

Firefighter honored for life-saving work

BY MARY LOU SONG
STAFF WRITER

Whenever Ronald W. Sill's beeper goes off, his daughter says, "Be careful, Dad."

You would say the same — especially if your father's being beeped meant that he would soon be climbing a firetruck and risking his life to battle a blaze in a burning building.

But for the last seven years, the beeper has meant exactly that. Sill, a teacher at Mercy High School, doubles as a volunteer firefighter for the Farmington Hills Fire Department at Station No. 4.

This year, he was selected Farmington Hills Firefighter of the Year.

"It's an honor I never expected," Sill said of the award. "I know my co-workers, their qualifications and what they do every day. That's why this is such an honor."

Sill was recognized for saving two lives.

At a staff luncheon on Aug. 25 at Mercy High, Sill saved a chinking staff member by performing the Heimlich Maneuver. Sill later taught the entire staff how to use the technique.

On the way home from work on Sept. 26, Sill passed a car accident on 14 Mile and Drake. Even though the situation appeared under control, Sill stopped and asked if anyone was hurt. The people said no, but Sill acted on instinct and decided to check for himself.

In one car, Sill discovered an elderly man slumped between the driver's seat and the dash board. The man was not breathing, but Sill tilted the man's head backward and resuscitated him.

"As you approach a situation, you think of what you need to be aware of — is the situation safe, are people hurt," said Sill, who is also a state certified instructor. "But

the training is so superior in this city that you know exactly what you should be doing and thinking when you approach that kind of a situation."

Two events triggered Sill's interest in firefighting: a friend's kitchen fire and his grandfather's death. In both crises, 911 workers responded to the emergency calls.

But Sill says his goal in becoming a firefighter and an emergency medical technician was to provide Mercy High School with somebody who would "be prepared." He estimates that he helps about 50 students and teachers a year.

Learning to be a firefighter has been a challenge, he said. "I've done things I never thought I was capable of."

Like running three days a week during training and running another three days to be prepared when you're "not a runner." And driving a fire truck when you drive a Chevrolet. And scaling a 100-foot ladder. Or "going into a burning building when everyone else is coming out."

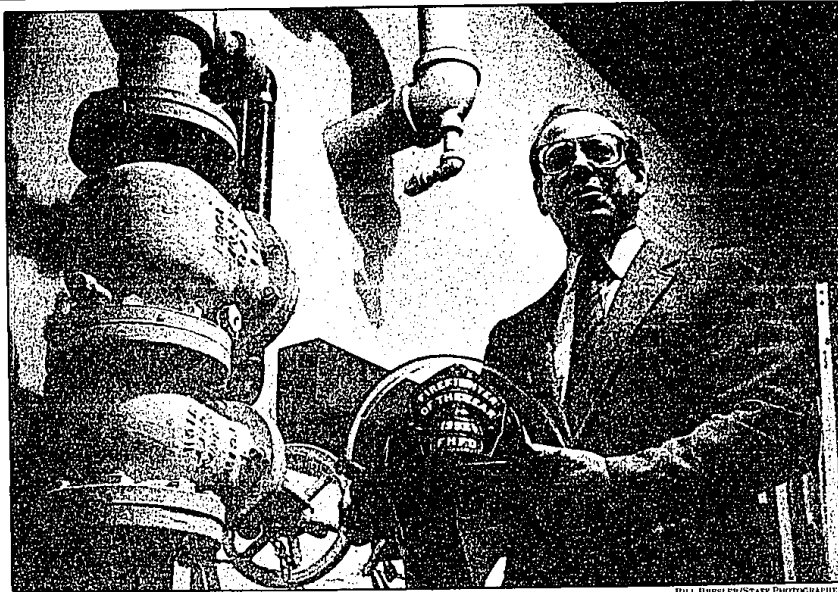
"Everything required some adjustment," Sill admitted. "It was not always easy, but well worth it."

Sill says one of the biggest challenges is "making sure family comes first and that I'm not running off at a time when I shouldn't."

Sill and his wife Cathy have three daughters: Amy, 17, Amanda, 15, and Ann, 12. Cathy is also a teacher at Mercy High.

Learning to live with the beeper meant the family had to adjust.

"There's always some kind of conflict," Sill said. "But my family is very supportive, as most families of firefighters are. . . . These awards are also for them."



HILL DRESLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Knowing what to do: Ronald Sill, Farmington Hills' Firefighter of the Year, used his training to save two lives at Mercy High School. He knows the school sprinkler system, too.

Thankful from page 1A

Curran, who made a full recovery. "Everyone had a particular role and didn't interfere with anyone else's role."

St. Clair said that learning to work together and being trained for crisis situations helps.

"We've worked together on so many cases," St. Clair said. "It's natural to step in and start."

Curran said firefighters and paramedics are not thanked

enough for their work. "The average citizen doesn't think of saying thanks," she said. "I can't believe it. They take 911 too darn for granted."

CEMS worker Witzman said, "We have all worked together with some people in the same situation as Madelyn's, but very few come back to acknowledge it."

But Shurtleff says that they are not in it for the thanks; they

do their jobs to help others. And, of course, they like to see how the people they have helped are doing.

"We don't always get the benefit of closure," Shurtleff said. "It's extremely important to know what happens. We live, train and dedicate our profession to people. If we don't know what has happened, it's hard to keep our feelings up."

Inspector Wells visited Curran after she left the hospital because he wanted to keep in touch. Curran has kept in touch with her heroes: last week she visited Station No. 1 with doughnuts.

"That's the thrilling thing for me — this association," Curran said. "There isn't enough thanks in my heart. Till my dying day, I'll be thankful."

Helpers do good turn for needy

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

Call them elves or Santa's helpers, the Farmington-area Goodfellows brings Christmas into the hearts of the needy the year around.

This year's Goodfellows newspaper sale is Friday, Nov. 27, the day after Thanksgiving. Delivery of baskets to the area's needy is Dec. 19.

Once again, these good fellows — and gals — will hawk their newspapers on street corners to raise funds.

The proceeds from the sale of the eight-page paper is returned to the community via their projects. In addition to the newspaper sale, the Goodfellows also have a dress and shirt drive, a canned food drive, volunteers who dress dolls for holiday giving and dozens of others who pack and deliver food baskets during the holiday season. They also have ongoing assistance programs.

Last year, the Goodfellows raised \$22,000 from the newspaper sale. They hope to raise \$25,000 this year, according to Dick Tupper, a Farmington councilman and former Goodfellow president, now in charge of communications. "With the help of Bob Rock, we did well with the newspaper sale last year," Tupper said. "He was organized and got everybody all juiced up about working."

In 1991, the Farmington Area Goodfellows helped 175 families which included almost 400 children and 165 seniors.

Thanks to the Goodfellows, Farmington schoolchildren in need have received gift certificates for shoes.

Principals Al Lanigan of

GOODFELLOWS NEED HELP

Again this year, the Farmington Area Goodfellows need your support to help provide a holiday lift to needy children and less fortunate elderly residents in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

With the money donated, the Goodfellows deliver baskets of joy typically containing canned foods and knitwear. Each includes gift certificates redeemable for fresh food and winter clothing. Toys, games, dolls and children's clothing are included when appropriate.

Family makeup dictates the size and content of each basket. Potential recipients must document need. Special dietary requests are honored when practical.

Cash donations come back to the community. About the only things the Goodfellows have to buy are stamps to mail solicitation letters and boxes to make into baskets. Volunteers are the Goodfellows' backbone.

Please fill out the coupon below and mail it, along with your donation to:

Farmington Area Goodfellows
c/o Farmington/Farmington Hills
Chamber of Commerce
33411 Grand River, Farmington 48335

Name	_____
Address	_____
City and ZIP	_____
Donation (check, money order, other)	_____

T H A N K Y O U

Larkshire Elementary, Dick Clase of William Gross Elementary and Mike Duff of Gill Elementary, have been active with the shoe program.

The 1992 Goodfellow drive is dedicated to the memory of Bob Snyder and Nita Piltz. Both were longtime volunteers who died in separate vehicle accidents last summer, Tupper said.

The Goodfellows' efforts are rooted in Farmington-area history. More than 60 years ago, a group of "fellows" in the Farmington Exchange Club combined

forces with other service clubs in the Farmington area to provide assistance to needy families around Christmas.

Until 1973, the Farmington Exchange Club sponsored the Goodfellows. Today, this club is still the driving force behind the program. The Goodfellows organization was spawned because many people felt that there needed to be a separate organization with its own set of bylaws.

Although changes have been made through the years, the objective remains the same.

The charges stem from an incident on Sept. 16. No date has been set for Austin's trial.

He faces similar charges in Bloomfield Township, according to Farmington Hills police detective Tim Swanson.

Austin's preliminary examination had been scheduled for Friday, the 11th day that Earl Bruce Williams, a 19-year-old Detroit man, had been cleared of a carjacking that occurred on Oct. 9.

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Man faces carjacking charges

Christian Tyrone-Phillip Austin of Detroit will face charges in connection with a carjacking at Sunshine Acura in Farmington Hills. Austin, 26, was bound over to circuit court for trial after Stephen Moran, a salesman at Sunshine, identified him as the man who robbed him and stole a car from the dealership. Austin is charged with unlawfully driving away a vehicle, a five-year felony, and larceny from a person, a 10-year felony.