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Merrill Fire Department  
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Through the combined support from North Central Regional Trauma Advisory Council (NCRTAC), Asprius Merrill Hospital, Merrill Ace Hardware, and the Merrill Fire Department (MFD), we successfully held our first ladder safety program. This event was held August 20<sup>th</sup> at the Merrill Fairgrounds in conjunction with the Merrill Fire and Police Departments 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Night Out (CNO). The ladder safety program featured a ladder buy back and ladder safety talk with possible demonstrations.

The intent of the program was to collect and properly dispose of unsafe step or extension ladders in the Merrill community and replace them with new, safe ladders. Additionally, the program allowed fire department and Ace Hardware employees to discuss and recommend a new ladder for participants. The key element for the buyback was making it financially worthwhile for participants. Merrill Ace hardware worked with Werner, the ladder manufacturer of the ladders that they carry in their store, to get special pricing for the event. Collectively they agreed to provide up to 100 ladders at a special price (store cost). Of the 100 potential ladders, participants could choose from 5 different types of ladders. In addition to the discounted ladder price, the funds from NCRTAC and Asprius Merrill Hospital would give each participant a store credit for their ladder purchase. The store credit amount was originally based off of 100 potential ladder buybacks, but was adjusted afterwards to reflect the number of actual ladders traded in.

For the event, a large dumpster was procured through a local company. The dumpster was actually stored inside one of the buildings at the fairgrounds to prevent "dumpster diving" after the event. Prior to CNO, the associated organizations advertised the best they could to promote the event. Advertising included fliers up at the hardware store and fire station, social media posts, and discussion through local radio on monthly fire department talk show. When participants arrived at CNO, they brought their old ladder to our booth and table, where we collected it and tossed it into the dumpster. The participant then received a voucher for their future ladder purchase at Merrill Ace Hardware. They were shown the 5 different ladders that they could buy and how much it would cost them. No new ladders were purchased at the event; everything could be done the next day through the store. It didn't matter what type of ladder the participant brought in, but they were only allowed one per household. We kept track of participants on a notepad. The participants were given until September 20<sup>th</sup> to order their new ladder. Many of the ladders were in stock at the store, and if they weren't in stock, the hardware store ordered them.

While we were planning for 100 potential ladders, we only received 22 on the day of the event. For the first year trying this program, we were still excited to replace those 22 unsafe ladders. Since the actual ladders traded in were less than 100, participants ended up receiving \$70 store credit for their ladder instead of the original \$35 amount.

Next year we are optimistic that we can make the ladder safety program even more effective in preventing ladder and fall injuries in our community. We believe that this year's participants will help us spread the program through words of mouth. Additionally we plan to incorporate advertising for it along with general CNO advertising. This should give more time and attention to the program. We are hoping to have a banner next year for our booth that will explicitly say "Ladder Safety Program." Finally we want to try and promote ladder safety demonstrations better.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Josh Klug'.

Josh Klug, Fire Chief