

?I do this for the chance to help someone? - youth firefighters



A group of Limerick Township's Youth Firefighters are ready to leave the fire station for Dickey Lake Beach on Apr 15 as part of their monthly training. JIM EADIE Special to This Week.

By Jim Eadie

?I am very proud of our little volunteer fire department,? said Limerick Township Deputy Reeve Sharon Carson. She is particularly proud of the department's ?Youth Firefighter? program, now into its third year. ?Jason Post, our fire chief, does a fantastic job,? she said. ?And all young people are welcome to participate. We have young people not just from our township, but from Bancroft, Wollaston, and Tudor and Cashel as well.?

Post is pretty happy with the dozen or so young people who come out regularly to the monthly meetings at the Limerick fire station. ?This is not just for boys,? he said. ?We have four girls in the group. We are trying to get some interest in the fire service, whether it be as a career option for them, or as volunteers. They are a great bunch of young adults ? and they teach me a lot too.?

Mitchell McTrach, Nate Hilts and Brandon Rines have been coming over from Wollaston township for almost three years. ?Our deputy chief Dave Jackson (Wollaston Township) told us about this. He knew we were interested,? said McTrach, ?he even drove us here for our first meeting.?

It has been a very busy three years. The group has had excursions to see the fire dispatch centre in Belleville, as well as the firefighter training tower in Trenton. They have had hands on training with forestry pumps and the back packs used in fighting grass and forest fires. Knots and ropes are an important part of firefighter gear.

?We took the first aid course and have our certificates,? added Rines, who was carrying his certificate with him. ?We have practiced putting on bunker gear,? said McTrach, ?including oxygen tanks!?

Another interesting meeting was taken up with search and rescue, where participants in firefighter gear have their vision obscured purposely, and are required to search an area by feel, looking for objects or bodies.

On the evening of April 15, the group was off in the fire truck to Dickey Lake Beach for a practice session setting up a forestry pump. As with any training session, a good thing happened - something didn't go as planned. The recoil mechanism on the pump engine malfunctioned, precipitating a quick change of plan to a second pump, and a repair session on the first pump. Clearly evident, and just as important as good equipment, was the demonstration of enthusiasm and good teamwork.

?I think I would like to be a fire chief someday,? said McTrach. ?Someday Rick Middleton (Wollaston fire chief) will retire ? I would like to do his job.?

?And I do this for the chance to help someone,? said Hilts. ?Me too,? agreed Rines.