

THE PORT HENRY FACT FINDER

Reporting the News and Needs of Port Henry and Vicinity

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BOARD NOTES

The Board held its first meeting of the new year at Village Hall, this past Monday, January 14th. Fire Chief Hughes reported the following statistics for 2012: 72 Calls involving 1,218.55 Manhours; OSHA Training, 815.50 Manhours; additional Training/Participation (up-keep on firehouse and equipment, etc.) 1,585.51 Manhours for a total of 3,619.56 Manhours, remember, ours is a VOLUNTEER Fire Department. Thank you Fire Department for all those calls you went to and all the hunting, fishing and other fun things you didn't do. Chief Hughes requested and received the Board's approval of new membership applications from Jason Drake, James Gregory and Preston Vargo.

The Mayor and Trustees are still having to deal with FEMA money problems resulting from the double whammy of 2010's flood and storm Irene. Not only are original requests made to FEMA slow to be resolved, changes required in an original request seem to take twice as long as the original request. Time consuming paper work and more paper work and then, replacement money for monies already having had to be spent is so slow in coming in that this causes more problems. Eventually, the money is forthcoming, but a lot of time, worry and probably money has been spent in the waiting. Example: The \$950,000 Bond Anticipation Note for the Campground Restoration Project's first installment is due on March 5, 2013 in the amount of \$190,000 plus a 1.95% interest of \$18,525, totaling \$208,525. It is mandatory that the interest be paid and, as of the meeting, the FEMA reimbursement had not been received. There was a discussion concerning the last possible date to wait for FEMA'S reimbursement, before having to set in motion steps necessary to cover, at least, the interest payment.

A letter was received from NYS Homes & Community Renewal on December 24, 2012 to inform the Village that its application for the New York Main Street Program was not selected for funding this round. However, a resolution was promptly passed to re-apply for this grant.

An additional letter was received from NYS Homes & Community Renewal to inform the Village that it had been awarded the \$600,000 Community Development Block Grant Public Infrastructure (sewers, water lines and such) Award. This is such good news. The older the community the more the need for infrastructure maintenance and replacement..

The request for proposals for the Village water meter system has been published. Bids are due by 4:00 pm February 11, 2013.

Important reminder: Residents, with cars and who park over night on the streets, be warned. A 1979 law is being enforced. No parking is allowed on any street within the village limits from November 15th- April 1st, from 12 am - 6 am. The first offense will receive a warning ticket, a second offense warrants a \$10 fine, however - remember any ticket (this is state-wide), whether speeding or parking illegally incurs an additional state mandated fine of \$85.00. So, you leave your car parked a second time on the street during the designated months and times, you are looking at a \$95.00 pay-out. OK, it's late, it's cold and you just can't find a place to park, so you decide to chance having to pay another \$95.00. Don't make that decision! It won't be just another ticket, the Village has the right to have your car towed away and - at your expense! Third time is anything but a charm. The reason for this law is: in winter, when you have snow, streets can not be plowed properly if cars are parked in them. Oh, where does one park? Go to your landlord and find out where he has provided parking for you. This, he is supposed to do.

At the meeting, a resident was unhappy that vehicles are not allowed on the beach this winter. He was still unhappy even after it was explained that it is a safety measure as there is no ice safe enough for ice fishing. Considering the economic times, this is probably a good time to weigh the cost vs. the value of using the beach in the winter, even if there is safe ice. When there has been general beach usage allowed in winter (other than walkers, which are allowed at all times) there has been costly vandalism. Even without vandalism, the cost of cleaning up after a winter of unsupervised public usage is becoming a very expensive taxpayer luxury as wages for the "cleaner-uppers" and costs of replacing broken items escalates.

After discussion, the Board decided to not increase fees to the Campground's seasonal campers, but increase transient fees by a few dollars. The need to address the problem of zebra mussels and seaweed incursions was discussed and possible control methods were suggested.

Also, in passing it was mentioned that work on the "Basket Store" should begin just as soon as all of the insurance requirements are satisfied.

FROM OUR SCHOOL

Fact Finder is pleased to offer the following Feature Article submitted from Patrick McCaffery's advanced 10th grade class of Fall 2012.

Drunken Decisions

by Blake Bigelow

When drunken and disoriented people climb into their vehicles and take hold of the wheel, what are their first thoughts? Do they think about what could happen to themselves or others? To be honest, I couldn't tell you the answer. I don't think anyone could. Many things could be running through their minds. There isn't a way to reverse what could happen in the case of an accident, but there is a way to avoid it. The next time you may be thinking about driving drunk, ask yourself this first, "How many people have lost their lives or have been harmed by someone doing the same thing I'm about to do?"

Well, to be exact, ten thousand, two hundred and twenty eight people were killed by drunk drivers in 2010. On top of that, three hundred and fifty thousand people were injured by drunk drivers. Drunk driving has a cost, a one hundred and thirty-two billion yearly price tag. That money is paid for by people who weren't even directly involved in the accident. Do you want to help pay for that cost? I don't think so.

Seconds can decide a matter of life or death. On an average, every ninety seconds someone is injured by a drunk driver. Every fifty-two minutes someone, somewhere, is killed by a drunk driver. In the end, who does drinking really benefit?

As I was reading, I came across a tragic story of a young child and a limo driver's death. In Long Beach, New York, a little girl the age of seven was killed by a drunk driver. The family was driving home after Katie's aunt's wedding in Bayville, New York, when a pickup truck was headed the wrong way. The truck hit the limousine and the driver Stan Rabinowitz was killed. Young Katie was also killed in the back of the limo. The limousine was crushed and little Katie's body was decapitated. Katie's mother said, "As I crawled out of the car the only thing that was left of Katie was her head. And I took her, just that and sat on the side of the Meadowbrook and watched the horrendousness going on around me." Later, five hundred people sat in a church and mourned over the death of their beloved friends. Think, this devastating story happened because a drunk driver decided to climb behind the wheel.

The only way to make our country, or even your town, a safer place is by setting good examples. Some teens don't understand why adults encourage them not to drink but they don't set good examples themselves. The question I'm trying to ask parents is, "Does drinking make you feel young and fun?" Ways to help your child better understand things are by setting rules for you and your child. To me, being a parent is by being a role model to your child. When parents and children sit down and talk about things, it makes the child realize that you're acting in a serious, mature manner.

Drunk driving, as I said before, is extremely dangerous. Is there a way to keep our roads safer? There are a few ideas I have thought of personally. Rule number one: adults, please try and drink maturely and in a safe environment. If you feel like you want to have a few drinks, have a designated driver. Rule number two: remember that you are a role model for younger people. There are ways to have fun as an adult, but please do it safely for everyone's sake.

Does having police officers patrolling the roads make you feel safer? As I was reading an article, I was shocked to come across the story of an officer of the law being arrested. On February 28th, 2012, an officer was charged with drunk driving. While on patrol duty, the Brooklyn officer crashed his car into a pole. Knowing this, do you really feel safer? If an officer won't keep our roads and towns safe, can you?

I have asked countless people this question, ask yourself. "Is beer addictive?" An average American drinks 470 pints of beer a year! That's over a pint a day, every day of the year! So how much do you think alcoholics drink? Beer and stronger alcoholic drinks can add to a list of growing problems, weight gain, injuries and, as we have seen, death.

Do you think you are addicted to alcohol? Can you go a day or even a couple of hours without cracking open a beer or mixing a drink? Think of all the money you could save by cutting back on your drinking! You may not realize it, but in a town people gossip about their neighbors, are you their new target? Be a role model. You don't want to be seen as the town drunk. You want to be seen as a smart, reasonable person, so act like one for everyone's sake. We want to make this world a safer place, one person at a time, so start with yourself. If you are of a drinking age, how can you cut back on your consumption of alcohol?

I realize I have pounded an intense amount of things into this paper, but, really, they are mostly questions for you to ask yourself. Now, ask yourself, "Have I learned something I needed to learn?" If you answer, "Yes.", then put down your beer, sober up and start becoming a role model.

I also realize that drunk driving isn't the biggest problem we are facing today, but it is a vastly growing one. It's time for this world to change for the better; so join in on the long journey of helping make a better and safer life for everyone.

IMPORTANT UPDATE FROM LITERACY VOLUTEERS

2012 was a worrisome year for Port Henry's Literacy Volunteer office. The company which had been servicing the State GED program gave notice that January 2014 it would begin charging a hefty fee for a previously free service, reduce the venues for taking tests and make it primarily computer based, which would require distance travel for many wishing to take the test and make it difficult for more senior participants. "Currently, New York is one of only four states that fully subsidize the cost to take the GED test. All other states pass down at least some of the cost to test takers in the form of a fee, which can range from as low as \$25 in Alaska to \$380 in Michigan. Earlier this year, the New York State Board of Regents....recommended that the New York State....begin charging a fee for test takers. Charging a fee would enable the state to raise revenue to support the GED system, which has suffered significant budget cuts in recent years....Charging even a small fee for the exam, in the range of \$15 - \$20, might at least cover the projected budget shortfall and provide some security to the system."

Fact Finder feels that charging a fee is an important psychological factor, in that it seems to be human nature to view that which is free as having less value than something that has cost, no matter how small the sum. And there is no question it should be small.

The 2014 date may seem a long way off, but there will be barely enough time to "circle the wagons" on the State level to protect such a valuable and much needed program. The impact on all Literacy offices, statewide, would be severe. However, the New Year has brought good news. This immediate problem has brought to a head underlying problems with the GED program. Most glaringly, it is outdated. "The GED was first established in 1942 to help returning WWII veterans finish high school and transition back home into the workforce. Within five years, New York began offering the GED to any civilian who sat for and passed the exam. During the program's nearly 70-year history, 17 million people in the U.S. have received the GED credential. It is now widely accepted by both colleges and employers, with 97% of colleges accepting the GED for admission and 90% of employers considering it the same as a high school diploma.

Despite its long history and wide acceptance, the GED system today in New York and nationally needs significant improvement. Not only are too few people earning the GED credential, but even among those who do, many of them are not college ready. Both of these issues stem from a basic fact: many young adults in New York are not equipped with the basic reading, math and writing skills needed to succeed on the GED exam, to go on to college or effectively compete in the job market." Nationally, New York is ranked 49th out of 50 states in GED attainment! Even worse is the fact that of those in New York who take the test, only 48% pass the exam!

Although there is an aggressive search being made for an alternative and better exam program, which will address the problems with the present GED program (realizing it is outdated and needs drastic and creatively effective reform) it would seem there is a more basic problem affecting the GED program - the American school system itself. It is a system which, all too frequently (whatever individual school's reasons), allows students to graduate high school often unable to speak their own language correctly, let alone write a moderately well constructed sentence. However, this is a whole other windmill to be tilted another day.

Literacy Volunteers of America and our own Literacy Volunteers of Essex and Franklin Counties tilt all sorts of literacy windmills quietly and effectively. If a foreigner wishes to learn the language of his new country or a visiting student is here for that very purpose, no better place to do that than with a trained Literacy Volunteer. Whether you are fifteen or fifty-five and want to improve your reading skills, Literacy will find a volunteer suited to your specific needs. Literacy suggests, if you or any one you know is considering taking the GED or has completed some parts of the exam, take it or complete it this year. If it is not completed this year, all previous scores will be lost. Literacy is a great place to improve your vocabulary skills and have fun by coming to their Scrabble tournaments. The number here in Port Henry is 546-3008.

BY THE WAY

You can take your recyclable paper to our Post Office and drop it in the large plastic container in the lobby? The Post Office receives reimbursement for its recycled paper and it is closer than the transfer station.

In the past two weeks there have been loud banging-of-metal sounds coming from down Velez Marina way. These sounds hopefully mean progress toward Port Henry's new marina.

Please note that Literacy Volunteers is always looking for new tutors. If you are interested, call Maria Burke at 546-3008. Frequently, the tutor realizes they are learning as much, or even more, than their student.

Reminder: play Free Rice on the internet, increase your vocabulary skills and send food to the hungry people of the world. Just Google "Free Rice" and begin feeding the world. The lower levels send out more rice, but the higher levels can be more fun and you still send rice.

For one day try smiling at everyone with whom you can make eye contact, particularly strangers, and watch how beautiful their faces become when they smile. They **will** smile, even if they think you are nuts.

Note

: The Fact Finder is internet accessible: porthenrymoriah.com - Living Here - About - The Fact Finder is a drop down.

Look for the next issue of the Fact Finder on Saturday, February 2nd at Adirondack Hair Associates, Macs and Moriah Pharmacy; also, find copies to read at the Sherman Free Library. There are read-while-you-wait copies at John Eisenberg's Service Center, Ken and Paula LaDeau's Champlain Best Wash and Don Foote's (Miss Port Henry) Diner.