

## Funding Crisis

Station 51 Funding The Carterville Volunteer Fire Department, while by no means completely out of the woods, has received a couple of significant shots in the arm recently. The funding we receive annually from the existing fire district has arrived a bit early. We have also secured a line of credit with our bank, allowing us to borrow even more money against our assets should we need to do so to tide us over until the additional funding from the fire district expansion comes on line in January of 2007. In addition, of course, we continue to look to the City of Carterville to resolve their outstanding debt to the fire department. That debt totals many tens of thousands of dollars and continues to grow each month if payments aren't made. We remain optimistic that the city will find a way to pay us what they owe. In the remainder of this article, we reprint a letter written by a long time resident expressing her support for her local firefighters. One Citizen's Reaction Sara Southard, a 20+ year resident of Carterville wrote this letter in reaction to a public meeting held in the summer of 2005. That meeting was held to discuss our funding problems and solicit ideas for possible solutions. Sarah wasn't able to attend that event. Instead she sent this letter, addressed to the firefighters, the mayor, the council, and the citizens of Carterville. A typewritten transcript of Sara's letter appears below. To see photocopies of her original page 1, page 2, page 3, page 4 and page 5, click on the links. Sarah's Letter

July 16 2005

Dear Tim, Fire Department Volunteers, City Council members, and the Carterville Community:

My name is Sarah Southard, and I live on Tennessee St., where I have lived for the last 20 years. I can not be here today because my granddaughter's birthday party is at 2:00 today in Neosho, as I can't be at both places at one time I would like to write this letter to let everyone know how I feel about our Volunteer Fire Department. It's very important to me that I let the fire department know that I support them 100% - and I want to do what I can to keep our fire department. I am very, very glad that we have the volunteer fire department. My concern about losing the department is not because my insurance will go up, even though it would be a burden financially as I'm on disability. I don't want to lose our volunteer fire department, because they have given me Peace of Mind for the last 20 years. When I go to sleep at night, if I were to wake up and find my house on fire, that I can pick up a phone, dial 9-1-1 and within minutes the fire department is here to save not only my house, but my life. If I were in a room and couldn't get out, the firefighters can safely get me out of that burning house, and give me medical assistance if needed until the ambulance would arrive. They can save my grandchildren, my children, my neighbors, and friends. What price would you pay to get you or a loved one saved? A life is priceless. Once it is gone, you can't get it back. Think about that.

The fire department not only saves your house, you and your loved ones from fire, they can also start your heart again if it quits beating. They can pry you out of a car with the jaws of life, keep your life going until an ambulance gets there, get you out of a collapsed house, give you CPR if you're a drowning victim, give you oxygen if you're having trouble breathing. These are just a few things the volunteer fire department can do for you. There are so many, many more things that they can and will do for you and your loved ones.

Think about what it will be like when you pick up the phone, dial 9-1-1 and your loved one is lying there not breathing, their heart has stopped and you're waiting for someone from another town to come save them because you didn't know how and we no longer have a fire department. Or your loved one is in a burning house, you got out, but someone is trapped inside, and all you can do is listen to them scream out your name for help. Will the fire department from another town make it in time? Are you willing to lose your volunteer fire department because you think you pay enough already, or the city should pay? Or you don't like the way things are run in our city? This meeting is to help and support our fire department. Our city is having a financial problem right now. Let's help the volunteer fire department and help the city council. Think about it people, you could lose more than a fire department. You could lose your life or the life of a loved one.

To the volunteer fire department, I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for being there 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days out of the year, and yes, weekends and holidays too. You put in many, many hours of service to our community. I thank your families for letting you give us your time, while it is taking away from your families. Thank you for being kind and caring in any given situation, and you do all of this voluntarily, no pay, no benefits, a lot of time, no thanks, and the community just expects you to be there voluntarily.

I will do what I can to help. Please Carterville citizens, from one citizen to another, support your fire department and you will never regret it.

Thank you,

Sarah Southard

Suggestions to help

I think each household should, and want to donate 35 - 50 dollars or what ever you figure is reasonable to help keep our volunteer fire department.

If you don't help by donations, then you will pay more in insurance than what would be given out of your pocket to keep our volunteer fire department.