

Council Honors Heroes from House Explosion

VILLAS- A number of those who responded to a house explosion at 234 E. Atlantic Ave, Nov. 7 were recognized by Lower Township Council Dec. 16.

Lower Township Mayor Michael Beck said Jim McCarty, an occupant of the home injured in the blast, made a phone call to participants at a beef and beer fundraiser Dec. 14 at VFW Post 4353. McCarty, and his wife Evelyn, are in a rehabilitation center in Philadelphia recovering from their injuries.

“They wanted to express their gratitude for the fundraiser and to the people we are going to recognize tonight,” said Beck.

McCarty told Beck he was looking forward to returning to Villas.

Beck said he did not know how the McCarty’s survived the blast that leveled their house. He said the couple survived thanks to the “people that are standing here this evening.”

“I think for the average person when something happens they stop and look,” said Beck. “For those who are trained, they move immediately towards the action.”

He said it was comforting to see fire companies and off-duty fireman arriving in their own cars at the scene of the house explosion.

The mayor acknowledged the Green Creek Volunteer Fire Company, Erma Volunteer Fire Company, Townbank Volunteer Fire Company and Villas Volunteer Fire Company for their work at the scene.

Beck gave certificates to firefighters who first responded to the scene: Bill Howard, Andy Hilvert Jr., Frank McCloskey, Andrew McCloskey, Charles Jordan and Bill Szemcsak.

The mayor also thanked members of the Lower Township Rescue Squad and Lower Township Police Department.

“You guys put your life on the line quite frequently and we’re grateful for that,” he said. “This was an exceptional event.”

The certificate of appreciation noted firefighters and other volunteers responded to the explosion and fire without regard to their own personal safety. The first responders entered the home which was still burning and removed the occupants to safety.

Responders and volunteers also evacuated the neighborhood, stated the certificate.

Beck thanked residents Bill and Gary Lazaro, Lower Township Special Officer Corey Scheid, Rio Grande volunteer firefighters Ken Hewitt and John Thomson and residents Nick Blasi, Stan Adamson and Daryl Benjamin.

Beck said roll call was not conducted at the fire scene, so there were probably a number of other individuals that needed to be recognized.

“They went into the house, they comforted the injured and took them across the street, they went door-to-door making sure other residents hadn’t been injured,” he said.