

iN COMMAND

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INVITING THE COMMUNITY TO PLAY

Westerville Division of Fire (Franklin Cty.) launched a community outreach program in 2001 by offering basic fire training to residents. It grew into a support group called the Citizen's Auxiliary Resource Team (CART).

At a recent event, Westerville Fire Battalion Chief John Bokros looks on as CART members Phil Price and Bard Reoch (in blue shirts) "back up" future firefighters.

TRAINED CITIZENS BECOME A RESOURCE

For the past three decades, the Westerville Division of Fire has prospered and grown as a result of the tremendous community support we have experienced through passage of levy issues and prevention and education programs. The Division has always attempted to show appreciation by offering tours, CPR training, and other venues to the community in response to their continued support.

BY CHIEF BERNIE INGLES, WESTERVILLE DIVISION OF FIRE

In 2000, a Division committee developed the idea to conduct an annual training class called the Citizen's Fire Academy that would be open to all citizens of the City of Westerville and Blendon Township free of charge, and would provide participants with an inside look at Division operations as well as an overview of firefighting and EMS careers.

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TRAINED CITIZENS BECOME RESOURCE

CONTINUED FROM COVER

The inaugural class was scheduled to begin September 11, 2001, but was delayed for obvious reasons. On September 18, 2001, 16 people began a ten-week training program that would become the start of a very successful initiative. Meeting each Tuesday evening, participants began with an orientation of the Division of Fire, the Westerville Communications Center, general terminology, budget, and general operations. They also were told what to expect from this training and what was expected from them. Students were encouraged to participate in all activities, but were not required to do so. The training that students were exposed to included the following components:

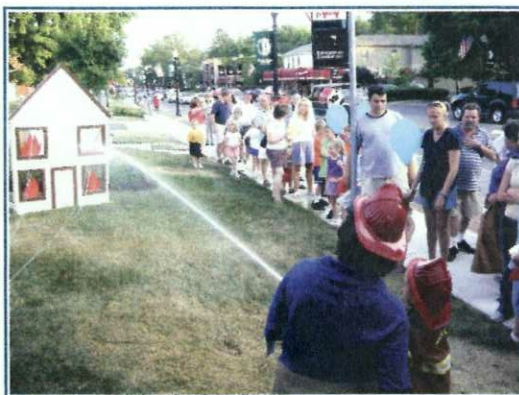
- Week 2, Personal Protective Equipment and Physical Agility
- Week 3, Fire Ground Operations, ICS, Accountability, Hoses, Fire Behavior, Pump Operations
- Week 4, Fire Ground Operations, Forcible Entry, Ladders
- Week 5, CPR
- Week 6, Vehicle Extrication Tools and Equipment
- Week 7, First Aid
- Week 8, Fire Prevention and Education
- Week 9, Emergency Vehicle Operations
- Week 10, Fire Extinguishers and Protective Devices.

For the students, some of the highlights of the ten-week program were operating a hose stream, operating a pump, climbing a 100-foot aerial ladder, and emergency vehicle operations. Students also obtained certification in CPR and were taught how to properly use a fire extinguisher with the Division's fire extinguisher training system.

Following completion of the first class, some of the graduates organized and established the Citizen's Auxiliary Resource Team (CART), which supports Fire Division functions at community events, drills, levy campaigns, and even in our hiring process. We have conducted annual Fire Academy classes, and community interest has continued to grow as graduates begin to speak about their experiences. To date, 63 students have completed this training.

Similarly, we now have a CART organization that has grown to approximately 45 members contributing 1,523 hours to the Division since they organized — and they have taken on even more responsibility. Some have completed CERT training, one graduate went on to EMT/paramedic school to change careers, and we have established this group as a resource for emergency disaster responses. Our Academy participants run the gamut, from homemakers and business owners to a college professor, an architect, and even a recently elected City Council member.

This program has been one of the most exciting things that the Division of Fire has



undertaken. Not only are we providing a valuable opportunity for citizens, but we have realized an untapped resource that will benefit the Division and the community for years to come. •

Long lines always form for children to "put out the fire" at Fourth Friday Safety Fest.