



NEWS

**GUADALUPE-BLANCO RIVER AUTHORITY
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**Belmont VFD receives \$8,300 from M.G. and Lillie A. Johnson
Foundation, Inc. for two SCBAs and Automated External
Defibrillator**

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BELMONT – William Komoll, President of the Belmont Volunteer Fire Department Board of Directors, announced today that the Belmont VFD was awarded an \$8,300 grant to purchase two new Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA's) and a new Automated External Defibrillator (AED.)

“We are thrilled to receive this funding, which will enable us to provide two more SCBAs and get a new defibrillator,” said Kent Pruett, Training Officer for the Belmont VFD. “This is equipment that is desperately needed to serve the community effectively. GBRA assisted us in identifying grant sources and worked with us to apply for the funds. Gonzales County Judge David Bird was also instrumental in helping us obtain the grant.”

Established in 1990, the Belmont Volunteer Fire Department/Emergency Medical Service serves approximately 2,500 citizens in rural Gonzales County. An all-volunteer force of 18 people covers a 350 square mile area. In addition, they honor mutual aid agreements with the fire departments of Seguin, Sand Hills, Luling, Gonzales and Nixon.

All the volunteers participate in a certification program offered by the State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association in specific emergency services such as fire suppression, first aid and rescue operations. They routinely respond to structural, brush and vehicle fires as well as automobile accidents and occasional evacuation assistance and swift water rescues during flood events.

Emergency medical services provided include oxygen therapy, treatment of major trauma cases, and care for victims of cardiac arrest and strokes. Annual funding in the amount of \$16,000 is provided by Gonzales County, but the organization also raises \$8,000 in contributions at the annual Barbecue, Raffle and Auction held in September. These funds are used to maintain vehicles and pay for utilities, insurance and fuel, and day-to-day operational cost, in addition to allowing purchase of new equipment. New purchases sometimes have to wait until sufficient funding is available, which increases the risks for everyone involved.

“Today we can only field two teams of firefighters for interior operations for a total of one hour,” said Pruet. “That’s not enough to perform all the activities involved in a large structure fire or a heavily fueled brush fire. This grant will let us buy two more SCBAs, plus some spare air bottles, which will really help to better protect our volunteers and the community. More importantly, we will also be able to replace the current defibrillator, which is no longer operable. In a community where 17 percent of our population is over 65 years old, and the nearest hospital or clinic is pretty far away, we really needed an AED. They cost about \$3,000 each, so the grant from the M.G. and Lillie A. Johnson Foundation was the answer to our prayers.”

“Belmont is typical of many of our communities,” said GBRA general manager W. E. “Bill” West, Jr. “It’s rural, located in a ranching area where there is no large industry or tax base, and has many retirees living on a fixed income. The amount of disposable income available to augment the budgets of emergency service providers is limited. This community has done a great job of raising money to supplement what Gonzales County provides, but finding outside funding was really important. GBRA is glad to be able to provide some expertise and assistance in locating and applying for these kinds of grants.”

GBRA provides economic development assistance ranging from community, tourist and business development to identifying grant opportunities and assisting in the application for such funding. For more information on the economic development assistance available from GBRA, contact Tommie Zwernemann, Economic Development Manager at 830-379-5822.