

# SVFD Members Go Bald In Support of a Neighbor

*By George Linkletter*

Walk around the Sherman Volunteer Fire Dept. this week and you'll notice something very different: several members are now hairless and virtual look-alikes of Yul Brenner, Howie Mandel and even our own Kris Fazzone.

The collective and rapid loss of hair is unusual but not abnormal for a group of individuals who dedicate a significant amount of time to helping others. In this instance, about a half a dozen SVFD members, who serve as volunteer firefighters and emergency medical personnel, had their hair shaved last week -- they agreed to go bald -- in a show of support for Mike Berger, a neighbor who is battling cancer.

Mike is a member of the nearby Gaylordsville Volunteer Fire Dept., the entity that organized the group shearing last Tuesday evening. About 20 SVFD members attended the event to show solidarity and nearly 20 GVFD members had their heads shaved as well.

There is little that is pleasant about the battle with cancer. One aspect that is particularly visible and upsetting to many patients is the hair loss that comes with an aggressive treatment of chemotherapy.

The loss of hair loss is isolating for many patients and calls undue attention to what many consider a very private, painful and scary ordeal. The SVFD and GVFD members sought to remove the stigma of baldness for Mike and make him feel comfortable and welcome as he wages his battle.

The GVFD is hoping to attract some public attention to their effort. The dept. is conducting a 'boot drive' on Saturday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, to raise funds for Mike and his family to help pay for medical and family living expenses. Another fire department in New Milford has agreed to help by donating the proceeds from an upcoming chicken dinner.

"Firefighters are really all about brotherhood," says Kris Fazzone, fire captain for the SVFD. "We coordinate closely with the Gaylordsville Dept., where Mike is a volunteer, and he is a neighbor here in Sherman as well. We wanted to show our support for Mike and hopefully encourage Sherman residents to be generous

during the GVFD boot drive.” The boot drive will be conducted near the intersection of Route 55 and Route 7.

Several individuals and groups in Sherman are helping out as well. One neighbor is operating a food chain that delivers meals to the Berger family. The Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church is also collecting funds. Donors can help out and remain anonymous by dropping off a check, made payable to Holy Trinity Church, with the word ‘Berger’ noted on it.

Oh, if you happen to see a SVFD member around Town sporting a new, extra short haircut – especially if it is Jared Bonner, Joe DosSantos, Matt Heinz, Eric Maher, Jim Reilly, Jeff Rabito or Clay Winters -- be sure to mention how good he looks. He’ll appreciate it. As will Mike Berger.

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*Courtesy of the New Fairfield Sherman Citizen News*