HENNING'S FIRE DEPARTMENT WORKS – AND PLAYS – HARD

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By Heather Rule

Work hard together, and play hard, too. That's the adopted motto of the Henning Fire Department, a group consisting of volunteers who are like one big family.

The Henning Fire Department is made up of about 25 volunteer members, including fire chief Mike Helle and assistant fire chief Erik Guse. There's also a waiting list of 10 people willing to serve in the department. In addition to the city of Henning, the department provides service to all of the surrounding townships including Elmo, Leaf Lake, Inman, Folden and Henning township.

The department also includes multi-generational firefighters. Henning currently has three father-son firefighter duos serving in the fire department. Some firefighters also had relatives who were previously members of the department. When Henning firefighters retire, they usually have 30 years of service under them, according to Helle.

"It's a lot of years of volunteerism for little pay," Helle said.

Many of the firefighters have full-time jobs on top of their duties at the fire department.

Beyond responding to emergency calls, Henning Fire Department is visible in the community in other ways. They work events at the local fairgrounds and do whatever they can to support the community. They visit the school each fall to educate students about fire safety. Younger elementary-aged students get to spray water from the firetrucks as a fun treat, too. The firefighters also talk with third-graders about home safety and the importance of knowing their address in case of an emergency.

They also helped start a lighted parade on the first Saturday in December, an idea that started during the pandemic when they wanted to find a creative – and safe – way to have Santa Claus come around to see the children. They also do a toy drive for the Ronald McDonald House and a Halloween trunk-or-treat event. The fire department is also a prominent presence during National Night Out in the summers, giving kids another chance to get up-close looks at the firetrucks and equipment.

"It gives you pride in your community," Helle said. "We're here for the community for more than just your bad days."

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