

ARROWHEAD PRESENTS THE 2020 JOHN KRALL AWARD August 15, 2020



This volunteer has been a member of our community since 2003.

His attention to detail and his relentless concern for the safety of our community are well beyond any requirements for this award. This Year's John Krall Award winner is Jim Gelsomini.

He has been our Fire Chief for 5 ½ years. At his request, he continues to be unpaid for his services as Fire Chief. Jim works for the fire department a tremendous amount of hours over many days each and every week.

He attended fire fighter training, an eight-week course, put on by Gunnison Fire. He commuted to Gunnison 2 nights per week plus some Saturdays. When training ended late this included hotel stays. All of this he did at his personal expense.

Jim has attended many medical training First Responder classes at Arrowhead, Gunnison and Lake City.

Every Sunday, you can find Jim at the firehouse starting up every engine including vehicles, pumps, chainsaws, etc. to ensure operational status.

His trips to Montrose always include shopping for the fire department for items needed for repair projects, equipment improvements and medical supplies. He spends extra time shopping at various stores in order to get the best possible prices to save the AVFD funds.

An outside wall in the equipment bay had water damage from snow melting off equipment and leaking through the wall during the winter. Jim tore the wall open, repaired the damage and put it back together saving several thousand dollars for the department. He also came up with a solution to prevent the issue in the future.

In another cost savings move, saving the cost of an electrician, he rewired the heating circuits in the equipment bay to run off a timer in order to take advantage of "time of use" savings in electrical service. This sounds simple but this was a big effort costing the department very little.

During power outages the firehouse communication radios, lights and bay door openers used to become non-functional. Jim rewired circuits so now these functions can run from a generator. During every power outage, Jim makes the trip into the firehouse to activate this service in order to keep emergency response ready.

Jim was a major labor contributor on the project to replace the extremely old pump on the large trailer/sled. He added enhancement to the new pump's plumbing when it was installed.

Fire codes require the fire fighter's gear worn to structure fires be no older than 10 years because the fire retardant capabilities deteriorate over time. Many of the AVFD's fire fighter suits were older, some as old as 30 years! Due to all the monetary saving from the work Jim volunteers instead of hiring the work out, the AVFD was able to purchase new gear over the past few years.

Another area that has benefited from savings due to Jim's volunteer efforts is having funds to replace the Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) equipment that was no longer certifiable. Interesting side note here; Jim does routine practice with SCBAs by sometimes wearing one while working on equipment on Sundays. The SCBAs are like a heavy, bulky backpack so it takes strength, balance and coordination to deal with them.

Jim attends emergency management meetings with other departments in Gunnison County over many months throughout the Year. Since COVID, Jim has been part of county meetings in order to maintain safety for our First Responders.

Recently, Jim hasn't allowed any cleaning staff to come into the firehouse in order to minimize COVID danger and to protect our First Responders. Instead, Jim has been doing the cleaning.

The Arrowhead Fire Protection District's long range plan included the purchase of a Type 3 fire truck. Due to Jim's relationships with Gunnison County, they donated the red truck you see at the Arrowhead firehouse, saving our fire district over \$100,000.

These examples are just a short list of the voluntary efforts that Jim performs. The amount of his volunteer work is huge. But he does it all quietly so most people don't realize his contribution.

One of the requirements for the John Krall Award is the awardees contribute without any expectation of reward or recognition. This fits Jim perfectly. He doesn't broadcast his accomplishments. You find out about them when you see the finished product and the results.

His volunteerism is a valuable asset to our community and most worthy of the John Krall Award. We are all proud to call Jim our friend, neighbor and Fire Chief.

