



SASSAFRAS-FERNY CREEK FIRE BRIGADE

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25 September 2011

Junior brigade celebrates 40 years

In October 1971, eight boys met at the Sassafras-Ferny Creek fire station to form the junior division of the local fire brigade.

The Sassafras-Ferny Creek Junior Brigade would in time become part youth club, part service organisation but always the intention has been clear – to provide young people with an understanding of the place of fire in the environment and best way to live with it ... and to have some fun along the way!

Many years later the junior brigade would come under the umbrella of the CFA's Junior Development Program, but in these early years the work was led by an enthusiastic young local volunteer Richard Cromb, who would eventually serve the senior brigade as Captain for 10 years before joining the CFA staff as an instructor.

The 40th anniversary of the junior brigade represents a remarkable achievement for a small community like Sassafras and Ferny Creek.

A key role of the junior brigade's contribution has been to serve as a "training ground" for the firefighters of the future. Literally hundreds of boys and girls aged 11 to 16 years have passed through its ranks, many going on as young adults to serve as firefighters locally, across Victoria and interstate.

Brigade Captain John Schauble, who himself started as a junior member in 1972, said many people in the local community probably did not appreciate the significance of the junior program.

"In the end, whether or not these young people continue on into the senior brigade ranks probably isn't the real benefit to the community – although they invariably make excellent additions to our operational team.

"Probably more important are the life lessons about fire that they take away with them and will retain for the rest of their lives, no matter where that journey takes them," he said.

Unlike many other brigades, the emphasis of our junior program is very practical; involving essentially the same basic learnings that senior brigade members must undertake. Every year our junior members take part in a competition day with other neighbouring junior brigades to test the skills they have learned.

Today, the junior brigade has 15 members, with a small team of junior leaders co-ordinated by senior brigade 1st Lieutenant John Tomada.

To celebrate the 40th anniversary, an open day is being held at the Ferny Creek Recreation reserve on Sunday, 16 October from 1pm until 5pm, with competitions and demonstrations, an afternoon tea, plus awards and presentations to the current junior members.

The whole community, especially former junior members and their families, are invited to join us!

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