

Local man goes from fighting fires to preventing them

Serving with the Gates Fire District since 1978, Dave Tytler is retiring as a lieutenant and taking a part-time job as the deputy fire marshal in Gates.

By **AMY CAVALIER**

Messenger Post Staff

The Gates Fire District responds to more than 2,200 calls each year. As one of 21 career staff with the fire department since 1979, it is quite possible David Tytler has responded to well over 30,000 calls.

He's been on the scene of innumerable car accidents, false alarms, medical emergencies, and fires. The airport is within the department's jurisdiction, as well as the Eastman Kodak Co.'s Elmgrove plant. The Gates Fire District also covers the most area of the expressway of any department in the county.

So it's understandable that just a few calls stand out in Tytler's mind.

There was that motor-vehicle accident on Scottsville Road that took the life of a mother and her three children.

"I was the first one there," he said. "It was right after my daughter was born. In the

road there was a stuffed animal called a Puffalump. That was my daughter's favorite toy."

Any firefighter will tell you, any incident involving children is the toughest call you'll ever have to go on, said Tytler.

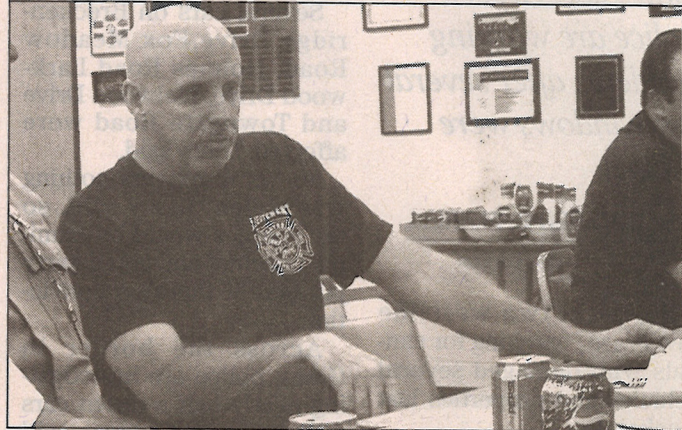
"Our job is to protect the public," he said. "If we can't protect the children, then it really sticks with us."

Wednesday, Sept. 26 was Tytler's last day on the job. A 1974 Gates Chili graduate, he started out in 1978 as a volunteer, fresh from serving in the Air Force Fire Department in Syracuse and Alaska for four years. He was following in the footsteps of his father Fritz Tytler and grandfather Cyril Attridge. Both were past assistant fire chiefs, and his father was a fire commissioner.

As a volunteer, he climbed the ranks, first as a lieutenant and eventually becoming assistant chief of Gates Fire Company No. 1. He also served as membership chairman and he was one of the first volunteers to be appointed as a safety officer.

Tytler was hired by the district as a clerk/laborer May 25, 1979. He's held many positions over the years. In 2000, he and fellow firefighter Gary Finlayson were appointed as the first career lieutenants in the fire district.

"People see us running into buildings when they're running out," he said.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Dave Tytler, an employee with the Gates Fire District since 1979, retired on Wednesday, Sept. 26. He started a new job as a part-time deputy fire marshal in the town of Gates on Monday.

And sometimes, it's as simple as a flooded basement.

"I find that whenever they don't know who to call for a problem, they call the fire department because if we can't fix the problem, we find somebody that will fix it," he said.

Leaving the fire department is "bittersweet," he said, but fighting fires is a "young man's job."

"It gets harder as you get older to get up in the middle of the night and respond to a fire," he said.

Last Tuesday, he got the chance to ride in a fire truck for the last time. On the way back to the station, Tytler realized how much he'll miss the job.

"You develop a family relationship when you work with the same people all the time,"

he said.

Tytler is planning on having a very "active" retirement. He started a new part time job on Monday helping prevent fires as deputy fire marshal in the town of Gates. Tytler resides in Caledonia with his wife, Kitty. His daughter Kelly is a student at SUNY Brockport.

Chief Jim Harrington said of Tytler, "you don't replace someone like this."

"He's been around so long....," he said. "There's always this magic between the guys when they get on the scene of the incident. It's an instinct, like a sixth-sense. You work with a guy for so long, you can anticipate what he'll do. Those are the types of things these guys pick up working day in and day out together."