

## **Gratiot Emergency Services Authority Announces Rescue Medical Project**

“Community” is the keyword behind the recent announcement by the Gratiot Emergency Service Authority of their partnership with the Howes families in a promotion to raise funds for the replacement of their aging medical first response vehicle.

The authority ([gratiotesa.com](http://gratiotesa.com)) was established in 2020 in recognition of the need for an agency focused on the complexities of contemporary needs to fund, staff, train, and equip the Ithaca Fire Department, serving the City of Ithaca and the townships of Arcada, Emerson, Lafayette, New Haven, Newark, and North Star. In 2022, the Perrinton Fire/Rescue joined the program, bringing Fulton Township into the authority.

While this structure provides a focused, efficient system to oversee the vital emergency services of fire and rescue to its citizens, the authority is still confronted with the ongoing challenges in maintaining necessary funding. Small communities throughout the country are facing the same financial pressures as populations and resources decrease while costs continue to rise.

Dave Nelson, Fire Chief-CAO, confirms that reality, adding, “While we are blessed to have the continued support of our citizens through our Fire/Rescue millage, the cost to run modern Fire/ Rescue programs continues to outpace the available resources that can be provided by the local community. We have always tried to look for additional sources of revenue, either through grants, fundraisers, or donations, to take the additional financial load off the local taxpayers. This fundraising partnership with the Howes family will accomplish that goal while providing additional funds to complete our project.”

According to Nelson, the department had been concerned about the deteriorating condition of their aging medical first response vehicle and had been trying to manage a budget solution to replace it. An estimate for a proposed new vehicle is \$185,000. By coincidence, members of the Howes families, who have a long history with the department, recently approached Nelson with a proposal to provide some funding to assist the department with its financial needs. The result was a G.E.S.A. board-approved fundraising drive with combined Howes families offering to match any monies raised by the community up to \$50,000 as an incentive to reach the financial goal.

The Howes family history with the Ithaca Fire Department dates back over 100 years, when George Henry Howes served and was the last driver of the horse-drawn equipment. Over decades, several family members served, including George’s sons Fred, Sr., and Bill, Fred Jr., and his brother Tom, and Ken Zimmerman, husband of Janet Howes. Fred Sr. served 33

years before passing in 1973, and as Chief in the late 60s. Fred, Jr. recalls their father telling of his experiences living on the upper floor of the fire hall until the age of 4.

A sense of community has always been important to the family, as evidenced by this sentiment expressed by Mike Howes, son of Tom.

“Although it’s been over 30 years since I lived in the Gratiot area, the memories I carry from growing up there have never faded. It will always hold a special place in my heart – a place where neighbors looked out for one another and where the foundation of who I am today was built.

That’s why I’m proud to be part of this fundraising effort in partnership with G.E.S.A. It’s a meaningful opportunity to give back to the area that shaped me. I care deeply about the health, safety, and future of this community, and I hope this initiative will bring lasting support where it is needed most.”

As it prepares to launch, the fundraising campaign, aptly named Rescue Medical Project, received a valuable endorsement from Commercial Bank. Their commitment, as announced by Kevin Collison, President and CEO, reinforces the spirit of community, the general theme of the project. “Commercial Bank is honored to contribute \$10,000 towards this important project. Our bank has a long history of serving Gratiot County, and we know how vital it is to support the safety and well-being of the people who live and work here. This initiative not only benefits Ithaca and the surrounding townships but also strengthens the entire greater Gratiot area as our emergency services continue to work together and support one another. We are proud to stand alongside the community in ensuring our first responders have the resources they need to protect us all.”

Electronic donations can be made by visiting <https://gratiotesa.com/fundraising/>. Checks payable to G.E.S.A. can be mailed to 130 W. Center, Ithaca, Michigan 48847, or dropped off at Ithaca City Hall, 129 W. Emerson St. Although donations to the department can be made at any time, this fundraising campaign will be promoted until December 1, 2025

For complete project details, visit [www.gratiotesa.com/fundraising](http://www.gratiotesa.com/fundraising).

“This is about all of us working together to solve a public health and safety need; therefore, no financial contribution is too small, and we’ve tried to make that process as convenient as possible, regardless of where you live. At the end of the day, we want every contributor, large or small, individuals, businesses, or organizations, to look at the project’s success and be able to proclaim, ‘look what we did together,’ “stated family member Fred Howes.