Fund Raising Info
By Marc Schwager

Thank you to everyone who donated to the MVFD. We had over 200 individual donations, from people within our community and from far away. It was an overwhelming display of generosity. Following the fires, through general donations and our Annual Fund drive, we received a total of $345,114. We also had a special fund set up for firefighters who lost their homes. As of the end of February, thanks to your generosity, we have disbursed $75,000 to them, which they greatly appreciated. In addition to the money, we have received donations of 4 trailers, which have been conveyed to the MVFD volunteers that lost homes as well.

Being a small, all volunteer, non-profit we were able to move very quickly to distribute the disaster relief funds. The first checks were conveyed on October 24th while our firefighters were still putting out hot spots.

The Annual Fund drive brought in $59,937, which is our second highest amount raised, and an impressive amount considering that this was on top of the $285,177 donated just after the fires.

In addition to the disaster relief payments to our firefighters, we are looking for capital purchases to put the money to good use. We have always believed that our funds better serve the community when they are not sitting in a bank account, but spent on the best possible apparatus for our fire fighting team. Our oldest engine (3481) is 27 years old and we need to replace it with a new one. New engines cost around $200,000 and thanks to your generosity we will not have to finance the purchase, and can still retain a prudent reserve fund.

Thanks again for your generous support of MVFD!

Volunteer Firefighter
Want to join?

In the aftermath of the 2017 fires, we have had a lot of interest from men and women in our community about how to join the MVFD. The process starts by contacting Chief Jablonowski to let him know you’re interested. He will ask you to attend fire training (drill) which lasts 1 to 2 hours on the first and third Thursday of each month at Station One. Attending training you get to know the other firefighters and to learn the character of the department – this will help you decide if the MVFD is the right fit. You also will learn ‘way cool stuff’ according to one recent recruit!

After attending a few drills, if you remain interested, you will attend Fire Academy. You will need to fill out a couple forms, have a valid driver’s license, get fingerprinted and take a medical exam. Fire Academy takes place in Santa Rosa and lasts 6 weeks (Wednesday evenings and Saturdays). After that, you’ll work with our Chief to ‘buddy’ with one of our experienced firefighters and begin responding to emergency calls. Once you are finished with Fire Academy, your ongoing time commitment is to attend the two drill trainings each month.

If you would like more info, please text: Michael Jablonowski at (707) 360-7712
**A Word from our Fire Chief**

By Michael Jablonowski, MVFD Chief

Sunday October 8th started as a typical late summer morning on the hill, warm with light breezes. Firefighter Scott Falkowski and I met early that morning at Station 1 to wash and ready the fire engine for the Glen Ellen Fair & Parade. Mayacamas Fire, Glen Ellen Fire, and CalFire were all a big part of what may be the world's shortest parade; kids and firefighters on top of the engine in front of us and people clapping and waving as we drove by. It was all over in less than five minutes, but great fun and good to be part of the Glen Ellen community. The rest of that Sunday was pretty quiet, with a not so short afternoon nap. Thank goodness for that nap as it was the last sleep for several days. But that's another story...

Now in March, almost six months later, the demolition crews and their giant excavators are almost done with their part of the cleanup. Even with fewer dump trucks on Cavedale and Trinity there are still delays, and both roads are in poor shape with large potholes and broken pavement – so caution is the watchword. So far it's been a dry winter and, in many ways, that has been lucky for us. The rock, washes, and falling trees associated with heavy rains have missed us for the most part. But, winter is far from over and these road dangers will stay on our agenda for a while longer. You may have noticed fire engines on our roads that you haven't seen before. We now have an automatic aid agreement with Sonoma Valley Fire & Rescue, which gives us additional resources for every emergency call. I am really pleased to welcome our neighboring firefighters to the hill. Additional resources always mean better service for our community.

Please join me in congratulating Jerry Appar who has accepted the position of Assistant Chief for the MVFD. Jerry has been a dedicated firefighter and captain for many years and I will share more background information about his service in our next newsletter.

As we cope with the myriad of problems in the post fire cleanup, here's suggestion for dealing with the standing burned and unburned fuels that still remain: Cut and make small burn piles through the summer months with the intent of burning in the fall. This will not only help the regeneration of plant life that is now sprouting, but creates a defensible space as well returning carbon as a fertilizer to the earth. You must have a permit to burn these small brush piles. It's an easy 3-step process outlined at www.MayacamasVFDD.org.

Remember that burning cannot begin too soon and no new fuel can be added to the pile after 3pm. If you have questions about conducting a hazard reduction burn or have not done it before and would like help, please contact me at 707 360-7712 or at mjablo@ymail.com.

By Skyla Olds

**Farewell Chief Horne and Welcome to Chief Jablonowski**

It is with equal sadness and tremendous appreciation for his 14 years of dedication, expertise, and tireless efforts with the MVFD, that we say farewell to our dear Chief, Will Horne. Closing out a 58-year career as a firefighter, Chief Horne resigned from the MVFD in December. He joined us as Chief in 2004 and transformed the volunteer department into the skilled and dedicated force whose heroic efforts and long brutal hours of firefighting saved so many homes in our community during the October fire. Thank you for your incredible service, Chief Horne. We will miss you.

And it is with equal gratitude and pride that I have the opportunity to introduce you to the new MVFD Chief, our very own Michael Jablonowski. Many of you may recognize Michael from his regular response to fire calls on the hill or from his trips up and down Cavedale and Trinity in his vintage diesel Mercedes with canine passengers. I have known Michael since I was born, and yet realized how little I actually knew of the many different lives he has led prior to sitting down to interview him for this story.

Michael emigrated from Europe to Queens, NY at the age of 9 as his family struck out for a better life following the devastation of WWII. Following childhood stints in the Midwest, Michael found himself living in the Haight in SF in the winter of 1966. Prophetically, he read in local rag “The Oracle” about a school located at Top of the World, and eventually found himself driving a bus full of starry-eyed astrology students from the Height up Cavedale, fixing the bus when it broke down, and meeting Ed and Ruth Hinson, with whom he would develop a close friendship and who urged him to move to our hills.

By 1968, Michael was renting a defunct cabin at 3870 Cavedale. While living there, Michael and his friends came across a serious car accident on Cavedale and attempted to render aid. It was then that Michael realized how much the remote and thorny access roads of our special community complicate vital and prompt medical attention. His cabin later burned to the ground, though Michael was not involved in extinguishing that fire, these two incidents on the mountain, set the first seeds which ultimately led to his becoming Chief of the department.

In 1975, Michael purchased property on Cavedale and from this period on, his life was tied to our mountain. Although he left often and traveled far, he always returned to his place on Cavedale.

In 1997, Cavedale resident Ruth Hinson passed away, leaving Michael to administer her estate. When he reached out to make a donation on her behalf to the MVFD in recognition of the many first responder calls they fielded, John King, then MVFD Chief, convinced Michael to sign up as a volunteer. Over the past 20 years as an MVFD volunteer firefighter and later Assistant Chief, Michael has witnessed significant changes in our community and in the department. Now, as our Chief, he will helm the department, as we undoubtedly will see our community change at an unprecedented rate in the wake of the catastrophic fire. I, for one, am comforted in knowing that our department is in the hands of someone with such extensive knowledge of our hill, our people here, our history, and our MVFD. Throughout our interview, two things were particularly clear: Michael remains passionate about the hill and how important living here has been to his life, and that as Chief, his priority will be how to provide the quickest and most competent response in emergencies for our residents. Welcome, Chief Jablonowski!
A Word from the President

By Allison Ash, MVFD Board President

Driving north on Highway 12 from Cavedale to Trinity, those who do not know what we’ve been through, see the lush, green pastures and the discoloration of the background hills and just remember that there was a fire recently, but they have no idea what our day to day lives have been like. We each have our own story, none of which are over yet, but collectively we are moving on.

I want to acknowledge that 1 in 3 properties in the MVFD were lost, 5 of our firefighters lost their homes, and one of our residents perished in the fires of October 2017. Grim though these numbers are, I want to focus on the future, the replenishment of our spirit and rebuilding of our lives. If we can forget, for the moment, the inconvenience of being stopped for the last two minutes while the speeder trucks carry away the remains of a neighbor’s home, we can pause and see the amazing array of wildflowers that have sprouted as well as the regeneration of the native chaparral plants. We each have our own story, none of which are over yet, but collectively we are moving on.

The Mayacamas FSC (FSC) was created in 1993 with the purpose of facilitating communities to become more fire safe, fire wise, and fire adapted. The California FSC receives funds from federal agencies, such as the US Forest Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management, which they then distribute to local fire safe councils. Local fire safe councils can also apply for and receive grants from other agencies, such as CalFire and PG&E.

Locally, the Mt. Veeder FSC, established in 2001, has successfully initiated fuel reduction programs, assisted with residential clearing to create defensible space, provided public education, and coordinated with their volunteer fire department in area-specific projects beneficial to residents in their service area.

The Mayacamas Fire Safe Council (MFSC) has elected its board officers: Lisa Warner (Chair), Kristen Drummond (Co-Chair), Jennifer O’Mahoney (Secretary), Geoff Herrick (Treasurer), Brandi Ashker and Theresa Hayle (Program Management), and Berta Acker (MVFD Board Liaison). The MFSC, operating as a subcommittee of the MVFD Board of Directors, will now seek funding to be able to provide community education and spearhead projects that will make our area more fire safe, fire wise, and fire adapted.

The MFSC’s initial activity will be to offer a “Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Seminar.” An HIZ is the 100 to 200 foot area around a home that includes structures and everything else within it; the seminar will help homeowners identify their specific wildfire risks and present options for mitigating and protective actions.

The seminar is open to all residents in our Mayacamas VFD service area at no charge, and will be held on Saturday, May 5, 2:00-4:00 pm at Silver Cloud Winery, 5700 Cavedale Road.

The Mayacamas FSC is seeking members to help execute a variety of projects.

Please contacts:
Lisa Warner at lisa@letocellars.com for more information.

• Our community has come together and feels closer knit than ever before (see it in the driver interactions on the roads and hear it in the postings on Nextdoor).
• The outpouring of generosity in the form of dollars and donated homes/trailers has been amazing.
• We have interested people who formed a Mayacamas Fire Safe Council, something former Chief, Will Horne, has advocated for over a decade.
• We have several residents who have volunteered to be firefighters and are actively attending the Fire Academy.
• We have a small group, headed by professional historian Rina Palei, undertaking a Fire History Project. Its focus is to gather oral histories from our firefighters and residents and thereby provide a record that can inform others when fires inevitably hit in the distant future.

Also under consideration is a shift in how the MVFD is organized and managed. As you know, over the last several years the County of Sonoma has been trying to find a better way to provide fire services to rural Sonoma County. To that end the County has sent out an RFP to find organizations better able to serve MVFD. It’s too soon to know the final outcome at the printing of this newsletter, but it looks like Sonoma Valley Fire & Rescue Authority (SVFRA) is in good position to provide us the key elements in the RFP: fleet management, training, administrative support, equipment & IT support, and operational support.

The New Mayacamas FSC

By Ellen Scarr

As a result of the devastating fires last October, a group of dedicated local homeowners have formed the Mayacamas Fire Safe Council (FSC). The umbrella organization, the California Fire Safe Council, was created in 1993 with the purpose of facilitating communities to become more fire safe, fire wise, and fire adapted. The California FSC receives funds from federal agencies, such as the US Forest Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management, which they then distribute to local fire safe councils. Local fire safe councils can also apply for and receive grants from other agencies, such as CalFire and PG&E.

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