

2018 Citizens Of the Year

Armonk Independent Fire Department

The sense of family and duty to the community within the Armonk Independent Fire Department has continued for over 85 years, when three friends used three brooms to put out a brush fire in April 1930, thus recognizing the need to have people available for such an emergency. That need gave birth to the all-volunteer Armonk Independent Volunteer Fire Department three months later. It is in that tradition—providing selfless service and giving of one’s self to help friends and neighbors—that makes the AIFD the first organization to be honored by the Armonk Chamber of Commerce as Citizens of the Year.



*L-R: John Heimerdinger, Phil Goulet,
Mitch Sime, Carlos Cano*

While none of those original volunteer firemen is still with us, two such stalwart veterans and ex-chiefs, John Heimerdinger and Mitch Sime, have more than 120 years of such community service between them. They cited that the organization’s duties and responsibilities to the community were integral to creating the sense of family and camaraderie within the group.

In addition to fighting fires and providing emergency medical care to area residents and businesses, the AIFD also teaches fire safety to community, school and youth groups, and hosts two week-long community outreach programs yearly at the Armonk Firehouse. Since the Westchester County Airport is

among its responsibilities, the AIFD requires members to participate in multiagency drills in case of large scale emergencies, such as aircraft rescue and triage preparation for medical personnel.

The AIFD firefighters and emergency responders all undertake extensive training and refresher courses to keep their certifications current, as well as to provide the finest service to the residents of Armonk. The training classes entail 140 hours to become a firefighter, and 160 hours for EMTs.

The original firehouse on Maple Avenue, now the Hergenhan Center, “was the meeting place for our families,” said Mitch Sime, the longest-serving member of the AIFD. “The firehouse was the main social center of the town. All the volunteers worked in or for the town. We all joined to help our friends and neighbors—and we’ve been doing it for a long time.”

Added John Heimerdinger, also a long-time fire commissioner, “We welcome all residents to become involved as members. All serve with distinction. We have our first and only female fire chief, Luci Labriola-Cuffe, as well as a special associate member, Tommy Cox. He is a long-time resident and member of the AIFD, starting with the department when he was in elementary school.”

With younger members, such as the newly elected fire chief Phil Goulet, and Carlos Cano, a 15-year department veteran and ex-chief, the AIFD has an active and bright future of service to Armonk and surrounding communities.

As far as the AIFD receiving this award, from the beginning, it was a clean sweep!



The firehouse in 1935