. They leave work and daily responsibilities. No matter when their service is needed, they answer the call to protect YOU. And they are compensated absolutely NOTHING for their efforts. Until you see it firsthand, it is almost unfathomable to understand the commitment our firefighters give to this community.



Not only are these firemen giving their time, but they are risking their own lives in service of others. These firefighters are putting on gear that is heat resistant up to several hundred degrees and running into a burning housefire, responding first on the scene of an accident in a busy intersection, and entering unknown and hazardous situations to save human life. The Perseverance Volunteer Fire Company has had two Line of Duty deaths in their 123-year history, most recently Bob Greiser in 2019. All as VOLUNTEERS for this community.

So why do they do it? Vice President and 16-year active member Dan Biros explains:

"Why do I do it? I joined the Perseverance Volunteer Fire Company of Souderton in 2008 with 11 years of prior firefighting experience in Lower Bucks. Those past 27 years could yield many different answers, each linked to an event that impacted a family, a business, a church, and the community I served. The simplest answer is to save life and property; to be a part of a better good, one where selflessness, determination, and commitment to serve and protect the community is priority. Each call I respond to comes with an understanding of the ultimate sacrifice I may be called upon to make, and serves as the conclusion to the fireman's prayer, "And if, according to my fate, I am to lose my life; please bless with your protecting my children and my wife".

What I enjoy the most about being a firefighter is Fire Prevention Week. Seeing the eyes of every child light up as they get a chance to be up close and personal with our gear, our trucks and our members. Providing them with moments to "high five" a fireman donning gear while overcoming fears, riding in our fire trucks and antiques, and leaving them with a promise that ALL of my firefighter friends and I will be there for them and their families at a moment's notice!"

You cannot put a price tag on their service. But from a dollars & cents standpoint, these volunteers save you an enormous amount in taxes. Each call averages about a dozen firefighters. Those are 12 people that are dropping everything in the service of others. If Souderton Borough had to pay even a third that many people to staff our station, the overall cost to the taxpayer would be well into the millions.

Even though our firefighters are unpaid, the tools they need to effectively do their job are very expensive. To outfit and train each firefighter costs upwards of \$8,500. There is more than \$50,000 worth of tools and equipment on each fire truck. And the trucks themselves cost an astronomical amount to replace. The Perseverance Volunteer Fire Company replaced its 1992 Peirce Engine last year for a cost of about \$600,000. In the coming years they will have to replace their 1999 Tower Truck for an estimated cost of at least \$2,500,000. Your financial contributions are much-needed. Supporting fundraising efforts of the Fire Company and the Auxiliary, and participating in the annual Fund Drive goes a long way.

As much as money is needed, volunteers are also needed. Like many civic organizations, volunteer participation is not what it once was. When my grandfather joined in 1945, there was a waiting list to be in the Fire Company. Today, it is hard to get people to volunteer. But even if you do not want to commit to the training and obligations of a full interior firefighter, you can still contribute! When I became Mayor (another volunteer job) and had more constraints on my time, I became Fire Police. This requires less training, but is still a critical part of the fire service and very much in need of volunteers. We also have need for members of the Auxiliary to help organize and lead fundraising efforts. I would love if this Mayors Memo inspired you to submit your application to become a firefighter today. But realistically there are many ways to contribute to this incredible organization that might meet your commitment level and lifestyle.

When you hear that fire whistle go off, or see a fire truck whiz past, know that an all-volunteer force is responding to those in need. It is an incredible commitment and we owe the Perseverance Volunteer Fire Company the most enormous debt of gratitude for their service and dedication to our community.

