

# Lowell Area Fire Department



## 2022 Annual Report

## CORE VALUES:

### Service:

We protect and serve our entire community with a commitment to performance excellence.

### Professionalism:

We are dedicated to serving at the highest level of excellence, in a manner showing commitment and respect to our mission. A commitment to excellence, possessing a positive attitude, and having pride in your work while conforming to a high standard of conduct.

### Honor/Pride:

The enormous commitment necessary to perform the Department's task requires excellence of character. We inspire each other through pride in our department, which is a belief that every action reflects on all the members of the department, both past and present. We take pride in ourselves as individuals, our members as a team, our department as a family, and our citizens as a community.

### Integrity:

We are committed to honesty and ethical behavior and we will make decisions based on moral standards regardless of personal belief or benefit. We will work hard every day to maintain the highest professional standards and to earn public trust through our actions.

### Family:

We are a fire department family. We are committed and accountable to each other because our lives depend on it. We value each member in our organization. We respect those who came before us and will strive to make the organization better for those who follow.

## Fire Department

3 A Note From Chief Shannon Witherell

4 Governing Body

5,6 Personnel Changes

7 2022 Achievements

8 Department Organization

8-11 Personnel Leadership and Roster

12 Facilities Information

13 Equipment Report

14,15 Training Report

16-19 Responses 2022

## Fire Prevention

20,21 Fire Prevention & Community Risk Reduction

## Emergency Medical Services

22 CPR and First Aid Training

23 Thank You



### 2023 GOALS

- Build on software programs for inventory and equipment tracking
- Explore grant opportunities
- Replace Medic 9
- Implement a Duty Officer response
- Complete a Department SOG rewrite
- Implement the Battalion Chief role

### A Note from Chief Shannon Witherell

The Lowell Area Fire Department is pleased to submit to you the 2022 annual report. In this annual report you will find general information on the station, vehicles, response statistics and reports from our staff and programs they are responsible for.

We responded to 1126 calls for service that included fires, motor vehicle accidents, HAZMATs, medicals, rescues, alarms, etc.

The Lowell Area Fire Department provides fire, EMS, rescue services and community education programs in 60 square miles for three municipalities including Lowell Township, Vergennes Township, and the City of Lowell as well as a mutual aid partnership with our surrounding townships.

This past year was filled with many victories and triumphs, such as lives saved, goals accomplished and awards received.

We look forward to 2023 with high expectations of improving our department and keeping our citizens safe. Our entire team is truly honored to serve our great communities!

Respectfully,

*Shannon L. Witherell*

Shannon L. Witherell





## Governing Body

The Lowell Area Fire Department is governed by the Lowell Area Fire and Emergency Services Authority Board. This board is made up of a elected member from Lowell Township, Vergennes Township and the City of Lowell, as well as a citizen from each of the three municipalities.

The Board meets once per month on the 2nd Thursday at 7:00pm at the Lowell Area Fire Station. The Board is responsible for the direct management of the Fire Chief as well as approving and overseeing the annual budget for the Fire Department .

The 2022 members were , Board Chairperson Jessica Marks of Lowell Township, Vice Chair Tim Wittenbach of Vergennes Township, Treasure Carlton Blough of Lowell Township, Mike DeVore of the City of Lowell, and David Wikstrom of the City of Lowell, and Kate Dernocoeur of Vergennes Township .

In 2022, the Board was invited to be involved with a number of activities including the swearing-in of members promoted to full member status, fund raising events, the Department year end banquet and community events. The Officers and members of the LAFD were pleased to have the Board members take part in these events.

In 2023 the Board along with the Command Staff continued to work with Chief Witherell to implement and review the McGrath Consulting Group report.



## Personnel Changes



In July of 2022 the Lowell Area Fire Department hired our first full-time Firefighter.

Firefighter Brenda Herron has been with Department since September of 2020. She came to us as an EMT working part-time for Rockford Ambulance. She was a vital part of our part-time program. Firefighter Herron oversees our daily Social Media outreach, handles all scheduling of our public education program, scheduling of our smoke detector / CO alarm program. She is also the departments pediatric care specialist on top of being one of our top responding members .

In August Firefighter Herron joined other female Firefighters in Orlando to take part in Women in the Fire Service conference. During this week long conference Firefighter Herron took part in several hands on trainings as well as lecture courses from some of the top women in todays fire service. These learning and networking opportunities are a invaluable part of growing in this ever changing field.

**2022 Welcomed several new members to LAFD**



Tony Ellis



Nick Martin



Kelly Nietupski



Keith Debbaudt

## Honorable Mentions



Firefighter Brenda 2022 Firefighter of the Year and life 2 savings



Firefighter Daniel Rybiski  
2022 Rookie of the Year



Deputy Chief Corwin Velzen  
2021 Chief's Service Award

## 2022 Achievements

In 2022, several members were enrolled in several different classes, including officer development, EMS, and professional education, with the goal of providing the best possible customer service to those who call on us.

Firefighters Matthew Harrison, Jim Weiler, Dan Rybiski and Paige Frazer, Mandie Jones Lieutenants Bob Hults, Kevin Jones, and Erik Kelley Captains, Sean Donahue, and Justin Soyka successfully the EMT course in 2022.

Firefighters Tim Hill, Nigel Hefty, Jim Weiler, Lieutenants Kevin Jones, Erik Kelley, Bob Hults Captains Justin Soyka and Sean Donahue completed the Fire Instructor I program and Deputy Chief Corwin Velzen completed the Fire Instructor II program in 2022.

Firefighters Paige Frazer, Mike Hoppenrath, Ian Shears, Chris Tomic and Mandie Jones completed the Firefighter I & II program in 2022.

At the 2022 annual banquet members of our Honor Guard were awarded a Special Services award for their hard work and dedication. Firefighter Mike Hoppenrath, Brenda Herron, and Chief Witherell were awarded Life Saving awards. Mr. Bruce Doll was awarded the Outstanding Community Supporter award.





## Department Organization

Shannon Witherell

Fire Chief

Cory Velzen

Deputy Chief

Sean Donahue

Captain

Justin Soyka

Captain

Kevin Jones

Lieutenant

Bob Hults

Lieutenant

Charles Johnson

Lieutenant

Erik Kelley

Lieutenant

### Firefighters

James Wieler

Tim Hill

Brenda Herron

Keith Debbaudt

Dustin Hendryx

James Bolan

Christopher Tomic

Thomas Van Putten

Tony Ellis

Ashely Putney

Charles Putney

Nigel Heftye

Nick Martin

Jordan Lambert

Zachery Jahnke

Matthew Harrison

Daniel Rybiski

Michael Hoppenrath

Paige Frazer

Mandi Jones

James Oswald

Kelly Nietupski

Micaiah Ford

### Vision Statement

The Lowell Area Fire Department will set the standard of excellence by honoring tradition, professionalism, customer service, and public education; We will also create leaders through training, education and strong ethical values.



## Personnel Leadership

### MISSION STATEMENT

We are committed to providing fire suppression, medical services, and other emergency and non-emergency activities to the residents of the greater Lowell Area. We accomplish this mission through training, dedication, and education to insure the protection of our membership and the community.



Chief Shannon Witherell  
1998



Deputy Chief Corwin Velzen  
2009



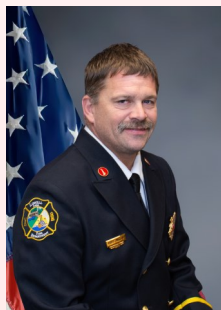
Captain Sean Donahue  
2008



Captain Justin Soyka  
2006



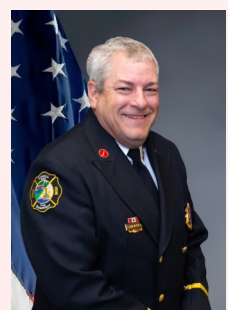
Lt Kevin Jones  
2017



Lt Robert Hults  
2008



Lt Charles Johnson  
2009



Lt Erik Kelley  
2013

## *Personnel Roster*



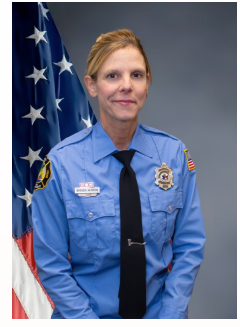
Jim Weiler



Tim Hill



Ian Shears



Brenda Herron



Tony Ellis



John North



Dustin Hendryx



James Bolan



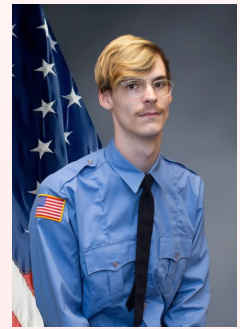
Christopher Tomic



Ashely Putney



Thomas Van Putten



Nick Martin

## *Personnel Roster*



Charles Putney



Nigel Heftye



Keith Debbaudt



Jordan Lambert



Matthew Harrison



Zachery Jahnke



Daniel Rybiski



Michael Hoppenrath



Paige Frazer



Mandie Jones



James Oswald



Kelly Nietupski



## Facility Report

Over the course of 2022 our staff continued to build on the facility updates that were started in 2020. Through a donation from Lowell Area Schools we added 30 lockers to the building and three sitting benches outside the building. This donation saved the department \$15,000.00 in lockers alone.

In July, Next Level Coating applied the new flooring to the hallways of the front of the building and donated a \$800.00 patch of our logo that was placed in the flooring.

Though a donation by the City of Lowell a new electronic door locking system was installed in the building saving the Department \$18,000.00. These doors have added security and access control to areas of the building .

In August, Wittenbach tree services donated their services to remove the overgrown trees and shrubs from around the outside of the building and staff donated labor to place new stones around the outside of the building.

We upgraded the training room to accommodate for larger staff training by adding two large tv's and remove the old projector system.

We will be looking to update the kitchen area and meeting room in the coming year.







Captain Justin Soyka  
Equipment Officer

### 2022 Equipment Goals

- Place the replacement Medic Unit in service.
- Improved record keeping through Emergency Reporting System

## Equipment Report

In 2021 our team along with the Kent County Purchasing Department finalized the specifications for the purchase of the new LAFD Engine 1. Several Truck manufactures submitted bids for this project. After several weeks of reviewing the bids, a recommendation was made to the Kent County Fire Commission and the Lowell Area Fire and Emergency Services Authority Board to sign a purchase agreement with Spencer Manufacturing in South Haven, Michigan as well as Spartan Motors in Charlotte, Michigan to build the truck. This truck is being dedicated in the name of Chief Frank Martin for his 45 years of service to the Lowell Area Fire Department in a public ceremony.

A grant was awarded from the Lowell Area Community Fund for \$112,500.00. These funds were used to order the equipment to properly stock the incoming Engine 1, including new battery operated rescue tools.

All annual DOT inspections were performed on all of the Department's trucks with no major issues noted. Pump tests were also completed finding three valve replacements were needed.

This year, all the ladders passed their testing. In 2022 the Department purchased our own hose testing machine. This machine allows the department to test our own hoses annually or as needed during the dayshift. Purchasing this machine saves the department roughly \$3,000.00 per year in testing fees. We tested roughly 7,500 feet of hose in 2022.

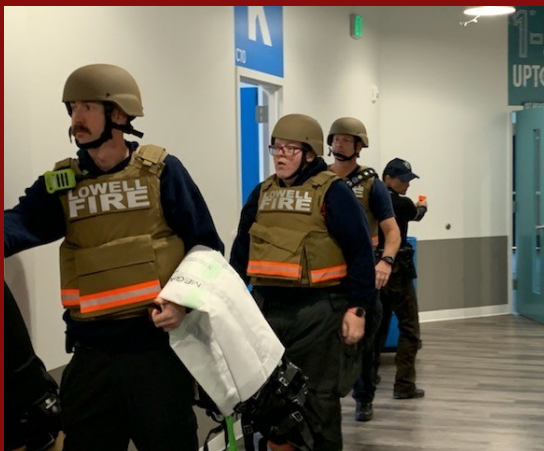


Deputy Chief Cory Velzen

Sr. Training Officer

### 2021 Training Goals

- Complete EMT Training for the remainder of the staff
- Live Fire Training Center
- Continue to train with area Departments



## Training Report

The Lowell Area Fire Department training division is responsible for all training related to medical and fire over the course of the year. This training will cover all requirements for new recruits as well as current incumbent fire fighters. This training covers a wide range of topics for all levels of training from the fire fighter, to company officer, to Chief officer level of training. To accomplish all levels of training for the department, LAFD often times has to get creative and work with outside agencies to get the desired results.

During the first few months of the year LAFD will cover multiple topics that are annual fire training refreshers. These topics will range from building construction, electrical safety, incident command, hazardous materials, and small engine. The training department will also take this time to host medical blitz on weekends where multiple medical topics are covered and reviewed to sharpen up the skills. Over the course of the year as the department became an EMT response department the level of medical instruction was elevated to the EMT basic and increased in frequency.

Training with live fire and having qualified instructors can be a major challenge for any department. During the course of the year LAFD hosted a state sponsored instructor I course and 8 members participated and pass the course. The department also had a member pass the state instructor II course and NFPA live fire course. The department leveraged this training and participated in multiple live fire training scenarios at the Thornapple FD live fire burn complex. Live fire training wasn't limited to only fixed facilities either. The department worked with some local residents on performing controlled live fire burns on large fields utilizing wildland training techniques.





Deputy Chief Cory Velzen

Sr. Training Officer



## Training Report

LAFD was offered the unique opportunity during the course of 2022 to train in a few local buildings as well. One of these buildings was the local JR high school. While part of the building was scheduled to be torn down the department utilized the building for a multitude of trainings. These trainings consisted of search and rescue, forcible entry, RIT, fire attack, ladder operation, and ventilation. The department was also offered the training opportunity to visit many local businesses as well. Visiting the local businesses provides the fire fighters with the opportunity to train on types of building construction and prepare for possible incidents and scenarios in case of emergencies.

One of the other areas that requires lots of training is in vehicle extrication. As vehicles continue to change and evolve the department again is thankful for local business to provide opportunities to sharpen their skills. The department participated in multiple vehicle extrications at junk yards that have been damaged from accidents that provide for real world simulations.

Not all training throughout the year is done in the area. The training department also sent some of the firefighters out to state sponsored Chief officers classes, national fire department instructors conference, and women in fire conference. These provide the fire fighters with a good perspective of the fire service and bring back exciting new ideas that will benefit the LAFD community.

Throughout the year LAFD training division looks to provide the best possible training they can to LAFD fire fighters. Each member will participate in roughly 10 hours of average training throughout a month. This level of dedication for training will help provide firefighters with the skills necessary to succeed at most scenario they may encounter. LAFD see the training division as the backbone of the department and will look to them in the future to provide the best education possible.

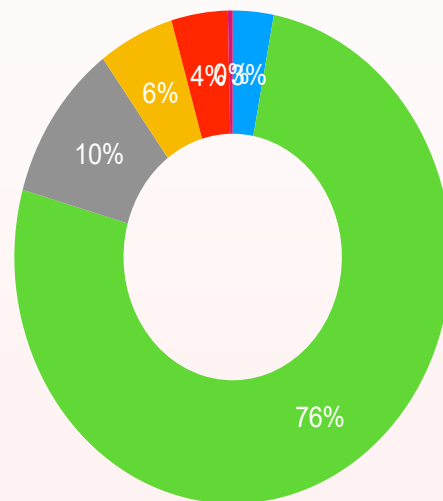




## 2022 Response Report

2022 was record breaking year with regards to call responses. Compared to 2021, we saw a 8% increase in requests for services. We saw an increase of 96 Medical/ Rescue. However we saw a decline of 6 fire related and a decline of 9 alarm related calls in 2022.

Also notable, apparatus response time in the 2022 during the 8:00 am to 4:00 pm have maintained a 5 minutes or less average.



■ Fires ■ Medical & Rescue ■ Service ■ Hazmat ■ Alarms ■ Other

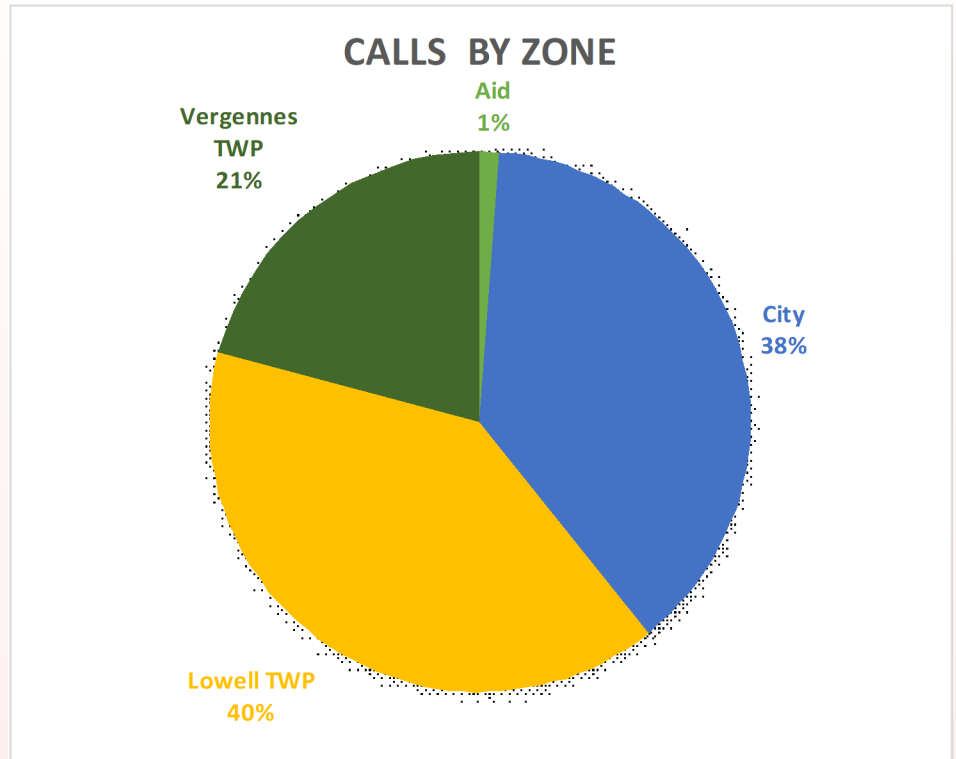
Call Type	
Fires	34
Medical & Rescue	860
Hazards Condition / No Fire	63
Service	118
Alarms	47
Other	4
Total Calls	1126



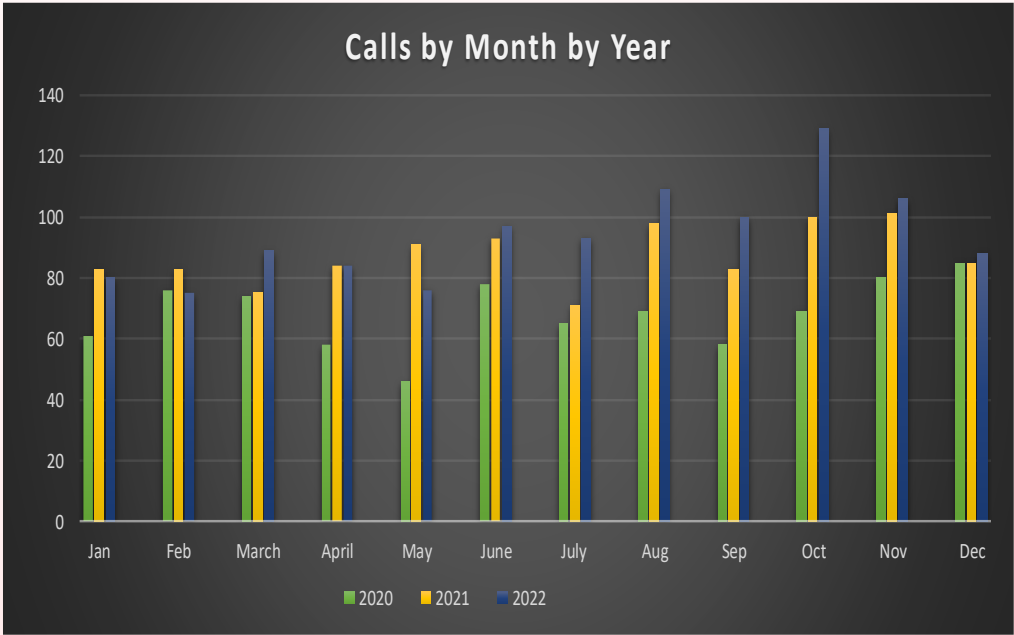
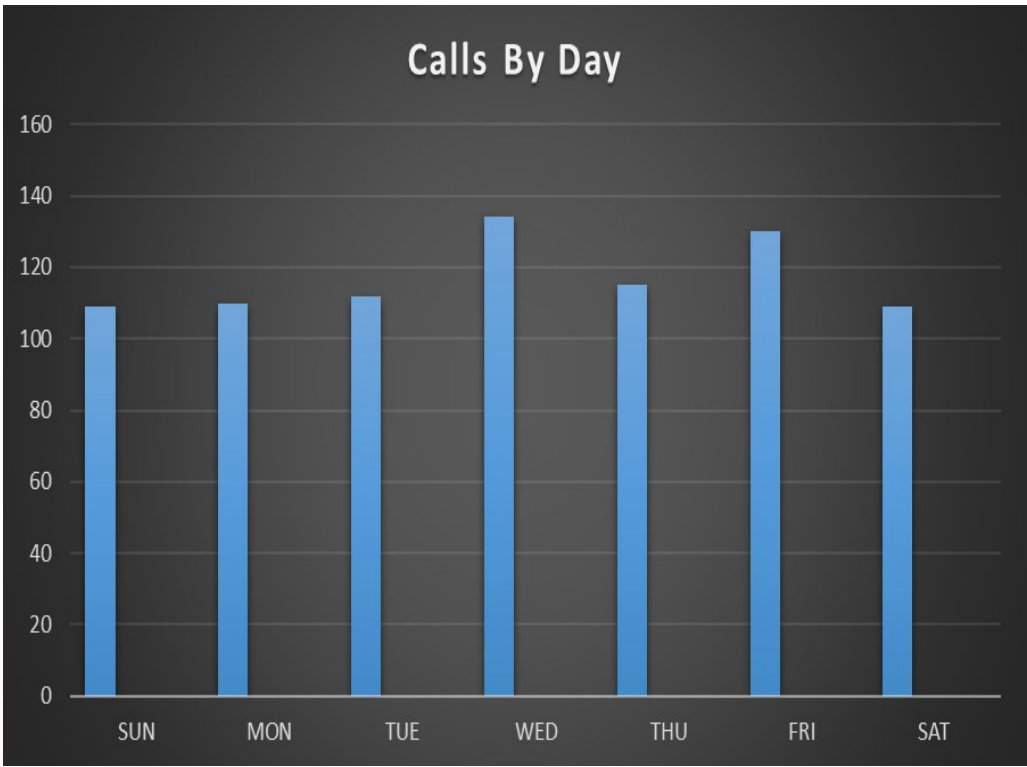


In 2022, the City of Lowell had 429 calls for service up from 427 in 2021, Lowell Township had 449 calls , up from 386 in 2021; and Vergennes Township 235 requests for service, up from 223 in 2021.

In 2022, we were requested to provide aid to outside communities on 13 incidents including the first deployment of MABAS 3603 to Hemlock MI. At the Hemlock deployment, our crew worked 12 hours flowing over 400,000 gallon of waters.









Captain Sean Donahue  
Fire Prevention Officer

## Fire Prevention & Community Involvements

In 2022 our team was able to return to the class room and a more traditional fire prevention instruction. We were pleased to have been a part of Fire prevention in all for the elementary schools in October. We had the opportunity to speak with over 1500 children in the class room as well as several hundred more at our station during Fire Prevention week.

We also had the opportunity to connect with our community through multiple events throughout the year including; Safety Town at Impact, Sensory Showing of Paw Patrol, Meijer safety carnival, Fallasburg historical village celebration, Vergennes United Methodist - Wacky water night, Riverwalk, Harvest Festival and more.

Over the course of 2022 our team also provided EMT medical standby's for a large number of events throughout the area. The following is a sample of these event; Kent County Youth Fair, Pride on the Riverwalk, and the Riverwalk 5K.

In 2022, we were pleased to partner with State of Michigan Fire Marshalls Office and to provide no cost Smoke and CO Detectors to our residents. In 2022 we installed over 200 smoke detectors and 60 CO Alarms in private homes throughout the area.

### 2023 Fire Prevention Goals

\*Install 300 Smoke Detectors and 120 CO Alarms

Fire Prevention Training, including adding an Inspector I

Continuing to hold a Trunk or Treat as well as a Community Open House







Little Chief

## Fire Prevention & Community Involvements

We had the opportunity to partner with Riding for Ryan in 2022. Riding for Ryan is a non-profit group formed by a Cascade TWP Firefighter after the loss of his son in a bicycle accident. The mission of the group is to prevent this happening to another family by increasing visibility of children on bikes by applying a bike flag to the bike. During the month of July our members changed our uniforms to the Riding for Ryan t-shirts as well as provided information on our social media. We also partnered with Ball's ice cream for a flag give away event. Over the year we handed out and installed over 300 bike flags.

Last winter we added Little Chief to our roster. Chief is a Golden Reviver puppy who's intended job will be a support animal for the staff. Research has shown a great deal of benefit for mental and physical health for first responders with access to therapy animals. In his short time with LAFD Chief has been on every local TV channel as well as in a national trade magazine. He is at the Station during the day and spends his nights and weekends home with Chief Witherell's family. Chief has completed his K9 good citizen training and will go on in late 2023 for his therapy dog training at West Michigan Therapy Dog.



## CPR and First Aid Report

### 2023 CPR Goal

#### Offer community CPR training

In 2022 6 members of LAFD received their American Heart BLS Instructor cards. Doing this allows for LAFD to annually recertify our members as well as offer CPR classes to members of our community. We aligned with Cascade TWP Fire Department as our training center and were able to provide life saving CPR training to several citizens over the past year.

In 2023 we will be looking for the opportunity to provide a community CPR event to place this life saving skill in the hands of as many citizens as possible.

We also offered CPR First Aid Training to several scout and fair groups over the course of 2022.





## Thank You

Our staff is excited to see what 2023 brings to the Lowell Area Fire Department. We look forward to continuing to serve this great community we are all proud to call home.

On behalf of the Command staff and members of the Lowell Area Fire Department , thank you for taking the time to read our 2022 Annual Report.



## Lowell Area Fire Department

315 S. Hudson  
Lowell, MI 49331

616.897.7354 ph