

PORTAL RESCUE NEWS

P.O. Box 16331, Portal, AZ 85632

March, 1998

EMERGENCY 520-558-2222

NON EMERGENCY 520-558-2223

FAX 520-558-2473

Written by members of Portal Rescue
Devorie Griffiths, Editor

PLEASE COME TO OUR ANNUAL MEETING MARCH 19 AT 7 PM!

Portal Rescue's annual meeting and elections will be held Thursday, March 19, 1998, at 7:00 p.m. in the new classroom at the Fire Station.

The theme for this year's meeting will be *Community Voluntarism*. We want to take this opportunity to recognize and thank all the wonderful people who helped build the new addition of the fire station. Come and see some of the highlights of the work in progress.

Also, we want to hear from you. The Board of Directors is working to establish policy on the use of the new classroom, and we'd like input from all Portal Rescue members and our community. Let us know your opinions so we may take these under consideration.

GOVERNING BOARD ELECTIONS

Portal Rescue's By-Laws require yearly elections for a 9 member Governing Board. This Board of Directors is responsible for policy making and budgetary authority. The Board consists of 5 active members of Portal Rescue (EMTs and/or Firefighters) and 4 members of the community. Nominations are received from the floor. Portal Rescue members vote for their 5 representatives and everyone present may vote for the 4 community representatives.

The new Board will elect officers which consist of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, EMS Chief and Fire Chief.

If you are interested in serving a one-year position on the Board, please contact Devorie Griffiths or Barbara Miller prior to the annual meeting.

THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD

By Yvette Rehurek

At the January 1997 Board meeting, a motion passed that "the first phase of the building project including a septic system, 40 by 24 foot concrete slab, plumbing, and enclosed bathroom will proceed at the approximate cost of \$8,000." The goal was to have Phase I finished by the end of 1997.

Then on February 13, 1997, at the annual meeting, Bruce Miller was elected to the Board and his assignment was to chair the building committee. As any good lawyer would do, he met this challenge head on and as a result, we have completed not only Phase I but Phase 2 and a few phases we didn't even know about.

We now have a beautiful addition that includes a kitchen, classroom, and two bathrooms. In the fire station, we added a shower for all those dirty firefighters and EMTs, a large utility sink and a donated washer and dryer. The electrical system was upgraded in the old section and new gas lines were put in. ALL THIS FOR UNDER \$27,000!

What a community we live in! Cash donations for this project totaled just over \$11,400. The Sew What Club was a big contributor toward this amount. Our fundraisers (1st Soup Kitchen and Barbecue/Dance) raised \$10,670 for a grand total of over \$22,000. In order to finish this project the Board voted to use \$5,100 from savings, as allowed for in the investment policy.

The monetary accounting is only part of this project. The amount of goods, services and time donated has been phenomenal. We can never begin to tell you about everyone who gave and gave. We, as a Board, can only say thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

We do want to mention the businesses who donated to the building fund in the hopes that you will remember them and show your appreciation. Cash donations were

given by Hatch Realty, Umphres Propane, The Magic Brush, Valley Telephone, and in Douglas, Southwest Carpet, Basha's Mercado and Southeastern Arizona Medical Center. Businesses who donated services, building supplies and/or other items include R&B Lumber, Elbrock Water Systems, Portal Store, Umphres Propane, and Maddux & Sons.

What a joy it was to hold our 2nd Annual Soup Kitchen in the new facility. We had heat, running water, outlets that didn't blow and bathrooms! What more could we want?

FUND RAISER WAS A HUGE SUCCESS

By Gerry Hernbrode

If they'd known so many folks liked a party, they'd have had one sooner. The October 18th party at Ted Troller's ranch, the brainchild of Debbie Rothpletz, Kim Gee, Kate Arambula, and Devorie Griffiths, added mucho bucks to the new addition building fund.

They pulled off a full-blown event that included dinner, cake auction, silent auction, door prizes, raffle, and an Open House complete with helicopter. The raffle alone made \$2,412 with Debbie selling the most tickets--924. When the Douglas Hospital gave \$1,500 in matching funds, the fundraiser made \$9,151. The new addition was on solid financial ground thanks to the many supporters of Portal Rescue who attended this event!

Ted Troller says he's been getting requests for another Portal Rescue dinner and dance. Anyone for a party?

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Devorie Griffiths

It's been quite a year! The building expansion project has consumed most of our thoughts and efforts, of one person in particular. Bruce Miller has been the driving force behind this monstrous undertaking. Without him our building would probably still be on the drawing board.

Our original plan presented at last year's annual meeting was to have two bathrooms built and functioning by year's end. The rest was to be completed over the next 5 years! But none of us knew Bruce Miller! When he starts a project, he gives it

his all and sees it through.

Bruce has been the head of this project since taking over from Richard Meagher in the initial planning stages. Bruce put in hundreds of hours before the actual building could even begin--preparing the building plans, obtaining County approval, procuring the permits, and sending the plans out for bid. Then the actual physical labor began. Bruce organized volunteer work crews for each stage of the process and was there at all times overseeing the work being done.

Bruce has dedicated the past year of his life to this project and we all owe him our sincerest gratitude. **THANK YOU, BRUCE!**

However, Bruce would be the first to say he couldn't have done it himself. We are indebted to so many people from our community who volunteered their time and skills to turn our dream into a reality! There were more than 55 volunteers who helped out! I've seen first hand the skills and talent our neighbors possess and I'm truly impressed....and grateful. To each and every one of you who helped with all the little and BIG jobs, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You! We couldn't have done it without you.

But we can't forget the ones who really made it all possible! If not for the generosity of our neighbors, friends, and associates who gave so freely, we would never have been able to finance a project of this magnitude in one year's time. Thank you so much for your continued support and trust.

We now have a classroom/meeting room that we can all be extremely proud of.

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I have enjoyed serving as President of Portal Rescue this past year and would like to thank my fellow Board Members for all they have done. This Board genuinely cares about Portal Rescue's EMTs and Firefighters and they've done their best for our organization. Thank you Barbara Miller, Yvette Rehurek, Gerry Hernbrode, Max and Debbie Rothpletz, Kate Arambula, Fran Zweifel and Bruce Miller.

Fire Chief Max, you're the best! Your patience and guidance with the fire department is an inspiration to me. Your skills as a firefighter and EMT are superb and your contacts in Animas, at Phelps Dodge, and with fellow fire chiefs are invaluable. Thanks for all you do for us!

Fran, thanks for keeping track of all the EMT doings. Your organizational skills and monthly EMS meetings have really turned our EMTs into a TEAM. We know and appreciate how much you do for us!

FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT

By Max Rothpletz

I guess we can't have a Clark Peak or a Rattlesnake Fire every year to brag about. This past year was quiet as far as fires go. There were a couple of roadside fires, one fire we could not get to, and one report of a fire we could not find.

The firefighters did respond to several motor vehicle accidents (MVAs). At these scenes the fire department personnel are in charge of extrications, crowd and traffic control, any fires or hazardous materials, setting up landing zones for the helicopters, and any other jobs that the medical personnel need assistance with.

The firefighters also spent a lot of time training during this past year. Some of the training topics were: the use of fire fighting hand tools, the setting up of landing zones, the use of portable pumps, and personal safety.

In March, Portal Rescue sponsored a 32-hour Basic Wildland Fire Fighting class. Instructors from the Arizona State Land Department came to Portal to teach 25 students how to fight wildland fires. From this class, Portal Rescue gladly accepted five new fire fighters. They are Manny Arambula, Harold "Brad" Bradford, Jesse Jones, Mitch Webster, and Anthony Cockerell. Welcome aboard!

I would like to thank my fellow firefighters for a safe and productive year. Without you there would be no FIRE DEPARTMENT!

NOTES FROM THE TREASURER

By Yvette Rehurek

The annual financial report to be presented at the annual meeting will be different from previous years.

In 1996, the Board voted to change the fiscal year to commence on July 1 thru June 30 and to adopt a fiscal year budget. The Board spent the first six months of 1997 developing a format and formulating a budget.

The budget for 1997-98 was adopted at the June 13th meeting. The financial report will reflect the first seven months of the FY97-98 budget. At this time, our expenditures are within the projected revenue stream.

We encourage you to attend the annual meeting on March 19 to receive a more detailed financial report.

PORTAL RESCUE NEWS

WHAT DOES AN EMS CHIEF DO?

By Fran Zweifel

From the title perhaps you think the EMS Chief is in the forefront of every medical emergency call. Not so. The job of EMS Chief consists mainly in acting as liaison between the Board of Directors and the EMTs and in trying to organize information in an effort to help things run as smoothly as possible.

EMT meetings are held once a month, for training and teaching sessions and for getting information from Board meetings to the EMTs. County, regional, and state EMS announcements are passed along at these meetings.

At the monthly Board meetings, the EMS Chief reports on various EMT goings-on and brings their needs and suggestions back to the Board. As a Board member the Chief shares in the work and decision-making responsibilities of the entire organization.

Additional duties of the EMS Chief include preparing a master calendar for the month which notes all upcoming meetings and trainings dates, and the AED (Automatic External Defibrillator) schedule. (This machine has to be tested daily by the EMTs.) It also includes ordering supplies whenever needed, filing monthly reports with our base hospital, keeping track of certification and CPR expiration dates, and arranging for periodic TB testing of all EMTs and firefighters.

If all this sounds endless, please be assured that the EMS Chief asks for and receives help, advice, and back-up from all the Board members and EMTs, whenever needed--which is often.

EMS CALL SUMMARY FOR 1997

Portal Rescue responded to 22 calls for medical assistance and treated 30 patients for problems almost equally divided between medical and trauma. Two thirds required ALS (Advanced Life Support). Six were transported to a hospital by helicopter, 16 were transported by ambulance, and 8 went by personal vehicle or refused transport.

We get letters . . ."thank you for the prompt response and fighting of the fire which occurred in our hay barn. We were very pleased with your efforts in containing this fire".

SOUP KITCHEN RETURNS

by Barbara Miller

On Saturday volunteers were scrubbing the paint from the floor. On Sunday the toilets were hooked up, the soap dispensers were filled, the kitchen plumbing was finished and the demand hot water heater was turned on. By Sunday evening the new classroom/kitchen was ready for the three days initiation as a soup kitchen.

The second annual Soup Kitchen held February 9-11 was a rousing success! If you missed it, you missed some wonderful food and a great community happening.

We had out of town guests from Douglas, Animas, Playas, and Cotton City, as well as Denver, Colorado and Akron, Ohio. Two couples who were passing through were also pleased to discover the home-cooked lunch provided by the talented cooks of Portal and Rodeo. A number of customers were seen two or three days in a row.

There were over 30 different kinds of soups, stews, and chili over the three days which made it difficult to decide what to choose. The variety of breads and desserts were impossible to count.

We had 218 customers for the three days and a total of \$1,097 was received from meal tickets. We also received \$610 in donations and \$364 from the sale of raffle tickets. Our total income for the three days was \$2,042!

* The gas grill generously donated by Alden Hayes was won by our "gas man", Bill Walter, of Animas.

There were more than 47 individuals from our community who helped out by bringing food, setting up, serving, or cleaning up. Portal Rescue thanks all of you who came and/or contributed. A special thanks goes to Jan Gee for all her hard work in organizing this wonderful event. Jan, you did a terrific job!

The dollars earned will help keep the vehicles running, the ambulance supplied, and utilities paid.

We get letters . . . *"It may have been just another day for the EMS volunteers, but your help was a true blessing for us. They truly were God's hands in our time of need and we will be forever grateful."*

TRAINING CLASSES

The training arm of Portal Rescue consists of Debbie Rothpletz and Joan White, both certified instructors with the State of Arizona Department of Health Services, Office of Emergency Medical Services.

Debbie and Joan offer a variety of training opportunities to Portal Rescue EMTs and to the community at large. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification is available under the auspices of the American Heart Association.

Debbie and Joan are also instructors for the National Safety Council and have taught classes for Portal Rescue's EMTs and Firefighters on blood borne pathogens.

Anyone interested in becoming an EMT, certifying in CPR, blood borne pathogens or possibly some other health topic, please contact Debbie at 558-2417 or Joan at 558-2420.

The next CPR class will be held in April at the Portal Fire Department. The cost is \$5 per person for books and supplies. Watch for posters announcing the date and call to reserve your spot. The next EMT class may be starting this fall.

You never know when these life-saving procedures will be needed. Be Prepared.

TWO UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, March 21, The Southern Arizona Trauma Network Education Comm. is conducting a Mini Trauma Life Support course for all local trauma care providers: EMTs, paramedics, nurses, PAs, and MDs. The course includes several interactive scenarios using moulaged trauma "patients".

If you are a health care provider and are interested in attending this course, please contact Debbie Rothpletz at 558-2417. The registration fee is \$5 and lunch is provided.

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Wednesday, March 25, Portal Rescue is hosting the monthly Cochise County Emergency Medical Services (CCEMS) Council and the Cochise County Fire Association (CCFA) meetings.

Fire Chiefs from all over the county will be in attendance as will medical professionals, personnel from the Sheriff's Department, Forest Service, and AZ State Land Department.

Portal Rescue members will be providing a hamburger-fry luncheon for the Council attendees.

EXPANDED SKILLS OF EMT's

by Joan White

The Arizona Department of Education, Bureau of EMS, requested changes to the certification requirements of Basic EMTs. These changes were approved by the Arizona Legislature. All EMTs in Arizona are required to have mastered new skills by the end of December, 2000.

New EMTs are being taught the new skills as part of their Basic Emergency Medical Technician course; "old" EMTs have to take a transition or "bridge" course which will incorporate a refresher course with the teaching of the new skills.

Portal Rescue's 11 Basic EMTs had their transition "bridge" course in May, 1997, with instructors Larry Townsend and Robert Borker of Southern Arizona Emergency Medical Training. All EMTs agreed that the class was well done and informative as well as absolutely necessary.

The new skills required of both new and old EMTs are:

1. Use of Automatic External Defibrillator
2. IV Monitoring
3. Assisting patients in the use of their own prescription inhalers, anaphylaxis kits, and nitroglycerin.

This class which our EMTs were required to take is the result of ever-changing state regulations. Continuing education is a huge part of being an EMT. Portal Rescue EMTs are now able to do even more while caring for their patients.

HELP US FIND YOU!

Portal Rescue has a locator guide for residents of Portal, Paradise, Rodeo, and surrounding areas. This guide gives us directions to find you in case of an emergency. But we need your help in keeping this current and up to date.

If you are a new resident to this area, or know of someone new moving in, please call Portal Rescue at 558-2222 to request a New Resident Form. You may also pick one up from Postmistress Joan Jensen at Portal. This gives us very specific directions and instructions in locating your home. In an emergency we don't want to spend valuable time searching for you!

MECHANICS ARE HAPPY

By Max Rothpletz

1997 was an excellent year for Portal Rescue's equipment inventory.

In July, we purchased, with the help of Dawana Murphy's dances, a new portable pump. The pump has already been used on several occasions and has come in handy.

In September, Portal Rescue was given on loan a brush truck/pumper from the Arizona State Land Dept. which we can use until we can set up our own brush truck. Jack and Mary Carson won a 25-inch television which they so graciously donated to Portal Rescue.

October was a big month for Portal Rescue. Southwest Gas Corporation gave us a 1992 Ford F-250 4X4 pick-up with utility boxes. This will be converted into our own brush truck. We hope to get it into service soon. Thomas Refrigeration in Douglas gave us a new VCR for use during our training classes. Phelps Dodge Hidalgo Smelter blessed us with a 1988 ambulance. It was a dream come true for our EMTs and our mechanics who've had to keep our "old" ambulance running.

In November, Dennis McAvoy asked the US Customs Agency if they would donate one of their surplus portable generators. So we are now the proud owners of a big diesel generator.

We thank everyone for their continued support. Portal Rescue has come a long way since our humble beginnings 17 years ago!

DO YOU SMELL SMOKE?

By Max Rothpletz

How safe are you when you are at home, asleep in your own bed? Not as safe as you might think if your smoke detector is not working properly.

A sleep study done by the Sleep Disorder Center at the University of Alabama found that less than 20% of the people tested were aroused by the smell of smoke after an exposure of 90 seconds. A room with a fire in it can reach temperatures over one thousand degrees Fahrenheit in less than five minutes.

According to the National Fire Protection Agency, 4,990 people were killed in fires in 1996 with 81% of these deaths occurring at home.

I wonder how many of these deaths could have been prevented by a functioning smoke alarm? So, how safe are YOU?

CAN WE TRANSPORT PATIENTS IN OUR "AMBULANCE" OR NOT?

Portal Rescue is a *rescue* unit. We are not licensed as an ambulance service. Specifically, we do not have a Certificate of Necessity (CON) issued by the Arizona Dept. of Health Services (ADHS).

However, Arizona Revised Statutes allow rescue units to transport if it is not medically advisable to wait for an ambulance. On several occasions this has been the basis for Portal Rescue meeting Douglas or Hidalgo County Ambulances to transfer patients. These transfers save valuable time in delivering a patient to the hospital.

We had met with ADHS in the past explaining the way our unique geographical area impacts transportation times and why this is a necessary option for us to exercise. Providing full time ambulance service by our volunteers is just not feasible.

During this past year, Douglas Ambulance was warned they could lose their CON if they continued to meet us enroute. Douglas' answer to this was to delete Portal from their service area. This immediately prompted several meetings, phone calls, and discussions between Douglas Fire Dept., the Douglas City Manager, County Board of Supervisors, ADHS, Tucson Medical Center (our Base Hospital) and Portal Rescue.

After months of worry and work over how we could resolve this issue, ADHS finally gave us (in writing) approval to continue this practice when medically necessary and with our base hospital's approval.

What does this mean to you?

Should you require emergency medical care and call Portal Rescue for assistance our EMTs will respond and treat your injuries or illness. We will call for a transporting ambulance to take you to the hospital. However, if the situation dictates a rapid transport due to the medical condition, we CAN meet the ambulance enroute or meet a medical helicopter for transport to a trauma center.

Hopefully this issue is behind us, once and for all, to everyone's satisfaction. Portal Rescue and TMC have always kept the patients' best interests in mind and will continue to do so.

We get letters . . . "Thank you so much for your quick and efficient response to my needs. It's people like you who make it possible for me to stay alone in Portal."

RETIREMENT RECALLS YEARS OF SERVICE

By Gerry Hernbrode

We hated to see them go--but, fortunately, they didn't go far. This year the "Founding Mothers of Portal Rescue", Delane Blondeau and Jeanne Williams, joined their husbands, the "Founding Fathers", Rene Blondeau and Bob Morse, in retirement. Also retiring was EMT Shirley Zent.

After answering EMT and fire calls for years, (16 for Delane, 12 for Jeanne, and 8 for Shirley) the trio decided to hang up their stethoscopes when their EMT Certification came up for renewal in July, 1997.

Jeanne and Delane's support of Bob and Rene's efforts that built the fire station, acquired the first vehicles, and got Portal Rescue up and running, earn them shared status as founders. These two special ladies recruited and tutored EMT students, provided necessary documentation on First Care Forms while assisting and comforting patients on many EMT calls, and they hacked away at burning stumps and "mopped up" with the best.

When asked how they felt about retiring after contributing to Portal Rescue for so many years, Delane responded, "It was easy to retire. The young people that have taken over have terrific skills and caring attitudes. They truly care about their patients, who are, many times, their neighbors but even strangers receive this special, caring attention that comes clear from their hearts. I would call them, without hesitation, if I ever needed help."

Jeanne Williams says, "The very best thing to see is how Portal Rescue has flowered over the past year, with all the community involvement and support in getting the new addition built. It would have been sad to see Portal Rescue go down the drain but that hasn't happened."

Over the years, Shirley's faithfulness to training, ambulance maintenance, and assistance at functions has always been in evidence. Shirley says, "I am enjoying retirement but I miss the classes. Portal Rescue EMTs are doing a great job."

Retired but still contributing, Bob Morse recently bought and installed halogen lights for the new heliport. Delane and Rene just contributed a computer for the new classroom. Jeanne and Shirley brought food and assisted with the recent Soup Kitchen.

Lucky for us, giving to the community is a habit that's hard to break!

A FRIENDLY FACE

By Debbie Rothpletz

Douglas Fire Department has a new fire chief and Portal Rescue EMTs couldn't be happier. His name is Larry Townsend. Larry is an R.N., Paramedic, and CPR Instructor. He has also established a state certified EMT and Paramedic Training Program. To add to the credentials after his name he is now Fire Chief for Douglas Fire Dept.

Larry has been to Portal many times to teach classes on a wide variety of subjects. He was instrumental in obtaining an AED (automatic external defibrillator) for Portal Rescue. This is used to shock cardiac arrest patients to restart the heart. Larry was also an instructor who trained and certified our EMTs on the AED.

The most important task Larry has undertaken on our behalf is to become our Training Program Director. This enabled Joan and me to continue teaching continuing education classes for our EMTs and training and certifying new Basic EMTs in Portal.

Best wishes, Larry, in your new job. A great Fire Department just got better!

ACCIDENT ON I-10

By Helen Snyder

Every year brings one memorable response. The candidate for 1997 was an MCI (multiple casualty incident) on the interstate just before Thanksgiving in which a van carrying 9 members of a family blew a tire in heavy traffic and began to weave. It clipped a semi and began to roll in the median, ejecting everyone - 4 kids and 5 adults - and leaving a trail of toys, diapers, kids clothes, and injured people.

Portal Rescue was called to help. Five EMTs responded. The wreck was east of San Simon and when the Portal unit arrived the EMTs were surprised to find the highway was not closed to traffic: semis were whipping by the rig as we worked to load the family's grandfather, his 4-year old granddaughter, and her dad into our ambulance. The trip to Willcox seemed interminable as the grandfather, who had a chest injury, groaned in pain and coughed.

The little 5-bed emergency room at the Willcox hospital was a scene of organized chaos as the injured family overwhelmed its resources. The 5 Portal EMTs worked side by side into the night with the hospital staff, taking vitals and watching over our patients until they could be assessed and treated.

Kids with possible head injuries need to be kept awake lest they lapse into unconsciousness. The Portal crew sang Christmas carols to the injured kids to keep them awake as long as possible but our little 4-year-old finally could not keep her eyes open. The doctor was unable to wake her with much shaking and shouting but when he tried to start an I.V. she came roaring back to life.

The Portal team worked in the emergency room for 3 long hours, until all the patients had been checked and treated. The 7 with the worst injuries were flown by helicopter to Tucson. The tiniest patient, a 2-year-old girl, was eventually transferred to a rehabilitation center in her hometown.

The Portal team was out over 6 hours and returned home after midnight.

ONE EMT's STORY

By Kate Arambula

I've always tried to be compassionate while treating patients and to consider how they were feeling. But on October 11, 1997, I found out first hand how it felt. On that day, I rolled my car four times and ended up on the other side of the gurney!

When the car finally stopped rolling, Matthew, my 4-year old son was screaming for his Daddy, and my friend, Krista, was trying to get out of the car, so I knew we were all conscious. My first thought was, "Oh my gosh! How far are we from Portal Rescue?"

Fortunately for us a couple in an RV stopped almost immediately to offer help. They let me use their phone to call for help and gave us washcloths to clean our bloody cuts, scrapes, and gouges the best we could. They also tried their best to keep us calm.

But I was never so glad to see those flashing lights coming! Knowing that EMTs whom I knew, had worked with on many occasions, and trusted fully were there to help us gave me the strength and comfort I so desperately needed at that moment. It was such a relief to know my son and friend were in good hands; I was finally able to let go of them to receive treatment myself.

I now know, personally, how much comfort and relief we EMTs can bring to our patients. My horrible accident has made me a better EMT and has taught me how much more compassion and understanding I have to give.

A special thanks to Russ, Jeff and Max, Jr. for being there for us. You will always hold a special place in our hearts!

PLEASE USE THIS FORM TO SEND US A PLEDGE FOR 1998

I am a supporter of Portal Rescue and wish to make a donation of \$_____.

Name_____

Address_____

City, State, Zip_____

Please make checks payable to Portal Rescue, Inc.
Send to: Portal Rescue, P.O. Box 16331, Portal, AZ 85632

THANK YOU!

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