

BELTON SPARTA VFD

# Back in action on Oct. 1

BY DEBORAH McKEON  
TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

A group with a dream, led by a man with a passion, reorganized the Sparta Volunteer Fire Department this year. It will be up and running due to a lot of hard work and the generosity of individuals and other departments.

Fire Chief David Kirk's goal was to be operational by Oct. 1, and he's certain it will be. The Bell County Fire Chief's Association voted the department in Monday night and approved its goal of Oct. 1, Kirk said. Members of the Association will stop by sometime this week to inspect the operation and sign off on paperwork.

The department will cover the same area it did four years ago when it had to disband — part of the Sparta Road area outside Belton city limits that hasn't been covered by Central Bell Fire & Rescue, Kirk said. Their station is at 7041 Sparta Road.

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## Sparta VFD

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"We're here to stay. We've come a long way to get this done, and we're not going anywhere," Kirk said.

He also said the group will be part of the East Side Strike Team. The group will be a certified first responder after the paperwork is signed and taken to Austin, he said.

The department has 13 firefighters, including nine who have experience and others who have been training, Kirk said.

He is proud of the great teamwork and group of volunteers who have dedicated themselves to the job ahead of them, and they've worked hard to get where

they are, Kirk said.

The reality of the return of the department was a joint birthday present for Kirk and Pat Beard. Kirk said Beard asked him once what he wanted for his birthday. His response was that he wanted the fire department back up and running. Once that became more of a reality, she told him, "Happy birthday, David."

The department bought an engine from the Lott Volunteer Fire Department, and it received a 1979 International pumper/tanker in the first week of July from the Texas Forest Service. Other departments donated gear and breathing apparatus.

Sparta firefighters trained at their own station in May and

with the Belton and Moffat fire departments in July.

They also trained in the Woodlake Subdivision after being invited to control the burning of a brush pile that accumulated during a spring clean-up the property owners' association instigated.

Woodlake also donated \$200 to the department.

Sparta VFD held its first "fill the helmet" fundraiser in June and collected more than \$1,500 from the community, Kirk said.

Others are determined to help get it get off to a great start, including Horny Toad Harley Davidson and Sons of Solomon Motorcycle Club. They have organized a benefit for the department Saturday. Joker's Icehouse

Bar & Grill will be at the benefit at 7454 S. General Bruce Drive, as well as a motorcycle and car show from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Live bands will play, including Back Creek Band, Road Trip Band out of Gatesville and Unwound from Belton.

Kirk is looking for someone to open the festivities by singing the National Anthem a cappella because the benefit is three days before 9/11.

All proceeds and donations will go toward safety equipment for Sparta VFD.

Those interested in joining Sparta VFD should call Kirk at 254-760-3272. "There's something for everyone to do," he said.

dmckeon@tdtnews.com



Josh Quinn/Telegram

Eddie Beard, head mechanic for Sparta VFD, installs a ground-wire in a fire truck.

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