



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George D. Maziarz

## Supporting Volunteer Fire Companies

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There are more than a dozen volunteer firefighting departments in Niagara County, and each fills a unique role in the community they serve.

One problem common to all these units, however, is the challenge of recruiting new members. It seems as though there are fewer and fewer people willing to make the commitment to stay in the Niagara region and serve their neighbors in the volunteer fire service. Overall, our county's population is slowly decreasing. Those who remain are, on the average, getting older in years. And so many people today are busy in so many other activities and pastimes.

As a State Senator, and as a longtime member of Live Hose Fire Company in North Tonawanda, I've seen this trend get worse and worse, leaving several local organizations with declining membership rolls.

In the face of these challenges, I want to highlight the Wrights Corners Fire Company in Niagara County. This group, with a keen sense of what the big picture has in store, has devised a creative way to attract new members. They are offering 'administrative memberships' to individuals who want to be a part of the company, but may not be able to go through extensive training and respond to emergencies at all hours of the day and night.

Rather, administrative members can help out with many other aspects of the company's activities, including committee work, fundraising, and special events like bingo.

These administrative members can use their talents to improve the operations of the fire company, while simultaneously freeing up full members to respond to rescue calls. "Our intention is not to create two sides of the firehouse," as Chief Kevin Guay said in a recent newspaper article. "We are a family. We are a team."

Many sets of eyes, from other fire companies to statewide firefighting organizations, are watching the Wrights Corners Fire Company's experiment to see if it will be successful. To me, this sounds like a terrific way to get more people involved with the work of the fire company. This is the kind of planning that will help fire companies survive long into the future and continue to be part of the fabric of our communities.

For all individuals in the greater Wrights Corners area and beyond looking for ways to serve their neighbors, I wholeheartedly endorse the fire company's vision. This is a great idea. For information on how to become an administrative member of the company, contact Chief Kevin Guay by calling (716) 433-2759.

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