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**Lions Club helps victims of fatal apartment explosion with $5,000**

**grant from Ohio Lions Foundation**

**Bob Finnan**y The Gazette

The Medina Lions Club announced it received a $5,000 grant from the Ohio Lions Foundation to help the victims of the Feb. 9 explosion and fire at Medina Village Apartments on Springbrook Drive.

Roger Grabowski, immediate past president, was tasked with the job of handing out $100 Wal-Mart gift cards to about 20 victims displaced by the fire.

Two of the apartment complex’s residents, 51-year-old Sheila Drake and her 18-year-old son Jacob, have died — Jacob in the blaze and Sheila later at a hospital from injuries sustained trying to save her son. Robert Drake, the father, is in fair condition at MetroHealth Medical Center in Cleveland.

The Lions gave the Drake family $500. The Drakes’ daughter, Amy Reindl-Priestly, accepted the money.

Diana Grabowski, secretary of the Lions Club, said it was a very emotional exchange.

“I just want to make sure every penny is put aside for them,” Diana Grabowski said. “They need so much. They’ll be traveling back and forth to doctors. They’ll need supplies.”

Diana Grabowski, of Medina Township, issued a challenge to other Lions Clubs. In Medina County, there are clubs in Brunswick, Chippewa Lake, Seville and Wadsworth.

“We gave $500 to the No. 1 affected family (the Drakes),” Roger Grabowski said. “It’s up to the other Lions Clubs to try to get some more.”

To date, the other clubs have raised $1,550, Diana Grabowski said. She said it will be deposited in a fire victims fund at Huntington National Bank. In all, about $7,000 has been donated.

Roger Grabowski said he couldn’t hold back tears while talking to the fire victims.

“It was so heart-wrenching,” he said. “They were so appreciative. They have nothing. They can’t get back in there.”

He said there were nine units affected; eight via the fire and one after it was flooded.

“After I heard some of the stories, I did a lot of crying,” Roger Grabowski said. “You never think it will happen to you.

“I was happy the Lions did something for those people and how quickly they stepped up. There were no questions asked.”

Roger Grabowski said he gave one of the fire victims five gift cards, but she gave three to another lady who had lost her job.

The woman said the second victim was “worse off than me,” Diana Grabowski said.

The Lions Club was formed in 1917 and provides eye exams, glasses and hearing aids to qualifying applicants.

“It’s a very good organization,” Roger Grabowski said. The Ohio Lions Foundation “said if more money is needed, more is available. They said, ‘Here’s $5,000 in gift cards. If that’s not enough, they’ll come back with another $5,000.

“That’s what Lions do. Where there’s a need, there’s a Lion.”

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