

Published July 5th, 2023

Family of Pete Wilson donates medical equipment to Rescue 1

By Sora O'Doherty



Chief Dave Winnacker, Mimi Wilson and Firefighter/ Paramedic Tom Schwedhelm Photo courtesy MOFD

The wife and family of the late Pete Wilson, a founding member of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, have made a donation to the Rescue 1 in honor of the former MOFD Director who passed away last November. Mimi Wilson and her family donated funds to the Rescue 1 Foundation toward the purchase of a Stryker Lifepack Cardiac monitor/defibrillator, and Rescue 1 matched their donation to purchase another.

Battalion Chief Lucas Lambert told the Lamorinda Weekly that the equipment represents the latest technology, is lightweight and can easily be taken into inaccessible areas. Mimi Wilson says that she knew that her husband would have wanted something that would benefit the men and women of the MOFD.

According to Lambert, crews had been looking for a compact cardiac monitor, different from frontline emergency equipment, a unit that can be carried in gear bags when MOFD firefighters are called to work on large wildland fires elsewhere in the state or nation. MOFD crews are often called upon to support the health and safety of firefighters, acting as fireline paramedics.

The choice of the "latest and greatest" equipment was researched by firefighter paramedic Tom Schwedhelm. Lambert says that Schwedhelm did an amazing job in researching the best equipment for staff and shared some of Schwedhelm's background. On one occasion, Schwedhelm was a fireline paramedic during fires up in Redding. "Tom was resting at a local hotel during his time off for rest and rehabilitation between shifts when he was awakened by a family at the pool whose child was drowning. Schwedhelm and others jumped into action and saved the young child, intervened with lifesaving measures, including a cardiac monitor and medications." Lambert noted, "This is why these types of tools are very important to Tom and to us. We use the

equipment for any emergency that comes up at any time."

Mimi Wilson says that the fire district was very important to Pete. He was on the Orinda Fire Commission before there was a fire district, when the county was making all the decisions, which is why he joined the effort to form a fire district that stands alone and the county can't make decisions for the district. Wilson believed it was important that the district serve the needs of Moraga and Orinda, which are unique in the county. He had to resign from the board because of his health, but his wife thinks that we would have been really pleased by the donation of something that will be useful to the firefighters themselves. One of the new monitor/defibrillators bears a plaque in Wilson's honor.

Sally Whittaker of The Rescue 1 Foundation reported that the cost of the two life pack machines totaled about \$7,000, half of which was donated by the Wilson family. She recalled that Wilson had been an MOFD director for 12 years and instrumental in combining the fire districts back in 1997. "Our fire district is very cutting edge and is sought after," Whittaker said. They will take the two monitors into the field with them for the health and welfare of the men and women of MOFD and other firefighters when they are out fighting fires. Mimi thought it was apropos to purchase this particular equipment to help the firefighters of MOFD. "The MOFD family is grateful for both the equipment provided through the generous donation in memory of MOFD Founding Director Pete Wilson and his lifetime of service to the community,"

MOFD Fire Chief Dave Winnacker said, "We are proud to be able to carry this reminder of his commitment to public safety on our apparatus as they deploy throughout the region and state."

Reach the reporter at: sora@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA