

THE LIONS OF NEW FAIRFIELD SENIOR SAFETY DAY

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The Town Of New Fairfield may be the safest place in the State of Connecticut for seniors. Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors play an important role in saving lives, but seniors should not be at risk climbing ladders or jumping up on chairs to test, change batteries or install these safety devices. This was the consensus of the New Fairfield Candlewood Lions Club.

Encouraged by Candlewood Lions President Bob Gyle, former CT Governor Lion Jodi Rell, Lions Alice Hoxie and other Lions Club members, Doug Stram sought help from the New Fairfield Senior Center Director (Kathy Hull) and Director of Social Services (Cindy White) in identifying seniors who could use help. Youth (students seeking community service) were sought to inform and facilitate safety measures for seniors (Debbie Blum, leader of Rebels Cares, took up the challenge). NFPA literature and "Fire Safety" training were offered youth by Town Fire Marshall Mike Crawford and Building Inspector Chris Baldwin provided Code information and installation instructions for youth training. The American Red Cross was also contacted (Caleb Clark and Steve Knortz) regarding their smoke detector program.

Lori-Ann Beninson, President of the New Fairfield Lions Club, hearing of this project, offered her Lions Club help. The project became much larger, including all seniors, and known as "The Lions of New Fairfield --- Senior Safety Project" with co-chair persons Lori Beninson and Doug Stram.

On November 7, 2015, after 5 Senior Safety meetings at the Senior Center, all came together 9:00am at the New Fairfield Volunteer Fire Department Co. A Fire House. Starting with the Pledge of Allegiance, students (7 from Rebels Cares and 3 from Boys Scout Troop 137) were divided by Debbie into 5 teams (2 students and one adult driver). They were provided a clipboard with a map showing senior locations (by Chris), a form completed by seniors regarding existing safety devices, etc. (prepared by Cindy & Kathy), a Red Cross Service Acknowledgement Form and safety checklist (provided by Steve).

Debbie matched each student team with 5 seniors and provided them with extra 10-yr. batteries and carbon monoxide detectors (donated by Rebels Cares). Doug explained use of clipboard information.

Steve Knortz spoke on fire and personal safety, smoke and CO detectors, demonstrated correct installation methods and activation of smoke detectors (The American Red Cross provided 75 smoke detectors - 10-yr. lithium batteries encapsulated within detector), instructed on proper use of tools (screw guns loaned and various fasteners also provided by Red Cross), explained hazardous situations

that may be encountered such as extension cords and combustibles near flames and answered questions.

Lori gave final instructions including use of seat belts and directed all to the fire dept. parking lot where batteries, carbon monoxide detectors and ladders were given teams by Debbie, and Steve distributed smoke detectors, tools, etc. All left by 10:00 am and the last team to return with completed forms and equipment arrived at 2:00 pm. Debbie treated all to a pizza party at Biscotti's.

It appears project was a success with twenty-five seniors served by 10 youth. The most serious call received was from a senior woman who would not let anyone in her house until she spoke with Doug and he could tell her it was okay.

This was a pilot project that needed everyone who voluntarily gave of their time and their non-profit organization's generous contributions of safety devices and batteries to run smoothly and successfully. Lori and Doug will review November 7th details and have another Senior Center meeting to look into improving "Senior Safety" during next year's time change. Additional help would be appreciated to expand this project to include veterans and handicapped persons. Meanwhile, there are many Lions Clubs in Connecticut serving their communities that may be interested in starting their own annual "Senior Safety" project. Lori and/or Doug would be happy to discuss what was done and what was learned from this project with any Lions Club.

The American Red Cross expressed interest in senior safety programs across the State of Connecticut. Imagine what Lions Clubs International and The American Red Cross could accomplish together!