

## Westchester fire officials seek support for child educational outreach



By Jonas Vea

Capt. Shawn Casey, of the Westchester Fire Department, is looking to garner more financial support for children's educational materials from the National Fire Safety Council's "Firepup" program that the department brings to all the schools in Westchester.

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Westchester, IL -

To help ingrain in kids' heads that they mustn't hide in the event of a fire and that they should "stop, drop and roll" if their clothing ever catches flames, the Westchester Fire Department is looking to increase financial support for children's educational materials.

The department has been participating in the Michigan-based National Fire Safety Council's "Firepup" educational outreach program for about 20 years, and about 25 businesses have been financially contributing to pay for the literature involved.

But Westchester fire officials said it's seeking more donations to maintain the program and perhaps expand it, and businesses in the village would be receiving letters requesting sponsorship.

### **Costs for sponsoring children to receive fire safety literature**

\$90 for 50 kids

\$135 for 75 kids

\$180 for 100 kids

\$270 for 150 kids

\$360 for 200 kids

The village's fire Capt. Shawn Casey said he drops off the literature to elementary schools in Westchester at the beginning of the school year, and, when he follows up with them during National Fire Prevention Week in October, he sees that the kids make use of them.

"They learn everything about 'stop, drop, and roll' ... the importance of smoke detectors and making sure their

families have a meeting place and exit drill in their homes in case of a fire. The visual materials really enforce things," he said. "When you get them when they're young, their fear and respect for fire just grows as they get older."

Casey said one of the most important things he teaches with the help of the materials is to never hide, for example, in a closet or under a bed.

"Children's first reaction is to hide when they're in danger," he said.

The classroom materials include pamphlets, bookmarks, posters and workbooks with coloring and grade-appropriate problem solving.

Lessons include the three parts of a fire — air, such as wind, breeze and a draft; heat such as a lighter, stove and match; and fuel, such as grease, wood and paper.

Reporting a fire and crawling beneath smoke is emphasized, and kitchen safety is detailed in the teachings.

More than 3,800 pieces of literature are delivered to Westchester Primary School and the elementary grade classes at Divine Infant and Divine Providence schools in Westchester.

Terry Niewiadomski, who works with the Westchester Fire Department out of the Illinois office of the National Fire Safety Council, said the cost of the literature comes out to about \$1.80 per child.

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