

Great River Gazette

Web Site: www.grca11739.com, Email: greatriver11739@gmail.com,
or mail to GRCA PO Box 13, Great River NY 11739



A Publication of the Great River Community Association, March 2022

Thank You for Your Service!

Rob Howard is on a mission to become the best neighbor he can be. Based on his 41 years of dedicated service to the Great River Community as a Great River Fire Department Volunteer Firefighter, we'd say he's achieved that goal. Achieved and exceeded you might say! We took a recent opportunity to present Rob with a token of the community's appreciation, and sat down with him to ask about his experiences as a volunteer firefighter serving the Great River community. Great River Community Association Officer Jeff Wilbert is shown at right presenting



Robert Howard reaches 41 years of service to the community this April

Rob with an aerial photograph of our beautiful river and surrounding community.

"It's all about neighbors helping neighbors"

Rob has lived in Great River since 1972 where he followed in a strong tradition of service to the fire department, serving alongside both his father and his brother. Although Rob recently relocated to nearby East Islip, he still volunteers for the GRFD, and in fact, has served several terms as Department Chief. Rob first started volunteering in 1981, and as of this April 2022 he will have served for 41 years, and counting!

We asked Rob what he found to be the most rewarding aspects of being a Volunteer Firefighter. He said, "...it provides an overwhelming sense of camaraderie and team work with your fellow firefighters, with whom you develop lifelong friendships." "But more importantly", he said, "it's an organization that

is founded primarily upon 'neighbors helping neighbors', and that is very rewarding."

Are there other rewards? "Yes, membership in the GRFD actually provides you with a service awards program where you receive \$20 per month for each year of service, once you turn age 65. Rob was quick to point out that "no one is going to go rushing into a burning building for \$20 a month, so it is really more all about helping your neighbors in their times of need." In addition to the service award program, firefighters receive a property tax discount, FREE community college (with a five-year commitment to volunteering), physicals conducted by local physicians, all required equipment, and gym memberships to keep you in top shape.

How has the pandemic impacted the GRFD? "Well, like most organizations membership is down, and we are in dire need of a fresh set of recruits." In addition to firefighter training, the (Continued on Page 2)

Continued from Page 1

department offers free access to training and certifications in the areas of Hazmat Handling, Coast Guard Operations (yes, we have our own boat!), Search and Rescue, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), qualification as a Certified First Responder, and Power Squadron membership.

What does the weekly commitment look like? "Volunteers can expect to spend as little as 3-5 hours a week at the fire house, with surges sometimes when we participate in specialized regional training events. Great River is a small district, so we only respond to about 80-100 calls per year, but any one of those can be critical, so we try to stay very well prepared."

How does one go about joining the GRFD? "We set aside time every Sunday between 9:30-11:30 AM, so candidates can just stop by and get a tour, meet your fellow volunteers, and ask as many questions as you like."

(continued at right)

On behalf of the Great River Community, we would like to say thank you very much to Rob, and all of the many other dedicated volunteers that continue to serve this community. Thank you for your service!



Robert Howard reaches 41 years of service to the community this April

Recent Events



On Sunday, October 24, under a beautiful sky, we held our annual Halloween Parade, with a near record crowd. The children and parents marched to seasonal music, decorated pumpkins, played games and much more. We hope you enjoyed the event. Committee Chairperson, Committee Members and Student Volunteers. Great River Firehouse - James DiGiovanna, Brian Verdino & Dave O'Connor, Pumpkins & Straw Bales - James & Karen DiGiovanna, Halloween Parade Signs - Llobell Realty. Cornstalks at 2 Signs - James and Karen DiGiovanna



On Sunday, November 28, a beautiful warm day for November, the community members got together and had our yearly Menorah Lighting. Shown at left are Town of Islip Councilman, James O'Connor, GRCA President JoAnn Kukenis, and Suffolk County Legislator Tom Cilmi.

Recent Events (cont.)



Bob and Barbara Kersch shown at left with their son Scott. A special Thanks to the Kersch Family for storing and maintaining the Menorah. We also want to thank Ilene & Charlie Maurer for lighting the candles nightly.



We would also like to thank Ellen Shulman for an explanation of the Menorah and its meaning to Hanukkah, which was followed by prayers and the lighting. Ellen also gave Gelt to everyone who attended.



On Saturday, December 4, 2021 we held our annual Christmas Tree Lighting event. A large crowd gathered for the festivities and joined East Islip Middle School Chorus in caroling. Community members all enjoyed drinking eggnog, hot cider and hot cocoa while snacking on cookies, candy canes, fresh popped popcorn and s'mores.

Future Events

- GRCA General Meeting: May 2022
 - Open to all community residents.
 - Look at the North and South “Welcome Signs” for further details.
- GRCA Officer Elections: November 2022.
 - Look for a future announcement for further details.
- Annual Memorial Day Parade hosted by the Great River Fire Department.
 - Tentatively scheduled for Sunday, May 29th.
 - Meet at the Fire House at 11 AM for a parade, followed by a ceremony at the War Memorial, and then back to the Fire House for hotdogs, refreshments, raffles, and Italian Ices for the kids!
 - Look at the North and South “Welcome Signs” for further details.

Odds and Ends

- Local landscaper is offering to train any new employees who might be interested in learning the trade. Steady work, good wages. Contact Brian, Great River resident and owner of Good Fellows Landscaping and Tree Removal at (631) 972-8501.
- Please support Bayard Cutting Arboretum. Your generosity allows them to maintain and enhance their historic and beautiful 691 acre landscape as well as the treasured Westbrook Manor. To donate please visit <https://bayardcuttingarboretum.com>
- Great River resident and PGA teaching professional Ed Sallie offers lessons and lesson packages at the Timberpoint Golf Course. Contact edsallie@optonline.net, or by phone at (631) 478-3126.

The Great River Gazette

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Great River Community Association (GRCA)

Web Site: www.grca11739.com

For any questions, comments, suggestions, or recommendations for future volumes email:

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Box 13, Great River NY 11739



GRCA Executive Committee:

- President - JoAnn Kukenis
- Vice President - Open Position
- Treasurer - Bill Vavricka
- Recording Secretary - Rosina O'Shea
- Corresponding Secretary- Jeff Wilbert

GRCA Board Members:

- John Acerno
- Tony Blumenstetter
- James Bruno
- James DiGiovanna
- Cliff Gibbons
- Paul Llobell



MAKE ME A FIREFIGHTER!



Join the Great River Fire Department TODAY!

"Membership has its privileges!"

As a department member you will be serving your community,
your family, your friends and your neighbors.

VOLUNTEERING TO BE A GREAT RIVER FIREFIGHTER HAS ITS BENEFITS AND REWARDS!

- Property tax reductions
- State income tax benefits
- Free health checkups
- Free gym membership
 - Free insurance
- College tuition reimbursement
 - Service pensions
- Free uniform, equipment and training

If you are between the ages of 18-60 and can commit 3-5 hours of your time a week,
you can join our ranks!

If you would like additional information

call 631-277-5837

www.greatriverfd.org

STOP BY THE FIREHOUSE ON SUNDAY MORNING

BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 9-11 AM

TO INTERACT WITH OUR CURRENT MEMBERS.

*****JOIN TODAY!!!*****

FIND THE FIGHTER IN YOU!

A full-sized copy of the form above can be
found on the GRFD web site at

www.greatriverfd.org

*Postage for this Newsletter is sponsored by GRCA Membership dues.
If your household is not currently a member, then please use the
enclosed membership form to join us...Thank You!*

To: All Great River Residents

From: The Great River Community Association
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Great River, NY 11739

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