



La Honda Fire Brigade Newsletter June 2007

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Jeff Clarke

President - Board of Directors

“Why do people volunteer for the Fire Brigade? Why should I? How much time would have I have to spend? What skills do I need? How do I volunteer?” The La Honda Fire Brigade (LHFB) has many ways for volunteers to help.

Obviously, volunteering for fire fighting and emergency response requires the most dedication and time commitments. Firefighters spend many hours training and practicing drills in addition to responding to emergencies. Previous experience in emergency fields is helpful but not required. Firefighters volunteer because they enjoy helping others, saving lives and supporting the community.

Board members are responsible for making sure that the firefighters have the tools and resources necessary to do their job. Their tasks range from handling corporate, business and legal issues to sponsoring fundraisers, to handling budget and financial issues. The board meets once a month for several hours. In addition, board members help out with events and sending out mailings, and publish the newsletter.

Infrastructure assistance includes helping with the membership drive, mailing parties, making posters and signs, computer assistance, database work, grant writing, and newsletter copy editing. The time commitment varies from a couple of hours for mailing parties to many hours for membership drives and database entry. People can volunteer for any of the events put on by the Brigade, such as the cioppino dinner, open house, pancake breakfast, and holiday faire. The time commitment can be from a couple hours to a full day per event. This is an easy way to help if you want to help support the brigade by volunteering.

CERT members spend several days in training classes learning the skills to help in the time of a disaster. In addition, they participate in drills to practice the CERT skills so that they are prepared when an emergency happens. During non-emergency times the time commitment is low but during a disaster they will be very busy.

Many volunteers help out because they want to support the community and help create a safe place to live. It is a way to learn new skills, meet people and build a sense of community. Students can receive community service credits. Of course, the more help, the easier the work is for everyone! To volunteer, please see contact information on page 2 or on <http://www.lahondafire.org>.



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Calendar of LHFB events:

July 15: Open house and flea market
July 19: General membership meeting
July 28/29: Driscoll rodeo
Aug 12: Motorcycle safety day, tentative
Sept 15/16: Golden State rodeo
Oct 14: Pancake breakfast
Oct 14: La Ducati day, tentative
Dec 9: Holiday faire

CHIEF'S REPORT

By Larry Whitney - Chief

In past newsletter articles I have discussed the LHFB's efforts in planning and preparing for emergencies. We are well prepared for the predictable events, but planning for the unpredictable is much more challenging. Every fire chief can only hope they have put into place the infrastructure to help their firefighters and communities respond and withstand the effects of any disaster that may befall them.

In our area, the potential for a wildland fire clearly is unpredictable, but highly possible. With this year's reduced rain fall, wildland fuels such as brush and grass will become susceptible to burning much earlier than normally expected. By late summer, fuels that have posed little risk in recent years may be primed to aggressively burn. The community and the LHFB must plan for this risk now, and take it seriously. Our 2007 wildland fire plan includes the following (and more):

Community preparedness:

“Defensible Space” inspections started earlier this year than ever before. These inspections, carried out by Cal-Fire, are intended to help safeguard wildland from the miscellaneous fires that can occur around a home and to give firefighters an edge in defending a home should a wildfire approach. The Brigade will be mailing 3000 “Living with Fire in San Mateo County” booklets to south coast households, so that homeowners can help protect their property. We will also construct a “Fire Safe Static Display” that describes the wildfire threat here in our region. Part of this display's message will be aimed at the many visitors to this area. We hope to have this display available for public events throughout the south coast. Lastly, in partnership with Cal-Fire and the San Mateo County Fire Safe
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Fire Department Personnel

- Larry Whitney - Chief

Officers

- Ari Delay - Assistant Chief
- Cathy Whitney - Captain

Firefighters

- Chris Conner – Station 55
- Rory Doolin
- Jeff Dominici
- Matt Hanlon – Station 58
- Paul Long
- Charles Marx
- Peter Panofsky
- Doug Woods
- Jim Young

Rookies

- Katie Johnson
- Brandon Wainwright

Board Members

- Jeff Clarke - Board President
- Julie Delay - Corporate Secretary
- Ken Gottwald
- Coleen Hackett - Treasurer
- Joseph Kral
- Sandi Ruiz-Poss
- Doug Turner – Web Master
- Iris Schrijver, M.D. – Vice President, Newsletter Editor

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Committee, our very popular “Fuels Reduction” program will be returning. This project gives residents a convenient way to dispose of brush and woody material as a part of making their home fire safe. Please see our website for more information.

Firefighter training: The Brigade has taken a leadership role in helping train firefighters for this year’s fire season. In late March we hosted the wildland field day of the College of San Mateo Fire Academy. Forty fire fighting students were trained on the tools that wildland firefighters use to suppress fires. In early May, 22 firefighters from 6 volunteer fire departments graduated from a LHFB sponsored 32 hour wildland firefighter class. As the season progresses, we will sponsor additional training to help State, County and LHFB firefighters learn to work together efficiently, as we all respond to fires in this area.

Pre-fire planning: The Brigade will be working with Cal-Fire to develop plans for evacuating several of the communities we serve. In many cases these communities mimic the conditions seen in the Oakland Hills wildland fire. Plans are being made to evacuate residents while moving firefighters to an emergency scene over narrow and limited roads. Public outreach efforts will be made to explain the plans to the covered communities.

With luck, the 2007 wildland fire season will be as docile as those in the recent past. However, depending on this is a formula for disaster. **Now is the time to join us in making plans to help keep your home and family as safe as possible.**

Cioppino dinner - By Sandi Ruiz-Poss

Tickets were sold out this year to the 2007 Bill Glass Memorial Crab Cioppino, which took place on April 21. More than 250 guests checked in at the festive red tent to purchase drink and raffle tickets or a specially labeled wine donated by La Honda’s own Rorden-Graham Winery and Smith Vineyards. This year’s event had some new ingredients. For the first time, our cioppino contained succulent pink prawns swimming alongside the crab in

the best tomato garlic sauce this side of the Mississippi. The guests heartily approved of the new addition. Another addition was the new fire engine bar, hand-built by our own volunteer firefighter Peter Panofsky. It featured flashing lights and a siren. This year’s Judd Cochran award went to Jeanie Graham for her continuous support of the LHFB and its events. We sold a record number of raffle tickets. There were many fabulous prizes, including gift certificates to many of our local eateries, gift baskets, a T.V. and a hand made quilt with fire engines on it. Our favorite DJ, Johnny Midnight, had the crowd dancing until the wee hours under the colored disco lights to rock, soul, country, R&B, and even some hip hop. We awarded Johnny Midnight with a special edition leather fire helmet. A hearty **THANK YOU** to our sponsors, raffle donors, and the volunteers who put in so many hours to make this event such a great success.



CERT students learn to safely use Fire Extinguishers

Getting up to speed - *By Doug Turner*

You may recall the days when the only option for logging onto the internet was to endure the painfully slow speed of dial-up modems. Since our last newsletter, the LHFB board of directors have re-evaluated our web host and internet services and made some simultaneous changes. We have joined the world of DSL and we have found a new web hosting company. The result is better and faster service at less cost per month!

Although the Brigade has had a website up since 2000, we decided to give it a new look. It will, however, always be a work in progress. We're thinking about the best way to post recent call activity. It is our intention to incorporate more pictures than ever before. Look for pictures of Brigade events, both ours and those we attend, trainings, drills, and in some cases accidents and fire calls. Also new on the site is a library link. Here you will find past LHFB newsletters, various brochures and flyers, and other publications of interest such as the 2006 annual report. The website (<http://www.lahondafire.org>) will continue to be a resource for documents you may wish to print out, such as membership forms and cioppino tickets. Looking ahead, we're also giving thought to adding PayPal to the site to enable users the ability to complete online transactions. This would deliver a simple way to renew memberships, make donations and purchase tickets or any of our logo items. The website is a means for us to communicate with you and the world, so email us your thoughts and ideas!



Asst. Chief Ari Delay instructs firefighters in wildland fire suppression

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PIONEER MARKET

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Perspectives: Volunteer LHFB firefighter Charlie Marx – *Interviewed by Iris Schrijver*



Firefighter Charlie Marx at the fire station

IS: How did you become interested in becoming a firefighter and when did you join the LHFB?

CM: I was a firefighter for a few summers at Fallen Leaf lake ~25 years ago, and when we moved out here 3 years ago the “Volunteers wanted and needed” sign outside the fire station had a cumulative effect every time I drove by. Since I prefer being the help rather than waiting for help, I contacted Chief Whitney approximately 2 years ago. During the initial meeting he gave me a tour of the station, a detailed description of the duties of a LHFB firefighter, and he clearly outlined the expectations. Chief Whitney made it plain from the beginning what it would take. I then observed a few training sessions, and saw that this department was extremely well run, organized, trained, and equipped. I was really impressed with the level of professionalism of the team, as well.

IS: What was the training like?

CM: There are two types of training required, and I was able to complete both at the same time, so I was able to start responding to calls 5 months after my decision to join the LHFB. First, there is the fire fighting and rescue training, for

which there are courses and classes such as structure fire, wildland fire, vehicle extrication, low angle rescue on steep slopes, hazardous materials, and safety. Some of these are held together with Santa Cruz County and Cal-Fire. Secondly, there is the requirement for medical training, which at a minimum includes a first responder course, with certifications for oxygen delivery, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and automated external defibrillation (AED). At the LHFB, every firefighter has completed training to the level of emergency medical technician (EMT) and several have undertaken paramedic training, as well. From the start, the LHFB was very welcoming and helpful. For example, in order to pass the structure fire class, I had to be able to put on my protective gear and breathing apparatus in less than 75 seconds, which is a big challenge. Peter Panofsky, one of the firefighters, volunteered to help me with practice drills so by the time I took the exam, it had become easy for me to do. This really illustrates the welcoming attitude of the LHFB as a whole. After the initial training is completed, training for all of us continues on an ongoing basis. We learn new skills, do new things, implement new procedures, and because of that, are optimally prepared for our great diversity of calls. At LHFB, there is a big emphasis on safety from the top down. It is a top priority of the Chief, and that builds a feeling of support and trust.

IS: What is the reality of being a LHFB firefighter, now that you have been with the fire department for about 2 years?

CM: It is all about commitment and motivation, and the work is really exciting and rewarding. I love being part of the team. We have the capability to do a lot of different things, because we have the best equipment, and the best people. Out here, nothing is routine. People depend upon us for everything from medical response to fire protection, and since only a few pockets are served by fire hydrants, fires can be very challenging, as well. Fortunately, we have tremendous support from the community. We could not have the excellent equipment that we have without community support, and I am reminded of that every time when I look

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Serving the community and
all volunteer since 1953

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at Engine 357, which on the engine itself has a list of the major donors. For me personally, being a firefighter is a good motivation to stay in shape, but more importantly, it is really nice to be involved in an organization that is doing so much good for the community. In our small community, almost everyone is giving back in some way, either by volunteering at a school, church, politics, or other things. I enjoy giving back, too, and making a difference. Early on, for example, I was on a late night medical call. While we were arranging transport for the patient to the hospital, a family member asked me whether I was a volunteer, and when I answered that I was, she expressed her deep gratitude. The call vividly reminded me that this work really makes a difference in people's lives when they need us most. And even though I sometimes have to respond to a call in the middle of dinner or late at night, my wife is very supportive because she can see that I am very happy doing this work.

IS: Speaking of work... **The LHFB is 100% volunteer.** Do you have a full time job over the hill?

CM: Yes, I do. I am the manager for a FedEx Kinko's store. Most of the firefighters work elsewhere during the day, but fortunately the daytimes are covered by those who live and work here. The calls are always exciting and interesting though, and if I had known what it could be like earlier in my life I might have made a career out of it! If anyone even thinks about joining LHFB, I highly recommend that you come in and find out for yourself. Whether you do this in addition to another job or ultimately as a paid career in another region, it is amazing work and a lot of fun!

IS: Thanks Charlie, for the interview and all you do for the community in this area!

LHFB:
VOLUNTEERS WANTED
AND NEEDED!



Fire preparedness in the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan.

Support your local fire brigade!
LHFB: 100% volunteer, serving YOU

Annual Report: The LHFB has made available a report on our 2006 activities. This report summarizes our 2006 statistics, contains general interest information on the Brigade and its personnel, and lists many of our accomplishments. If you would like a copy please e-mail Chief Whitney or give us a call. A pdf copy of this report is also available on our new website.