

# Johnson County RFD #1



## Fire Prevention Division



**“Prevention  
through  
Education”**



According to the United States Fire Administration, Arkansas has one of the highest numbers of fire related deaths in the U.S. with most of those being young children and the elderly.



Johnson County Rural Fire District #1's Fire Prevention Division goals are to reduce fire deaths, civilian injuries and economic losses as well as increase fire safety awareness to the public. Through funding from three FEMA Fire Act Grants, two awards from the Arkansas Fire Prevention Commission and sponsors totaling almost \$200,000, the department has built a strong fire safety program.

## DEPARTMENT BACKGROUND

In August 2002, Johnson County RFD #1 was about to embark on a magnificent journey. Until that time, the department's efforts were completely suppression oriented. Prior to that time, fire prevention activities averaged **30 minutes** a year and the department had **zero** budget for fire prevention activities.



With a vision in mind, the department has since added fire prevention to its mission statement, formed a Fire Prevention Division and Fire Safety Team focused on providing the citizens of Johnson County Rural Fire District #1, Johnson County and surrounding counties with an environment that is safer from fires, environmental hazards and life threatening medical emergencies through educational and fire prevention activities.

Johnson County RFD #1's Fire Safety Program is not only recognized at the local and state level, but at the national level as well. According to Craig Christiansen, (Chairman of the Arkansas Fire Prevention Commission) in his year end report to Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee in 2004, "Johnson County RFD #1 program's have grown to include all of Johnson County and has taken a leadership role in this type of effort. The emphasis here is on education of all age groups, and serves as a model for others around the state."



The department's goals are to:

- 1) Reduce loss in fire deaths, burn related injuries and property loss
- 2) Reach more of the target populations (children under the age of 14 and elderly over 65)
- 3) Improve and increase fire safety activities already in place
- 4) Improve methods of reporting
- 5) Improve evaluation methods
- 6) Develop and implement more of a variety of fire safety programs
- 7) Provide public education training for department and county's firefighters
- 8) Provide support and programming for fire departments in and outside of county
- 9) Expand volunteer base through Firecorps program to keep up with increase in programming

From June 2004-June 2005, the department met or exceeded the following goals:

- 1) **Zero** burn injuries compared to two the year before. We have experienced an **80 percent decrease** in property losses.
- 2) The department was able to document that **66 percent** of the target population of children in the county under the age of 19 since January 2003 have received fire safety programming from RFD #1's Fire Safety Team.

- 3) The department had a **335% increase** in the number of direct fire safety programs and a **287% increase** in fire safety awareness activities (June 2004-2005) over the same time period the year before (June 2003-June 2004).
- 4) Several new methods of reporting were improved upon and many new forms developed to help the departments Fire and Life Safety Educator (FLSE) keep track of populations reached and programming implemented.
- 5) Evaluation methods improved drastically with the development and implementation of several new methods, including Impact Evaluations (Fire Safety House Surveys and Smoke Alarm Installation Surveys) and Formative Evaluations (Teacher Surveys for Fire Prevention Week, Consumer Evaluation of Program). Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered for the first time in the Fire Prevention Division's history. University of the Ozarks Business students assisted in this effort through statistically analyzing the data.

An evaluation method in Spanish was also conducted for the first time this year since the primary school has shown a 600% increase in its Hispanic population since 2003.

- 6) Many new fire safety programs were developed, including those for the safety house, safety room, puppet program, Freddie and Pluggie the robots, Fire Safety with Sparkles Program, Reading with Sparkles Program, Sparkles Fan Club, Project S.A.F.E. Home (Smoke Alarms for Every Home), Fire Safety Board Contest, the Traveling Trunk, Jr. Firefighter Challenge, and the "Don't Burn It, Recycle It" Program.

- 7) The department brought in an educator from Florida who conducted three classes: one for the department's firefighters, one for the county firefighters and one for state's firefighters. Through these classes, **23 different counties** from the state of Arkansas were in attendance.



That's **30% of the counties in the state!** Many firefighters made positive comments as a result of these classes, some stating "I was afraid to start a program, now I can't wait to get back to get one started", "This class had so many different ideas that I have taken and am planning on using in my county's education efforts", "Before attending, I thought that I would never be interested in adding puppets to my educational activities, but now, after this class, I have already purchased four" and "I plan on using a lot of the information that I was taught for future programs for our fire department. I wish all classes were this interesting."

Two more educators will be brought to the state in June for classes. One class will be held in Johnson County and another in Northwest Arkansas. A workshop will be co-sponsored by Arkansas Children's Hospital and the Arkansas Fire Prevention Commission.

The department's FLSE has been working with the Oklahoma State University Fire Service Training to learn more about its Fire and Life Safety Educator I program. The department's FLSE is working with Jimmy Parks and Charles Maxwell of Arkansas Children's Hospital to create a FLSE program through the Arkansas Fire Academy.

- 8) The department has provided support and programming for departments not only in the county, but outside the county as well. From assisting with grant writing, to helping with developing lessons plans specific for other departments, to providing training, to providing support materials such as the robots or Sparkles, the department has gone and will continue to go the "extra mile" to help others. Coalition numbers have increased and more agencies, businesses and individuals are involved in helping promote fire safety in and outside of the county.
- 9) The department has worked hard to recruit and retain volunteers to help with the increase of fire safety programming. One of the ways that we were able to accomplish this was through starting a Firecorps program. In 2004, volunteers donated over 100 hours of their time. This year, volunteer time has already surpassed that mark. The University of the Ozarks Phi Beta Lambda group has agreed to help the department and take on fire safety programming for the next school year as a community service project. The department's FLSE has assisted the PBL

organization with developing a their strategic plan for the next school year. This plan will provide the department with hundreds of volunteer hours and will enable the department to increase its fire safety efforts.

#### Other projects:

##### \* Fire Safety Signage

- The fire safety sign outside of the station has been erected and displays fire safety messages daily



##### \* Freddie the Firetruck Robot

- Purchased and has been used at several different fire safety events in the county.

##### \* Making of Fire Safety Videos

- Project is underway. With the new digital video camera and computer, the department is in process of making fire safety videos which will be distributed as soon as the project is completed. DVD's will be available to movie rental stores in the area to be rented free of charge. They will also be available to schools and individuals who request them.

##### \* Fire Safety with Sparkles and Spanner Program

- Sparkles Fan Club is underway. Newsletters have been completed, membership cards printed and promotion is underway.
- Trading cards ordered, received and have been passed out to thousands of children. Trading cards have also been produced and distributed in Spanish.
- Training of Dalmatians began in January with a dog trainer. Spanner is able to "Dial" 911 on a telephone display and is learning to tell the difference between a tool and a toy and pick up the toy. Sparkles has learned how to get in bed, get covered by a blanket, pretend to be sleeping, and when the smoke alarm goes off, get out of bed, crawl low, go to the door to "test" it, then take another way out through the window, then go to the meeting place.



**\* Fire Safety Newsletter**

- Was developed and mailed to 1000 homes in the district.

**\* Fire Safety Billboards**

- Held our second Annual Fire Safety Billboard Contest. Billboards on display in November and December and seen by over 13,500 cars daily.

**\* Department Developed Handouts Project**

- "Sparkles Fire Safety Activity Books" were developed and distributed to almost 1000 children in and outside of county. They have been a big hit and include the most up to date fire safety messages. Other handouts have been developed and distributed in both English and Spanish.

**\* Fire Safety Awareness Parade and Kidsfest**

- Fire Safety Awareness Parade included 37 apparatus from 13 departments in two counties and Kidsfest included 22 different agencies from three counties



**\* Jr. FF Challenge**

- Designed to promote fire safety, the Jr. Firefighter Challenge made its debut at Kidsfest. Sixty-six children went through the challenge which included fire safety activities, such as stop, drop and roll, crawl low under smoke and other fire safety related themes.

**\* Training**

- The department's firefighters received over 260 hours in public education training. The department's FLSE attended two public education courses at NFA (for a total of three weeks in 2004), the NFPA Fall Conference in Miami and NFPA World Safety Conference in Las Vegas.

**In 2004, RFD #1 firefighters donated over 1570 hours toward fire safety activities and received over 204 hours in fire safety training. Volunteers from University of the Ozarks and other individuals volunteered 115 hours of their time.**





**In order to implement such an aggressive fire safety program, the department relies on the help of Firecorps, a program that supports and supplements fire departments through the use of citizen advocates for non-operational activities. Since August of 2002, the students at the University of the Ozarks have helped with the department's fire safety program. In 2004, when the department was awarded its second fire prevention and safety grant, the members**

**realized that RFD #1 needed students from the University of the Ozarks even more. Phi Beta Lambda came through with helping fill "goody bags" for Fire Prevention Week, working with the department's smoke alarm installation program, and assisting with "Kidsfest"**



**the county's fire and life safety fair held in October. In addition the PBL members assisted the department in their evaluation methods by performing critical data entry and data analysis tasks. Without this help, the department would have not been able to reach its goals or the number of target risk groups, that of children and the elderly.**

**RFD #1 has formed a more formal partnership with the University of the Ozarks Phi Beta Lambda and will continue with the Firecorps program during the 2005 -2006 school year. PBL uses this opportunity to provide service to the community, to promote social responsibility among its members and at the same time, help keep those in our community stay fire safe.**



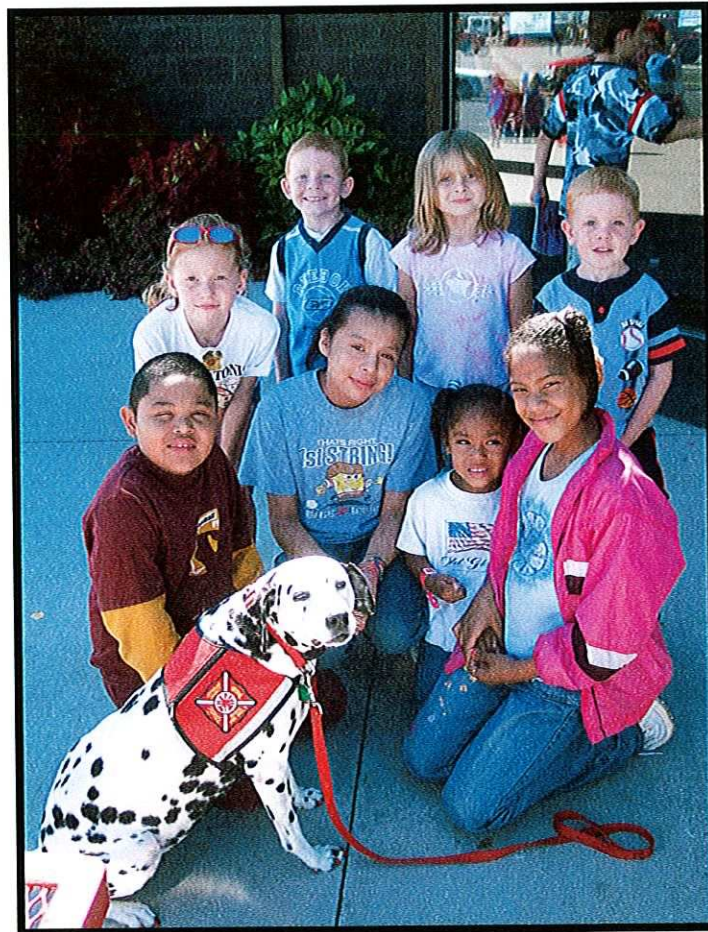
**The Firecorps group will be assisting the Fire Prevention Division in:**

- **Devising marketing ideas and assist with the implementation of the Sparkles Fan Club**
- **Create marketing ideas for Kidsfest Safety Fair and Third Annual Fire Safety Awareness Parade**
- **Develop and help implement the Fire Safety Calendar contest involving all schools in the county. U of O PBL logo will be on calendar along with other sponsors**
- **Will participate in the Third Annual Fire safety Awareness Parade and Kidsfest Safety Fair**
- **Help at various fire safety events and activities**
- **Present fire safety programs to other university students during Campus Fire Safety Month**
- **Fill goody bags for Fire Prevention Week**
- **Project S.A.F.E. Home program (smoke alarm installation program)**
- **Do fire safety related skits at various fire safety activities**
- **Perform data entry of department's evaluation methods**
- **Participate in the Johnson County Peach Festival and Christmas Parades**
- **Form and implement a Fire Safety Puppet Troupe**
- **Develop and maintain a Firecorps webpage complete with chapter fire safety activities and fire safety tips**
- **Develop Power Point presentations**
- **With the help of a editing program, assist with minimizing photos for inclusion on webpage. This will be done throughout the year.**
- **Be responsible for documenting activities (have Firecorps sheets signed noting "time in" and "time out" time at EVERY activity).**
- **Inspire others to join Firecorps from PBL who might not be actively involved.**



**Johnson County RFD #1 will be doing the following in return:**

- **Put a PBL/Firecorps logo on Safety House**
- **Include a photo and story in the fire safety newsletter**
- **Have a Firecorps trading card with group photo of active PBL members that participate**
- **PBL/Firecorps webpage link on homepage of [www.rfd1.com](http://www.rfd1.com)**
- **T-shirts for members that actively participate in events involving Firecorps**
- **Have a Firecorps banner made**



**'Prevention through Education'**