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Fun, food and fellowship were had by all at the annual Union County Fire Department Station No. 1 Open House on Saturday, Sept. 8. Photo by Mark Smith

fire hydrant so small children could handle the nozzle and see what it was like to spray water on a fire.

And what would an open house at a fire station be without hot dogs and hamburgers? There was a plentiful amount of food with all the fixin's and beverages on that Saturday.

Other firefighters took guests on tours through the headquarters where the offices, sleeping quarters, kitchen and emergency operations center are located. Guests had a plethora of questions answered about how everything works.

All in all, the 2018 Open House at Station 1 was a huge success.

"People never really know what's in this station and how the Fire Department works," said Fire Chief David Dyer. "Open Houses, to me, are a perfect opportunity for people to come see all the equipment, because they help donate money to the volunteer stations and SPLOST pays for a lot of our equipment here."

"They get to see the equipment, they get to see how it works, and they get the guys, the firefighters who are actually going to do the job, to show them how it works. They get to meet the firefighters in a non-emergency, relaxed environment. People get to know them. It's just a good fellowship."

When asked about future developments, Dyer said his department started its five-year plan in 2016, "and we update it every year. One of the main points that we have is to build a training facility."

There will eventually be a two-story "burn building" made out of ocean-going shipping containers welded together for live fire training; a 40-foot-tall concrete block tower for repelling and other heights training; and various other simulated training stations on the property.

The alternative to training locally is trainees must drive about 240 miles south to the Georgia Fire Academy at the Georgia Public Safety and Training Center in Forsyth County, which presents obvious difficulties for volunteers and full-timers in Union County.

The new training center will be like having the Georgia Fire Academy right here in the firefighters' own backyard.

Also in the works, said Dyer, is a ladder truck for the Fire Department. He wasn't able to give a specific timeline, but Dyer assured the North Georgia News that it would likely be a reality in the near future.

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