



Hot Spots

The Newsletter of the Creston Fire Fighter Associate Membership

Learn more about your fire department and the efforts of its dedicated, hardworking volunteers.

Breaking New Ground

For its 45th annual auction, the Creston Fire Department set a big goal: Bring in enough money to enhance the Lake Blaine station with a new training facility for the department's volunteer firefighters and medical responders.

"The plan is to finish the project without using any tax dollars," Chief Gary Mahugh said before last April's auction. "I think that's really important, particularly in today's economy."

That economy—along with the weekend's weather—put a damper on attendance and thus the amount of money raised this year. Consignor and bidder numbers were both lower than expected. The department netted about \$25,000 after event expenses and paying about 80% of the amount raised to consignors. That's down from about \$35,000 in 2010.

Although the numbers were lower than hoped, it's enough to put the building in place when combined with some money remaining from the 2010 auction and other donations.

"We may have to wait on some of the finish work in the interior, but by August we'll be using the space for training," Mahugh said.

Excavation at the Lake Blaine site has already begun in preparation for the move of an unused modular classroom acquired from the Bigfork School District, the northern portion of which lies in the Creston Fire District. An existing building on the site must be shifted to make room for the new portable structure, a change that will require concrete and utility work for both buildings. A new steel roof and interior upgrades are also eventually planned for the three-classroom portable.



Hats, raincoats and gloves were requirements for attendees at this year's Creston Auction. Volunteer auctioneers spent all day Saturday and Sunday afternoon auctioning off every item on the Creston School grounds. For more photos, see p. 2.

The building will be used as indoor training space for the firefighters and medical responders. For several years, they have been meeting inside a truck bay at the station before moving outside for practical training.

"This opportunity came with good timing," Mahugh said. "The project has been

on the books for years, and the generous contribution of the Bigfork School District made this possible."

The fire district's trustees have agreed to accept the new building as district property once it's completed, which ensures ongoing operational costs will be covered by the district.

Lake Blaine Open House Planned

The Creston Fire Department will hold an open house and community picnic at the Lake Blaine fire station on Lake Blaine Road later this year to celebrate completion of its new training building.

A date has not yet been set for the event, but it is tentatively planned for late summer or early fall. The exact date and time will be posted on the reader board at the Creston fire station and online at the "Creston Auction" page on

Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/>).

Community members will have the opportunity to tour the new building and learn about how it will be used. The picnic that follows will be potluck style, so please bring a dish to share. The fire department will supply snacks and beverages. Friends and family are welcome, but please leave your pets at home. For more information or to help set up the event, contact Gloria Graves at 250-4655.



April's 45th Creston Auction held surprises for everyone. From top left to lower right: Fencing was installed on a frosty morning. Bidders found treasures galore to take home. Auction crowds stood for hours under gloomy skies that released rain and snow to bid on the thousands of items covering the Creston School grounds. Creston Fire Chief Gary Mahugh said he was encouraged by the turnout in poor weather. Creston Fire Captain John Klippel and Assistant Chief Bob Kun share a laugh with other fire department members. Photos by Jaime Pickering.

Local Businesses Earn Thanks for Auction Support

The annual Creston Auction is a huge undertaking for the Creston Fire Department, requiring countless hours and upward of 200 volunteers to plan, organize and run the event. The fire department is grateful for the ongoing support from community members who have helped the auction continue to grow for 45 years. (For more about how you can support your local fire department, see p. 4.)

Area businesses are also huge supporters of the Creston Fire Department, providing a range of equipment and services needed to run the auction, as well as donating gift certificates and goods that are sold to bidders during the event. The fire department would particularly like to thank the following businesses and individuals for their support of this year's Creston Auction:

- A. Able Fishing Charters
- Alert Security
- American Web Design
- Autosport

- Big John's
- Big O Tires
- Bigfork Drug
- Bigfork Rents and Events
- Blue Star Knives
- Brenneman Dairy
- CAD
- CHS
- CJ's House of Style
- Coca-Cola
- Columbia Container
- Cost Less Carpet
- Country Auto
- Creston Topsoil
- Currier's Welding
- Daily Brew Coffee
- Dairy Queen of Kalispell
- Domino's Pizza
- Echo Lake Cafe
- Electric Avenue Gifts
- Fastoys
- Flathead Concrete
- Flathead County Sheriff's Posse and Mounted Posse
- Flathead Electric Cooperative
- Flathead Vo-Ag Department
- Forever Gelous
- Four Seasons Nursery
- Garden Bar
- Gene Gordner
- Glacier Bank

- Glacier Horse Blanket
- Gresko's
- Health Consulting Resources
- Heaven's Peak Lodge and Resort
- Heritage Custom Farming
- Hooper's Nursery
- Dan and Geri Jacobs
- Knife River
- Kravingz Cafe
- Land Guy, Inc.
- Leighty Bros. Construction
- Leland's Honda
- LHC
- Little Brown Church
- Los Caporales
- Luna's Wine and Coffee Cellar
- Mahugh Fire & Safety
- Massey Excavating Inc.
- Midway Rental
- Mild Fence
- Montana Ace Hardware of Kalispell
- Montana Agricultural Experiment Station
- Montana Army/Navy of Kalispell
- Montana Coffee Traders
- Montana Rockworks
- Mountain Brook Studios

- Mountain View Mennonite Church
- Murdoch's Ranch & Home Supply
- NAPA Auto Parts
- National Pawn
- Northern Lights Chiropractic
- Parsons Tractor
- Penco
- Pick's Bowling Center
- Plant Land
- Plum Creek
- Pocketstone Cafe
- Pro Clean Car Wash
- Raceway Park
- Riecke's Bayside Gallery
- Jim Sappington
- Schellinger Construction
- Schuster Construction
- ServiceMaster
- Silver Bullet
- Snappy Sports Senter
- Swan River Gardens
- Tree Image
- Triple W
- Valley Glass
- Western States CAT
- Whalen Tire
- The Zone Family Fun Center
- Matt and Emily Zemacke
- Alan and Nancy Zimmerman

Spotlight on Safety: Waiting for the Water

As water and snowpack levels rise around the valley, flood stories have become front-page standards. In Creston, the fire department is closely watching sloughs and creeks, particularly along Foothill Road, near Echo Lake and around Lake Blaine, as well as the portion of the Flathead River that stretches south from the Old Steel Bridge.

"Two things are going to get us," Creston Fire Chief Gary Mahugh told attendees of a recent CFFAM meeting, "rainfall and warm temperatures."

The valley has seen plenty of both in recent weeks. The fire department is heavily involved in the countywide effort to assess and monitor flood-prone areas and is prepared for its primary role in high-water situations: ensuring life safety.

"Fire we can manage," Mahugh said. "But the thing about flooding is there's not a lot we can do with it."

Despite frequent discussion of sandbagging to redirect water, Mahugh says that such efforts must be done properly to be effective and avoid creating an issue for neighboring properties. He instead emphasized that people should focus on basic personal safety if flooding occurs:

- Avoid working directly in flood water, as it can be contaminated by septic systems, animal carcasses and bacteria.
- Wash hands vigorously and thoroughly after any contact with flood water.
- Ensure shots are current, including those for hepatitis A and B and tetanus.
- Secure propane tanks with a chain or cable to a nearby tree. If you must leave your home due to flooding, close valves.
- Don't drive through water over roadways, as depths can be deceiving.
- Have a 72-hour emergency kit on hand. A good source for kit components is <http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit>.

By the Numbers: Gauging Water

Past high-water years:
1964, 1974, 1975, 1991, 1995, 1997

Flathead Basin snow water content:
about 226% of normal

Snow level at Noisy Basin:
about 143 inches

Flathead River level:
11.83 feet at Columbia Falls

Flood stage level:
14 feet

Flood information sources:
Flathead County flood info hotline
406-758-2111
Advisories, forecasts, & river levels
<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/mso/>
Office of Emergency Services
<http://flathead.mt.gov/oes/>

From DNRC, Flathead Watershed Sourcebook, NOAA.

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CFFAM to Continue Summer Meetings

Chief Gary Mahugh takes pride in leading a fire department in which every member trains and works as a volunteer. But tapping those individuals for additional tasks, such as running the annual Creston Auction, can quickly spread resources paper-thin.

So when community members approached him about forming a new fire department support group to help run the auction, plan and organize other fundraisers and promote the Creston Fire Department in the community, he did not hesitate to give a green light.

Since CFFAM's first meeting in June 2008, the group has done all of those things and more. Its monthly meetings draw a handful to dozens of people, with more volunteers showing up as the annual auction approaches and the spring frenzy of putting on the three-day event hits with full force.

On Call

CFFAM Meeting

When: 6:30 p.m., June 21

Where: Creston Fire Station,
4498 Hwy 35

What to bring: A dish to share

More info: Contact Gloria Graves,
250-4655, crittermom10@hotmail.com

"It's such a huge undertaking. We are really trying to lighten the load on the members of the fire department," said CFFAM member Gloria Graves. "We work hard to get community volunteers to help in the different areas of the auction, because it always happens: [the fire department gets] called out for a fire or medical emergency during the sale."

This summer, CFFAM's core members are looking for ways to relieve some of the pressure in the spring and get a jump on planning. The members also want to keep the group together and on the radar of the community throughout the year. This is particularly important because the group is crucial in providing emergency

support for the department, including making sure responders have enough food and beverages when they are on scene at a fire or during a flood.

"It isn't just the auction," Graves said.

The summer CFFAM meetings are about community and sharing ideas, as well as the following upcoming events: **Early summer/late fall: Open House and Picnic, Lake Blaine Fire Station.**

The next CFFAM meeting will focus on the open house of the fire department's new training building (see p. 1).

October: Soup for Supper, Creston Fire Station.

Our Soup for Supper evening has become a mainstay for the community in the fall. We will be shifting the event back to National Fire Prevention Week this year and will need volunteers to prepare soups and desserts. We are also hoping to have a raffle at this year's fundraiser and are accepting donations.

All community members are welcome at CFFAM's monthly potluck meetings, held the third Tuesday of each month.