



Hot Spots

The Newsletter of the Creston Fire Fighter Associate Membership

Learn more about your fire department and the efforts of its dedicated, hardworking volunteers.

Bidders' Delight

A community gathering, a fundraiser for a volunteer organization, a treasure trove of new and used items up for grabs: all that and more come out of the two-day, 43rd annual Creston Auction & Country Fair and the accompanying RV, Marine, Auto & Equipment Sale.

This year's event will be held Saturday and Sunday, April 4 and 5, at the Creston School and Eastside Grange Hall. This fundraiser for the all-volunteer Creston Fire Department is the largest spring event in Montana and draws more than 7000 people from the northwest United States and Canada annually. Last year's event raised more than \$27,000 for the fire department, which uses the funds to train and equip its firefighters. The department is hoping to see that number rise this year.

"I like to see the community come together to help us help you," said Fire Chief Gary Mahugh. "Few things today involve the community like a fire department, especially a volunteer fire department."

Over the life of the auction, more than \$1 million has been returned to community. The Creston Fire Department has used the money to purchase safety equipment, build the Lake Blaine training center and even make payments on fire trucks and engines. Through the auction, the Creston Fire Department has acquired equipment that no other fire department in western Montana has, equipment that is used to save lives and property and to protect the firefighters, said Assistant Fire Chief Bob Kun.

"We try to think ahead and make sure that we can help anyone wherever, whenever," Kun said. "We're always thinking about the customer. We like to consider ourselves to be very progressive,



and it costs money to be progressive."

The auction has grown over its 43 years from a two-hour sale run out of the back of a pickup truck by a dozen people to a multiday, 200-person volunteer effort filling the Creston School grounds and gym and Eastside Grange Hall.

"It continues to be a community event, just as it was then," Mahugh said.

Auction weekend is preceded by months of planning and preparations long handled by the Creston Fire Department's 30-plus fire and medical responders. This year, auction organizers are working to bring more community members into the process of setting up and running the auction to lighten the load for the firefighters.

"When the pagers go off [calling firefighters to an emergency] during the auction, we want to be able to jump in the trucks and go do our thing and not worry about the auction. It will still go on

because community members will be there to step in," said Mahugh.

These fire and medical responders provide 24/7 emergency response, 365 days a year, to their 83-square-mile district. In 2008, the Creston Fire Department responded to more than 230 incidents, approximately 65% medical or rescue related and 35% fire related. In addition, each responder obtains hundreds of hours of training annually.

As Mahugh said, "The real value to this community is in the volunteer firefighters who don't get paid for what they do."

For more information about the Creston Auction, or to list items for advertising, call 406-250-7396 or write to Creston Auction, 4498 MT Hwy 35, Kalispell, MT 59901. Information is also available at www.crestonfire.org.

Thank You!

Donors Make Flag Pole Project a Reality

The response to a call in the first Hot Spots newsletter for funds and materials for the flag pole project was overwhelming. The volunteers of the Creston Fire Department were thrilled with the support shown by the community.

This project could not have been completed without the assistance of community members like you and local suppliers and businesses.

The Creston Fire Department raised nearly \$3000 from community members. Donations that were not spent on the flag pole project were added to the Creston Fire Department's equipment and training fund.

CFFAM member Larry Manley spearheaded the flag pole landscaping effort and made it his mission to acquire as many materials as possible through donations from local businesses. Anderson Masonry, Black Gold Top Soil & Landscaping Products, Creston Top Soil, Currier's Welding, Glacier Gardens, Hoopers Garden Center, and Montana Rockworks contributed to the project, donating trees, groundcover plants, landscaping rock, cedar chips, and topsoil. These materials were worth nearly \$2000 in total and are crucial to the quality of the project.

The flag pole was installed in early September and dedicated in a ceremony held September 11. Most of the landscaping materials were placed before snow blanketed the area for the winter. The finishing touches will be put into place this spring, and a new reader board will be set up for notices and events.

You Can Never Have Too Many Cooks

By Gloria Graves, Associate Member

It all started out as idle chitchat.

The conversation began with the bake sale for the 42nd annual Creston Auction last year and what could be improved. For the last 3 years, people passing by the tables and perusing the array of scrumptious homemade delights had been asking "Where's the lefse?"

Lefse is a Norwegian flatbread made from potato, milk, and flour. It was once a staple of the Creston Auction bake sale but was missing from the tables in recent years.

We began to kick around the idea of bringing it back.

Assistant Fire Chief Bob Kun said, "you're doing *what?*" Keep in mind that most of us had never tasted it and had no idea of the work involved in preparing it. But, I like a



challenge! I spent a couple days on the phone, searching for griddles and "turners" and sweet talking as many people as I could into the project.

Lo' and behold, a total of 35 people of all ages from Creston, Bigfork, and Kalispell showed up for the lefse-

making part. We learned the fine art of rolling paper-thin pastry, along with the value of the infamous turner.

So lefse will be at the bake sale this year. The best part is, we had a good time and the volunteers have asked when we can do it again.

Making the Most of the Creston Auction

Tips for Sellers

- At Saturday's auction, no items will be sold with minimum bids attached.
- At Sunday's equipment sale, a minimum bid can be set at \$1500 or more. Call for information on titles.
- If you contact us early, we will advertise your larger items for free throughout the northwest area.
- Donations are appreciated and are tax deductible. Consider donating an item or more from your load to the Creston Fire Department for the sale.
- Each item must be tagged individually. Rather than a miscellaneous box of books, canning jars, and videos, consider boxing items by type or donating them to the Rummage Sale.
- You can consign items for sale and specify that the proceeds (minus the consignment fee) be given to an organization that you designate (church, school, etc.).
- PLEASE, no junk, tires, or livestock.
- Bring your own disposable tarps.

Tips for Buyers

- There will be no buyer's premium this year.
- There will be a \$5 charge per bid ticket on Saturday. Bid tickets go on sale at 8 a.m.
- There will be a \$10 charge per bid ticket at Sunday's sale. Bid tickets go on sale at 9 a.m.
- ID is required to obtain a bid ticket.
- Hot food will be available Saturday and Sunday.
- A Rummage & Bake Sale will be held in the Creston School Gym on Saturday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Donations of items are always needed and appreciated! Please call 250-7396 for information.
- An Arts & Crafts Sale will be Saturday in the Eastside Grange Hall.
- We accept MasterCard and Visa for auction purchases only; bring cash or checks for other purchases.
- Please leave your dogs at home!



By the Numbers: Auction Accounting

First auction: 1966
Length: 2 hours
Attendees: 100 to 200
Volunteers: 12
Net for Creston Fire Department:
 \$200 to \$300

Most recent auction: 2008
Length: 2 days of sales
 1 day for consignment
Attendees: 7000
Volunteers: 200+
Gross: \$200,000
Net for Creston Fire Department:
 \$27,000

Amount raised over the 42 years of
 the Creston Auction:
\$1 million

Spotlight on Safety: Keep Fires Under Control

Spring is here, and open burning season has begun. The members of the Creston Fire Department hope that safety will be your primary concern this season.

No permits are needed until May 1, but you do have to follow air quality and ventilation rules. Fires are not allowed during periods of impaired air quality. Before starting any outdoor fire, call Air Quality (406-751-8144) or visit www.flatheadhealth.org/envhealth/burn.cfm.

Environmental Health Services officials emphasize that you should burn only clean, dry materials and should not let poorly burning fires smolder. Do not burn manmade materials, business waste, treated or painted wood, animal parts, hazardous waste, or noxious waste.

Starting May 1, you will need to obtain a burning permit. A permit can be obtained from the Interagency Burn Permit Center at 2250 Hwy 93 N in Kalispell.

Keep the following conditions and regulations in mind:

1. Only burn natural vegetation from the permitted site.
2. Burn only during daylight hours.
3. When winds exceed 5 miles per hour, do not light a fire. If winds exceed

Important Dates

March 1 to April 30

Open burning. No burning permit required. Air Quality compliance required.

May 1 to June 30

Burning permit required. Air Quality compliance required.

July 1 to September 30

No burning in Flathead County.

October 1 to November 30

Open burning. No burning permit required. Air Quality compliance required.

December 1 to February 28

No open burning (season closed).

10 miles per hour, you must extinguish the fire.

4. A burn pile must not exceed 10 feet by 10 feet by 5 feet in height.

5. Your burn permit must be in your possession at the burn site.

6. The burn pile must not be closer than 50 feet to any structure or standing

timber or 10 feet from a property line.

7. Do not set a fire within 500 feet of forest slash.

8. The fire must be attended until completely out—NO FLAME, NO SMOKE.

9. Only one residential outdoor fire may be burned on the property at any one time.

10. A shovel and water-charged hose or at least two 5-gallon containers of water should be on site and immediately available.

11. You must completely extinguish the fire if any emission is detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of any person; if it causes damage to property or business; or if it causes a nuisance to others.

12. Burn barrels are not permitted.

13. Leaves and grass clippings do not burn well, so consider composting them instead.

14. Warming fires are permitted but must be kept within 4 feet in diameter. Even small fires should be attended until they are completely out.

Penalties may be assessed for violations of burning permit rules. See your burning permit for details.

Creston Fire Department
Creston Fire Fighter Associate Membership
4498 Hwy 35
Kalispell, MT 59901

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Volunteers Needed for Auction

Volunteers are needed for the 43rd annual Creston Auction & Country Fair and RV, Marine, Auto & Equipment Sale, to be held Saturday and Sunday, April 4 and 5. This is your opportunity to help this rural all-volunteer fire department pull off its primary fundraising effort for 2009.

Come to help unload trucks and trailers on Consignment Day, Friday, April 3, as items are dropped off at the sale site. Intake begins at 7 a.m. and continues until 7 p.m., so you can join in for the morning, afternoon or even just a couple of hours

<p style="text-align: center;">On Call CFFAM Meeting When: 7 p.m., Tuesday, March 17 Where: Creston Fire Station, 4498 Hwy 35 What to bring: A dish to share More info: Contact Gloria Graves, 250-4655, crittermom10@hotmail.com</p>
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after work. To volunteer Friday, call Rich Lapp at 253-5263.

Volunteers are also needed Saturday starting at 8 a.m. and Sunday at noon to sell food, hold up auction items, work the indoor rummage and bake sale, and help in other areas. Call 250-7396 for information.

All volunteers receive food and drink vouchers. Please dress warmly and for the weather; work gloves are also advisable, particularly if you plan to help Friday.

Friday, April 3 • 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Come before or after work!

DONATION AND CONSIGNMENT DAY

Bring items for sale to the sale grounds at Creston School, MT Hwy 35, 12 miles east of Kalispell

Saturday, April 4 • Starts at 9 a.m.

\$5 bid tickets go on sale at 8 a.m.

CRESTON AUCTION

Acres of items for sale: new and household items, antiques, sports equipment, tack, tools, building materials

Commission rate: 25%

Single items selling for more than \$1000: 18%

Items selling for \$5 or less: Proceeds donated to the Creston Fire Department

No Buyer's Premium

Sunday, April 5 • Starts at Noon

\$10 bid tickets go on sale at 9 a.m.

AUTO, MARINE, RV & EQUIPMENT SALE

Call for info on reserves and titles

Commission rates *per item* are as follows:
\$1000 or less: 25%; \$1001 to \$10,000: 10%
More than \$10,000: 5%