



## The Chairman's Corner

by

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### EMERGENCY SERVICES TRAINING CENTER DEDICATION

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On Saturday, May 21, the Columbia County Board of Supervisors and I invite everyone to attend the dedication and open house of the new Columbia County Emergency Services Response Facility at 50 Grandinetti Drive, Ghent, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The new facility will be dedicated in honor of PJ Keeler, who has served as county EMS Coordinator for the past 22 years. The dedication ceremony begins at 10 a.m.

To me, this is a fitting tribute to a gentleman who day-in and day-out puts his heart and soul into his role as EMS Coordinator. Further, in a job that's complex in the easiest of times, the pandemic increased PJ's job in major fashion, and he has met that challenge.

On May 21, apart from the dedication ceremony, planned are demonstrations of the facility's capabilities by fire, EMS, and law enforcement agencies. In addition, booths featuring information from agency and training facility equipment vendors will be on hand.

"We plan live demonstrations of some of the training props that we have at the new facility," said county Fire Coordinator George Keeler, "as well as some interactive training props that the public can participate in."

Keeler said one of the props would be a digital fire extinguisher or a hose, on which the public can practice putting out a digital fire. There will also be a live demonstration of the vehicle fire prop. Further, the county hazmat team will have equipment on display and be available to answer questions, and the Columbia County Sheriff's Office will perform some demonstrations.

Most all fire companies/departments in the county are expected to participate in the dedication and demonstrations, he said. A recruitment retention booth will be set up for those interested in becoming a member of the fire service.

"I think the dedication is a great honor for someone who's done a lot for the emergency services of Columbia County. On behalf of the fire service, we'd like to thank the Board of Supervisors for putting this project together, and of course to PJ for helping us in a lot of ways over the years," said Keeler.

PJ's contributions to emergency services in the county are seemingly endless.

He has been an active member of the A.B. Shaw Fire company for 46 years, a 13-year member and current deputy commissioner on the Claverack Fire District Board of Commissioners, and is a 42-year member of the Greenport Rescue Squad, having served on their board of directors for 40 years.

He's credited with instituting a number of programs that have benefited all EMS, fire and police agencies in the county. PJ worked tirelessly with the agencies to create and implement an EMS system that would provide stability, decrease response times, and improve patient outcomes. His relentless effort ultimately led to the creation of a first-of-its-kind EMS system in Columbia County. The new system went online in 2010 and has saved countless lives (including the life of a patient involved in a motor vehicle crash, the very first day the system started). Today, counties and agencies from all over New York State (and beyond) routinely reach out to PJ to learn more about the system that he pioneered.

Those in attendance at the dedication ceremony on May 21 will learn more about PJ's accomplishments over the years. But for those who can't make it, all residents can be grateful for all PJ has done to raise the bar for the emergency services around the county.