



“It is all about serving the community & giving back.”

Volunteer fire departments throughout the country are struggling to keep their rolls filled.

Departments that once had waiting lists to join now find themselves searching for members.

But any shortage in the Mineola Volunteer Fire Dept. can't be blamed on the Hooks family.

Four members of the family are serving on the department, and a fifth retired after spending 25 years with the organization.

Their experience level ranges from Mickey, who has 35 years of service, to the newest member, his nephew Bryce, who joined just two months ago.

The current group includes brothers Mark and Mickey and their sons, cousins Bryce and Eric (a 22-year member). A third brother, John, left five or six years ago after 25 years of service.

Mickey was the first to join followed a few years later by Mark and John.

Between the five, they have logged 112 years as Mineola volunteer firemen.

Mark, who also works for the city of Mineola, noted that the only real difference between a volunteer

fireman and a paid one is the paycheck.

With increased standards over the years, volunteers receive the same training as the paid employees.

Mark wouldn't venture to guess how many hours a year it takes to be a VFD member.

They spend two weeks per year at the acclaimed Texas A&M fire academy in College Station where a wide range of first-class training is available.

They have meetings twice per month where they also brush up on training, along with countless other schools they attend.

And then up to 150 times a year they can be called out anytime, day or night, holidays and weekends.

As Mark noted, calls can come during your child's birthday party or the Thanksgiving meal.

He did say that overall calls are trending downward in the past few years, to which he attributed better public education concerning fire safety.

And that's another area where the volunteers put in their time – making presentations to school children and others.

“It's all about serving the community and giving back,” said Mark.

On top of that, the Mineola department's primary fundraiser is a rodeo held every summer since the mid-1950s.

Work that goes on year-round, and then for the three-day event the volunteers spend their days and evenings working the rodeo.

When Mark's son approached him about joining, he was happy Bryce had an interest.

He had been around it his whole life.

One of the first things his Dad advised him was to talk it over with his wife. It does take an understanding spouse.

Bryce is the exception, unfortunately. Fewer young people seem to want to get involved, Mark said.

The Mineola department is chartered for 25 members and has only 18 on the roll.

But when it's time to roll, there's a great chance someone named Hooks is manning the trucks.

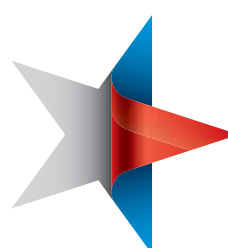
THANK YOU TO ALL THE FIRST RESPONDERS OF WOOD COUNTY!

We appreciate all that you do for us.

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Members of the Alba Volunteer Fire Dept. Department members, in no order, include Shawn Newland, Donnie Burge, Bailey Mischnick, Jeremy Elliott, Robert Thompson, Jerry Frost, Josh Mize and Alicia Mize. (Monitor photo by Sam Major)



Serving the east side of Lake Fork is the Land's End Fire Department. They are, from left, Jim Wiskur, Quin Marston, Robert Ukleja, Ken Stribley and Mark Meng. (Courtesy photo)



Precinct One Constable Steve Bowser



Yantis Volunteer firefighters participate in constant training exercises continuing their professional growth as they help cover the northern part of Wood County and the Lake Fork area. They are: (left to right) Wesley Crist (chief), Mark Coker (first assistant chief), Jeff Quinn (captain), Nathan Crist (second assistant captain), Deborah Crist, Kevin Wansley, Melissa Morton, Jamie Smith and Matthew Scarborough. (Monitor photo by Larry Tucker)



Precinct Three Constable Gary Dixon



The Mineola ISD Police Dept. includes Mike Hurst, left, and Chief Cody Castleberry.

A tribute to first responders

The following first-responder agencies are gratefully acknowledged as represented in this special tribute:
 Mineola Police Dept.
 Mineola Fire Dept.
 Mineola emergency dispatchers
 Quitman Police Dept.
 Quitman Fire Dept.
 Alba Fire Dept.
 Lands End Fire Dept.

Hainesville Fire Dept.
 Wood County Sheriff's Dept. and bailiffs
 Wood County constables and K9 Mata
 Wood County fire marshal/emergency management
 Mineola ISD police
 Mineola ISD resource officer
 UT Health helicopter
 Yantis Fire Dept.
 as well as the following agencies who also have a presence in Wood County:
 Alba Police Dept.
 Texas Dept. of Public Safety highway patrol
 Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. game wardens
 UT Health and Christus Trinity Mother Frances EMS ambulance and helicopter crews
 Winnsboro Fire Dept.
 Winnsboro Police Dept.
 Hawkins Fire Dept.
 Hawkins Police Dept.
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 Coke-Pleasant Grove Fire Dept.
 Holly Lake Fire Dept.

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The City of Quitman Police Department consists of, from left, Linda Williams, John Farmer, Chief Kelly Cole, Joe Andrade, Austin Milbourn, Corbin Hanner and Michael Chilson. (Monitor photo by Larry Tucker)



Jim Rapp is the resource police officer for the Quitman Independent School District and also serves City of Quitman Police Department when needed. (Monitor photo by Larry Tucker)



Above, Quitman Volunteer Fire Dept., back from left, Scott Wheeler, Bentlie Griffith, Junior Stovall, Robby Clanton, August Walters, Zaqne Hradecky, Colton Otto, Greg Young, Wesley Price, Will Leake; and, front, Brad Newsom, Tino Elias, Kaleb Mosley, Marshall Newsom, Jason Gallender and Corbett Shirley. Not pictured are Gary Simpkins, Ronnie Box, Cody Burge, Taylor Shelman and Patrick McKinney.



At right, Wood County courthouse bailiffs stay busy at the entrance and standing guard for district and county court sessions. They are, bottom from left, Jake Williams, La'Dawn McGee, and Lynn Bettis; top, A.G. Sessions and Cody Burge. (Monitor photo by Larry Tucker)



Tully Davidson serves as the Wood County Emergency Management Administrator and Fire Marshal.

Thank you to our FIRST RESPONDERS.

Your bravery & dedication makes East Texas a great place to live.



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The City of Quitman appreciates all of our first responders that keep our community safe & secure, healthy & happy every day.

Thank You

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TO ALL OF OUR HEROES



THANK YOU

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Members of the Mineola Volunteer Fire Dept. include, from left, Shawn Callahan, Nick Holland, Bryce Hooks, Eric Carrington, Chad Bennett, Jamie Davlin, Captain Eric Hooks, Captain Justin Clower, Assist. Chief David Madsen, Chief Javier Ortega, Asst. Chief Mark Hooks, Secretary Craig Gould, Cody Clarke, Clayton Hamlett, Mickey Hooks, Justin Block, Josh Hearne, Manny Morales and Chris Harlow. (Monitor photo by Sam Major)

Mineola emergency dispatchers



Merici Osbourn

Aubree Guest

Brittany White



Kristin Ramsey

Lisa Overton



Members of the Mineola Police Dept. include, from left, Lt. Donovan South, Officer Jeremy Johnson, Sgt. Tucker George, Officer Teri Cole, Cpl. Lathon Miller, Officer Adam Jones, Chief Chuck Bittner and Capt. Dusty Cook. (Monitor photo by Sam Major)



Canine officer Mata with Officer Jeff Hammond (left) and Constable Precinct 2 Kelly Smith. Mata took the place of retired Canine officer Juma recently and Constable Smith is his handler. Mata is trained in different areas of canine service such as tracking and drug detection. (Monitor photo by Larry Tucker)



Peter Harris (left) and Andrew Palacios (right) are two of the 26 personnel who make sure UT-Health Air One is always ready to serve East Texas citizens.



Members of the Hainesville Volunteer Fire Department



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answering the call.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

*We appreciate the sacrifice & dedication of
all first responders in Wood County*

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Thank you to all of the first responders and frontline workers, including our own teachers and staff, who make it possible for our children to receive the education they deserve every day.



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