Celebrating 175 years with the Independence Fire Department

This year the Independence Fire Department is celebrating 175 years of service. Organized by a group of volunteers in 1843, the department is one of the oldest west of the Mississippi River.

“175 years ago, settlers were converging on Independence preparing for the Great Migration of the Oregon Trail,” Fire Chief Doug Short said. “The men who volunteered at first had to depend on wagons and buckets, making an already dangerous job even more so. Buildings were made largely out of wood; open fires were often used to heat and cook. Those early firefighters were less focused on saving a building and more focused on saving lives and keeping a fire from spreading.”

The science of fire fighting has changed over the years. Firefighters no longer enter burning buildings without breathing apparatus, their trucks can pump tremendous amounts of water even high up in the air, and they no longer depend on buckets or man-powered hand pumps.

“There’s no law that says you can’t be the best at what you do,” Independence Fire Department Captain Richard Webb, also a member of the Independence 76 Fire Company, said. “In 1918, Independence purchased its first motorized trucks, and, in 1928, added two American La France trucks. This was a turning point for the department and caused a bit of a stir among the firefighters at the time.”

The City of Independence utilized open cab trucks and firefighters rode tailboard well into the 1990s, which posed challenges when it was hot, cold or there was any kind of precipitation.

““All the fire trucks they had when I hired on were open cab,” Independence Fire Department Retiree Craig Mitchelltree said. “And the firefighter rode on the tailboard and you’d grab that bar. You’d get dressed holding on while you were going down the street.”

While many things have changed in the fire service over the last 175 years, the camaraderie and sense of family remains.

“The one constant in the fire department is change, whether it’s the tactics or the technology being used,” Independence Firefighter Cole Sammons said. “However one thing that will stay the same will be the bonds and the history we create. That is lasting.”

At the parade and celebration on June 16, Congressman Emanuel Cleaver presented the department a proclamation which had been read on the house floor honoring the anniversary. State Representative Bill Kidd presented the department with a flag flown over the Missouri State Capitol. Finally, Mayor Weir recognized the commitment and partnerships between the department, International Fire Fighters Local 781, and the Independence 76 Fire Company which have all worked together to preserve the history while looking toward the future of the department.


CityScene is published monthly by the City Manager’s Office located at 111 East Maple Street, Independence, MO 64050.

For information, call 325-7086.

Attending a local event, program or activity? Share pictures and tag the City. We love to see our community from the citizens’ perspective.
Mark your calendar - August Events

Farmers Market
Open Wednesday and Saturday
The Independence Farmers Market will be open each Wednesday and Saturday in July from 6 a.m. to 1 p.m. Visit local farmers, crafters and more. The Market is located at the northwest corner of W. Walnut St. and S. Liberty St.

Be sure to stop by and follow the progress of the new Uptown Farmers Market being built on Truman between Osage and Liberty.

Look for information regarding the opening of the new Independence Uptown Market on Facebook, Twitter and Nextdoor in August.

Plant and Seed Distribution
August 2, 4 p.m. - 5 p.m.
Sermon Center South Room, Fall Plant and Seed Distribution. Must be a member of Kansas City Community Gardens to participate, but you can sign up on site. For more information, email Selena at sgood@indepmo.org

Drop-Off Depot
August 11, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
The Drop-off Depot will be held at 875 Vista Avenue on the second Saturday of each month, March through November, weather permitting. For more information or any questions, please call (816)325-7600.

Sizzlin' Summer Showcase
August 17 and 18
On Friday, August 17, at 7:00 p.m. and Saturday, August 18 at 11 a.m. & 2 p.m., at 11025 E. Winner Road in Independence, Puppetry Arts Institute presents “Sizzlin’ Summer Showcase,” performed by puppeteer Kraig Kensinger. Marionettes and hand puppets showcase a variety of summertime show tunes. Admission is $6 per person. For reservations, call (816)833-9777.

Women of the Santa Fe Trail Lecture
August 25, 2 p.m.
Join the Friends of the National Frontier Trails Museum and the Santa Fe Trails Association Missouri River Outfitters Chapter for a lecture by historian Dr. Leo Oliva exploring female writers on the Santa Fe Trail. Dr. Oliva is the author of several historical works, covering the Santa Fe Trail, the Frontier Army, and 19th Century Kansas. The lecture will take place at the National Frontier Trail Museum, 318 W. Pacific Avenue.

Before the lecture, the Friends of NFTM will hold their annual meeting at 1 p.m. This meeting is open to current and prospective members. Light refreshments provided.

Admission is $5, free to members of the Missouri River Outfitters, Friends of the NFTM, SFTA, KCAHTA, and OCTA.

Mile Starts Here
Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.
Every Wednesday at 9 a.m. meet at Waterfall Park (4501 S. Bass Pro Dr.) for a mile walk lead by a community member. It’s a free program that encourages people to get together to socialize and exercise at the same time.

**Weather Disclaimer**
If the temps drop below 32 degrees, or above 90 degrees, or there is rain at 9 a.m., the group will meet at the Independence Center (18001 E. 39th St.) to get in their mile walk. Please make sure to check The Mile Starts Here Facebook page periodically for updates.

Special Events Policy Reminder
indep.us/specialevents
As noted previously in CityScene, the City has implemented a new Special Events Policy. If you are holding an event in the community, please visit indep.us/specialevents to learn more about how you can obtain the required permits and approval.

You can also find a list of all Special Events that have completed the process on the website.

Independence Young Matrons Support Community
Independence Young Matrons (IYM) is pleased to announce this year’s gifts to the community totaling $29,909.32.

At the May 22nd luncheon meeting, representatives of the following organizations were presented gifts totaling $18,252.67 by Board of Trustees Co-Chair Roma Meinsen: Cancer Action; Community Services League; Tennies for Kids; Developing Potential; Drumm Farm Center for Children; Foster Adopt Connect; Marion Hope; Neighborhood Dinners Program; NewHouse Shelter; Puppetry Arts Institute; Shepherd’s Center of Raytown; Tabitha’s Closet; William Chrisman High School Drama and Broadcast Departments. Also awarded was a scholarship for higher education.

Members made ongoing, like-kind donations through the Civic Committee valued at $5,630. These contributions benefit Independence School District children; Animal Shelters; Community Service League and Crossroads Shelter.

One of the IYM’s long-standing gifts to the community is the Children’s Theatre Production. This year’s 60th production was “The Pirates and the Treasure Map” and was attended by more than 4,000 area children. Bus transportation for children to attend a cultural arts program is provided through the Vera Redfield Endowment, which was established by IYM at the Independence School District Foundation.

The annual Holly and Mistletoe Homes Tour, held by IYM on the first Thursday in December each year, provides the majority of fundraising for the grants. For more information, visit IYM on Facebook or independenceyoungmatrons.org.

Independence CityScene
July 2018

Mark your calendars for the 46th Annual SantaCaliGon Festival
August 31 - September 3
santacaligon.com
City of Independence celebrated the opening of the new Communications Center, home to the City’s 9-1-1 dispatchers, on June 20. The Communications Center is located at 17220 E. Medical Center Parkway.

The Communications Center was made possible through support from the City’s Public Safety Sales Tax. The 9-1-1 dispatchers will now move from the basement of the Central Police Building off of Memorial Drive. When fully staffed, this division employs 31 people, who in 2017 dispatched more than 150,000 calls for service.

City implements new LLC Registration program

With a new law in the State of Missouri, the City of Independence has implemented a program to register Limited Liability Companies (LLC). The law is designed to make it easier for the City to tackle blight and ensure that our citizens live in safe and healthy environments. By having basic contact information, the City is able to properly notify individuals responsible for properties owned by an LLC.

The law, RSMo. §347.048, states that all LLC’s that own property within the City of Independence are required to file an affidavit stating the name and street address of at least one person who has management responsibility for the LLC. If the person listed ceases to have responsibility, a new affidavit needs to be filed within thirty (30) days of the change.

There are over 1,800 different LLC’s that own property within the City of Independence. Letters were mailed to the address of record of each LLC in May notifying them of this requirement.

To register an LLC, please visit indep.us/LLC where you can complete the registration, and download the required affidavit. If you have any questions about this program you can call (816) 325-7427 or e-mail Grant Watkins Davis at gwatkinsdavis@indepmo.org.
Council Corner - Mayor Pro Tem (4th District) Tom Van Camp

When I originally ran for 4th District Councilmember, I started a conversation with my neighbors. As I knocked on doors I heard concerns about the rental properties in our community and knew that this was one of the most important issues I could work on as a member of the Council. In the fall of 2016, I championed the Rental Ready Inspection Program which requires residential rental units to meet basic standards of safety and livability in order for the landlord to renew their business license. These inspections take place every two years.

The program rolled out in June 2017 and the first year has been a huge success. Since June 1, 2017, our six qualified rental housing inspectors have completed more than 2,800 inspection. Through these inspections we have more than doubled the registered rental units in the City, starting at 7,900 and growing to 16,800. Additionally, this brings us more in line with Census estimates for rental units in Independence. We have added more than 900 licensed landlords to our system as well.

And while I cannot say how proud I am of these numbers, what I think is the bigger win for all of us is the increased safety and livability of our rental units in the City. For example, these inspections have helped fix or replace more than 200 smoke detectors.

Our inspectors have found raw sewage in basements, exposed electrical wires, broken heating units and more. Tenants were afraid to bring these problems to their landlords’ attention, but this program helped ensure that these problems were fixed without repercussions to the renters. In fact, I heard recently of a tenant who was physically unable to go to her basement, so she was unaware of sewer and electrical problems until the inspection. Landlords and renters alike have told us they have liked the new program and its results.

It is important to note that rentals are a business venture; and while landlords have a responsibility so to do the tenants inhabiting the units.

The Rental Ready Program has become a regional and national model. The conversations that have resulted in this first year show there may be future changes that we need to make but we know we are on the right track.

If you have questions about Rental Ready or would like more information visit indep.us/rentalready or call (816)325-7405. You can find a list of the qualified inspectors on this website, learn more about the landlord/tenant related ordinances of the City and steps tenants can take to file formal complaints.

Again, I am proud to serve as your 4th District Councilmember and have recently been voted Mayor Pro Tem. Thank you for the opportunity to serve this community. If you have questions or concerns for me or any of my fellow council members, you can always contact the City Council at (816)325-7022.