

MEMORIAL DAY



Today we are here to honor and remember the sacrifice and valor of those who fought and died in our nation's wars providing us with all the freedoms we too often take for granted.

I want to take a moment and honor today's fire and EMS providers.

But first, I'm going to tell you a little bit about the reality of what communities' face.

The State Comptroller reports audits of fire districts revealing mismanagement or theft of funds, departments lack resources and equipment (some resorting to buying used equipment), and there is turmoil amongst the members (some quite serious).

Whether it's volunteer fire departments, fire districts, or paid departments, there is a shortage of people willing to serve. Last week I spoke with a mayor whose volunteer fire department has an average age of 70. It was a much larger village in a similar rural area. The most essential system supporting the health and safety of our communities is in crisis.

When speaking of Stanley Hose Company we get that swelling feeling of pride when we see them march in their formal dress under the backdrop of shiny red fire trucks, we worry when they are on I-86 with cars passing at 70mph, we watch in awe as they fight fires, we well-up at word of them braving the cold water to save a dog, and we are grateful for their willingness to spring out of bed at 2am to the medical attention of someone in need.

This is what we see from the average of 370 calls per year. Whether they respond to twice as many or half as many calls, it's their willingness and preparedness that serves our community well. It requires the commitment of the whole family, a sacrifice of many hours.

Stanley Hose Company's role in supporting the members and the fire department through fundraising, collecting donations, grant writing (largely in part to Financial Secretary Joel Fisher), and managing the assets, both physical and financial, is extraordinary. The Fire Department's leadership begins with Chief Matt Oehlbeck who has a deep bench; Assistants Jared Oehlbeck, Brett Cook, Ray Spacht; and Squad Captains Tim Fisher and Jim Croscut to mention a few. They have recruited a number of young members, and some not so young, but still able body enough to carry the flag.

Combined they have all the foundational elements to ensure the future of the department. Our gratitude and appreciation extends to all the seen and the unseen, the commitment, preparedness, and cooperation it requires to serve the community at the highest level.

Thank you,
Mayor Colleen Meeder

