FRONT LINE



A salute to community volunteer first responders • 2025



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FRONT LINE

A salute to community volunteer first responders

Features



The Price Of Protection

Outfitting Vol. Fire Departments. 6



New Presence In Urbanna

MCVRS acquires new building 12



Fundraising Efforts

Fun ways to support 16



What It Takes

Becoming an EMT. 28

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On the cover:

Joanna Worley of the Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department battles a massive house fire in Urbanna on a cold winter night.

Photo by Larry Chowning



Northumberland County would like to thank all volunteer and career first responders.

Northumberland County Board of Supervisors



Thank you for keeping our community safe!



Welcome to FRONT LINE

January's snowy and frigid weather should really make us appreciate our volunteer first responders.

When the temperatures plummeted to single digits and snow covered our roads last week, most of us stayed put, warm and cozy in our homes. Volunteer firefighters and rescue squad personnel were ready and willing to brave the cold to serve our community if that call came.

Their commitment to help their neighbors doesn't change with the weather or the time of day, which is why we choose to honor them each year with this special section. We are honored to tell the stories of our volunteer first responders in Lancaster, Northumberland and Middlesex counties.

This year's issue features articles on the high cost of outfitting firefighters, the training needed to become a volunteer emergency medical technician (EMT) and the fundraisers that help keep these organizations operating.

Volunteer first responders play a crucial role in our communities. Their sacrifices are immeasurable. So as you settle in to bed on a cold, winter night, remember that family member, friend or a neighbor who is standing at the ready. We thank them for their service and dedication.

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FRONT LINE *Support Spot*

A list of area volunteer fire and rescue organizations can be found on page 31.

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It costs several thousand dollars annually just to inspect and certify Kilmarnock Volunteer Fire Department's ladder truck. Photo courtesy of KVFD

by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

Adding dollars and cents to the volunteer firefighting equation

The cost to save a life or property is getting more expensive.

With the price of turnout gear increasing by double digits in the past few years, the cost of high ticket items of trucks and apparatus escalating, and insurance premiums rising annually, it's more costly than ever to fund a volunteer firefighter.

To be fitted head to toe in turnout gear is just over $11,000, according to CD Hathaway, treasurer of White Stone Volunteer Fire Department (WSVFD). Hathaway, who's been a volunteer firefighter in the county for nearly 30 years, has seen the prices of both the turnout gear and equipment steadily increase.

The intangibles like "our insurance have also gone up considerably," he said. "But apparatus and turnout gear has really gone up way more since COVID."

If the national news is to be believed, supply chain issues and item availability is to blame for cost increases across the board from food to clothes to appliances since the pandemic. Life-saving organizations like volunteer fire departments are not immune to inflation.

HOW MUCH DOES FIREFIGHTER GEAR COST?

Helmet $350

Face Shield $100

Suspenders $125



Turnout Coat..... $1300

Personal
Alert
Safety
System ... $600

Gloves $120

Additional Gear

Headlamp.....	$ 89
Goggles	$ 70
Flashlight.....	$ 78
Radio	$1000

Turnout Pants $1000

Self-Contained Breathing
Apparatus $5900

Boots $275

White Stone Volunteer Firefighter David Farmer

$11,007 PER FIREFIGHTER

WSVFD has 43 members, 26 of them with full turnout gear, including helmets, face shields, pants, coats, boots, even flashlights. The bulk of that now $11,007 price tag for complete turnout gear is the $5,900 self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), or air pack. Turnout pants are about $1,000 and the coat $1,300. A radio is $1,000 and wildland gear, which was not included in that ticket price, is $2,000. Each firefighter is also equipped with a pager, which cost about $429, to hear dispatched calls.

Of course, all of those prices are subject to change as the cost of everything just keeps rising, according to Fairfields Volunteer Fire Department (FVFD) Chief Phillip Keyser.

"Northumberland [board of supervisors] does support us well. It's enough to operate without replacing much of the equipment," said Keyser. Fairfields has two stations, one in Reedville and another in Glebe Point. The county kicks in over $300,000 and gives that same generous contribution to Callao Volunteer Fire Department. They also give some financial support to Kilmarnock Volunteer Fire Department (KVFD) which often answers calls in the lower western portion of Northumberland County.

Purchasing equipment is where "our fundraisers kick in," said Keyser.

Fairfields put a new fire truck into service in August 2023. The truck cost $860,000, some $112,000 more than the contracted price in 2021-22 because of a surcharge blamed on an increase in cost of supplies.

"But we had to pay it, they had us," said Keyser. "The wait time now is like three years to get a truck."

He added, the department was told that same truck would cost some $1.2 million if it was ordered now, that's a whopping $450,000 more than the original $750,000 the department had contracted just over two years ago.

With trucks costing so much "we try to get 20 to 25 years out of them but then you reach the point where the parts are not available and you can't find people who know how to work on them. Then they are compromised and that is a danger to the public because we can't provide the coverage they need," he said.

WSVFD purchased a new truck, Engine 20, in 2021. It was ordered in 2020 when the department locked in a price tag of $512,000. According to Hathaway, that same truck today, just three years later, would be "north of $700,000."

WSVFD also just purchased new extrication equipment to the tune of $38,000. Truck payments, spread out over 10 years, are $33,000 annually. The department's building mortgage is $60,000 per year and insurance, including liability on its properties and accident/sickness coverage on its volunteers, is over $30,000 per year.

"We try not to duplicate our resources," said Hathaway. Kilmarnock has a ladder truck that responds throughout the county, always to structure fires. White Stone has a truck with portable air and specialized extrication equipment.

The same is true in Northumberland, where Fairfields has a ladder truck it uses to aid Callao Volunteer Fire Department. And if needed, FVFD and KVFD will respond with its trucks to assist neighboring counties.

Just having those vehicles inspected and certified annually is pricey, said Kilmarnock Volunteer Fire Department (KVFD) Chief Bryan Keyser, who has been a volunteer for 26 years and is in his first year as chief.

"To be compliant, there's an annual inspection where they even ultrasound the ladder," he said.

After the ladder truck's rescue rope is used once, it's no longer viable and becomes utility rope.

"If it's used just once for a rescue, that's it. We have to buy new rescue rope," said B. Keyser.

KVFD has 35 active members, each with complete turnout gear.



New extrication equipment for White Stone Volunteer Fire Department cost some $38,000. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



Air packs—a critical piece of equipment for firefighters—cost nearly $6,000 each. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

"And if gear is 10 years old, whether it's been worn once or a lot, it's trash," he said. "So we are constantly buying gear to stay compliant."

This past year, Kilmarnock and Fairfields were fortunate enough to have both ladder trucks inspected and certified at the same time, which was a cost savings for both. The price was abut $2,000 for each, said B. Keyser.

And replacing parts on the trucks is not cheap. KVFD recently replaced tires on the ladder truck for the price of $6,000.

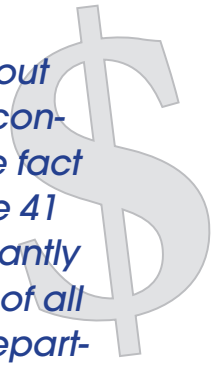
"I do believe it's going to get to the point, without proper planning, that it's going to be hard to continue with volunteer departments. That and the fact that volunteerism is on the downslide," said P. Keyser. "We have 41 members and are fortunate that we are constantly picking up new members, who are enthused, of all ages. And that's been a help. The volunteer departments are unlike paid departments because they don't have to worry about raising funds to keep operating."

A tool available on the National Volunteer Fire Council website calculates the value of a volunteer fire department member, "which kind of puts everything in perspective," said Keyser.

Based on the website's calculator—running two different scenarios—the annual cost to staff a fire station with four members at $40 per hour with benefits, 24 hours a day, would be $1,402,402. "This amount of staffing would still have to be supplemented by volunteers to meet national safety standards," he said.

The other scenario calculates the value of a volunteer member. Running the numbers using Fairfields' department with 41 members at only six hours a week—probably a low number—the results show the department produces an annual value of $426,997 with each member producing an annual value or cost saving to the locality of $10,415.

"These figures do not include any trucks, equipment or buildings and reflects solely on personnel," said P. Keyser. "I think this sheds a whole different light on the situation that does not catch the public's eye."



"I do believe it's going to get to the point, without proper planning, that it's going to be hard to continue with volunteer departments. That and the fact that volunteerism is on the downslide. We have 41 members and are fortunate that we are constantly picking up new members, who are enthused, of all ages. And that's been a help. The volunteer departments are unlike paid departments because they don't have to worry about raising funds to keep operating."

--Fairfields Volunteer Fire Department
Chief Phillip Keyser

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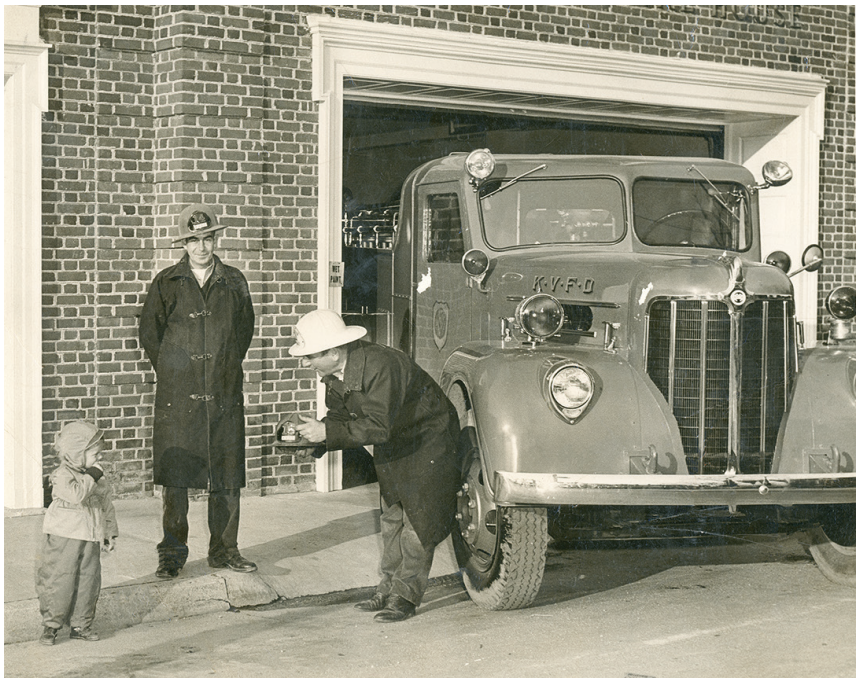
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Recruiting the young

This 1946 photo shows Kilmarnock Volunteer Fire Department Chief Warner Eubank (right) and fireman W.E. Smither giving little Jimmy Sparshott a fireman's helmet. This picture was taken when the firehouse was on East Church Street, Kilmarnock. Photo courtesy of Kilmarnock Museum

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Middlesex County Volunteer Rescue Squad (MCVRS) Captain Ole Albert, left, and MCVRS President Lynn White stand inside the new Urbanna MCVRS station building on Grace Avenue in Urbanna. Photo by Larry Chowning

Deltaville-based rescue squad now has additional building off Grace Avenue in Urbanna

by Larry Chowning

The Deltaville-based Middlesex County Volunteer Rescue Squad (MCVRS) recently purchased a $200,000 facility in Urbanna to house the rescue squad ambulances and personnel for serving the central and upper ends of the county.

The Deltaville rescue squad began in fall 1958 in the garage of Claudia S. Marchant, where it conducted its first meeting. Prior to that, and until 1969, local funeral homes provided some ambulance service in the county.

Under the auspices of MCVRS, the Urbanna Branch was formed in 1968, when donations from people throughout the county allowed the purchase of a new rescue squad vehicle for that area.

The Urbanna Branch was the forerunner of the Central Middlesex County Volunteer Rescue Squad in Urbanna that dissolved several years ago due to lack of volunteers and funding issues. This forced the MCVRS, with the support of the Middlesex County Board of Supervisors, to take over service of the entire county.

The new squad building on Grace Avenue in Urbanna, houses the Urbanna Branch squad and the Middlesex Rescue Squad Auxiliary thrift shop known as "Second Time Around."

"One of the advantages of going into this building is that we no longer have to pay rent to house "Second Time Around" or the squad," said Lynn White, president of MCVRS.

MCVRS was leasing space from the Middlesex County Volunteer Fire Department in Urbanna and Second Time Around was leasing space in a building on Cross Street.

The Urbanna building cost $200,000 to purchase and $80,000 in renovations "to make the building work for us," said MCVRS Captain Ole Albert. "It is also where we wanted it to be, centrally located in the county, and in the Town of Urbanna."

A lot near Bethpage Camp-Resort just outside of

Urbanna was donated to MCVRS for a rescue squad building. “We considered that but the cost of building a facility there was going to be over $1 million and there was a time period tied to the gift that required us to build within a certain period of time,” said White. “We would also have to borrow money.

“This is an ideal situation for us,” said White. “We have the room we need to house our vehicles and staff that live on site [plus] Second Time Around are now all under one roof. We also had the funds to pay for the building, which means we have no debt involved in the building. We would have had to borrow money to build a $1 million building.”

The new facility houses two rescue squad vehicles, living accommodations for the crews, a conference room, kitchenette, and space for Second Time Around. Renovations included installing room and fire walls, new HVAC, installation of living quarters, correcting outside drainage issues and a walkway in the front of the building for better access.

Through the Middlesex County Rescue Squad’s Auxiliary, individual donations, MCVRS Rescue Regatta, Middlesex County and Town of Urbanna financial support and grant fund monies are raised to operate and maintain the squad. The auxiliary runs bingo in Deltaville and the two thrift shops, one in Deltaville and one in Urbanna, all with volunteers.

The Middlesex County Board of Supervisors voted in January to budget approximately $60,000 a month to help pay for paid squad members. “It is getting harder and harder for us to find volunteers,” said Albert. “COVID-19 hurt us bad. We went from 55 volunteer members to 15. This has caused us to have to go more and more toward paid staff.”

Second Time Around

Second Time Around Thrift Store is run totally by volunteers. Store Manager Melissa Swenson of Urbanna said that people are finding the store at its new location and they have more space for products.

The store is run by 17 volunteers and Swenson said she needs more men to help with some of the heavy lifting that comes when furniture has to be moved. It also takes three volunteers to run a shift at the store and there are two shifts each day. “We need more volunteers to help run the store,” said Swenson.

The store sells used furniture, clothes, small electric kitchen items, tools, books and other items donated by the public. “We want items that are in good shape,” said Swenson. Donations are accepted during store hours Wednesdays to Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Anyone interested in donating to the squad can do it online at mcvrs.life. To become a volunteer on the squad or a member of the auxiliary call Lynn White at 577-0692. The address for sending checks in the mail is MCVRS, P.O. Box 98, Deltaville, VA 23043.



The Middlesex County Volunteer Rescue Squad (MCVRS) has purchased two large sections of this building in Urbanna to house the Urbanna Branch of the rescue squad and Second Time Around, a thrift shop sponsored by the MCVRS auxiliary. Photo by Larry Chowning



Staff members working at the Middlesex County Volunteer Rescue Squad (MCVRS) thrift shop, Second Time Around, on Wednesday, Jan. 15, at its new location in the MCVRS building in Urbanna on Grace Avenue include, from left, Aaron Morse of Water View, Cathy Depping of Urbanna and Manager Melissa Swenson of Urbanna. Photo by Larry Chowning

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Middlesex County Volunteer Rescue Squad 2024-2025 officers include, front, from left, First Lieutenant Ellen Vest, Engineer Wayne Bailey, President Lynn White, Vice President Caleb Mason, Director Jack Hurd; and back, same order, Treasurer Leslie Krom, Secretary Terry Hess, Captain Ole Albert and Legal Advisor Albert Brooks. Second Lieutenant Angie Zabel, Medical Advisor Sterling Ransone and Director Brad Norris were unavailable for the photo.
Photo by Don Richeson

MCVRS seeks more volunteers

by Don Richeson

The Middlesex County Volunteer Rescue Squad (MCVRS) and its auxiliary installed the groups' 2024-2025 officers during their July 25, 2024 annual banquet at the MCVRS building in Deltaville. Peninsulas EMS Council Executive Director Michael Player performed the installations.

Both groups need more volunteers. The squad needs folks to go on ambulance calls and will provide free training. For information, call 505-0602.

The auxiliary needs volunteers to help at its thrift store and with its other projects. Both men and women can now serve in the auxiliary. For information, call 815-9507.

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Although our local volunteer rescue squads and fire departments are supported in part through county and grant funding, they rely heavily on fundraisers to supplement and complete their budgets. Our reporters have talked to the organizations in Lancaster, Northumberland and Middlesex counties to learn about the most popular fundraisers for each and how those funds are used.

Doing good while having a good time:

Events to support volunteer fire and rescue

by Jackie Nunnery

Volunteering for a fire or rescue squad is a significant time commitment, not just in training and taking calls, but in fundraising. With the cost of equipment ever increasing, it can be expensive keeping our communities safe and healthy. The good news is there are numerous ways to show your financial support of these volunteer organizations all while having some fun in the process.



Smith Point Sea Rescue looks forward to their annual oyster roast in March as a way to connect with the community. Photo courtesy of Smith Point Sea Rescue

Northumberland County

The county's two volunteer fire departments—Fairfields and Callao—have a slew of events planned each year to meet their financial needs.

According to **Fairfields Volunteer Fire Department** Chief Phillip Keyser "Fundraising is a critical part of our operations which fills in the holes in our budget cycle and allows us to plan for future needs."

Three popular fundraising events take place throughout the year. In early February—this year it is Saturday, February 1— they hold their Shrimp & Oyster Feast, typically feeding two sell-out crowds of 300 people all you can eat steamed shrimp and oysters. Later, they start the summer in June with the Pig Pickin' on the Point, a barbecue and entertainment event at Buzzard Point Marina.

"The extreme boat docking competition revived this event and attendance has increased every year. We solicit sponsors to pay for the expenses and have been supported well by the businesses," said Keyser. FVFD ends the year with the Stew Thru in December, a classic Brunswick stew event made by members of the department. "We take pre-orders and sell out the 360-plus quarts we make every year," he said.

Keyser said their annual mailer is also a valuable fundraising and communication tool. "This year our project is to redo the driveway around our Glebe Point station that is crumbling and is in dire need of repair/replacing," he said. "The mailer allows us to directly communicate with the people we serve. We have gotten some good feedback through this campaign."

For **Callao Volunteer Fire Department**, there is a new firehouse to fundraise for. This year marks the first year since COVID that the community will get together for the annual Shrimp and Oyster Dinner, held on March 1 this year. For the last few years it has been a drive through event according to board secretary Judy Taylor. Other events on their calendar include a car wash and bake sale May 31, a dance on June 21, a gun raffle and turkey



White Stone Volunteer Fire Department will continue to offer family fun with the Northern Neck Waterfowl & Wildlife Expo. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi



For generations, families have looked forward to the annual summer carnival tradition, the Kilmarnock Volunteer Fire Department Firemen's Festival. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

shoot September 12 and Callao Fest at Callao Brewery November 1.

After purchasing a new ambulance last year, proceeds from this year's chili fundraisers in spring and fall will help **Callao Volunteer Rescue Squad** replace an older ambulance according to Captain Chonna Toulson. The group also sends out a fund drive letter to their service region each year.

Northumberland County Rescue Squad president Steve Tucker said they too send out a fundraising letter to their service region which includes the lower portion of the county. "The county has been very, very generous since 1964," he said. The letter also serves to update the community on improvements and purchases. The squad is looking to purchase LUCAS chest compression/defibrillators as well as upgrade the garage bay flooring of the Heathsville station.

The kitchen crew at **Mid-County Volunteer Rescue Squad** will be busy preparing food to help with fundraising efforts this year. In addition to prepared foods for sale at the Heathsville Farmers Market beginning in April, the group will prepare take-out meals for Easter and Thanksgiving. According to president Valerie Barton, proceeds will go towards the purchase of two replacement LifePak monitors/defibrillators.

Lancaster County

White Stone Volunteer Fire Department also will be busy throughout 2025 with fundraising events. February 9 is their annual hake fish breakfast, followed by the Northern Neck Waterfowl and Wildlife Expo on March 15 and 16. This is the first year the WSVFD has taken the helm of the expo and Chief Charles Brocklebank hopes the community will come out and continue to support the event. "There really is something for everybody there." The group also holds a 50/50 raffle where one lucky ticket out of 399 wins the jackpot totaling $20,000 and the department also sends out a fund drive



Extreme boat docking has added excitement to the Fairfield's Volunteer Fire Department's summer event, Pig Pickin' at the Point. Photo by Lisa Hinton-Valdrighi

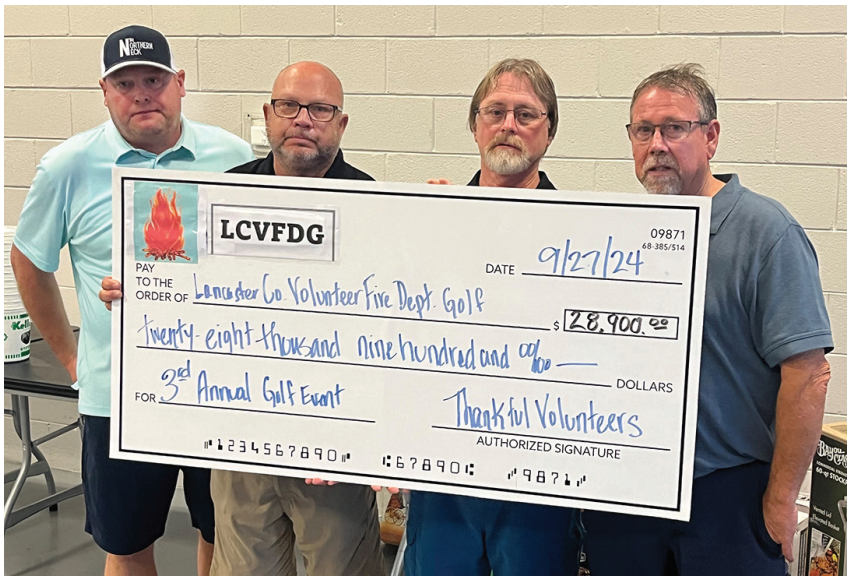
letter to their service area of White Stone, Irvington and Weems.

Brocklebank noted that "if it wasn't for the community," none of this would be possible. Proceeds from all of their events go to "keeping the lights on" as well as setting aside money for capital improvements.

The big event for the **Kilmarnock Volunteer Fire Department** is the KVFD Firemen's Festival, now in its 90th year. Held over a 10-day period at the KVFD Carnival Grounds in Kilmarnock, there are plenty of rides, games and of course, delicious carnival food sure to please anyone. Chief Bryan Keyser said proceeds of this beloved event go towards replacing gear and equipment.

In addition to the already full calendar of events, White Stone, Kilmarnock and **Upper Lancaster Volunteer Fire Department** all benefit from the annual Lancaster Volunteer Fire Department Golf Tournament, now in its fourth year. Golfers gather at the Golden Eagle Golf Course each fall with the proceeds shared between the three fire departments.

ULVFD also serves community dinners and hosts mudbogs.



Members of the White Stone, Kilmarnock and Upper Lancaster Volunteer Fire Departments shared in the proceeds of the fall golf tournament. From left are Dan Sanders, WSVFD; Roy Hall, KVFD; and Danny Akers and Toby Sisson, ULVFD.

Fundraisers alone keep rescue afloat

Serving the entire region is **Smith Point Sea Rescue**. President Pete Ortiz said fundraising has allowed Smith Point Sea Rescue "to purchase our search and rescue vessels, outfit them with the latest electronics that allow us to operate night and day in inclement weather, maintain and refurbish our vessels as well as fund our general operating expenses."

They do this primarily though an annual newsletter solicitation drive. "We send out a newsletter along with a request for donations should the recipients feel so disposed. Fortunately, the response over the years has been very generous," he said.

The group also holds an oyster roast the first Saturday of every March. "While it is a fundraising effort, it isn't our main one. We tend to look at it as a community event."

Ortiz said the focus this year was "upgrading the electronics on our oldest vessel as well as purchasing survival/exposure suits for our crews to operate safely during the winter."



Members of Mid-County Volunteer Rescue Squad, Captain Jeff Plumb, Donald Butler and Charles Howard, put together Thanksgiving meals for their annual fundraiser. Photo courtesy of Valerie Barton



The community gathers at the Callao Volunteer Fire Department firehouse for their annual Shrimp and Oyster Dinner. Photo courtesy of Judy Taylor

‘Pay it forward’

to first responders in Middlesex County



The sale of discarded artworks like this and other treasures of the past financed the purchase of new fire truck #53 for the Hartfield Volunteer Fire Department. Photo by Tom Chillemi

by Tom Chillemi

People helping people is the essence of volunteer first responders. And those who donate to these vital services complete the circle.

Middlesex County first responders have made it easy and fun to donate through dinners, entertainment, games, thrift stores and more.

Listed below are “fun” ways to “pay it forward” to first responders who are on alert 24 hours a day/seven days a week/365 days a year.

Deltaville

The Lower Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department (LMVFD) Auxiliary is a group of only 12 active members, but they have been able to raise more money in the last three years than ever before, said auxiliary president Bonnie Armentrout. “I can tell you that this group is proud and will push to continue working for the cause.”

Last year the MVFD Auxiliary made its largest donation ever of $35,000; and could exceed that amount this year. Fundraising efforts have included “Flamingo Flockings,” bake sales, 50/50 raffles, Firefighters Oyster Roast, Firefighters Crab Feast, other raffles, a barbecue dinner and the Love Light Tree donations at Christmas time, she said.

“It is essential that fundraising efforts include setting a goal to work toward and determine how you are going to do it, which often means thinking outside

of the box to come up with new ideas," said Armentrout.

"Flamingo Flockings" is an unusual idea they've used. A flock of (plastic) pink flamingos are placed in the yard of a "victim" along with a letter in a pouch explaining how it works. The victim fills out a form naming the next victim and puts it in the pouch with their donation. "We go back after two days and move the birds," Armentrout said. "In the last three years we have raised over $45,000 with 'Flamingo Flocking.' "

The pink flamingos project will return April 1 and will continue through June 30. "Most people enjoy it and we get a lot of positive feedback," Armentrout said.

Fundraising requires communication with the community, being visible and "most importantly letting them know how much you appreciate their support," she added.

Volunteer by emailing Armentrout at barmentrout003@gmail.com.

LMVFD will have its Firefighters Oyster Roast on April 12, and the annual Firefighters Crab Feast will be August 2.

Hartfield

The thrift store at **Hartfield Volunteer Fire Department** (HVFD) is nicknamed the "The Cave of Knowledge." It is where men can gather around a propane heater to talk about the tools and machines that have been donated



Get ready! On April 1, the "Flamingo Flockings" fundraiser begins again. The Lower Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary will place plastic pink flamingos on selected lawns in order to prompt donations. Photo by Tom Chillemi

Entertainment and bargains help fund MCVRS

On June 3, the **Middlesex County Volunteer Rescue Squad (MCVRS) Auxiliary** will celebrate its 50th year helping fund the rescue squad, headquartered in Deltaville.

MCVRS Auxiliary President Darlene Revere was at the first meeting on June 3, 1975, and has been involved ever since. She remembers that day well because she was pregnant with her son.

Bingo, food, and second-hand stores have been the combination that helps sustain the MCVRS.

Every July when new officers are installed, the MCVRS Auxiliary gives the rescue squad approximately $50,000 to kick off its fund drive, Revere said. In addition to that donation, the auxiliary then pays some of their other expenses during the year like buying new equipment or paying for repairs to ambulances, she added.

Founded in 1956 the MCVRS was one of the first volunteer rescue squads in Virginia.

The rescue squad has never had to borrow money in its 69 years, said Revere. That's remarkable considering an ambulance can cost more than $450,000, and the MCVRS built a large Deltaville squad building. It also recently purchased a building in Urbanna for $200,000 to garage ambulances and give first responders a place to stay while on duty.

Bingo

More than a decade before Virginia had a lottery, bingo was among the first fundraisers at MCVRS and it's still going on. Every Monday night, with few exceptions, the rescue squad building at 17684 General Puller Highway (Route 33) in Deltaville comes alive with the smell of dinner cooking in the kitchen. Doors open for dinner at 5 p.m. and bingo begins at 7 p.m.

Dinners offer variety like shrimp or fish, tacos, soups, and specials like Salisbury steak and more.

The good times roll every Monday except for a few weeks at Christmas time, said Revere. If bad weather threatens, the bingo follows the lead of Middlesex County Public Schools — if Middlesex schools are closed due to weather, so is the squad's bingo gathering.

Bingo is even offered on holidays, when many other things are closed.

There's a "progressive" jackpot game each night with the payout rolling over each week until someone wins. It's gotten up to $6,900, which brought in more players seeking the big prize, she said.

"Instant" tickets are sold that are opened to reveal the outcome.

"We've done pretty good with bingo," said Revere, adding that two second-hand stores are a big help.

Flea markets

In addition to bingo, the MCVRS Auxiliary operates two second-hand stores.

Deltaville's Flea Market store, at 16395 General Puller Highway (Route 33) in Deltaville, is open 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesdays and Saturdays.

The Urbanna thrift store at 391 Hilliard St., near Urbanna Market grocery store, is open 10 a.m.-4 p.m. four days a week — Wednesdays through Saturdays. Both stores accept items in good shape. They ask that items not be left when the stores are not open, said Revere. People have dropped off furniture in bad shape requiring the volunteers to take it to one of the county's recycling centers.

Donations of clothing are popular and the stores have "bag" sales with all the clothes that can be stuffed into a bag for a good price.

Free photo

Another fundraiser is the free family photos for those who make a donation, said Revere. Photos this year will be taken noon-3 p.m. Sunday, March 30, at the rescue squad building in Deltaville. Those who are photographed are given a disc with their photos, which they can take and have printed. Letters asking for donations will be mailed the week of February 1.

Volunteer

Giving your time is among the most valuable gifts. Auxiliary volunteers are desperately needed and greatly appreciated. They only ask that a volunteer work one Bingo night a month or work one six hour shift at the flea market a month, said Revere.

Revere has made some good friends and she says volunteering is a great way to stay involved. "I just like doing it," she said. "I've made a lot of good friends through the Auxiliary and that's made it easy to stay in it."

For information, email Darlene Revere at drevere70@gmail.com.

and are for sale. There's an occasional "what's this" item? It's the modern version of the old country store that had a wood stove. Next to it is the furniture shed.

In the main store, you'll find household goods and clothing.

The HVFD thrift store has raised about $65,000. "That's an amazing amount of money and it's all based on generosity of the donor," said volunteer Pat DePina. Whether donating or buying, "it is the same thing as giving . . . when you buy something, you get a reward for your purchase."

DePina said they have "Blue Light Specials," where items are discounted for "one hour only." And they have a few 50% sales around the holidays.

Volunteer Jim DePina, Pat DePina's husband, has a philosophical approach to recycling things that were once important. "Ninety percent of this stuff was appreciated by someone, but 10 percent was not," he said. One example is a jigsaw puzzle with "9,000" pieces — that's not a misprint. It will be six feet long when, and if, it's completed. "If it weren't for places like this, some of this stuff would be headed for the dump," Jim DePina said.

The HVFD thrift store is open 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Wednesdays and Saturdays at 3309 Twiggs Ferry Road just off General Puller Highway in Hartfield.

Jamie Revere, second assistant chief and treasurer of the Hartfield Volunteer Fire Department, said fund drive letters are sent every October to people in the area HVFD serves.

The HVFD also has had a golf cart raffle for a number of years.

Firefighters also collect parking donations during Topping's Wings, Wheels & Keels event on the last Saturday of September and sell food at the event. They also have a spaghetti dinner around Veterans Day, when veterans can get a free dinner.

Grey's Point Camp in Topping partners with the HVFD, which conducts a barbecue dinner at the campground in July.

The HVFD is considering having breakfasts or dinners throughout the year.



The thrift store at Hartfield Volunteer Fire Department even has a pet section. Its customers include Front Line reporter Tom Chillemi's 5-month-old Pomeranian, "Tarzan," who recently checked out a squeaky toy held by thrift store volunteer Pat DePina. Photo by Tom Chillemi

Urbanna

The Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department (MVFD), located in Urbanna, conducts its biggest fundraiser at the Urbanna Oyster Festival offered the first Friday and Saturday in November. The field behind the firehouse rocks on Friday night after the festival's Fireman's Parade, and again Saturday with bands, beer and food.

The MVFD's next fundraiser will be the oyster dinner, which is offered on either the first or second weekend of March. Their crab and shrimp feast is offered in August.

The final regular fundraiser is the Urbanna Hometown Christmas Parade, which is presented the first or second Saturday of December, when firefighters and MVFD Auxiliary members serve up oysters, hamburgers, hot dogs and more.

Bethpage Camp-Resort hosts events in partnership with MVFD to raise funds, explained Ben Langford of the MVFD. "Last year Bethpage raised more than $5,000 for the fire department. They have done quite a few special theme event weekends that raise money for other nonprofit organizations in the county as well," said Langford.

"Overall, fundraising is how we make money for our department," Langford continued. "It's a lot of hard work that we volunteer to do because we enjoy it."

The MVFD Auxiliary plans to again host live bluegrass music at the MVFD station (the Urbanna firehouse) on Saturdays once a month from March through October. Refreshments are served. Admission is free but donations are welcome.

Water View

The Upper Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department (UMVFD) has two oyster and ham suppers annually. One is the first Saturday after the Urbanna Oyster Festival and the other dinner is in the spring. It's all-you-can-eat fried local oysters and ham with side dishes, including pickled beets, corn pudding, baked apples, homemade hush puppies and more. Members of the UMVFD Auxiliary and community bring their special desserts. "People say it's the best thing going," said UMVFD Chief Billy Collier.

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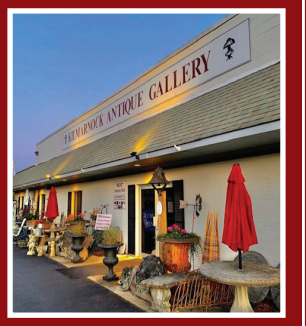
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Gas fireplace safety tips

Few images capture the spirit of a season as well as a family gathered around a fireplace embodies winter. Winter is indeed a time when families spend more time together indoors and there's no better gathering spot than around a warm fireplace.

Heartwarming scenes around a fireplace are even more enjoyable when safety has been prioritized. While natural fireplaces with roaring flames are notable safety risks, it's important that individuals with gas fireplaces embrace fire safety as well. The following are some gas fireplace safety strategies everyone can embrace:

• Avoid the DIY installation route. Even the most skilled do-it-yourselfers are urged to let the professionals install a new gas fireplace. Gas lines are nothing to mess around with, and professional installation teams have ample experience setting up new gas fireplaces in a home.

• Be sure to install a carbon monoxide detector on the same floor as the fireplace. During the gas fireplace installation, ask that a carbon monoxide detector with battery backup is installed on the same floor. The detector alarm will alert individuals if something is amiss, like a gas leak. Periodically inspect the detector to ensure it's working properly.

• Periodically inspect the safety screen. Glass panels are standard features on many gas fireplaces. Such panels separate the fire within the fireplace from the people and items outside of it. Glass panels can become extremely hot, which is why most gas fireplaces come with safety screens as well. These mesh safety screens can keep curious kids and pets from touching hot glass panels, and also protect adults. Inspect the safety screens periodically to ensure they're still intact and up to the job, replacing them if necessary.

• Keep objects a safe distance away from the fireplace. Experts advise keeping objects a minimum of three feet away from the fireplace at all times. Fabrics and other materials that contact the glass pose a fire hazard, so keep the area in front of the fireplace clear.

• Make the fireplace off limits to children and pets. Though the aforementioned safety screens are a vital safety feature that can keep kids and pets safe, it's still best that kids and pets are kept away from the fireplace at all times. Turn off the fireplace if kids are playing in the room, and use safety gates to keep kids and pets away when the fireplace is in use.

• Book annual fireplace inspections. Annual inspections of the fireplace can ensure everything is working properly. Professional inspections may detect potentially harmful gas leaks, and annual checkups also can help individuals extend the life of their fireplaces.

• Recognize outdoor gas fireplaces have their own safety protocols. Outdoor fireplaces have become wildly popular in recent years. Homeowners who install outdoor gas fireplaces on their properties must recognize these awe-inspiring features require their own unique safety measures, including turning off the gas supply at the end of outdoor entertaining season and protecting the fireplace from the elements when necessary.

Gas fireplace safety strategies can protect residents and also increase the life expectancy of these sought-after features.



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Electrical fires are more common than one might think

Electrical fires are more common than one might think. The Electrical Safety Foundation says home electrical fires account for an estimated 51,000 fires each year, nearly 500 deaths, and more than 1,400 injuries. Certain conditions can lead to electrical home fires. The National Fire Protection Association indicates home fires can result from overloading electrical outlets and inadequate distribution of lighting equipment. When this occurs, these fires most often originate in a bedroom. Another common cause of electrical home fires is faulty wiring and related equipment malfunction. It is important for homeowners to be aware of potential electrical issues and remedy them quickly to avoid home fires. Ensuring electrical systems are up to code and addressing issues with the help of a qualified electrician can reduce the risk of electrical fires.

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Answering the call: *you, too, can volunteer*

by Valerie Barton

Are you looking for an opportunity to serve your community in a meaningful way?

When I retired to the Northern Neck in 2012, I loved the freedom most retirees enjoy—long walks on the beach, fishing, crabbing, kayaking, going out to extended lunches—and I soon forgot about those long work days and company bureaucracy.

I also soon felt guilty for having so much free time. I thought "couldn't I do more for my new community? Wasn't there some activity where I could really make a difference?"

My background had nothing to do with medical services but after doing some research, with some curiosity and knowing the real need for emergency medical care in rural communities, I attended a meeting of my local rescue squad. To my surprise, the majority of members were retirees. I was welcomed with open arms. When I first joined, I was a "third" on the crew, which includes a driver, emergency medical technician (EMT) and third person.

My first challenge was to receive my cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and automated external defibrillator (AED) certification. My job as a third was to assist the driver and EMT on scene by gathering patient information, bringing supplies to the EMT, assisting during transport and, literally, holding many frightened hands.

I learned all about how to assemble a stair chair, use a people mover, what a Lifepak is and where all the tools and equipment are on the ambulance. I was part of an important team and learned something new on every call. My teammates were generous with their encouragement, sharing knowledge and experience.



Valerie Barton

I was asked if I would be willing to train as an ambulance driver and decided I was up to the next challenge in my retirement. I took the Emergency Operator's Vehicle Course (EVOC) and passed it in my first month of being a member.

Initially, I was so nervous, but with the encouragement of our vehicle officer, I was soon responding to scenes and transporting patients to our local hospitals. I learned so much about emergency medical care in rural communities. Most important, I was so impressed with the genuine compassion, empathy and care exhibited by the EMTs and crews of my squad.

Regardless of the nature of the call—whether it was assistance after a fall, a car accident or some other illness or accident—the crew exhibited the same professional demeanor. When a rescue squad responds to a call, they are going to meet someone who is having their worst day. Helping your fellow man, even if it is literally just a hand up off the floor, is a very rewarding experience.

My next challenge came from my captain who asked me to consider becoming an EMT. I received a scholarship from the Virginia Department of Health Office of Emergency Medical Services and the squad paid for the remainder of the cost of books, materials and travel for testing. I successfully passed the National Registry test and became a NREMT. I now serve as president of our squad and continue to be so very proud of each member and their dedication to the community.

Volunteering for the local rescue squad doesn't mean you have to follow my path. There are many other opportunities and ways to serve in a rescue squad that are non-medical. If you have culinary skills, writing, communication, social media or computer skills, you are needed. Any role you perform on a rescue squad will fill you with pride because of your ability to help your neighbor. No medical background is necessary. Being part of a team and making a difference is beyond rewarding. There is so much need. I encourage you to consider this investment in your community.

Valerie Barton is president of the Mid-County Volunteer Rescue Squad.

Volunteers get back more than they give

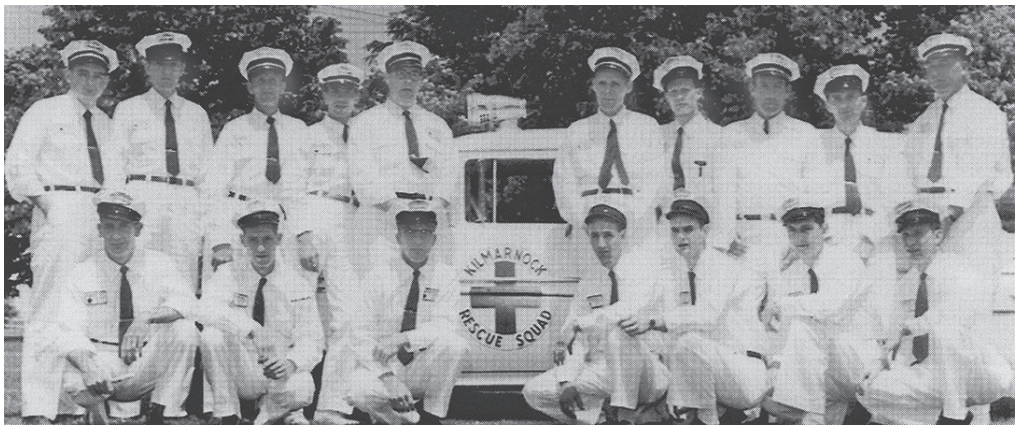
by Bonnie Armentrout

My husband and I moved to Middlesex 10 years ago and as a result of getting involved with the Lower Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary I have made many new friends and I love it here! I was concerned about retiring to a place where we had no friends or family and "nothing to do." Since joining the auxiliary, I can assure you that was something that I did not need to be concerned about.

Auxiliary members are both lifelong residents of Middlesex and "come heres." Volunteering is an opportunity for people who move here to meet people. Volunteering gives people who are lifelong residents an opportunity to share their experiences with new residents, and they are the root of making this community stronger. It also gives everyone the opportunity to make new friends.

Give volunteering a try. Start with just a few hours a month. Giving your time is very rewarding. I believe that a person gets way more from volunteering than they give. Volunteer by emailing me at barmentrout003@gmail.com.

Bonnie Armentrout is president of the Lower Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary.



The Kilmarnock Volunteer Rescue Squad organized in 1957. Squad members built the first ambulance themselves, starting with a 1957 Pontiac wagon. They housed the ambulance in a building behind Tebbs Garage on Main Street, Kilmarnock. Founding members from left are (front row) Clarence Welch, Towles Newsomb, Earl Jones, Grover Clingan, Jimmy Walker, Leroy Acors and George Urban; (next row) Rudy Gurley, Neale Sanders, L.P. Schools, Henry Pittman, Sonny James, Jack Winters, Chester Cooke, George Thomas, Jeff Gillispie and Luther George. Roscoe Bangs is credited as the founder of the rescue squad. Photo courtesy of Kilmarnock Museum



Fire trucks, fire trucks and more fire trucks participated in the 2024 Urbanna Oyster Festival Fireman's Parade, including this tanker truck from Upper Lancaster Volunteer Fire Department. Photo by Larry Chowning



This 1958 photo shows Kilmarnock Volunteer Fire Department firemen with their new truck. From left are Chief James Haydon, Robert M. Lee, Junior Brent, Ed Davis, Theodric Purcell, Henry Pittman, Carlton Headley and Bobby Crowther. KVFD was organized in 1932. Photo courtesy of Kilmarnock Museum

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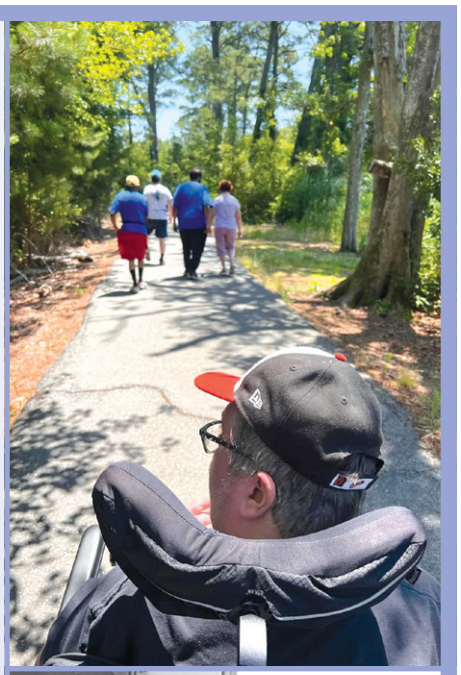
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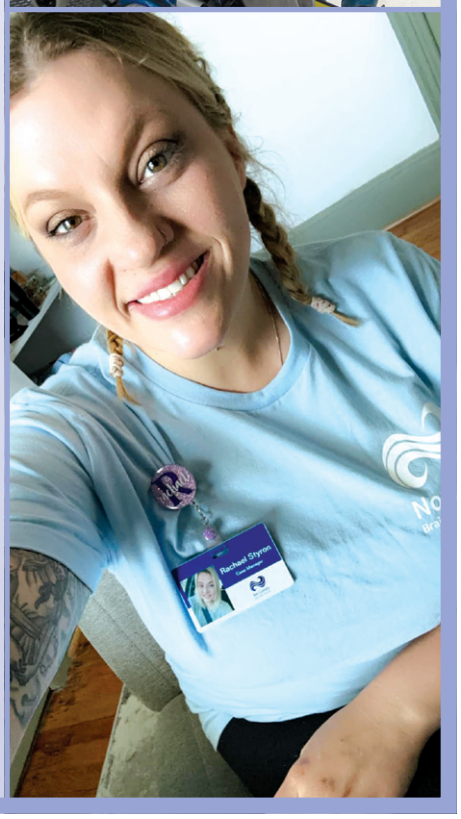
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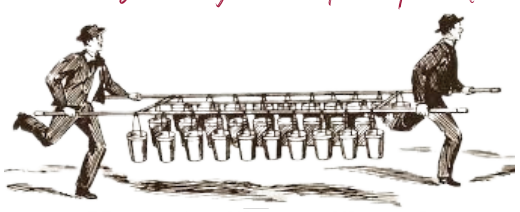
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From incidents like minor falls to traumas requiring airlift transportation, rescue squads are there to help make each critical minute productive with the goal of saving lives. Photo courtesy of JW Luttrell

Training and compassion drive emergency medical services

by AnnGardner Eubank

Getting a call that a loved one has endured a medical trauma is a nightmare situation. From vehicular crashes requiring the operation of the jaws of life, cardiac arrests, strokes, falls and multitudes of other life threatening injuries, just the thought of yourself or a loved one enduring something so traumatizing is often too much to bare. Those are the calls that our area Emergency Medical Service (EMS) fearlessly answer and respond to day in and day out.

Across the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula, men and women volunteer to go through hours of training and education, sacrifice their weekends and holidays, and mentally and physically prepare to see and treat life threatening injuries for the sake of the protection of their communities.

Northumberland County Chief of Emergency Medical Services Calvin Balderson has been an EMS volunteer for over 30 years and a career EMS for over 20 years. As chief of emergency services, his primary job function is overseeing the career EMS systems in the county.

According to Balderson, there are four tiers of emergency medical technicians (EMT).

EMT Basic, EMT Advanced, EMT Intermediate and EMT Paramedic each play a major role in serving in the county EMS squadrons. While each level of specialty comes with its own set of responsibilities and capabilities, earning any of the titles is no small feat.

According to Balderson, 200 hours of training is required to reach the first level of status as an EMT Basic. An EMT Basic is someone who provides basic emergency care and transportation for clients. In addition to basic first aid skills, an EMT Basic trains to be able to administer limited medications, airway management and specific treatments for medical emergencies.

Having a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) card and passing the National Registry EMT examination are required to serve as an EMT Basic.

An EMT Advanced bridges the gap between on-sight treatment and hospital care. Their training is more extensive and they're able to administer more medications as well as intravenous (IV) fluids.

An EMT Intermediate must be licensed and certified to work in their state. Their responsibilities for their patients are more extensive, and include cardiac monitoring, manual defibrillation and a number of other life-saving interventions.

According to Balderson, an EMT Paramedic is the highest level of care. They and EMT Intermediates are able to give medications for severe scenarios like cardiac arrest, overdoses, allergic reactions and life saving medications as a whole.

To go from a basic to a paramedic in the area takes four semesters at Rappahannock Community College, Balderson said.

"It's a combination of practical scenarios and classroom learning. When an individual finishes the classroom portion, they also have to complete field time," he said.

Those working towards becoming a paramedic will perform ride-alongs with an agency to get patient contact as well as complete hospital visits to become familiar with more medical procedures and practices.

Once all coursework is complete, a candidate receives an eligibility test letter and then ultimately completes national registry testing as well as receiving state credentials.

Today, Northumberland County has two career medical units that are staffed 24/7, as well as three independent volunteer squads that run calls.

"Being able to direct the agency in a way that provides the most beneficial service to the citizens and being able to give the EMTs and paramedics the abilities to do their jobs is my favorite part of it all," Balderson said.

With career EMS administering life saving care during someone's most vulnerable state, volunteers also provide patients with thorough, dedicated and ample care in order to protect and save lives.

For the Kilmarnock-Lancaster Volunteer Rescue Squad (KLVRS), providing life saving intervention is about passion for the community just as much as it is training and skill.

Dawn Thompson, captain and the longest running member of KLVRS, said since joining the team in 2010 and previously serving in Tappahannock since 2000, she has been compelled for decades to help serve the community and those in need.

"We help in times of someone experiencing the smallest injuries to the biggest," she said.

JW Luttrell, a volunteer since 2014, and Jameson Scott, who joined in 2022, echoed Thompson's reasoning for being a part of the volunteer EMS. They each said they grew up around first responders and felt the desire to give back and help the community.

According to Scott, those interested in EMS can join KLVRS as a junior member as young as 16. Of course they won't have as many responsibilities and capabili-

"Helping someone in their time of need is fulfilling and is the most rewarding part of it all."
--JW Luttrell



From left, Jameson Scott, JW Luttrell and Dawn Thompson have dedicated hours upon hours of their time over the years in the name of serving their community and neighbors in their times of need. Photo by AnnGardner Eubank



Northumberland Emergency Services coordinates multiple units with a number of career paramedics as well as numerous volunteers to respond to calls within their community. Photo courtesy of Calvin Balderson

Being able to direct the agency in a way that provides the most beneficial service to the citizens and being able to give the EMTs and paramedics the abilities to do their jobs is my favorite part of it all."
--Calvin Balderson



In addition to running calls, the Kilmarnock-Lancaster Volunteer rescue Squad promotes community service and education. Jim Dullea and Alora Tyson provide information and resources at an Irvington Farmers Market. Photo courtesy of JW Luttrell

"When our group comes, they come prepared, trained, empathetic and sympathetic...I would want this team to be there for me if I were in need. I trust them with all of my heart and soul. They give 110% and give it their all every time to their patients as well as the patient's families." --Dawn Thompson

ties as other members in the squad, but being a junior member allows individuals to gain familiarity with medical services and ultimately become more prepared to join the program, he said.

In the squad, which currently has 19 volunteers, the youngest just turned 18 years old with the oldest being in his upper 70s.

According to Thompson, the squad completes about 200 calls annually, and primarily run from 6 p.m.-6 a.m. on the weekends.

Active members are required to complete at least four 12 hour shifts per month, with associate members required to complete two 12 hour shifts monthly.

All members are additionally required to attend six meetings and six training sessions annually.

Currently, KLVRS has four running trucks to perform their duties in addition to a "Community Outreach/Rehab Truck," which is stocked with essential supplies like waters, blankets, and sanitary products that may be needed at the scene of an incident, as well as just materials for those in need in general.

In addition to providing emergency medical intervention and services, the KLVRS is community-centered, often organizing and operating fundraisers throughout the year.

"We do a lot of fundraising that doesn't even necessarily go to us as a squad, but to benefit the community. We recently did a clothing drive," Luttrell said.

While they joined for the same reasons of providing care and assistance to others, Scott, Thompson and Luttrell all agreed that the "family" unit of the sqad is something special.

"It's family oriented here. We're just a big family and we're all here to do the same job," Thompson said.

Scott said the camaraderie while helping the community is something he loves.

"Helping someone in their time of need is fulfilling and is the most rewarding part of it all," Luttrell said.

As they are dedicated to their community, Thompson emphasized the urgency and proper care someone can count on when they're in the most vulnerable hour.

"When our group comes, they come prepared, trained, empathetic and sympathetic…I would want this team to be there for me if I were in need. I trust them with all of my heart and soul. They give 110% and give it their all every time to their patients as well as the patient's families," she said.

While making the urgent, trembling call for help can be nerve wracking and frightening when a life is on the line, the community can rest assured that passionate, caring, trained professionals and volunteers are on the other end of the line, ready to take any call that comes their way.

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FRONT LINE Support Spot

The area's fire departments and rescue squads depend on donations, fundraisers and volunteers. For those who may wish to make a donation or volunteer, a listing of fire departments and rescue squads in Lancaster, Middlesex and Northumberland counties with their contact information is provided. Email and websites have been provided for those that have them. Some use PayPal.

LANCASTER

Kilmarnock Volunteer Fire Department
P.O. Box 1295
Kilmarnock, VA 22482
804-435-1332
readylancaster.org

Location: 71 School Street
Kilmarnock, VA 22482

Upper Lancaster Volunteer Fire Department
P.O. Box 205
Lively, VA 22507
804-462-5404

Location:
5170 Mary Ball Road
Lancaster, VA 22503

White Stone Volunteer Fire Department
579 Chesapeake Drive
White Stone, VA, 22578
804-435-3801

Kilmarnock-Lancaster Volunteer Rescue Squad
P.O. Box 333
Kilmarnock, VA 22482

Location:
61 Harris Road
Kilmarnock, VA 22482
804-435-1474

The Upper Lancaster Volunteer Rescue Squad
P. O. Box 176
Lively, VA 22507
804-462-7375
upperlancasterrescue@yahoo.com

Location:
123 Norris Road,
Lancaster, VA 22503

MIDDLESEX

Hartfield Volunteer Fire Department
P.O. Box 205
Hartfield, VA 23071
804-776-6880
hartfieldfire@gmail.com

Location: 3309 Twiggs Ferry Road
Hartfield, VA 23071

Lower Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department
P.O. Box 6
Deltaville, VA 23043
804-776-7104
lmvfd.com

Location: 16881 General Puller Highway
Deltaville, VA 23043

Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department
P.O. Box 71
Urbanna, VA 23175
804-758-2320

Location: 330 Virginia St.
Urbanna, VA 23175

Upper Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department
P.O. Box 75
Churchview, VA 23032
804-758-5200
waterviewfire23180@yahoo.com

Location: 4583 Water View Road
Water View, VA 23180

Middlesex County Volunteer Rescue Squad
P.O. Box 98
Deltaville, VA 23043
804-776-6875
Provides Emergency Medical Service (EMS) for the entire county.

Locations:
Deltaville Station
17684 General Puller Highway
Deltaville, VA 23043

Hartfield Station
10946 General Puller Highway
Hartfield, VA 23071

Urbanna Station
391 Hilliard St.
Urbanna, VA 23175

NORTHUMBERLAND

Callao Volunteer Fire Department
P.O. Box 39
Callao, VA 22435
callaovfd.org
Email info@callaovfd.org

Location:
314 Northumberland Highway
Callao, Virginia, 22435
804-529-6211

Fairfields Volunteer Fire Department
P.O. Box 656
Burgess, VA 22432
fairfieldsfire.com

Locations:
Reedville Fire House
119 Main St.
Reedville, VA 22539
804-453-4055

Glebe Point Fire House
66 Firehouse Road
Burgess, Virginia, 22432
804-453-6390

Callao Volunteer Rescue Squad
1348 Northumberland Hwy.
Callao, VA 22435
804-529-6630
callaoVRS@gmail.com

Mid-County Volunteer Rescue Squad
7990 Northumberland Hwy,
Heathsville, VA 22473
804-580-8615

Northumberland County Volunteer Rescue Squad
412 Reed Ave., Reedville, VA 22539
804-453-3174

Smith Point Sea Rescue
P.O. Box 662
Burgess, VA 22432
smithpointsearescue.com
All volunteer water rescue service for the mid-Chesapeake Bay

Thank You!

Lancaster County expresses tremendous gratitude for its local first responders and front-line workers. From day-to-day operations to large scale events, your sacrifice and commitment to keeping the community safe touches countless lives every day. We are forever grateful for your service!

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