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RIVERDALE - Community rallies around family burned out of home

(by Leslie Scott - Staff Writer - February 17, 2009)



PHOTO BY CHRIS BURLEW

The Pompton Lakes/Riverdale First Aid Squad and the Riverdale, Pompton Lakes, Pequannock and Bloomingdale fire departments all assisted to put out the fire that broke out on Feb. 10.

RIVERDALE - The community has been asked to come to the aid of a family during a time of need. Friends and the Pequannock Rotary both started funds to assist the Negrini family, who lost their home due to a house fire on Feb. 10.

Fire Chief Mike Norton said that the house was left unlivable.

Although the cause of the fire is still under investigation, Norton said it originated in the kitchen and spread to the second level of the home.

"The whole home received damage. Part of the home was fire damaged, the whole home was smoke and heat damaged and there was quite a lot of water damage," said the chief.

To initially help out, a clothing drive was started the night of the tragic fire. Within hours, residents from Riverdale and Pompton Lakes sent lots of clothing and household materials to the Riverdale Community Center.

"We got an overwhelming response for the clothes," said friend of the Negrini family, Pan Sylvestri. "It took us an entire day to go through everything."

Sylvestri said the family couldn't express enough gratitude towards the response from the community.

Monetary contributions are also being accepted. Friends got together and established a fund at the Lakeland in Bloomingdale and the Pequannock Rotary also set up a separate fund for the family.

Sylvestri said the family is doing well. "They are holding it together as best as can be expected."



They are currently living in an apartment in the borough. "They wanted to be able to keep the kids in their everyday routine," said Sylvestri.

The homeowners, Symone and Fab Negrini, have four small children. None of them were at the house when the fire broke out.

Riverdale Police Captain John Peine said there were 12 pets inside, three dogs, four cats, three birds and two ferrets but only two of the dogs survived.

The fire chief credited the FIT-5 device for saving the lives of the two dogs, Judge and Chaos.

When thrown into a room, "It dramatically reduces the temperature in a structure, within a couple seconds you can dramatically see the difference in the change of the smoke color and the flames dissipate for a little while," said the chief.

Norton said when the FIT-5 was first tossed inside the house, one dog (Judge) was found immediately.

Family friend Judy Grecco said, "Judge had burns and smoke inhalation and Chaos, who was found an hour and half after the fire started, she was found in the basement swimming in the water. She did not suffer from any burns, but she did get hyperthermia and smoke inhalation. Both dogs are still hospitalized."

Peine said both the Riverdale and Pompton Lakes police departments responded to the site within minutes and the Riverdale Fire Department was there not long after.

The Pompton Lakes Riverdale First Aid Squad along with the Pompton Lakes, Pequannock and the Bloomingdale fire departments all responded to the fire.

The firefighters did encounter some difficulty on the second level of the home, but they were able to get the fire under control within 50 minutes, the chief said.

"On the second floor, the firefighters felt it was unsafe because some of the flooring had holes in it (from the fire). So with the fire still going and the smoke condition, it was pretty bad. We weren't able to put the firefighters where we really needed to have them, so we had to work most of the fire from outside the structure and that did make it difficult for us," said Norton.

Those interested in giving a monetary contributions can send them to either: the Pequannock Rotary, C/O Borough of Riverdale, P.O. Box 6, Riverdale, NJ 07457 and note 'Negrini' on the check; or send it in care of the 'Negrini Family Fire Fund' to the Lakeland Bank, 28 Main St., Bloomingdale, NJ 07403.

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