

Like father, like mother, like son

Written by By Marcie Klomp, The Lime Springs Herald
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[Editor's Note: This article is being re-printed courtesy of The Lime Springs Herald in Lime Springs, Ia., and Evans Publishing. The subjects of the story are former Leonard residents Rodney, Shanna and Cole Lewis, who moved from here in 2003. Cole is now 18 and preparing to graduate from Crestwood High School this year. He enjoys working with the volunteer fire department in their hometown with both of his parents. They still have many family members in the area including Rodney and Shanna's daughter and Cole's sister, Jessica, and her children of Leonard; Rodney's parents, Darold and Susan Lewis of Leonard; Shanna's mother, Ruth Taylor of Leonard, and father and step-mother Jerry and Nancy Todd of Trenton; as well as many others.]

The Rodney Lewis family has two claims to fame in regards to the Lime Springs Fire Department--it contains the only woman (Shanna) on the department and the youngest (Cole), but all three are in the "brotherhood."

The patriarch, Rodney, brought his family from Texas in 2003, where he had been a member of the Leonard, Texas volunteer fire department for three years.



Wife Shanna hadn't been on the fire department but had some training. "For work, I had a lot of training initially through Hazmat. I was on the emergency brigade after completing a 40-hour Hazmat class." She also took some classes with the local department in Sherman, Texas.

Jerry White, a Lime Springs firefighter, talked Shanna into joining the department in 2004. She

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was the second woman on the department. Deb Meyer was the first, but has since moved.

CAPTION (TOP PHOTO): Firefighting is all in the family with Rodney, Cole and Shanna Lewis. - Photo courtesy of The Lime Springs Herald

Shanna's first major fire was the Rick Kirkpatrick fire in December 2005. She was on the roof and was one of the first to go inside the house.

Right after that, Rodney joined the department. Their best training was at the Tim Roberts house that was used as training in a controlled burn.

Rodney said his most memorable experience occurred last summer when the department blocked traffic for the Chris Opat funeral procession. He was especially emotional about the Patriot Guard since he rides with some of the guys in his leisure time.



With both parents on the crew, you can say Cole has firefighting in his blood. He's wanted to be a firefighter since a young age and has been working toward that goal for several years. Last year he job shadowed at the Rochester Fire Department for eight hours and went on three calls.

He first became serious nearly 10 years ago. "When the World Trade Center came down, it was a bad day. I always wanted to be a firefighter, but from that point on... that's what I wanted to be."

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CAPTION (BOTTOM PHOTO): At right, Cole Lewis poses for a Senior picture as he prepares to graduate from Crestwood High School in Cresco, Ia. Shanna said, "I think it'll be a good career for him. Cole is a hands-on young adult and has a real ability to take charge in any situation."

"I want to be a career firefighter in Rochester or Cedar Rapids. I'm going to school at Kirkwood for two years after I graduate high school." After Cole gains about ten years experience, he would like to be a fire marshal.

He became a member of the Lime Springs department on his 18th birthday--January 15. Besides his family, he has had another big supporter in Lime Springs -- current mayor, Barb Robinson.

"Ever since I was 16 and she found out I wanted to be a firefighter, she kept asking my age. She knew I wanted to be a firefighter and she believed in me."

To show how serious he is about training, Cole is already taking a self-study class to earn his FireFighter One (FF1) certification. He enjoys the class. "It was the first time I was in an air pack. It was cool," he commented.

When it comes to firefighting, it's all in the family for the Lewises.