

Fire station serves as distribution site

National Guard transports supplies to shelters

by **JILL SCHMELZER**
Reporter

Williamsville Station One became the main food distribution center for local shelters in Western New York after the October snowstorm knocked out power and heat in Amherst and surrounding areas.

Williamsville resident and Bee Group Newspapers classified manager, Holly Smith, took ac-

tion and became team leader for the site.

She, along with members of the Williamsville Explorers Post, divvied the food donated by Seneca Niagara Casino for 14 shelters across Western New York. The efforts began around 8 a.m. when heating units, food and the National Guard arrived in vehicles.

Smith said she organized volunteers and separated the food into

trays to be distributed at the different shelters. Seneca Niagara Casino donated enough food for 1,000 people during both breakfast and lunch. The National Guard then transported the trays to the various locations.

"Though we here in Williamsville were able to serve as the distribution center of meals to shelters throughout the county, that was only one part of the success of this plan," Smith

said. "There were those that cooked the food before we distributed it, and those that served it after the meals were received. It was a privilege to work alongside the Army National Guard and they, along with everyone else it took to place a meal on a plate for those displaced by this storm, deserve true thanks. Everything related to the successful outcome of this emergency situation is a coordinated effort."

Approximately 300 residents were helped at the Amherst Center for Senior Services, five fire departments, Weinburg Campus and Harlem Community Center, said Jim Zymanek, Director of Emergency Services.

The Amherst Senior Center serviced up to 150 residents at one point and is still assisting those. Executive Director of the Amherst Center for Senior Services Mary Ellen Walsh said cots and meals have been donated by the Red Cross, and the shelter is continuing to service members of the community.

Power has been restored, and transportation is available for those who need a ride to and from the center, Walsh said.

Since Friday, the senior center has been a temporary home to many elderly people and families. Officials said one mother came in with her 9-day-old baby and son.

Some obstacles workers had to overcome included getting power to those on oxygen and providing medication to those who lost or ran out of their prescriptions.

Also, Meals on Wheels resumed operation Monday, Walsh said.

"There is a good morale. People are getting tired, but they are comfortable and very very nice," Walsh added.

Amherst Police Detective Sgt. Michael Torrillo said the long-term shelter that will be operated by the Red Cross will be located at the Harlem Road Community Center, 4255 Harlem Road in Amherst.

Senior citizens who do not have power can be transported to a town shelter at the senior center, 350 John James Audubon Parkway. Both facilities have cots, blankets, fresh water and warm food. For assistance to one of these shelters, call 689-1322.

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GARAGE FIRE — Main-Transit firefighters ventilate the roof of an attached garage at 426 Teakwood Terrace shortly after 9:40 Tuesday morning. An animal's nest inside a chimney caught fire, causing a

total of \$35,000 damage. Main-Transit was assisted by East Amherst, Snyder and an engine company from Chili, N.Y. sent to Erie County as part of a statewide mutual aid plan to deal with emergencies.

Photo by David F. Sherman

Submissions to The Amherst Bee

Any organization who had to cancel an event due to the **Oct. 12-13 storm** should resubmit information about rescheduled events.

The Amherst Bee will run the new times and dates for any organization affected by a cancellation. Please submit information to Reporter Jill Schmelzer at jschmelzer@beenews.com or Associate Editor Jessica L. Finch at jfinch@beenews.com. Information can also be faxed to 633-8601. For information call, 632-4700.

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