

Firefighter from page 1A

hospital a couple of weeks later. That makes you feel awfully good."

Delivered baby

Cheyne also delivered a baby five years ago halfway between the mother's home and Botsford Hospital.

But there have been times when things did not go well.

"We had a call at a trailer park where a van had backed into a little boy," he said. "He was in cardiac arrest. He didn't make it. Those cases, with a child, are always tough."

Promoted to sergeant in 1990, Cheyne can do any job with the department, an important attribute in the mostly volunteer force. "You have to be able to do everything, including drive," he said. "Because you never know who's going to show up and answer the tone."

The tone, which comes over a pager each volunteer carries, is one of many developments that have improved safety for and effectiveness of firefighters. Ken Cheyne, Jim's father, said that — and his own experience as a firefighter — are reassuring.

There have been a lot of

changes since my time," he said. "We used to be able to ride on the tail board (on the outside of the fire engine). We would even be doing that on the freeway, going 50 miles an hour. You can't do that now and it's probably a good thing."

World without beepers

The pager also did not exist during Ken Cheyne's era.

"We'd either hear our call on our radio or on a siren from the station," he said. "If the wind blew the wrong direction, you could end up going out and finding that it wasn't your station that sounded the siren. That happened to me one time."

The senior Cheyne is rightfully proud of his son, and other firefighters rely on Jim Cheyne's stability under pressure. Since Cheyne answers the call more than two-thirds of the time at the Old Town fire station, being a reliable partner to other firefighters is important.

"Jim's the kind of guy that I want for a partner," said Mike Kish, a full-time firefighter. "You know that if you go down, he's going to be there to get you out."

That's the most important thing."

Fire Chief Richard Marinucci says firefighters like Cheyne help the city maintain a top notch department made up of 83 paid-on-call volunteers and only 17 full-time members.

"This is very demanding for a part-time job," he said. "Jim is an ideal employee. He not only does everything you ask of him, he finds ways to make the department more efficient."

His family adapts

Wife Laura and 4-year-old daughter Brittaney have adapted to Cheyne's long, unpredictable schedule, but it wasn't easy.

"He had just gotten on (the fire department) when we first met," Laura Cheyne said. "At first, my reaction was that my boyfriend was a firefighter, someone people look up to. But then I saw the other side. I would say that I'm not playing second to a little gray beeper."

But the couple made adjustments.

"People laugh, because we go everywhere in separate cars," she said. "But we have to. He likes what he does and he's good at it."

'We had an incident where a man had a cardiac arrest at a restaurant. We did our job and he ended up walking out of the hospital a couple of weeks later. That makes you feel awfully good.'

Jim Cheyne
Firefighter of year

Some weeks when he's busy, we go through 'daddy withdrawals.'

Having a husband on call all the time has meant planning to go to events as a family or a couple, but then being prepared to go it alone, she said.

"If I made my plans around him being with me, I would be mad at him all the time," she said. "He doesn't need it and I don't need it."

And it's not as if Laura Cheyne did not know what to expect.

"When we got married, the wedding party posed for pictures on a fire truck, if that gives you any idea of what I could expect. Not many people have the willingness to do what Jim does. I'm very proud of him."

Postmaster from page 1A

Bate said that reflects a deliberate effort by the postal service to improve customer relations and not just only budget considerations.

Pat Compton, president of the Farmington/Farmington Hills local of the American Postal Workers Union, said he expects good things from Bate.

"I've heard from some carriers who are concerned," he said. "But we've known about this for awhile. Most people aren't worried. I think he'll do a good job. Before he was just the officer in charge. Now he'll be calling the shots."

Bate, who is married to Sheila and has a 4-year-old daughter, Brittany, was one of 28 postmasters accepting new positions in the Royal Oak Postal District Friday. He will supervise 270 employees in the two post offices that make 41,000 deliveries in a 36 square mile area, bring in \$20 million annually and have an operating budget of \$12 million.

"You always have to win over employees when you come in," Bate said. "And you can't make everyone happy. But I think you want people to like what they're doing and help them do a good job."

Pianist Varani plays at church

Pianist Flavio Varani will appear Feb. 28 as part of Nardin Park United Methodist Church's Music Series at the church, 29897 W. 11 Mile, Farmington Hills.

The program will begin at 3 p.m. and will be followed by a light reception in the church's fellowship hall, at which time guests can greet the artist.

Brazilian-born Varani began performing as a soloist at the age of 7. When he was 10, he began touring with the Brazilian National Symphony, a tradition that continues up to the present day.

He is a recitalist, chamber musician and guest artist with leading orchestras in the United

States, Latin America and Europe.

Varani has studied at Juillard and The Manhattan School of Music, as well as with the legendary Magda Tagliaferrero in Paris.

Included among his numerous honors are the Harold Bauer Award for the most distinguished pianist, First Prize winner at the Chopin International Competition in Mallorca, Musician of the Year awarded by the Michigan Foundation for the Arts and Best Soloist of the Year by the Brazilian Art Critic's Association.

The public is invited to attend. There is no admission charge.

Tax cut from page 1A

Superintendent Michael Flanagan has said a 20 percent cut from the district's \$88 million budget would be crippling.

"If you look at five people in a room, one of them is gone," Flanagan said. "... How do you destroy a system? Twenty percent is destroying a system."

"We've already lost \$6 million in recapture. Then take another

\$16 million, where do you begin?"

The alternative is to ask for a tax increase — at least 6 mills to make up the \$16 million loss.

Voters just passed a three-year renewal of 12.0634 mills Feb. 2. With double-digit assessments

and in a climate of anti-tax fervor, a millage increase would be diffi-

cult, officials say.

"That's why it's out of the question," Barrett said. School officials are still hopeful, though.

Several tax reform proposals are floating around the House. One is the "Sweet 16" plan, which would include a one cent sales tax increase.

Any sales tax increase would have to go to a vote of the people. The state 4 percent sales tax ranks 32nd nationally.

State Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills, said she thinks some tax reform tied with a sales tax increase would make sense. At least some lost revenue would be returned, she said.

"We'd have some belt tightening here," Dolan added. "We just don't want to have an amputation."

School officials expect some cuts. The district dealt with a \$7 million cut and the loss of 140 positions two years ago.

Little sympathy is found in Lansing for out-of-formula districts, according to Dolan, Barrett agrees.

"I think there's a stereotype going that out-of-formula means rich," Barrett said. "We know that's not the case."

Flanagan said he'd hold the legislators responsible if the 20 percent cut goes through with no reimbursement.

"When we start talking about that, and we fill up Farmington High's auditorium. Then in the back of the room, the name of the legislators will be in large letters who voted for this and their numbers."

"We'll say, this is brought to you by these people."

Schools back O/K tax plan


While Gov. John Engler's tax reform plan draws criticism from the schools, the Farmington Public Schools has endorsed the Olmstead/Kearney Proposal.

The O/K Proposal would phase-in 50/50 state funding, plus lottery proceeds, for education while reducing operating millages to 30 mills in all districts. The




plan would also prohibit the expansion of categorical recapture and tax base sharing.

"This is the proper long-term solution," said Superintendent Michael Flanagan. The plan is endorsed by Michigan Out-of-Formula District Association and Oakland County Superintendents Association.

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