



Fire ravaged the Welch home at 248 Patterson Rd., Worthington, last Monday.

Photo by Steve Margargal

Ordinary day turns tragic when fire destroys Worthington home

by Elodi McBride

WORTHINGTON—Monday, the beginning of the work week, was sunny. The Welch family began their day; Anna went to school, J.P. ran some errands and Marion began her candle making. She had a workshop in the basement of their house where she also made her soaps.

In the time Marion had gone upstairs for something (she didn't remember what it was) and when she returned, she said there was a fire that was scaling up the walls. "I don't know what happened," she continued. But she and her helper, Chad left the basement and called 9-1-1. Thinking she could do something, they brought a hose to the basement. When they opened the door, it was all

smoke. So they left and moved away from the house.

"Why weren't they here yet?" Marion questioned herself. Then wondered if she had given the correct address. "It was the longest fifteen minutes," she said. "It was pretty tough to just stand there."

J.P. was returning to Worthington when his pager

Continued on page 14

Russell nixes open space development by-law

by Diane Smith

Opponents to the Open Space Development (OSD) by-law were

that development is going to happen, with or without any new by-

the basement, the wind that fanned the fire and the open space of the first floor allowed the fire to expand quickly. Throughout the day, firefighters coming home from work, arrived at the scene to assist. It took until 5 p.m. before the scene was stable and safe, according to Sawyer. The other fire departments stayed at the station to help them clean and put away equipment. Pizza was brought in by Police Chief Bob Garnepoy of Huntington.

The Welch family left by late afternoon to get Anna, 18, their daughter a senior at Wabconah Regional High school. They did not want her to come home to this situation. Their neighbors, the Strasbergs, who came down earlier having seen the smoke from their home, offered them their guest cottage for as long as they needed. Before they had left, Rev. Douglas Small arrived and had a check in their hands from the Congregational Church to help in whatever they needed. After collecting Anna and returning to the Strasbergs, everything had been set up for them. They called Lionel, 20, their son, who was at St. Michael's College in Burlington, VT.

By day's end, many residents in town learned of the fire and were seeking information on what they could do for the family. Clothes had been donated and other items.

What was lost

A week later, during a telephone interview with Marion and J.P., they talked about the events of day and what they were doing now. Their home held a lot of memories Marion said. "Lionel was born in the living room. It's pretty hard to look at it [the burnt remains] now," she said. Both said that it was only stuff and stuff can be replaced. But

did I know the family but they live on Harvey road." Anna's girlfriends went to the Berkshire Eagle archives and copied newspaper stories on the track team, put together an album, and highlighted Anna's name. Amanda Dewey, 11, who has known the Welch family, was helped by classmate Aidan Novo, 12, both sixth graders at Gateway Middle School. Amanda went to each sixth grade classroom, explained what happened and asked for donations. A collection jar was set up in the reading room. Over one hundred dollars was donated. On Saturday, Oct. 9, the Worthington Fire/Rescue set up trucks at the Disposal Site and Corners Grocery and took up a collection for the Welch family.

Where do we go from here?

The Welch family have taken the offer of the cottage for the winter. "We're not going to do anything right now. We're going to think about it...no quick decisions," Marion said. They are in contact with the insurance company and still working at their farm. Continuing, "People have been so generous, but we no longer need clothes and we won't need any furnishings or household items at this time. We're just going to figure out where do we go from here," Marion concluded.

Funds

The Worthington Fire/Rescue Association will collect donations for the Welch family. Check should be written to the Worthington Fire/Rescue Association with a note for the Welch family Fire Fund. The First Congregational Church is also taking donations. Checks should be sent to the church noting the donations are for the Welch family Fire Fund. There is also a collection jar at Corners Grocery.

WORTHINGTON FIRE

from page 1

toned a box alarm at approximately 10:30 a.m. (J.P. is a Worthington Firefighter.) It was his address—248 Patterson Road, Justamere Tree Farm. Knowing Marion was home, he made a quick decision to go the station and get one of the fire trucks. There he met Firefighters Jack Millman and Richard Sawyer. Sawyer, a lieutenant, would be the scene commander.

The house was fully engulfed as seen from the road way before they arrived. The power lines were down, but WMECO arrived and verified that the lines were dead. Mutual aid from the fire departments in Chesterfield and Cummington arrived as well. They worked on the house and worked on keeping the surrounding trees and propane tanks cooled. J.P. said, "It wasn't that easy [to work on his own house]." He said that there had been no shortage of fuel. The fire wood was stacked on the porch and the cook stove wood was stacked in preparation for winter.

Water was continuously brought in to the scene from the Prentice Road Pond and the stream at Adams Road and the portable pool. Sawyer said that Goshen Air Truck arrived to supply air tanks. Hilltown Community Ambulance arrived to be on hand, just in case. They kept the fire fighters supplied with drinking water all day long. [Later in the afternoon, they took one fire fighter to the hospital due to smoke, according to Sawyer.] George Propane arrived to disconnect the gas tanks and blow off the gas.

Marion and J.P. watched as the house burned down to the ground. "I knew they were doing the best they could," Marion said later. According to one fire fighter, several situations were against them; a fire in the basement, the wind that fanned the fire and the open space of the first floor allowed the fire to expand quickly. Throughout the day, firefighters coming home from work, arrived at the scene to assist. It took until 5 p.m. before the scene was stable and safe, according to Sawyer. The other fire departments stayed at the station to help them clean and put away equipment. Pizza was brought in by Police Chief Bob Garnepoy of Huntington.

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there were treasures. One treasure was Marion's grandfather's fiddle. J.P. said that her grandfather had toured Minnesota playing on that fiddle and Marion was learning how to play it. J.P. thought of the pocket watch Lionel had in a small glass case. It was Lionel's great grandfather's watch. J.P. said that Lionel had been named after the man. The watch itself was nothing expensive, but it was a family piece and had "LIONEL" written on the back. Both said it was the scrapbooks that they missed. J.P. thought because the kids grew up in town that people would have pictures. He asked if people could share them, they would greatly appreciate it. Marion said someone had already given them a scrap book. They both felt bad about the awards and trophies Lionel had from cross-country skiing and Anna had for track. They did learn that some of items could be replaced.

Help from Everywhere

"We are so thankful for everything," Marion said. J.P. said, "People have been unbelievable. Other people had offered us places to live." The outpouring of funds and donations may have overwhelmed the Welch family, but they have graciously accepted people's intentions. J.P. said, "People do what they can. They put aside their differences and help." Jimmy Lewis, a son of a family friend, ran their booth this weekend at the Ashfield Fall Festival. "We weren't up to it," J.P. said. Jimmy sold brooms [handmade from J.P.] for them and there were no soaps—all gone in the fire. Marion said a customer, who had earlier purchased a lot of her handmade soaps, brought them back so she would have some. Marion said, "This four year old boy baked us an apple pie. He said he was sorry our house burnt down. I didn't know the family but they live on Harvey road." Anna's girlfriends went to the Berkshire Eagle archives and copied newspaper stories on the track team, put together an album, and highlighted Anna's name. Amanda Dewey, 11, who has known the Welch family, was helped by classmate Aidan Novo, 12, both sixth graders at Gateway Middle School. Amanda went to each sixth grade classroom, explained what happened and asked for donations. A collection jar was set up in the reading room. Over one hundred dollars was donated. On Saturday, Oct. 9, the Worthington Fire/Rescue set up trucks at the Disposal Site and Corners Grocery and took up a collection for the Welch family.

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