

# Junior firefighters train in smoke-filled building

By Jennifer Archibald  
Staff writer

Flora and Cutler Volunteer Fire Departments have revived their junior firefighter programs.

Each of the departments has five youth-in-training. One is in eighth grade and the rest are in high school.

They have their own meetings and training exercises, and also attend the meetings of the entire department.

Captains Dan Bott and Mike Cottrell, Lieutenant Jack Switzer, and fireman Rod Jewell are in charge of the junior program for Flora. Safety officer Robert Goris and department secretary Jeremy Reef head the program for Cutler.

The latest junior training exercise was Saturday in Flora. It was held in Glen and Marti Dillman's barn behind their home on East Columbia Street.

"The juniors were getting training in search and rescue and in their self-contained breathing apparatus," Bott said.

"We've done search and rescue before, but this was the first time we had the smoke machine," said

Matt Bott, a junior at Carroll High School and Dan Bott's son. He said it made the situation look real.

"There wasn't the heat and soot, but the smoke was pretty thick, reducing the visibility to 12 inches or less," Dan Bott said.

Three young boys participated as victims - Alex and Kreed Switzer and Tim Hubler. Alex and Kreed, ages 11 and 9 respectively, are sons of Jack Switzer.

"The juniors said the boys did an excellent job of pretending to be unconscious," Bott said. "They found out how much work it is to get a person out."

Bott said the juniors entered the building as two-member teams.

"I was glad to see there was good communication between the team members. That's very important," Bott said.

He added that some of the junior firefighters took tools into the smoke-filled room, but in the process of search and rescue, they left the tools behind.

"That's the way it should be," Bott said. "People are more important than the equipment."

"Junior firefighters get basically the same training as new

members of the department," said Dewayne Pirtle. He has been a member of the Flora department for a year and a half and helps with junior training exercises.

Pirtle said the juniors have pagers and respond to fires (except when they're in school).

"They are closely supervised on the scene, and don't go into burning buildings," he said. Pirtle added that the juniors do help on the scene, by getting tools for the firemen, filling and changing air bottles, etc.

The Flora department's junior firefighters are Matt Bott, Mitchell Cottrell, Justin Hayes, Tyler Jenkins, and Justin Buttice. All but one, Tyler Jenkins, are sons of Flora firefighters.

Cutler's juniors are Cody Miller, Joshua Hayden, Christopher McGrew, Mark Wagoner, and Ashley Bordner. McGrew and Wagoner are sons of Cutler firefighters, and Bordner is the daughter of Cutler chief, Jay Bordner.

Matt Bott said the junior program is very helpful to him because he plans on being a professional firefighter.



### Learning the ropes

Veteran firefighter Jack Switzer, pictured right, is giving instructions to junior firefighters from the Flora and Cutler Volunteer Fire Departments. The group is shown Saturday at a training exercise in Flora. Comet photo by Jennifer Archibald



### Rescue

Cutler junior firefighter Joshua Hayden, pictured above, is about to bring out a child in this simulated fire scene. A smoke machine added to the realism of the rescue. Only his tennis shoes are shown, but nine-year-old Kreed Switzer was acting as an unconscious victim. Comet photo by Jennifer Archibald

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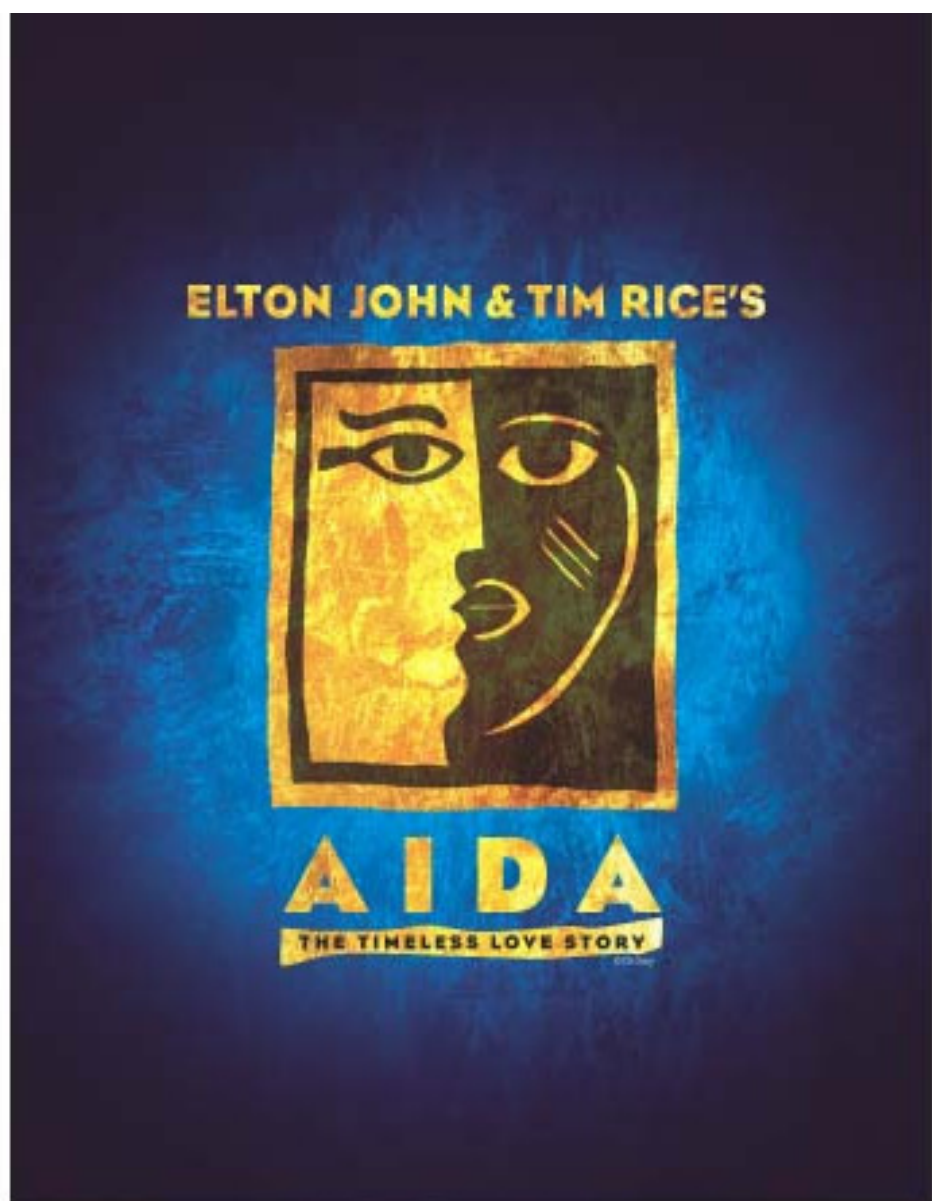
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