

Patrick Rhonemus The Gazette

WESTFIELD - The Westfield Insurance Foundation donated \$50,000 to the Westfield Fire and Rescue District to help cover the replacement cost of the district's first response vehicle.

Westfield Fire Chief Jeff Hall said the district has always had a good working relationship with Westfield Insurance and he had discussions with members of the foundation on the fire district's needs. He said the donation is very generous.

"It's going towards the replacement of a first response vehicle," Hall said. "It's the vehicle I use daily, but it is also going to be equipped with two fire extinguishers, a first-in EMS bag, an AED, a set of forcible entry tools, stuff like that."

Currently, Hall uses a 2012 Ford Expedition that has needed several repairs over the years because of its extensive use. With the donation of \$50,000, as well as money generated by selling some older equipment that is no longer needed, a new vehicle that costs \$58,869 will be purchased for the district, with no taxpayer money being used.

Westfield Community Investment Leader Gretchen Long said safety is part of the foundation's mission.

"We look to provide support charitably, and philanthropically because it is really an extension of what the insurance industry does every day," she said. "We help people, families, businesses, what have you, feel safe and secure, but what is unique to us compared to maybe some other funders is our focus on safety and disaster recovery."

Long said prevention is key, and the foundation's strategy really complements its role in Medina County.

"We know we are the largest private employer," she said. "We also know we are probably the largest philanthropic giving organization, but we also insure many of the residents and businesses in this county. So, we really think that we have a responsibility when it comes to the safety of this community."

Long said this is only one of the many examples of supporting first responders, with other departments like Seville, Lafayette, the Medina County SWAT team and others being provided funds over the years.

"We want to support first responders because we really do believe that our neighbors, our employees, our customers, they really deserve the peace of mind that their first responders are going to be well equipped when they are responding to their time of need," she said. "We know that especially in a rural community, but not limited to suburban communities, there's great technology or maybe training that is out there. But we know it's cost-prohibitive."

With the donation, the fire district can continue its goal of maintaining the high level of service that it provides, while being fiscally responsible.

"We are extremely grateful for this donation to help offset costs that would normally be incurred by a taxpayer," Hall said. "Without this, this would not have been possible."

The Westfield Fire District currently has an operating levy on the upcoming general election ballot. Westfield Township Trustees said funds generated from the levy will allow the fire district to plan and prepare for the future while providing the level of service the community expects. More information on the levy can be found at tinyurl.com/bdHz7d7j.

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