

The PRVFD Journal



Volume 4

Pine Ridge Volunteer Fire Department Company 68

Summer
2009

Special Points Of Interest

- **"Chief's Corner"** Chief Pearsall discusses PRVFD's 10th anniversary and donation concerns **Page 1**
- **"PRVFD: - - - An Amazing Journey"** Laurel Hendrix describes the history of the PRVFD **Page 1**
- **"Donations Needed"** Some interesting ideas about funding PRVFD **Page 2**
- **"Tips For Survival"** - Cal Fire Chief Steve Lawshe offers tips about surviving wildfires **Page 6**

Inside This Issue

"PRVFD At Your Service"	Pg. 1
"Donations Needed"	Pg. 2
"PRVFD dispatchers"	Pg. 3
"Featured Apparatus"	Pg. 3
"CVFCA ???"	Pg. 3
"Safety, Safety,"	Pg. 3
"Community Outreach"	Pg. 4
"The Cressman fire"	Pg. 4
"New Job for Bundli"	Pg. 4
"Featured Firefighter"	Pg. 5
"New Members"	Pg. 5
"Survival Tips"	Pg. 6
"More than Just A FD"	Pg. 7
"Why Training?"	Pg. 7
"Folks Who Have Helped PRVFD"	Back

Chief's Corner

A Milestone Year by Larry Pearsall



Our department is approaching a milestone year; we will celebrate our 10th anniversary next April 8th. What a journey it has been. To commemorate this special time, Laurel Hendrix has written our feature article on the history of the Pine Ridge VFD. I'm sure you will enjoy this article.

Although we're excited about our milestone anniversary, we approach it with some trepidation. Our continued success depends on donations from our Pine Ridge property owners.

With the current economic climate our finances may decline. It is our sincere desire that you will recognize the importance of our fire department and continue your generous support.

Two special people have made this Journal a reality because of their special donations.

Over the years all Pine Ridge property owners have benefited from our department, if not from emergency services, then from the many community services we provide. You will find another article that high-

lights some of these services that have provided important assistance to our neighbors.

Actually our strength lies in the diversified skills, abilities and dedication that all our members possess. I am very honored to lead this organization.

**Thank you all for
your continuing
support.**

PRVFD At Your Service — An Amazing Journey by Laurel Hendrix



In April 2000, Pine Ridge resident Larry Pearsall came to the Pine Ridge Property Owners' Association with an idea to add to their list of fire safety action items. Why not equip an old pickup with a water tank and pump, make a quick, initial response to any wildfire which might ignite, and then let the pros do their job when they eventually arrived on scene? Would any other property owners be interested in joining Larry as volunteer firefighters?

Nine property owners answered "Yes." This marked the beginning of the amazing journey of the group which



would evolve into the Pine Ridge Volunteer Fire Department. We've been in motion for almost 10 years, providing our community with an array of services no one, including Chief Pearsall, could have envisioned back then.

PRVFD's roots run deep in our community. After attending organizational meetings of the Highway 168 Fire Safe Council in spring 1999, members invited CDF Chiefs Becky Robertson and Bill Johnson to assess our fire danger situation in Pine Ridge. Their size-up: we were in a fire crisis situation. PRPOA members took action, eventually working with CDF to create our Defensible Fuel Zone along the length of Cressman and Lower Cressman road. PRPOA members also established a safety zone, an evacuation plan, improved

(Continued on page 2)

Donations Needed To Cover Operations

by Howard Hendrix

We know that this year you will have to make hard choices when it comes to which worthy causes you will or can support. Realizing the limited funds all of us have to contribute, your fire department has worked hard to limit expenses and seek outside funding to meet equipment needs.

Cost-cutting strategies we have implemented include taking Engine 368 out of service in order to cut fuel and insurance costs. Two members have volunteered to sponsor a Patrol truck and pay all expenses for that vehicle. The Chiefs have agreed to use their personal cars (rather than a Patrol) for most PRVFD-related business. Even all costs for the Journal you hold in your

hands have been completely donated by members.

PRVFD members donate hundreds of hours to the department each year. None of our volunteers receive any compensation for the services they provide. Fortunately, we have been able to secure several gifts and grants over the years which have helped to improve our readiness and service.

Our continuing challenge remains our operating expenses -- particularly insurance, fuel, and repairs and maintenance -- for training and all operations.

The Mar-Val receipt program, scrip program, and annual barbecue fundraiser have all been very helpful, but they



cannot alone cover the annual costs of our operating expenses. The fact remains that the single greatest source of our operating funds must come from you, the property owners of Pine Ridge, through your kind donations.

If the one hundred-plus property owners in Pine Ridge each donated an average of \$120 annually, the PRVFD's operating expenses would be cov-

ered. If you are able to donate more, we encourage you to do so. "Major gifts" allow us to make the department a little better each year.

We remain committed to maintaining both our training and our medical and fire service at the highest levels we can achieve, but we can do none of this without your help. Thank you for your continued support, and for keeping the Pine Ridge Volunteer Fire Department one of your favorite tax-deductible charities. Together, we are making a real difference for all who live, own, work, and play in Pine Ridge.

Thank you for your continued support

PRVFD At Your Service An Amazing Journey ...Continued

(Continued from page 1)
signage, and an emergency manual.

The last thing on Larry's initial "to do" list was to form within PRPOA a volunteer firefighting contingent. Three months after its inception in April 2000, Gene Van Dyne offered a 1952 Ford fire engine he'd been storing on his property for over 12 years. Once restored, the soon-to-be engine E68 entered service, equipped with hose and sundry hand tools donated by local volunteer fire



departments. Then-PCF Captain Pat Gallegos provided initial training, and our volunteer firefighters donated 772 man-hours assisting CDF in monitoring burn piles from the DFZ project. In September 2000, the Chief organized the Road Rangers and Quad Squad in order to assist



outside emergency personnel, to provide traffic control, and to supply food and water to firefighting personnel.

Other milestones lay ahead. In 2001, out of general concerns regarding liability issues, Pine Ridge Volunteer Fire Department became an independent organization separate from PRPOA. Later that year, PRVFD was awarded its first grant through FEMA in order to outfit our firefighters with new and durable wildland personal protective equipment. In May 2002, PRVFD earned official status as a Fresno County fire department, Company 68.

The scope of our journey can be measured in growth—in terms of numbers of volunteer firefighters, road rangers, apparatus, equipment, and gear. In April 2000, we numbered nine mostly untrained volunteers, one rebuilt 1952 engine, some miscellaneous donated

hose, and a few hand tools. Today, we are thirty-nine strong—twenty five trained volunteer firefighters, six road rangers, three dispatchers, one advisory board member, three auxiliaries, and one honorary member. Our equipment pool has grown as well—one structure engine, two wildland engines, a water tender, and two patrols. Thanks to grants developed by PRVFD members, our updated wildland and structure personal protective equipment, hose, and medical



(Continued on page 7)

PRVFD Dispatchers

We have an unusual situation in our Pine Ridge area. It seems that radio waves don't like us. Our cell phones don't work, and, unfortunately, our pagers don't always work either.

We are actually dispatched by the Cal Fire Emergency Command Center (ECC) in Fresno but sometimes some of the pagers refuse to work.

To circumvent this problem we have our own dispatchers who call most every-



one on the telephone.

Virginia Pearsall is the head dispatcher who usually takes the call from ECC. Caryl Clayton and Doris Lewis can fill in if Virginia is unavailable.

This is a thankless job, always working in the background and never getting recognized. They all do it faithfully and without complaint.

Thank you ladies for a hard job well done!

**Featured Apparatus
Water Tender 68**

PRVFD's latest apparatus acquisition is a much needed water tender which we call WT68. In the Pine Ridge area, where there are no fire hydrants, getting water to a fire is very important. That is exactly what water tenders do.



WT68 is a 1959 International truck that carries 1500 gallons of water. It has a high pressure pump that is used to transfer water or, if necessary, can supply fire hoses.

This truck was generously donated to us by the Shaver Lake Volunteer Fire

Department. Shaver Lake operated the truck for 14 years. Prior to that it was in service with the Mid Valley Fire District. When CDF took over Mid Valley they donated the truck to Shaver Lake VFD.

Chuck Reynolds is the Engineer assigned to the truck, and he keeps it clean, full of water, and running like a top all the time.

Even though our new truck is 50 years old, it runs well and still does the job it was designed to do. We are very fortunate to have it.



Safety, Safety, Safety

By Gary Martin



Did you know that nearly half of all firefighter deaths and injuries occur either driving to and from a call or during a training exercise?

Many vehicle accidents occur when driving to a call for service. There are several reasons for this. First, the general public somehow gets very nervous when they see an emergency vehicle approaching. Sometimes drivers will just stop in the middle of the road. At other times they won't yield, and there are even times when they will speed up so they don't feel required to pull to the right and stop. Meanwhile, the

firefighters' adrenaline is building, and sometimes we are thinking about the call itself, rather than the task at hand of getting there safely.

When fire fighters return from a call, they are very fatigued and dehydrated and that in itself causes problems. The adrenaline has passed and they just want to get back to the station house to relax. As a result, they sometimes either get sleepy or are not paying close enough attention to the road and are then more likely to become involved in vehicle accidents.

(Continued on back page)

CVFCA ???

by Larry Pearsall



Chief Pearsall and Chief Colbert belong to an organization known as the *Central Valley Fire Chiefs Association*, CVFCA. This group meets once every month and is composed of approximately 85 fire chiefs from the central valley.

The purposes of this organization, per their Constitution, are:

- To provide a mutual association of chief officers of fire departments within Fresno, Madera, Kings, Tulare, Merced, and Mariposa counties.
- To promote uniformity of thinking through a friendly medium of exchange of information, relative to the efficient operation and well being of our departments.
- To coordinate all operations deemed necessary in times of mutual need.
- To exercise expertise in

dealing with any matter that may affect our departments.

We are now able to represent volunteer fire departments in the discussions and contribute to Central Valley fire-related efforts. PRVFD is now well known by other departments, all of which are more than willing to help us in time of need. As a result of our participation, we have received synthetic fire hose from Kingsburg FD and were able to store our E-ONE fire engine at the Sanger FD station last winter.

Membership in this organization has been a rewarding experience for PRVFD and our Chiefs.



PRVFD Community Outreach

by Larry Pearsall



The Pine Ridge Fire Department serves our community in many more ways than just putting out fires and meeting medical needs.

Some of the service projects we are involved in are as follows:

- We burn brush piles for folks who can't do it or don't feel comfortable doing it themselves.
- We deliver water to folks who



are having water well problems.

- We clear fallen trees off the roads.
- We make home and property inspections and advise the owners of fire safety areas that need improvement.
- We utilize our fire engines for flushing out drainage culverts under the roads.
- We assist in road grading and

paving operations by watering down dirt roads and providing water for rollers.

- We patrol during *Red Flag Days* (days with extreme fire danger) to advise and caution residents and be on the lookout for fires.

- We participate in Edison Company Science Days and help educate children in fire safety issues.

- We patrol during the Shaver Lake fireworks event to help prevent unsafe fire situations and assist the spectators as needed.



We sincerely desire to help our community in any way we can. If you need assistance

please don't hesitate to call us.

We are there for you!

The Cressman Fire
By Warren Colbert



One of our recent incidents was potentially a major fire that could have traveled through our tract, up toward Wildflower and on to Shaver Lake.

We were dispatched by the Emergency Command Center to a vegetation fire on Upper Cressman Road. The Pine Ridge Fire Department responded with three engines, a water tender and two patrols. We had a total of 15 firefighters on scene, plus two road rangers and three quad squad members controlling traffic on our roads.

Our department was first on scene and upon arriving at the fireground observed that the fire was going strong and was starting up a steep incline into heavy brush and timber. We immediately made a hose lay and commenced putting water on the fire.

We were soon joined by several Cal Fire engines, USFS engines, Bald Mountain and Shaver Lake water tenders,

air attack units, command personnel and two Mira Monte ground crews. Because of the quick response and large number of firefighters and apparatus, the fire was quickly knocked down before it could escape into the dense vegetation.

Our fire department plays a very important role in keeping our community safe

Fire investigators determined that the cause of the fire was a burn pile that had been dormant for eleven days. The property owner thought he had extinguished the fire properly, but eleven days later the pile came back to life and rapidly spread. Fortunately, a neighbor spotted the fire and called it in.

It is very gratifying to realize that our fire department plays a very important role in keeping our community safe.

New Position for Lieutenant Bundli

Lt. Lisbeth Bundli was appointed Finance Officer early in 2009. Lis' new responsibilities entail setting up annual fiscally responsible budgets for each year, helping to steer the executive board to look at all options to ensure the optimal functioning of the department based on the current financial viability, and over-seeing adherence to the budget by all PRVFD members.

Lis is also the chair of the Finance Review Committee. The Finance Review Committee evaluates the accounting records of the Treasurer on an annual basis, ensuring compliance with the main objectives of the fire department.

Lis is a CPA in public practice. She also teaches accounting and accounting soft-

ware operation. The last few years Lis has donated her time and expertise preparing tax returns for the fire department. She is also a very proficient firefighter.

The department really appreciates Lis' many skills and talents and her willingness to share them with the department.



Featured Firefighter Captain Hank van Loon

Early in 1980, Hank and his wife Dory made a major life changing decision to relocate. They decided to move from the San Joaquin Valley to the Central Sierras. They selected a very small community, Pine Ridge. They took up residence in their new home in 1981. When they moved, their children Tim and Melissa were only six and three years of age.

Hank began his career with CDF (now Cal Fire) in November 1975. Upon completing his basic training he had numerous assignments primarily in the San Joaquin Valley. In 1979 he was promoted to Engineer and in 1986 to Captain. As a Fire Captain he was responsible for running hand crews, a position he continued to hold until his retirement in 2004. When Hank was asked to chronicle his different assignments, he just shook his head and told us that they were too many and varied to mention all of them in the Journal.

support during the summer for major wildfires. Upon his retirement Hank joined PRVFD. We all are thankful that he did so. His vast experience, knowledge and relationship with Cal Fire personnel in our area make him an extremely valuable asset to our Department.



Hank is a good neighbor and friend to so many of us. There are few in our community who have not experienced his willingness to help. Whether it's clearing roads, felling trees, doing mechanic work or providing transportation during foul weather, he has always made himself available. We could not ask for or be blessed with a better person and family to share our special community.

Hank, as a Captain in the PRVFD, is our *Operations Officer* and also shares training responsibilities with Assistant Chief Warren Colbert. Dory is a member of the Department's unique *Quad Squad*. Together they continue to work and volunteer which enhances our community and makes it a safer place to call home.



Today Hank and Dory, the proud grandparents of two young boys, are enjoying retirement—well, not complete retirement. They both work part time for Contractors Sanitation, located in Exeter, CA. This organization provides kitchen

Thank you Hank and Dory for all your contributions to our special mountain community. You are greatly appreciated.

Newest Members

DAN and SUZANNE HAAS



The Haas family became property owners on Glenwood Lane in 1992. Dan & Suzanne, along with their sons Brandon, Matt and Josh, and neighbor Dale McGee, started building their cabin in 1998. Dan retired from his sheet metal job in 2007 and since then have become avid motor-

cycle riders and snow skiers. They are currently part-time residents. They joined the PRVFD in January 2008. They are the proud grandparents of three grandchildren, who occupy a lot of their time.



PETE HOLEMAN



Pete was born and raised in the Central Valley. He attended Fresno City College and Fresno State University, where he graduated in 1974 with a degree in Recreation. After graduation he began a career in the construction industry.

Pete married Cindy in 1980 and raised two sons, who now reside in Clovis and Auberry. They also enjoy their grandson, who will start school this fall.

As a family they enjoyed skiing and riding motorcycles, which they still do today. Pete retired in 2007 and joined the fire department in 2008.

DAVID LEHMAN

I moved to the "Lovely" Fresno area from Spokane, WA in 1990 to take a position with the Federal Aviation Administration, I'm presently a Supervisor in the Fresno Flight Standards District Office. My wife Nee and I were married in the Shaver Lake Church, so when we decided to purchase a "vacation home", it just had to be in the Shaver area. We looked at properties for 3 years before finding our place. The wait was worth it!. The place is beautiful and the fresh air is so desirable, but the best part of living on Glenwood Lane are all our neighbors. We are truly blessed with all the new friends we have met since our purchase. We can only hope that we are able to repay all their kindness.



Fire Season Tips For Survival
by Cal Fire Chief Steve Lawshe



This summer peak fire season is just around the corner. Early indications are that 100 foot clearance inspections are resulting in greater numbers of landowners already making their property defensible for this summer. This is a direct result of increased inspections and education to the public we serve. Landowners in the SRA (State Responsibility Area) understand that if they work towards making their property defensible the Local Fire agencies will have a greater success in being able to mitigate a wild land fire in their area. Along with your defensible space, there may be times when homeowners will be asked to evacuate to a safer place until the fire can be mitigated.

There are three types of Evacuation Notifications in Fresno County:

- *Evacuation Advisory* - This is issued to the media to alert the public to potential evacuation orders. The advisory will contain general information on how to prepare for an evacuation..
- *Evacuation Warning* - Issued when an evacuation order is eminent. This is a warning to the public to prepare for an evacuation. They are to wait for further instructions.
- *Evacuation Order* - issued when there is an immediate threat to life and/or property. The evacuation order contains specific geographic areas to be evacuated and the procedures to be followed.

CLEARING INFORMATION

<http://www.fire.ca.gov/index.php> <http://groups.ucanr.org/hwmg/>

During an emergency situation there are several places where you can find information regarding the status of an emergency, evacuations, and shelters: KMJ 580 AM radio, Channel 30 or Cable Channel 3, Channel 24, Sheriffs Department: Emergency 911 or Non



Before Clearing

Emergency 855-2369.

The biggest help the public can do for the local fire agencies is to have its own evacuation plan and make sure all family members are aware of it prior to and emergency. This would include pets and livestock.

EVACUATION INFORMATION

**KMJ 580 AM radio
Channel 30 or Cable Channel 3
Channel 24
Sheriffs Department Non Emergency 855-2369.
Emergency 911**

The following paragraph describes what is required for your own 100 foot defensible space to make your home and property in compliance, giving your Firefighters a chance to be on offense in an emergency.

Where your homes are located, you need a minimum of 100 feet of Defensible Space around all of

the structures on your property. Within this zone you should, at a minimum, remove all bear clover within 30 feet of the structure; limb trees that are greater than 8 inches in diameter to 8 feet above the ground; limb trees that are less than 8 inches in diameter so their branches are not touch-



After Clearing

ing the ground; and ensure that vegetation is separated to provide vertical and horizontal clearances to eliminate fuel ladders. You need to check and ensure that all flammable vegetation within 10 feet of your propane tank is removed and there is at least 15 foot vertical clearance above your propane tank. You need to ensure that there are no branches within 10 feet of any chimney, stove pipe or heat emitting vent on your home. You need to ensure that there is at least 15 foot vertical clearance (branches removed) along the length of your driveway. You also need to ensure that vegetation is separated to provide vertical and horizontal clearances to eliminate fuel lad-

ders along the length of your driveway. During fire season, you need to keep your roof and gutters cleared of leaves and pine needles and keep your fire wood stacked at least 30 feet from structures.

This is the time of year to jump on getting your defensible space needs achieved. The suggestions above are a minimum and provide a place to start. Once you have achieved these, keep working further out from your structures. For further information on defensible space and wildfire preparation, please see these web sites: <http://www.fire.ca.gov/index.php> <http://groups.ucanr.org/hwmg/> <http://firewise.org/>

As a long time resident and a 25 year CAL FIRE employee, I can say we are very fortunate to have the dedicated paid and volunteer fire companies that we have in Eastern Fresno County. They put in countless hours of training and in many cases only exist with your support and donations. Please continue supporting the local fire departments in your area. Every little bit helps. Have a Safe Summer.

Please continue supporting the Local Fire Departments

Steve Lawshe is the Western Division Chief for CAL FIRE / Fresno County Fire District.

PRVFD At Your Service
An Amazing Journey ...Continued

(Continued from page 2)

equipment enable our volunteers to do our job in a safe and professional manner.

This information only tells part of our story, though. Our history is primarily defined by service. We've responded to big events—the 2004 *Peterson Fire*, and very recently, the 2009 *Cressman Fire*, both of which posed a serious threat to our homes and forest. We've also

performed the more mundane yet vital services which have greatly enhanced the quality of life in



Pine Ridge—medical aid responses, hazard reduction pile

burning, smoke checks, water deliveries, and fire prevention and suppression. We've given back to the larger mountain community, volunteering our services for Edison's Science Days, Edison's former pine needle disposal site, the Highway 168 Fire Safe Council, and the Shaver Lake annual fireworks patrol.

With the ongoing support of our volunteers and our community, more chapters in this story of service and dedication remain to be written.



More Than Just A Fire Department?
 by Royella Van Dyne



More than just a fire department? Just ask me A call to 911 and in minutes the Pine Ridge Volunteer Fire Department (PRVFD) pagers are summoning the departments First Responders to a medical emergency. I was that emergency.

Last fall I had a serious health problem. My husband called 911 on several occasions. Each time the PRVFD

First Responders were dispatched and were first on scene, even at 2:30 one morning. They were very professional and reassuring as we waited for the ambulance to arrive. Seeing friendly faces during an emergency is very comforting. I am extremely grateful that they are part of our community.

Each time a page went out, the PRVFD Road Rangers-

Quad Squad also answered the call, taking their posts at the intersections to direct the ambulance and other apparatus to our home. This is another service for which I am very grateful.

Due to the address numbers not being in sequence and our narrow winding roads, the Quad Squad response is vital to direct emergency equipment to our address. The ambulance crews

commended the ladies for being so helpful.

I want to thank members of the PRVFD who were there to support us during some very scary times.

if you have an emergency, call 911 and be assured the Pine Ridge Volunteer Fire Department will respond.

Why Training?
 by Warren Colbert



Often on Saturdays during the spring, summer and fall months, residents and visitors to our Pine Ridge area see our fire department in full fire gear and the fire engines with all their bright lights gleaming. Many stop and ask, "Is there a fire or emergency?"

The answer is, "No, we are simply having a training drill." This is an ongoing part of our department. We try very hard to stay tuned and ready to respond to any fire or other emergency in our area. This is especially important to our dedicated volunteers. Continuous training keeps our members aware of what they need to do to stay safe and still accomplish what they have committed to do for our community.

Our training continues year round. However, in the heavy winter months we take the training indoors. Our winter training takes place usually once a month and involves lec-

tures, discussions, and classroom drills. The rest of the year we try to train twice each month. This is usually outdoors on a Saturday morning and involves most of our equipment.



If you see us working very hard and being very serious it's because we are preparing ourselves for any emergency that may occur.

So just toot your horn and wave or stop and watch us for a while. You're always welcome.

**PINE RIDGE VOLUNTEER
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**THE PRVFD JOURNAL
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**Safety, Safety, Safety
 Continued**

(Continued from page 3)

While at the incident scene, firefighters also have much to worry about: Smoke inhalation, collapsing ceilings, enough oxygen to breath. From wearing as much as an extra 40 pounds of gear, a firefighter's balance may be thrown off, which may result in injury while the firefighter is performing the simplest of tasks. Climbing ladders, walking on steep pitched roofs, walking in and around brush on steep hill-sides (not to mention broken glass underfoot and limited visibility due to smoke) are just a few of the obstacles a fire-fighter faces.

Some questions fire-fighters need to ask themselves

include: do you have a safe escape route in case your location is overrun by a wildland fire? Do you have proper communications with others to warn them, or to contact them if you need help yourself? Do you have all the necessary equipment to perform your job safely— not just a fire shelter, but bottled water and energy bars to help you overcome dehydration and fatigue? Are there power lines in the area and how might their presence affect you?

As a fire fighter you have the task of saving the property and lives of others, but you biggest challenge is to do so while insuring the safety of other firefighting personnel and yourself.

Folks Who Have Helped PRVFD

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Auberry Vol. Fire Dept. | Reedley Fire Dept. |
| Bald Mountain VFD | Sanger Fire Dept. |
| Big Creek Vol. Fire Dept. | Shaver Lake Vol. Fire Dept. |
| Cal Fire (CDF) | Sierra High School |
| Clovis City Fire Department | So Cal Edison Company |
| The County of Fresno | Edison Big Creek Hydro |
| Cressman's Store | United States Forest Service |
| FEMA | Bob Waterston |
| Firebaugh Fire Dept. | Many Individual Donors |
| Fresno County Sheriff Dept. | |
| Fresno City Fire Department | |
| Hwy. 168 Fire Safe Council | |
| Huntington Lake VFD | |
| Dr. Ed Kennedy | |
| Kingsburg Fire Dept. | |
| Layton Volunteer Fire Dept. | |
| Madera County Fire Dept. | |

**THANK
 YOU ...
 EVERY-**