



City of Middletown

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

October 27, 2021

For Immediate Release

Contact: Mayor Benjamin D. Florsheim, (860) 638-4801

PHOTO OP WITH A HISTORIC 1930 AMERICAN LAFRANCE FIRE TRUCK

Thursday, October 28, 2021 at 4:00pm at the R.M. Keating Historical Enterprise Park

Middletown, CT – On Thursday, October 28, 2021 at 4:00pm there will be a photo op with a historic 1930 American LaFrance Fire Truck. The public is invited to view the truck during the photo op on Thursday. Members of the committee who brought the truck to Middletown, along with Mayor Benjamin D. Florsheim, will be present. The photo op will take place at the R.M. Keating Historical Enterprise Park, located at 180 Johnson Street in Middletown.

The truck was brought back to Middletown by a group of local active and retired Middletown Fire Fighters this past Sunday, October 24, 2021. The truck, a 1930 American LaFrance, was originally ordered by the Middletown Fire Department in 1930, and it was delivered to the city in 1931. Middletown used the truck until the late 1950s. It was then loaned to Connecticut Valley Hospital. When Connecticut Valley Hospital received its own Ladder Truck, Middletown gave the truck to Ernest I. Swartz, owner of EIS Brake Parts, which was located on North Main Street. Mr. Swartz put the truck in his antique museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where it remained until it was bought by Retired Captain William Broderick of the Binghamton, New York Fire Department.

While on duty in early July, Active Fire Fighter Ryan Scranton received a call from a woman named Christina Broderick, stating that she had a 1930 American LaFrance Fire Truck that originally came from the Middletown Fire Department. She asked if there was any interest from the Department to buy the truck back. As then Fire Chief Robert Kronenberger was about to retire, he suggested Ryan contact Active Fire Fighter Owen Andrews, knowing he would be interested in the truck. Owen made the contact with the owner, and also contacted Retired Fire Fighter Jim Loewenthal, who was active with the retirees from the Middletown Fire Department. Jim then contacted Retired Fire Fighter Gene Olson, who was very knowledgeable about vintage trucks.

On July 12, 2021, Jim Loewenthal, Owen Andrews, and Gene Olson took a trip to Binghamton, where the truck was being stored, to investigate the state that the truck was in. Upon arriving back to Middletown, Jim spoke



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with his boss and very good friend, Robby Gallitto, owner of Gallitto Construction Company in Middletown, about transporting the truck back to Middletown. Mr. Gallitto contacted his friend, Matt Hubbard, owner of Yankee Heritage Construction Company in Middletown. Together they asked Tommy Paddock, a mechanic, and Brandon Hood and Joe Marino, both drivers with Gallitto Construction, and Dennis Harvey, a driver from Yankee Heritage Construction Company, if they would be willing to volunteer their time to bring the truck back to Middletown, which they graciously agreed to do.

The owner of the truck, Retired Captain William Broderick of the Binghamton Fire Department, offered to give the truck back to the people of Middletown, asking only that they pay the remaining storage fees the truck had accrued. Owen Andrews, Ryan Scranton, Jim and Patti Loewenthal, Gene Olson, and Peter and Mary Ercolani paid the final storage fees so the truck could be returned to Middletown.

Jim, Owen and Ryan met with Mayor Florsheim on October 5, 2021, and showed the Mayor pictures and provided him with the history of the 1930 American LaFrance Tiller Truck. The Mayor was very interested in retrieving this piece of Middletown history. The truck will soon be one hundred years old, and is likely remembered by some who have lived in the community for many years.

SIGN MART, located on Washington Street in Middletown, generously donated a two foot by eight foot sign that says "Going Home to Middletown, CT." The sign was hung on the side of the truck as the group drove the Tiller truck home to Middletown, Connecticut from Binghamton, New York on Sunday, October 24, 2021. Mayor Florsheim commented, "I am very grateful to this group of retired and active fire fighters for bringing this piece of history back to Middletown. The Middletown Fire Department serves this community with such integrity, and it's wonderful to have a tangible piece of history that has such a connection to the community." Retired Fire Fighter Jim Loewenthal also commented, "this is real history coming back to Middletown. A lot of our City fathers will recognize the truck, and I think they will enjoy having that history back in town."

The committee plans to set up a nonprofit crowdfunding page to help pay for the restoration and future display of this truck, which is currently being stored at the R.M. Keating facility.

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