

Modern life suits Greenfield staff

Past eight years have brought many changes to fire department

By **RIA MEGNIN**
The Salinas Californian

Fighting fires in Greenfield just isn't what it used to be.

It's been eight years since the 70-year-old Greenfield Fire Protection District moved from its original location on El Camino Real to a new station on Oak Avenue. Two years ago, the agency switched from an all-volunteer department to adding some full-time, paid staff, which happened just as Chief Ed Banuelos stepped down after nearly 20 years as the company's head. The department is now led by Chief John Sims.

Engineer Jason Muscio, who spoke on behalf of the department, said he likes having a mostly volunteer department, even though he's one of the paid, full-time employees.

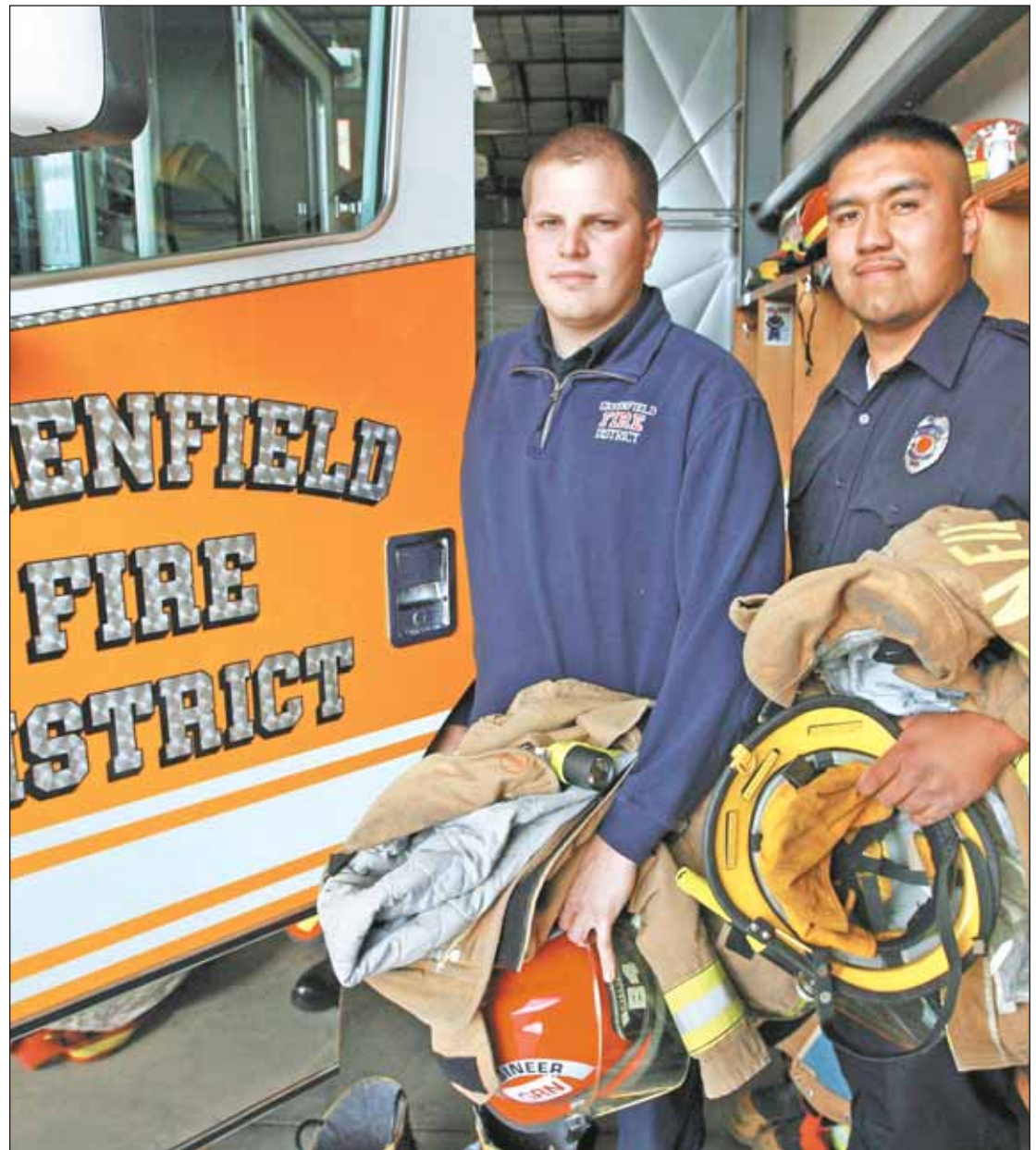
"It's important, because a lot of agencies around here are getting away from that," Muscio said. "With volunteers, the people you get really care about the community, because they live here. It's their friends and neighbors and their homes they're protecting.

"And from a manager's standpoint, the cost is a lot lower."

Paid firefighters have it nice as well, he added. "It's pretty much the ideal job: The schedule is great, the work is exciting, and it's always changing, so you're never bored. Every call you go to is different," Muscio said.

In Greenfield, that work covers 36 square miles of city property and surrounding land. Firefighters respond to structure and brush fires, medical calls, vehicle accidents, hazardous-material spills, downed wires, fallen trees, floods, earthquakes and "all types of disasters," he said.

Their biggest challenge, Muscio said, "is keeping up



RICHARD GREEN/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN

Engineer Steve Medvigy, left, and firefighter Michael Salinas prepare to go to work. Two years ago, the Greenfield Fire Protection District switched from an all-volunteer department to adding some full-time staffers.

GREENFIELD FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

n **CHIEF:** John Sims

n **STAFF:** Three paid engineers, one paid firefighter, 11 volunteers.

n **LOCATION:** 380 Oak Ave., Greenfield.

n **HISTORY:** Established 1936 on El Camino Real by the Greenfield Post Office.

with the growth of Greenfield, and trying to find the funding to provide good quality training, keep our equipment updated and constantly recruit new volunteers to come in."

The Fire District has a \$484,000 annual budget that

covers operations, payments on the new station, and salaries and benefits for the full-time staff. The money comes from developers' impact fees, paid out of each new building constructed in Greenfield, and from property tax assessments.

Though it's hard to keep pace with Greenfield's growth, Muscio said, the district's program and facilities today "are head and shoulders above what we used to have."

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