



01/11/2006

## **KPD, KVFD systems best for Kearney**

By Gregory Olson , Kearney View

**The Christmas Day shooting in Good Samaritan Hospital's emergency room is being debated all over town and in this newspaper. In addition, the Kearney Volunteer Fire Department had two fires involving four deaths, and paid fire fighters from nearby cities are saying the deaths occurred because Kearney fire fighters are volunteers.**

I have heard all sides of both debates. Without fail, someone eventually states, "Had I been the police officer, I would have wounded the guy in the leg or something."

Really? Would you have? Police officers and sheriff's deputies are highly trained and fall back on their training in all aspects of performing their jobs. Maybe we should all ask ourselves if we had been placed in the same situation, how would we have reacted.

You have a split second to react.

Training tries to simulate such situations and the stress they cause. Adrenaline was flowing through anyone in the emergency room Christmas night. The officer fell back on his training.

Place yourself in the officer's shoes. Christmas will never be the same for the rest of your life. How many of our public servants have had life-changing situations put upon them while they were dealing with others? A Buffalo County sheriff's deputy several years ago was forced to shoot an individual during a traffic stop to save his own life. He was shot during the attack. Did that change his life and his family's life forever?

When you decide to be a public servant, you know the risks. I have a family member who was a Denver police officer for 25 years. What makes him most proud is that he was never placed in a situation where he had to discharge his weapon. That is the goal of every officer sworn to "serve and protect."

KPD Chief Dan Lynch has been a police officer in Kearney for as long as I can remember. He is a fantastic police chief. The professionalism he and his officers follow should be praised without question. Lynch and Sheriff Neil Miller have improved law enforcement in central Nebraska by leaps and bounds. They have set the standard.

My father has been a Civil Service commissioner for more than 25 years, working to make sure Kearney hires only the best people to become police officers. He wears that pride on his shirtsleeve for all to see. Trust that he and everyone in our law enforcement and fire protection ranks follow a higher standard to make us all feel safer.

Recently, a paid firefighter called our city manager saying the fatal fires were because we have volunteer fire fighters. Local media picked up on this and another round of debate began. Some in this community believe we need a paid fire department; however, most people do not.

Kearney and the surrounding Rural Fire Protection District are fortunate we have a volunteer department. KVFD has the best leadership to take it into the future. The budget is one of the smallest in the community, even less than what we spend on parks.

Because less money is spent on wages and benefits, Kearney has some of the latest fire equipment.

Our fire fighters are there because they want to, not because there's a paycheck.

Typically, paid departments have five firefighters per truck. If three trucks respond, you have 15 fire fighters at a call in the first 10 minutes. Kearney's volunteer fire department has an average of 35 fire fighters per fire, more than double a paid department.

A fire officer is on the scene with most fires, calling back the situation so responding fire fighters can plan how to fight the fire or handle the evacuation.

This saves lives and property, as proved by Kearney's insurance rates. Our volunteer fire fighters train as much as paid fire fighters, and sometimes more. They sacrifice time away from families to train, and fall back on training to properly handle the situations that confront them.

They spend countless hours helping to train each other and fire fighters from other local departments. Honorably, they want to ensure the safety of our communities.

Kearney and Buffalo County are very lucky to have the structure in place for our public servants. Don't say, "Shoulda," "Coulda," "Woulda." Be proud of them.

Greg Olson is a reserve with the Kearney Volunteer Fire Department.

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