

# Role

TEXAS FARMER

June 2013 VOLUME 99 | ISSUE 02

An RVOS Insurance Publication

## HONEST ENDEAVOR

NEIGHBORS  
HELPING  
NEIGHBORS



Lodge News  
Home Office News





**SHARLET SLADECEK**  
Editor

## Letter from *the Editor*

A quote attributed to John Wesley (1703-1791) says you must “do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.” This is what people from all over have been doing as they endeavor to help the citizens of West and Granbury, Texas,

and Moore, Okla., who have lost family, friends, pets, homes and livelihoods. In West the fertilizer plant explosion occurred and in Granbury and Oklahoma a tornado. Food, clothing, shelter, prayers, cleaning up, volunteering, monetary donations and much more have been offered and provided by some very special and caring people during the recovery process.

Andrew and I had the opportunity to see the devastation in West and talked to one of our insureds. She told us her story, which you can read on page 8. What I find extraordinary is that she is still with us after all the debris that was on top of her, as well the undamaged cross left on the wall in her house. I believe divine intervention saved her and the cross was left as a sign that she was being watched over. There are others that can tell stories as amazing as this one. I admire the people that have a positive outlook on the recovery process and all the people that have come to the aid of those in time of need as “neighbors helping neighbors.”

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## NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS *For over 100 years*

ISSN. 8750-9873  
USPS No. 540-020

**EDITOR** Sharlet Sladeczek  
**GRAPHICS** Andrew Phillips  
PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

CIRCULATION OVER 62,000

OFFICIAL ORGAN RVOS Farm Mutual Insurance Company  
Periodicals Postage Paid at Austin, Texas and additional mailing offices.  
Subscription price per year, \$1.00  
Send all change of address to: Texas Farmer, P.O. Box 6106, Temple, TX 76503-6106. Always include your old and new address, lodge number, and zip code.

POSTMASTER SEND CHANGE OF ADDRESS TO:  
Texas Farmer, P.O. Box 6106, Temple, TX 76503-6106

**HOME OFFICE** 2301 S. 37th St.  
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## Letter from *the President*



**WILEY SHOCKLEY**

President  
RVOS Farm Mutual  
Insurance

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### *Uctivé pozdravy to All,*

The Spring of 2013 has come and gone in a short three month period leaving in its wake a myriad of catastrophes and loss of life not only in Texas but across the country. This leaves us to reflect on those most affected by these events as they travel the road to recovery and grieve in remembrance of loved ones lost.

Tornados touched down in the Granbury area, with hail and wind damage reported in a number of communities including Mineral Wells, Cleburne and Ennis. In addition, a devastating fertilizer distribution plant explosion in West on April 17 took the lives of 15 dedicated emergency responders and residents when an out of control fire spontaneously ignited tons of ammonium nitrate. Hundreds of homes were destroyed or damaged and their occupants displaced.

The RVOS disaster response Mobile Claims Unit was activated and on site in West by 8 a.m. the morning following the event. An officer and several staff adjusters were immediately available to begin the process of helping our members recover alongside our agents and all of the township of West. Additional staff was moved in and eventually totaled 24 personnel who remained in West until all reported claims had been inspected. The total damage paid by RVOS for losses from the explosion event exceeded \$30,000,000. Flags at the Home Office flew at half-staff in remembrance of those who perished until our claims office closed at the end of May.

The outpouring of genuine heartfelt assistance to the community of West following the fertilizer plant explosion catastrophe was a worldwide expansion of the neighbors helping

neighbors philosophy that RVOS was founded upon. Together the citizens of West were the epitome of strength and resiliency in overcoming the unimaginable loss of life and property by serving as the ideal example of what it takes to stand strong against overwhelming odds. In the blink of an eye their way of life was changed forever and the entire community was affected in some way. We hope that in some small way our role in helping to pave the road to recovery for our friends and neighbors in West made a difference.

We at RVOS honor them and dedicate this issue of the Rolnik to their loss and ongoing recovery.

The annual meetings of our Local Lodges will begin after July 1 and with the 29th 2014 RVOS State General Convention scheduled to take place in Waco June 22 and 23, it is time to elect member delegates and their alternates to attend the convention. If you are interested in participating in one of these positions, you should make sure your name is included for consideration when the elections take place. Each Local Lodge is entitled to one delegate for every 200 members.

*Best Regards and Na vaše zdraví,*

*Wiley R. Shockley*



## **+** Flying Half-staff

Flags at the RVOS Home Office flew at half-staff in honor of those who lost their lives in the West fertilizer plant explosion and in support of the community's recovery. In addition, RVOS dedicates this issue to family, friends and loved ones affected by the fertilizer tragedy. They were not raised to full-staff until every reported loss had been inspected and the claims office in West was closed. Pictured (L) are the flags in front of the home office.



## LODGE 49 ^

Lodge 49 made three donations to the Mt. Calm Volunteer Fire Department, Hubbard Volunteer Fire Department and Hubbard Wetcats. Agents Rodger Chase and Jerry Don Smithey presented the donations.

*Pictured (L-R): Agent Rodger Chase, Mt. Calm VFD representative Milton Stuckly, Hubbard Wetcats representative Carla Wetsel, Hubbard VFD Ronnie Howell and agent Jerry Don Smithey.*



## LODGE 51 ^

Lodge 51 members gathered March 16 at the SPJST Lodge 25 in Ennis for an afternoon of fun, food and festivities. John Mensik Jr., president of the lodge, welcomed members and guests. Bubba's Barbeque provided lodge members a meal. Some members in attendance received prizes. In appreciation of the local fire departments the lodge made donations to the Garret Rural, Rosser, Telico and Alma Volunteer Fire Departments.

*Pictured (L-R): Secretary/Treasurer Lydia Mensik, District 6 Director Rhonda Steelman, Garrett Rural VFD representative Randy Thomas, Rosser VFD representative Kenneth Orman, Telico VFD representative Van Fowler, Alma VFD Timmy Marusak and President John Mensik Jr.*



## LODGE 55 ^

Shillerville Lodge 55 held their lodge social April 21 at DeCosta Hall. After a delicious barbeque meal the lodge officers presented donations to the Fortran and Inez Volunteer Fire Departments in Victoria County. The lodge members that attended enjoyed delicious food and fellowship.

*Pictured Top (L-R): Secretary/Treasurer Marilyn Kabela, agent Kathleen Yoss, District 4 Director and agent Dennis Vanek, President Beatrice Neisser and Vice President Gay Revel.*

*Pictured Middle (L-R): Vice President Gay Revel, agent Kathleen Yoss, Secretary/Treasurer Marilyn Kabela, President Beatrice Neisser, Fortran VFD representative Larry Green, District 4 Director and agent Dennis Vanek and Fortran VFD representative Albert Bures.*

*Pictured Bottom (L-R): Vice President Gay Revel, agent Kathleen Yoss, Secretary/Treasurer Marilyn Kabela, President Beatrice Neisser, Inez VFD representative Buddy Franz, District 4 Director and agent Dennis Vanek and Inez VFD representative Charles Mozisek.*

## LODGE MEETINGS

### Hogg & Frenstat Lodge No. 7 & 54 Meeting

**DATE** Sunday, September 22, 2013

**TIME** 12:30 p.m. Lunch

Meeting to follow

**PLACE** Holy Rosary Recreation Center  
Frenstat, Texas

**RSVP** More info on reminder letter

### Holland Lodge No. 83 Meeting

**DATE** Sunday, September 8, 2013

**TIME** 2:00 p.m.

**PLACE** Holland SPJST Hall

### Waco Lodge No. 109 Family Day

**DATE** Sunday, July 14, 2013

**TIME** 1:00 p.m. Lunch

**PLACE** Geneva Hall, Elm Mott, Texas

**PHONE** (254) 722-0006

### Temple Lodge No. 133 Meeting

**DATE** Tuesday, July 9, 2013

**TIME** 6:00 p.m.

**PLACE** Oscar Store, 8133 Oscar Spur  
Temple, Texas

### Wilmer-Hutchins Lodge No. 180 Meeting

**DATE** Monday, September 23, 2013

**TIME** 4:00 p.m.

**PLACE** 102 Main St., Palmer, Texas

*Refreshments will be served.*

## In Remembrance

*Cecil Verm*  
Secretary Lodge 111  
*Voyt J. Holub*  
President Lodge 141  
*James Brake*  
Agent Lodge 157





## LODGE 103 »

Tioga-Whitesboro Lodge 103 held their spring meeting in Pilot Point on April 13. Pictured (L-R): Agent Moses Hejny, President Brian Heitzman, Secretary Karen Prescher, Mary Shockley, RVOS President Wiley Shockley, District 6 Director and agent Rhonda Steelman and Vice President Edward Blakley.



## LODGE 124 «

Forest Glade-Mexia Lodge 124 made a \$500 donation to the Mexia Habitat for Humanity.

Pictured (L-R): Directors of Habitat for Humanity, Jan Miller and Marjorie Parks, and Secretary Debbie Cooper.



## LODGE 127 »

Jourdanton Lodge 127 donated to the Relay for Life fundraiser.

Pictured (L-R): Community manager for American Cancer Society John Pish, Atascosa County Relay for Life committee chair Amber Zellweger and President Bobby Tymrak.



## LODGE 77 ⚡

On Dec. 20, 2012, Circleville Lodge 77 made three \$150 donations to each of the Thorndale, Weir and Bartlett Volunteer Fire Departments. Lodge 77 has 75 members and \$15 million of insurance in force. The lodge officers are President Kathleen Kaderka, Vice President Tim Vrabel, Treasurer Mildred Green, Secretary Wayne Green and agent Ronald Randig.

Pictured Top (L-R): Secretary Wayne Green and Thorndale VFD chief Eric Melde.

Pictured Middle (L-R): Treasurer Mildred Green, Secretary Wayne Green and Bartlett VFD chief Frank Graham.

Pictured Bottom (L-R): Secretary Wayne Green and Weir VFD representative Amanda Frymire.



## LODGE 143 «

Academy Lodge 143 made a donation to the Little River Academy Volunteer Fire Department.

Pictured (L-R): Little River Academy VFD chief David Borders and President Otis Beck.

## LODGE 121 »

Janak-Hallettsville Lodge 121 made donations to the Lavaca County Emergency Medical Services and Hallettsville Volunteer Fire Departments.

Pictured (L-R): President JoNell Janecek, Lavaca County EMS representative Debra Fishbeck and Secretary/Treasurer Kathleen Steinocher.

Pictured (L-R): Hallettsville VFD chief Anthony Ludwig and President JoNell Janecek.





# LODGENEWS

## LODGE 167 »

On March 24, 2013, Corsicana Lodge 167 awarded three \$500 scholarships at the Navarro County Youth Expo. Lodge 167 has 829 members and \$161 million of insurance in force.

*Pictured (L-R): Dave Clemons, Shelby Mc-Camey and agent Denise Brown. Not present, Savanna Bearden.*



## LODGE 189 »

Bosque Lodge 189 officers, Secretary Patsy Lund (L) and President Earl Curlee (R) recently presented \$500 each to three food banks in Bosque County to help with the annual Fall food collection. In Clifton, Dr. Jerry Smith (C) accepted the donation for the Clifton Food Bank.



*Photograph by Carol Spicer/The Clifton Record*

## LODGE 194 ⚡

Lodge 194, Clark Insurance Agency and the Home Office participated in a car show and cookout in Amarillo on April 27. Proceeds went to Martha's House, a non-profit organization that provides housing for women and children that are homeless or have been abused.

*Pictured (L-R): Marketing representative Daniel Bales and District 5 Director and agent Jack Clark.*

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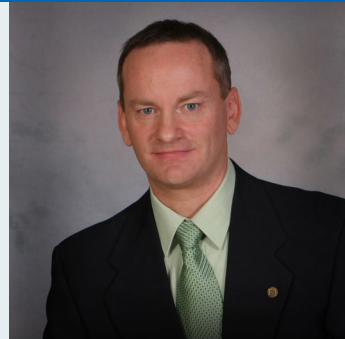
## RVOS Service Pins

Allen Vanek was recognized Feb. 1, 2013, for 20 years of service with RVOS. Allen began his career with RVOS as a Staff Adjuster. In 2004 he was promoted to Field Supervisor. Allen and his wife Stephanie have two daughters, both A&M graduates. They have one granddaughter and one grandson. Allen and Stephanie attend St. Mary's Church of the Assumption. Allen enjoys deer hunting, fishing, restoring muscle cars, collecting antiques, woodworking, gardening, making homemade wine, hot sauce and deer sausage in his spare time.



20 YEARS

Wesley Jackson was recognized March 30, 2013, for his 15 years service with RVOS. Wes began his career as a Staff Adjuster. He later served as Adjuster Supervisor and Claims Manager. October 2006 he was appointed by the Board of Directors to serve as Home Office Secretary and became a member of the Board. In August 2012 Wes was promoted to the position of Vice President. He graduated from Texas Tech University in Lubbock with a bachelor of architecture and holds an associate in claims (AIC) from the Insurance Institute of America. He has a Professional Farm Mutual Managers (PFMM) designation and has served as a past president of the Texas Association of Mutual Insurance Companies (TAMIC). Wesley and his wife Christi reside in Temple with their two children Cassidy and Cord.



15 YEARS

Mary Ann Tomasek was recognized Sept. 16, 2012, for 10 years of service with RVOS. Mary Ann served as a Priority One Liability Underwriter for seven years before transferring to the Communications Department with RVOS. She now serves as a Customer Relations Team Leader for RVOS. Mary Ann and her husband, Anthony, live in Temple with their two daughters, Jencie and Juliann. She enjoys spending time with family and friends, traveling and reading.



10 YEARS

Brett Johnson was recognized Feb. 24, 2013, for 10 years of service with RVOS. He was born in Snyder, Texas, and attended Spring Hill High School in Longview, Texas, and the University of Texas at Austin. He and his wife Javan have been married for 27 years. They have one son, Cameron. He and his family are members of the Mobberly Baptist Church in Longview. Prior to his employment with RVOS he worked in the construction industry which included residential, commercial and industrial projects. Brett enjoys hunting, fishing, working in the yard and reading in his spare time.



10 YEARS

Ken Langford was recognized Feb. 24, 2013, for 10 years of service with RVOS. Ken was born in Pasadena and grew up in South Houston, Texas. He graduated from the University of Houston with a bachelor of science in business. He and his wife Tracy have been married for 31 years and have two children and one 6-year-old grandson. Prior to coming to RVOS Ken was a claims representative with Texas Farm Bureau in Houston and worked as an independent adjuster. Ken enjoys working his cows with his dad and grandson and also enjoys hunting and fishing, especially saltwater fishing.



10 YEARS

Tammy Jackson was recognized Sept. 5, 2012, for 5 years of service with RVOS. Tammy began her career with RVOS as an Imaging Clerk and currently works in the Claims Department as a Claims Clerk. Tammy grew up in the Humble/Houston area. In May 1996 she moved to Copperas Cove with her cousin. Not too long after that she moved to the Temple/Belton area where she met her husband. They married in June 2002. Tammy enjoys working in the Claims Department issuing claim checks and doing what she can to help our insureds.



5 YEARS





## SURVEYING THE DAMAGE

The center of town was bustling with traffic, but two blocks away it was a ghost town.

Residents of West started to sift through the damaged homes almost two weeks after the fertilizer plant explosion, looking for anything they could salvage.

The West Fertilizer Co. plant exploded on April 17 despite the efforts of first responders who tried to put out a fire at the plant. The explosion damaged homes, businesses and schools in West. Officials have confirmed 15 deaths and over 100 injuries.

Officials released a statement that the cause of the fire that led to the explosion is still unknown, but could have been triggered by a faulty electrical system at the plant, a malfunctioning golf cart or a criminal act.

Investigators divided the town into three zones based on proximity to the fertilizer plant. The homes damaged the most were located in zone three on either side of the railroad tracks that cross through West.

West resident and RVOS member Jeanette Holecek was

“All the sudden the carport just literally fell down on me.”

– Jeanette Holecek

among those who lost their home to the explosion. Holecek was trying to leave her house when the plant exploded.

“I was standing between my house and my car in the carport. All the sudden the carport just literally fell down on me.”

Holecek said she remembers hearing the blast from the explosion. “Whoosh. I couldn’t believe it, but I was laying under plywood and bricks,” Holecek said.

Adjusters determined that Holecek’s home was a total loss. “I had no windows. I had no doors. Part of my roof was caved in,” Holecek said. “When we were able to go in on Saturday it was very emotional. I couldn’t go to where the carport was. When I finally did walk over there I still don’t know how my body was between the brick wall and my car,” Holecek said.

Holecek’s home and other homes on her street have an orange slip of paper over the front door. Homes marked with these notices were damaged so badly that it’s dangerous to go inside them.

Some of the homes in zone three burned to the foundation. In other homes the roof is caved in, walls are gone and the house is littered with debris.

Holecek said there are sentimental things she lost that insurance and money will never replace. “How do you put

Photographs by Andrew Phillips/RVOS Insurance

a value on those things. You can’t put a price on it,” Holecek said.

Holecek said that one of the sentimental things in her home that was not damaged was a cross on the wall. “That was just God’s way of saying to me that he took care of me. Even though your house is gone, you’re here,” Holecek said. “Faith has brought us closer together. We may have a different religion, but we all have the same faith.”

Holecek said most of the people on her street don’t plan on rebuilding in the same location. “It’s really sad. West has changed in a bad way because there are so many people who are not going to build back there,” Holecek said.

## HONEST ENDEAVOR—NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

First responders, local businesses and residents of neighboring communities rushed to West after the explosion, looking for ways to help support West’s families and residents.

And residents of West continue to receive support from the state and the nation after the disaster. Gerald Groppe, fire chief with the Robinson Volunteer Fire Department, said that first responders from across the state have traveled back and forth between their town and West.

“We started out that night by sending a truck and crew up there to assist with trying to mitigate the disaster,” Groppe said. “Since then we are talking with crews trying to locate equipment. There are certain things that you need

at certain times. We were able to donate some equipment that they needed.”

But Groppe said first responders aren’t the only neighbors trying to help West; people from all over the country are trying to find ways to help.

“It’s amazing, when you have something that bad happen, how many people are willing to spend their time and their money just to help somebody else get through something. I would have never dreamed there would have been that many people involved in wanting to help,” Groppe said.

Groppe said he even spoke with a pastor from Alaska who stopped in West to offer his support. “He just let those guys know that even the people in Alaska have prayers going to [West],” Groppe said.

Among those neighbors trying to help West are insurance companies like RVOS, who put disaster response teams in the area after the explosion.

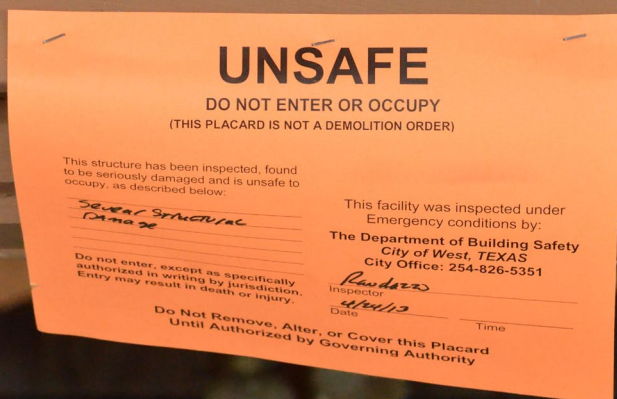
Holecek said her RVOS agent helped her with the claim filing process. “I went to the agent in West to ask what I had to do to file my loss. He said it had already been filed for me. They were just exceptional,” Holecek said.

And her adjuster gave her advice about what to save out of the home. “He was telling us to keep doing what we were doing. [By going through the house] he said we were saving what insurance can not replace,” Holecek said.

Wiley Shockley, President of RVOS Insurance, said that

An apartment complex (above), the building closest to the fertilizer plant, was destroyed by the blast.





the way the community has come together embodies the company principle, neighbors helping neighbors.

"The outpouring of genuine heartfelt assistance to the community of West following the fertilizer plant explosion catastrophe was a worldwide expansion of the neighbors helping neighbors philosophy that RVOS was founded upon," Shockley said.

Groppe said that residents need prayers and monetary donations. "A lot of equipment has been donated, a lot of food that people will need. But for the long term I think donations of money will go a long way in helping people get things they need," he said.

Shockley said he "hopes that in some small way the RVOS role in helping to pave the road to recovery for friends and neighbors in West made a difference."

## THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Residents, authorities and businesses in West are not certain about when or if the town will make a full recovery. Holecek said she is hopeful West will fully recover from the

damage. "We're just that kind of people. Yeah, we are set back right now, but we will rebuild. We will keep going," Holecek said. Holecek said the recovery may take years, but with help she said eventually the town would recover.

And Groppe also believes that the people of West will recover because they are a resilient people. "Since it's such a small community I would say the majority of that community will stay together and rebuild because that's their heritage," Groppe said.

Groppe said that it would take five or six years before things are normal in West again. But he also said that people can help West on its road to recovery. "The biggest thing is to have somebody there that cares. No matter how trivial it may seem to some people, that can make a lot of difference in someone's life when they have lost everything," he said.

“  
The biggest thing is  
to have somebody  
there that cares.

”  
– Gerald Groppe





**FARM MUTUAL LEGISLATION** - RVOS President Wiley Shockley (L) and former RVOS President Mike McMahan (R) visited with McLennan County State Representative and Rural Caucus Chairman Doc Anderson in Austin in regards to legislation that would have a negative impact on RVOS and other Texas farm mutual insurance companies. Several House bills were filed imposing additional taxes and assessments that would affect our members and were being opposed.



**PRESERVING OUR CULTURE** - On March 23, 2013, The Texans of Czech Ancestry (TOCA) held their appreciation awards ceremony at the Texas Czech Heritage Cultural Center in La Grange, Texas. At this event the RVOS TOCA nominee Laddie Gajdica was awarded a certificate of appreciation for his contribution to preserving the Czech culture and heritage. RVOS also made a donation to the Texas Czech Heritage Cultural Center (TCHCC) to put towards the preservation of the Czech culture.

*Pictured (Clockwise from top left, L-R): TOCA secretary and RVOS District 3 Director Thomas Stavinoha, TCHCC treasurer and District 4 Director Dennis Vanek, Donna Vanek, RVOS President Wiley Shockley, Mary Shockley, RVOS Secretary James Smith and Betty Smith. TCHCC vice president Joseph Bartosh, TOCA secretary and RVOS District 3 Director Thomas Stavinoha, TCHCC treasurer and District 4 Director Dennis Vanek, TCHCC president Retta Chandler, RVOS President Wiley Shockley, TCHCC secretary Barbara Hruby, RVOS Secretary James Smith and honorary consul general of the Czech Republic for Texas Raymond Snokhous. TOCA President Arlene Cloyd, RVOS TOCA honoree Laddie Gajdica, RVOS President Wiley Shockley. District 4 Director Dennis Vanek, President Wiley Shockley, RVOS TOCA honoree Laddie Gajdica, District 3 Director Thomas Stavinoha and Secretary James Smith.*



**RVOS LONE STAR SOFTBALL** - RVOS sponsored a softball team to compete in the Lone Star Softball Budfest on May 3-5. The RVOS team placed 5th with a 7-2 record. *Pictured (L-R, Bottom to Top): Vice-President At-Large Richard Hykel, team members Josh Hykel, Zach Ragston, Robert Martinez, Joe Wanek, Casey Mikes, Reyes Jimenez, Nathan Thomas, Keith Stone, Kelly Cast, Trent Denio; not pictured, Cody Coufal.*

**YOU'RE INVITED**

to

**ATTEND**

a

**Fundraising Gala**

**Friday 19-20 Saturday  
July**

RVOS has partnered with SPJST, Slavocek Meats and Gulf Coast Claims Service as part of the relief effort provided by the West Benevolence Fund to aid the victims and the City of West affected by the West fertilizer plant explosion.

A fund raising event is scheduled for July 19th and 20th at Seaton Hall. Activities will include dinner, beverages, dancing, a raffle and a silent auction. Music will be provided by the Ennis Czech Boys, Fritz Hodde & the Fabulous Six and Johnny and the Corvette's. Tickets to the event are \$50 per person.

*Limited quantities available!  
Purchase your tickets now!*

*Contact Sharlet Sladeczek by  
phone: (254) 742-4203 or  
email: ssladeczek@rvos.com*





# Honoring **THE** Courageous



# HONORING THE COURAGEOUS



Photograph by Andrew Phillips/RVOS Insurance

## HONORING THE COURAGEOUS

President Barack Obama remembered the firefighters who died in the West fertilizer plant explosion in a memorial service at Baylor University on April 25.

Obama said the residents of West modeled the courage America needs by coming together and helping the community.

"These hard days have shown your ability to stand tall in times of unimaginable adversity," Obama said.

Senator John Cornyn introduced Obama at the service. "Today we honor the lives of twelve great men who gave their lives in an enduring act of love for their neighbors, families and community," Cornyn said. "How does one find such great courage as these men did?"

Twelve first responders died in an explosion on April 17 trying to put out a fire at the West Fertilizer Co. Officials have confirmed at least 15 deaths and hundreds of injuries caused by the blast.

Texas Governor Rick Perry said at the service first responders know there is no such thing as a routine emergency. "Firefighters and medical technicians who died last week in West certainly knew that, but it didn't slow them down as they raced towards that burning factory," Perry said.

"The true common thread that bound [the first responders] together was their love of community," he said.

Twelve caskets were lined up in front of the stage with pictures of those killed in the explosion next to them. Attendees of the event stood up as family and friends of the responders entered.

Baylor President Ken Starr said that communities across Texas and the nation are ready to support West as their neighbors.

"Here at Baylor we know and love our neighboring

“America  
**NEEDS**  
towns like  
**WEST**”

– Barack Obama

community called West," Starr said. "We pay tribute on a day of remembrance here in our community of neighbors."

Former president George W. Bush did not attend the service, but said those suffering from the West explosion are in his thoughts and prayers.

The service commemorated the first responders who died with a video eulogy. Those dead include Morris Bridges, 41; Perry Calvin, 37; Jerry Chapman, 26; Cody Drago, 50; Kenny Harris, 52; Jimmy Matus, 52; Joey Pustejovsky, 29; Cyrus Reed, 29; Kevin Sanders, 33; Robert Snokhous, 48; Doug Snokhous, 50; and Buck Uptmor, 45.

A teary audience listened as the video for Morris Bridges played. "Morris is a hero, to not only his children, but to his community," Carmen Bridges, Bridges' wife, said.

Obama said that the people of West have been tested and tried by the recent explosion, but that the country will



“ Today we honor the lives of **twelve** great men who gave their lives in an enduring *act of love* ”

– John Cornyn



continue to support the town. “Even amidst such sorrow, such pain, we recognize God’s abundance,” he said. “Your country will remain ever ready to help you recover, rebuild and reclaim your community.”

The service ended with a ceremonial bell toll and bag pipes playing Amazing Grace to honor the responders.

“There will be moments of doubt and pain ... but today I see in the people of West, in your eyes, that what makes West special isn’t going to go away. Instead of changing who you are this tragedy has simply revealed who you’ve always been,” Obama said.

### FIRST RESPONDERS GATHER

The memorial service was preceded by a processional down University Parks Drive. The U.S. flag draped over the street afixed on top of the ladders of two firetrucks as over 300 firetrucks paraded under it. Over 4,000 first responders from across the state packed the Ferrell Center in honor of the responders.

The memorial service was sponsored by the Texas Line of Duty Death Task Force and the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

In continuing with the tradition, firefighters stood guard over the caskets, moving only once every half hour to switch positions.

Gerald Groppe, fire chief with Robinson Volunteer Fire Department, said first responders have been trying to help West since the explosion. “We started out that night by sending a truck and a crew up there to assist with trying to mitigate the disaster,” Groppe said.

First responders gathered to honor those lost in the explosion, but they also have gathered in West to help the town rebuild.

“It’s amazing, when you have something that bad happen, how many people are willing to spend their time and their money just to help somebody else get through something.”

“I would have never dreamed there would have been that many people involved in wanting to help and come that far,” Groppe said.

U.S. Fire Administrator Ernest Mitchell, Jr. said that first responders across the nation will continue to serve in honor of the heroism of the first responders in West.

### THE COURAGE OF FIREFIGHTERS

Ronald Siarnicki, executive director for the National Fallen Firefighters Association, said that firefighters are often called to sacrifice their lives for the community.

“Honor, tradition and courage—all three are engraved in the soul of a firefighter, and are the source of their heroic actions,” Siarnicki said.

Siarnicki said that firefighters show their courage, as the twelve volunteer firefighters did, by risking their lives just to give their communities a chance to survive.





## Election of Delegates to the 2014 General Convention

Below you will find the By-Laws regulating the election of delegates to the June 22 and 23, 2014 General Convention.

**Art. 3, Sect. 2.** (the section in parenthesis) (Each Delegate, Alternate Delegate, or Officer must have a policy in the Delegate's, Alternate Delegate's or Officer's own name in order to have a vote and to be eligible to represent the Local Lodge as a Delegate or Alternate Delegate).

**Art. 10, Sect. 3.** (a) Only members in accordance with Article III Section 2, of these By-Laws may become Local Lodge Officers or Delegates. (b) In order to be eligible to be elected or to serve as a Local Lodge Officer or Delegate, the individual must be in good standing and not have been removed from a position by the Local Lodge or by the Home Office within the preceding six years.

**Art. 14, Section 3.** – Each Local Lodge at its annual meeting before the Convention shall elect from among its members a Delegate or Delegates and Alternates to the General Convention. Chapter 911 of the State Statutes dictates that each policyholder in a Farm Mutual Insurance Company shall be entitled to only one vote in all policyholders' meetings. Therefore, only one of the named insured's on the policy can be a Delegate. Each Delegate is entitled to as many votes at the Convention as will equal the number of members of their Local Lodge. The Local Lodge will elect one Delegate for each two hundred members and another Delegate for each additional two hundred members. For example, up to two hundred members, one Delegate; four hundred members, two Delegates; six hundred members, three Delegates; eight hundred members, four Delegates, etc. A Local Lodge of less than twenty-five members is entitled to one Delegate but at Local Lodge expense. This does not apply to Local Lodges organized since the last Convention. Where there are more Delegates from one Local Lodge, the Delegates divide the votes equally. The Local Lodge has the right to elect an additional Delegate if it attains the required additional membership on or before December 31st of the year preceding the Convention year and its total vote will be determined according to its membership on such date as such membership is determined by Article III Section 2 of these By-Laws. No Director or Officer of this Association or Adjuster may serve as a Delegate at any Convention while a member of the Board or Adjuster. Nevertheless, such persons will be eligible for election or re-election to any office.

**Art. 14, Section 4.** – (a) Local Lodge Secretaries must send the Home Office the names and addresses of their Local Lodge Delegates and Alternates by January 31st of the Convention year. Delegates elected later must be reported within ten days after their election.

**Art. 14, Section 5.** – Each Delegate must attend the Convention. He or she will receive mileage from his or her home to the Convention and back and daily pay for the time lost because of attendance at the Convention. If it is impossible for the Delegate to attend the Convention, it is the duty of the Alternate to fill the vacancy. Delegates will be paid by check the week following the Convention.

**Art. 14, Section 6.** – Each Delegate must present proper credentials at the Convention signed by the Local Lodge President and Secretary, or must prove in some other manner that he or she was duly elected.

**The name, social security #, address, zip code, and email address (if any) must be completed on the credential form for both the Delegate and Alternate Delegate. Both the lodge President and Secretary must sign the credential form. If the mileage is known it may be completed, if not this can be turned in at time of registration. Make sure the Delegate and/or Alternate Delegate have a policy in his/her name. If husband & wife are elected as a Delegate and/or Alternate, they each must have a policy in their own name (see Art. 14, Sect. 3).**

### Information concerning recommendations for amendments to the By-Laws:

**Art. 14, Section 7.** – Recommendations for amendments to the By-Laws must be sent to the Home Office prior to December 15th preceding a Convention and the Home Office must arrange such recommendations and they must be published in the March issue of the official publication preceding the Convention. If recommendations are not submitted by Local Lodges prior to such date, such matter shall not be considered at the Convention unless it is brought up by the By-Law Committee. All By-Law recommendations must be voted on at a Local Lodge meeting and signed by the Local Lodge President and Secretary prior to mailing to the Home Office.





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