

Campaign to Date Raises Nearly \$40,000 Grant Awards to Fund Unity House Development Plan Goals

Five grants totaling just over \$40,000 were awarded to Unity House of Cayuga County Inc. in the last quarter of 2007 and first three months of 2008, representing a successful start to the grant writing strategy contained in the agency's Development Plan.

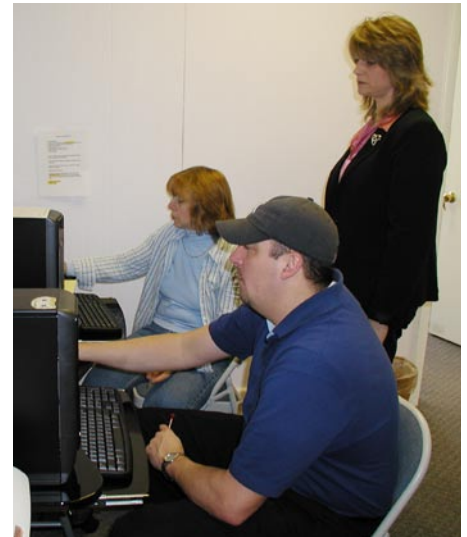
That plan identified five goals for 2008: the enhancement of agency-wide technology; obtaining additional nursing department medical and staff training equipment; upgrading day habilitation transportation; financing costs related to consumer Medicare Part D prescription co-pays; and funding a sensory stimulation environment for a planned Auburn day habilitation program expansion. The plan also calls

for achieving an intermediate goal of providing agency staff software application training and a longer-term goal of raising the equivalent of four months' agency operating capital. All the plan's goals are intended to bolster financially Unity House's support departments which are essential to the agency's primary services and programs.

Besides the execution of a continuous grant writing campaign, the plan relies on developing and marketing gift prospecting and planned giving campaigns to the agency's known and potential constituents and stakeholders, to generate the funding needed to meet its identified needs.

Funding IT Needs

One of the five grant awards – from the Allyn Foundation in Skaneateles, NY – totaled \$25,000 and is being used as the primary funding source for Unity House's 2008 agency-wide Information Technology (IT) Project. That two-part effort will transition the agency's human resource employee management process to a completely computerized system and also will expand Cayuga and Tompkins County day habilitation staff access to the larger system. That greater access will facilitate the changeover from staff handwritten, consumer care information to the agency's FOOTHOLDS computerized platform. Coincidental to that award was the reallocation in December 2007 of a combined grant of \$10,000 given to Unity House by the D.E. French and Stanley W. Metcalf Foundations, from its initially intended purpose of



Day Hab Director Darlene Podolak (far right) training assistant managers Jackie Bragan (background) and Bruce Adams (foreground) on agency's new IT equipment

building and grounds renovations to helping fund the IT project's price tag of \$39,500. Unity House's July 2007, 30-Year Dinner and Dance celebration generated the remaining money needed to begin and complete the IT project.

Supporting Consumer Training

A second donation consisting of six reconfigured work stations with a market value of \$3,000 was made to Unity House by a corporate supporter that wished to remain anonymous. The donation originated after Unity House staff and family made this particular supporter aware of a specific need within the agency's Unity Employment Services (UES) program. After the donor purged the computer equipment and donated it, Unity House staff spearheaded by administrative associate Mary Fishlock reconfigured the items for use at the agency's three (Geneva, Auburn, Syracuse) UES sites.

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Unity House

Empowering Lives. Securing Futures

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Requests to mail to preferred mailing addresses also should be called or sent to that same administration phone number or e-mail address

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For comprehensive information about Unity House of Cayuga County Inc please visit our website at www.unityhouse.com

Executive Director's Perspective

This year promises to be one of the busiest in the history of Unity House of Cayuga County Inc. That's saying something, given we are always very involved in delivering and improving our services and programs and attending to the many details those efforts require.

We started 2008 planning and carrying out the relocation of our Auburn Unity Employment Services site, from its second floor, 38 East Genesee Street offices to 1110 Corporate Drive, the vacated Social Security building just off Grant Avenue. Almost immediately thereafter, we relocated two of our Mental Health Services' programs, Independent Housing and Intensive Psychiatric Rehabilitation Treatment, into their very own space in that same building. We are anticipating relocations of various components of our Tompkins County operations, as well.

On the heels of those Auburn and Ithaca moves, we also are looking forward to the opening of our Auburn day habilitation recreational drop-in center, an after-hours and weekend service designed to enhance the social lives of individuals with developmental disabilities. To be located at our 31 Market Street day hab site in Auburn, the service will feature structured activities as well as time and space for consumers to develop their social skills in a more relaxed atmosphere. It promises to deepen our commitment to empower consumers and further expand their independence.

In 2008 we also expect to realize a much-needed expansion of our Auburn day hab program. We are working with OMRDD to increase our physical



*Joyce Williams, Executive Director
Unity House of Cayuga County Inc.*

space and programmatic capacities for our day hab consumers, whose growing numbers deserve and need those elements an expanded program will provide. In addition, our Tompkins and Cayuga Counties' Individual Residential Alternative (IRA) programs and services also will be experiencing changes that were unimagined in 2007 or, at best, were barely blips on last year's horizon.

Finally (I think!), we also are exploring ways to more effectively and efficiently deliver our N.Y. State Office of Mental Health (OMH)-licensed supervised community residence housing program, in collaboration with OMH. We are excited about the chance to pioneer a new and different model of care on behalf of consumers and their families.

In pondering the changes we know about and the as-of-yet unknown ones that are sure to appear and challenge

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Click on www.unityhouse.com!

Need information about our **MRDD, Mental Health Residential, G.R.A.C.E. House Alcohol and Chemical Dependency, and Unity Employment** services and programs? Want to become a Unity House supporter and make a secure donation online? Interested in our current job opportunities and details? Like to read about Unity House news and developments including consumer success stories? Just log on to our redesigned website at www.unityhouse.com. Besides our three annual newsletters, we've also posted our new agency DVD 'Empowering Lives, Securing Futures' on the site for you to review and use. Click on www.unityhouse.com for all your agency needs.

Nursing Services Streamlines Consumer Prescription Refill Process

Unity House's Professional Nursing Services has teamed up with OMNICARE Pharmacy and its Information Solutions service to forge a more efficient and effective MRDD residential consumer prescription refill process.

The new course of refilling prescriptions electronically comes on the heels of the nursing department's centralization of its initial and refill prescription business for about 100 MRDD residential consumers through OMNICARE's Syracuse, NY pharmacy service location.

Initiated in November 2007 at Unity House's MRDD Individual Residential Alternatives (IRAs) in Cayuga and Tompkins counties, the new, computerized prescription refill process replaces a system that for each refill duplicated how the nursing department originally filled consumers' prescriptions. That practice required the consumer's physician to generate the original prescription and Unity House's RN to verify in writing the prescription's accuracy, and also ensure that a hard copy of the original prescription was returned in a timely manner to the physician who generated it.

of our consumers has about five (5) refills of an original prescription before it expires and has to be renewed, and the additional factor of us dealing with some 22 physicians in Tompkins County and at least four (4) in Cayuga County."

Mancinelli and her department transitioned to the faster, easier way of refilling prescriptions with the help of the agency's OMNICARE pharmacist, Mike Panasci (pronounced Pa-NAH-shee). Mancinelli and her nursing staff, weary of completing and faxing prescription refill orders and of worrying if they ever reached Panasci, learned about the Omniview e-Refill system from him. Almost immediately, they understood that its features would eliminate the inefficiencies they experienced with their burdensome refill process.

OMNICARE's e-Refill system is web-based and only required an internet connection at the Unity House IRA sites for it to be implemented and maintained. User IDs and passwords control which Unity House site employees can access the system, which employs an encrypted connection between the OMNICARE pharmacy and IRA sites. In addition, users



New Life IRA residential counselor and med stipend Kelly Green refills consumers' prescriptions using a barcode scanner, computer and the Omniview e-Refill process

the request it will notify you that pharmacy follow-up is required, and the pharmacy contacts us."

The system allows sites to transmit refill orders by using a barcode scanner (in use at Cayuga County New Life and Tompkins County Dryden IRAs) to read prescription label numbers earmarked for refill, and then transmit them electronically to the designated Omniview website refill link. Sites lacking barcode scanners type directly in to that same link the RX codes off the prescription labels.

"You just scan the barcode off the original prescription and hit the refill link under pharmacy and they get and refill the order," said Kelly Green, a residence counselor and med stipend responsible for refilling consumer prescriptions at New Life IRA. "I can check the status any time and also get all our consumers' prescription reports that include refill information. I learned the system in no time. It's really easy to use."

"We're really pleased with OMNICARE and with getting more efficient so we can spend more time caring for our consumers," says Mancinelli, whose department also uses OMNICARE's pharmacist consultation services to review twice a year each Unity House consumer's medication regimens and make appropriate recommendations to issuing physicians, per OMRDD regulations. "It's much better all the way around."

"Refilling consumers' prescriptions electronically is a huge time and care savings for Nursing Services"

Mary Mancinelli, RN, Director of Nursing

"Before we changed over to refilling scripts electronically, to refill a prescription, we had to repeat the original prescription procedure for each and every refill," says Mary Mancinelli, BS, RN, Unity House's Director of Nursing Services. "I cannot tell you how time-consuming and inefficient and at times frustrating that could be. With our new OMNICARE Omniview e-Refill way of refilling consumers' scripts, we never have to repeat the steps essential to the generation of the original prescription. This is a huge time and care savings for us, when you factor in the fact that on average each

can determine the status of all open prescription orders, not just refills, and manage other consumer pharmacy data and information with e-Refill.

"E-Refill is simple and straightforward," she says. "We have an electronic record of every refill request we send, and we get an immediate on-screen confirmation from the OMNICARE pharmacy that it has received the request. Plus our refills are delivered the same day they're placed, usually between 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. that night. Their system screens refill requests for multiple potential issues, and if it finds any, instead of confirming

Grant Awards Total Nearly \$40,000 *continued from Cover*

UES staff will train UES consumers on basic IT skills with the upgraded work stations, to better prepare them for the demands of the current competitive marketplace.

“We’ve realized for some time that the primary, unmet marketplace demand challenging our consumers is the lack of understanding, having, and using information technology (IT) skills,” said Unity House Executive Director Joyce Williams. “With this very generous donation, we can develop consumers’ IT skills and make consumers even more job-ready and marketable than we already do, and improve their job placements.”

A third grant award from the Allen Speiser Fund for Vocational Rehabilitation provided the UES-Syracuse site \$1,272 to purchase additional IT equipment for the project there.

Teaching Consumers Literacy Skills

Two other grants totaling \$10,703 awarded to the agency – by the Tompkins County Friends of the Library Community Grants Committee and the Park Foundation, both in Ithaca, NY – will be used to fund Unity House’s Day Habilitation (day hab) Library Literacy Project in Tompkins County.

As much the brainchild of the agency’s Tompkins County day hab consumers and families as it is of that program’s staff and managers, the day hab library literacy project will combine day hab library space with a proven literacy program to improve consumers’ literacy, job, and life skills. The 12 x 15 space, ideally situated at the day hab site at 408 E. State Street in Ithaca, will be renovated to house two new work stations with Internet access, ten six-foot bookshelves, a library desk and chair, a library reading chair and ottoman, an area rug, and a floor lamp. Plans are to have day hab consumers with staff oversight manage and maintain the space. To be open to all Unity House consumers and staff from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday with weekend hours an eventual probability, the library will include a wide selection of books and reading material appropriate to day hab consumers. Day hab management also is planning to develop a catalogue system with help from consumers and staff.

Programmatically, plans are to have day hab Community Integration Specialist (CIS) staff be trained by Tompkins Learning Partners (TLP) to provide one-to-one literacy tutoring



Tompkins County Day Hab Manager Kathy Marshall and staff and program’s consumers spearheaded library literacy project.

to day hab consumers. In addition, TLP will advise day hab management about library inventory and teaching materials and also will be available for occasional consulting. Goals of the literacy program encompass increasing consumer participants’ vocabularies and reading and math abilities; increasing their interest in reading independently; expanding their desire and opportunity to experience relevant learning activities; and improving their self-esteem and job readiness.

Additional grant applications are being submitted to a number of local and regional funding sources to achieve Unity House’s remaining immediate goals and one intermediate goal, in conjunction with the agency’s gift prospecting and planned giving efforts. Those two campaigns are expected to be launched in the late spring / early summer of this year and also will be maintained continuously to help meet Unity House’s four months’ operating capital fundraising goal.



UES-Auburn employment services coordinator Cyndi Sharp (front) and site manager Brenda Murphy at the site’s newly equipped consumer IT training area.

Cayuga County Mental Health Awards Unity House's Independent Housing Program Additional \$22,555

The Cayuga County Department of Mental Health has granted Unity House's Permanent Supported Housing program an additional \$22,555 in funding that will be used to house three more consumers independently in apartment settings in Cayuga County, as well as provide them case management support, assistance furnishing their living quarters, and financial counseling, among other services. The award, granted in February 2008, will double (from three to six) the number of program participants directly funded by the Cayuga County Mental Health Department. It also will expand the total number of program participants from 55 to 58 (*for details about the award, visit www.unityhouse.com, click on the News / Press page, see 2.27.08 Main Story*).



CQC Guide to Accessing Records Now Available

Facilities and programs like Unity House which provide services to individuals with disabilities are required to keep records about the care and treatment of people they serve. In respecting the rights and dignity of these individuals, NY State Mental Hygiene Law establishes basic rules of confidentiality and provides for access to records by individuals receiving services and by persons legally authorized to speak on their behalf. The state's Commission on Quality of Care (CQC) has made available a guide, in question and answer format, for individuals receiving services, their families, and other "qualified persons" interested in accessing records, including references to the applicable provisions of the law. To receive a copy of the pamphlet, call Mary Fishlock at Unity House at 315-253-6227, ext. 119.



CNY DSO's Family Support Services Available Region-Wide

Families of individuals with developmental disabilities often need help in meeting the unique challenges of caring at home for a family member or relative with a disability. The NY State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) Family Support Services helps families meet these challenges. Through its many Developmental Disabilities Services Offices (DDSOs) in Central New York, OMRDD offers Family Support Services Coordinators who can help families arrange for the assistance they need, such as respite care. Coordinators also can help obtain specialized equipment, initiate home modifications, and create comprehensive planning in keeping family members or relatives with disabilities at home. For more information, in Cayuga County call 315-253-6283; in Syracuse and Onondaga County, call 315-473-5050; and in Ithaca and Tompkins County, call 607-273-0811.

G.R.A.C.E. House Receives \$26,282 Additional Funding

In the past five months Unity House's G.R.A.C.E. House chemical dependency recovery program and services has received additional funding totaling \$26,282 from its licensing authority, the N.Y. State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS). In December 2007, responding to a proposal G.R.A.C.E. House submitted in the fall of late 2007 for items to refurbish its community residence, OASAS awarded the program \$20,417. G.R.A.C.E. House used the funding to replace the living room and bedroom sets in its individual and community living areas in February 2008. On January 17, 2008 OASAS notified the program that it had been selected to receive a one-time funding award of \$5,811 from a statewide initiative for treatment providers serving persons involved in the criminal justice system. G.R.A.C.E. House qualified for that funding because at least 51% of its total admissions from October 2006 through September 2007 had a criminal justice history. G.R.A.C.E. House will use that award to purchase a new community residence refrigerator, update the residence's public phone service, and install ceramic tile in the residence's kitchen, in its efforts to continue to maintain a superior living facility for consumers recovering there. (*for details about each award, visit www.unityhouse.com, click on the News / Press page, see 2.13.08 and 2.27.08 Main Stories*).

Unity in the Community: Similar Paths as Employees and Volunteers

For Unity House employees Jessica Williams and Jessica Waldron, nothing could be further from the truth than the oft-quoted adage, “There’s no such thing as coincidences.” In fact, upon learning about their backgrounds and life perspectives, there appears to be nothing but coincidences for these two young women for whom giving back in their occupations and to their respective communities is second nature.



Unity House employees and volunteer firefighters Waldron (l) and Williams (r): giving back is second nature

Consider Williams’s and Waldron’s known similarities: both are bright young women who by all accounts excel at their jobs, due in no small part to their motivation to care for and improve the independence and lives of individuals with developmental disabilities. Both have the same first name and the same middle name, which each spells the same (Lee). The first letter of their last names is the same (W). One (Williams) was program manager at Unity House’s Oak Drive MRDD Individual Residential Alternative (IRA) in Union Springs, N.Y. before hiring the other (Waldron) as a residential counselor there; the ‘other’ (Waldron) holds the Oak Drive program manager position now.

To top off the list of likenesses Williams and Waldron share, each volunteers wholeheartedly for Cayuga County volunteer fire departments (Williams initially for the village of Union Springs and now for the Town of Fleming’s, on Route 34, and Waldron for the village of Union Springs) in their ‘off’ hours.

Could there be more coincidences about these two professionals that thus far haven’t been mentioned?

“Well, believe it or not,” grinned Williams, assistant director of Unity House’s MRDD residential (Cayuga County) and day habilitation (Cayuga and Tompkins counties) programs and services, “More than one person also thinks we look alike. But no, we’re not sisters or related in any way. You do have to admit, though, there are a lot of parallels between us, so who knows? It seems our paths as employees and volunteers are somehow linked, which is fine with me because Jess is such a capable and good person, on the job and at the firehouse.”

Both Williams and Waldron landed in the human services profession and volunteer firefighting for the same reasons: to help those less fortunate than themselves, and to give back to the communities they call home.

“I was always interested in human services,” says Williams, a native of Groton, NY, who has a BS Degree

County. Then I took the Unity House job at the Oak Drive IRA.

“Having been in the field now for a little while, it’s very gratifying to know that through our work the lives of others are improved,” she says. “It’s pretty much the same reasoning for volunteering for the fire department, giving back and making that commitment to contribute to your community.”

“I just really like to help people,” agrees Waldron, a Union Springs native “It’s what got me going as a nurse’s aide at Lakeside Nursing Home in Ithaca, NY and what interested me about becoming a residence counselor at Oak Drive back in December 2005 and now the program manager there. And I have the same outlook about volunteer firefighting as Jessica: help out by giving time and effort to where you also live.”

For Waldron perhaps moreso than Williams, becoming a member of a volunteer fire department, traditionally a male-dominated bastion that scorned female participation, was less of a challenge given her lifelong relationship to the department of which she is now its President as well as a lieutenant in charge of an engine.

“My father, Garrett Waldron, has been a long-time member and is now the Chief of the Union Springs volunteer fire department,” smiles

As with their Unity House jobs, Williams and Waldron take their obligations as volunteer firefighters seriously.

in Sociology and Criminology from SUNY Cortland and an MS Degree in Organizational Management from Keuka College. “I lived in Dryden, NY while going to school in Cortland and worked as a residence counselor at the old George Junior Republic. I moved to Oneonta after graduating from Cortland and took a job there as Individual Programs Coordinator for the Day Treatment program at ARC of Otsego

Waldron, one of two women members to date. “I’ve been around the firehouse there all my life because of my Dad. I’ve been a member since I turned 18, going on eight years ago. That probably made it easier to break in and join for me than it was for Jess.”

Williams, now living in Fleming, NY with her two black Labrador retrievers, Harley and Sadie, says

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Unity House on the Move

The late winter and early spring of 2008 witnessed the relocation of three Unity House services and programs into one building on the east side of Auburn, and the temporary relocation of a fourth service.

On February 21, 2008 the Auburn site of Unity Employment Services (UES) moved its operations from its long-time, second floor space at 38 East Genesee Street about two miles east to the former federal Social Security Administration building at 1110 Corporate Drive in Auburn. The move was necessary to better accommodate the program's eight full-time and nine part-time employees' growing space needs and the corresponding needs of the consumers they serve.

"We have some 15 consumers in our job development phase and 50 in job placement, and they and our staff needed more space and better space layout, and our new location on Corporate Drive gives us that," said UES-Auburn site manager Brenda Murphy. "The new location also gives us more parking space, which we desperately needed." UES-Auburn's phone and fax numbers (315-253-8732, 315-252-5126) and Murphy's e-mail address will remain the same (bmurphy@unityhouse.com).

In March of this year, the administrative offices of the agency's Mental Health Services' Permanent Supported Housing program (a.k.a. Independent Housing), long-situated at N-81 Oak Creek Town Homes, moved into the same 1110 Corporate



New quarters for Unity House's UES-Auburn, IPRT, and Independent Housing programs and services.

Drive office space occupied a month earlier by the UES-Auburn program. Independent Housing Program Manager Judy Fisher and her staff moved in to their new quarters on the twenty-fifth of the month. They will be joined later this year by Unity House's Mental Health and Employment Services Director Sue Morley, who will vacate her administrative office at 108 South Street in Auburn to be physically centered with the UES and Independent Housing programs and services she directs. Independent Housing will change its phone (315-282-0299) and fax (315-252-5126) numbers, and Fisher's e-mail address (jfisher@unityhouse.com) will stay the same. Morley will keep her 315-253-6227 extension 118 phone number, Unity House e-mail address (smorley@unityhouse.com), and fax number (315-253-4528) until she moves to her new Corporate Drive address.

On March 28th of this year, due to its need to comply with its licensing authority's request to increase its operational space to better serve its consumers' needs, the agency's Intensive Psychiatric Rehabilitation Treatment (IPRT) program, housed on the first floor at 38 East Genesee Street in Auburn, also moved into new space at the same 1110 Corporate Drive building. Susan Sloan, director of Unity House's Mental Health Support

Services and overseer of IPRT, moved herself and IPRT's staff of seven employees into their larger space on the last Friday of the month. Sloan's phone number will change to 315-282-0297 at the new space. Her fax number (315-252-5126), and e-mail address (ssloan@unityhouse.com) will remain the same.

Also in 2008, Unity House is planning to move its mental health support service Drop-In Center, known as a 'Pure Peer Program' and recognized by the New York State Office of Mental Health as a viable self-help service. Adjunctive to the agency's IPRT program and physically located with it in that same 38 East Genesee Street address, the Drop-In Center couldn't relocate with IPRT to 1110 Corporate Drive because that new space does not have enough additional room to accommodate the Center. In addition, the single-story, open-floor layout of the new IPRT space at Corporate Drive doesn't provide the appropriate programmatic environment the Drop-In Center requires.

Until the agency secures space appropriate for the Drop-In Center's purpose, the service will remain at its 38 East Genesee Street location and retain its Wednesday 5 pm-9 pm and Saturday and Sunday 10 am-5 pm hours of operation. For more information, call Susan Sloan at 315-282-0297.

"Our employment services' consumers and staff needed a more accommodating layout and more space including parking space, and our new Corporate Drive location gives us that"

Brenda Murphy,
Manager, UES-Auburn site

Executive Director's Perspective *continued from Page 2*

us as 2008 progresses, I thought about how my and most peoples' initial reaction to change is to resist it. Emotionally and intellectually, we hate it. We get comfortable in our routines and consciously and unconsciously do all in our power to maintain and perpetuate that comfort.

Yet, we know through experience that change is an every day fact of life and can be very beneficial. Often, change can and does teach us, direct us, and even lead us to the most effective solutions. It also has been integral to the accomplishments of consumers and families. In a sense, change can lead to the birth of our real selves or rebirth of our mission and values. Referring to change - I'm dating myself here - wasn't it Bob Dylan, our nation's true musical poet laureate, who made popular the phrase, "He not busy being born is busy dying"?

In 2008, our year of change, I am very confident we will embrace what we have planned as well as what fate has in store for us. As always, regardless of what we experience, we will ensure any and all change benefits our consumers and their families.

Unity in the Community *continued from page 6*

Waldron began talking to her about joining the Union Springs department shortly after she hired her as a residence counselor at the Oak Drive IRA. She says Waldron didn't have to make much of a hard sell for her to join.

"I was always interested in joining one because, like I've said, it involves giving back," she declares. "But to be honest, another part of me wanting to join had to do with challenging that all-male status quo thinking and practice of all volunteer firefighters being men. I just went ahead and filled out the application, passed the background checks, was voted in, and received my gear. That was in June 2006. Since then, I've transferred from Union Springs to the Town of Fleming volunteer fire department."

Waldron has a leg up on Williams experience- and training-wise, given she has about six more years time as a full-fledged volunteer member of the Union Springs department. She's already completed the first phase of organized, comprehensive firefighting training known as Firefighter I and plans on completing the Firefighter II phase once she finds the time to do so. As with Williams's Town of Fleming department, her Union Springs firehouse responds to far more ambulance than fire calls.

"We get about 200 ambulance calls a year," she says. "Although I'm not a trained and certified EMT, I do go on those, mostly as a driver and to assist as a third member."

Williams adds that she is looking forward to taking Firefighter I, an 80-hour training covering every conceivable firefighting situation while in full gear, in the very near future. Passing the Phase I training qualifies firefighters to enter burning buildings.

Both Waldron and Williams take their firefighting gear with them just about wherever they go. And, as with their Unity House jobs, they take their obligations as volunteer firefighters seriously. They attend as many of their weekly training meetings as possible, in addition to their departments' monthly business meetings. Neither ever bemoans the fact that their time and energy as volunteer firefighters is unpaid.

As if to emphasize that element of volunteering, when asked about any unusual developments in 2007 she and Waldron got to experience, Williams laughs and says, "Well, for the first time as volunteer firefighters and taxpayers, we got to claim a volunteer firefighter tax credit on our returns. You can't beat that, can you?"



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