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NEWS >>

COUPLE SAVED FROM RESIDENTIAL FIRE AFTER LOCAL 700 POLICE OFFICER'S QUICK RESPONSE

During the late evening of Oct. 18, Somonauk Police Officer and Teamsters Local 700 member Steve Kuester was out on patrol when he saw a nearby smoke haze in the sky.

“When I saw the smoke, my first thought was, ‘Who is burning leaves this time of night?’” said Officer Kuester.

As a volunteer fireman, Officer Kuester says a home fire has a “certain smell” and he knew right away it was not burning leaves as soon as he got closer to the smoke. He immediately turned around and found the street and the house that the smoke was coming from.

“I saw that the garage was on fire and flames were shooting out of the back,” the Local 700 member said. “I called it in right away and when I saw three cars in the driveway, I knew someone was inside the home.”

He began pounding on the front door and yelling, “Fire!, Get out, fire!” The couple at home took a few minutes to wake up and realize what was happening, but they were able to get out of the home unharmed.

“They were frightened, but very thankful and appreciative,” said Officer Kuester. The fire department responded very quickly and the fire was extinguished fast.

During the Somonauk Village Board meeting on Nov. 9, Officer Kuester was given the Somonauk Police Department’s Life Saving Award. The award, presented to him by Somonauk Police Chief Rich Smith, stated it was “in recognition of his efforts that resulted in the saving of two lives on Oct. 18.”

“It feels good knowing that I was just doing my job,” said Officer Kuester. “I suppose I was just in the right place at the right time.”

Officer Kuester recently saw the couple at a local event that honored hometown heroes. The couple gave him a Superman figurine that is able to hang as a Christmas ornament. Officer Kuester currently has it on display at home with other special items that were dedicated to a former K9 partner that he had between 2002 – 2008.

A police officer since 1994, Officer Kuester has been with the Somonauk department for the last 12 years and a volunteer fireman for three years.

“Without Officer Kuester’s quick response and efforts to wake the couple at home, the outcome of this fire could have been very tragic,” said Teamsters Local 700 President and Teamsters Joint Council 25 Trustee Becky Strzechowski. “On behalf of the Local 700 Executive Board, I commend Officer Kuester for his life-saving efforts and his dedication to the community by serving as both a law enforcement officer and a volunteer fireman.”

Teamsters Local 700 is an affiliate of Teamsters Joint Council 25, America’s premier labor union for Chicago, Illinois and northwest Indiana.