



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## **Senator Young Secures \$200,000 For Gowanda Rescue Vehicle**

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ISSUE:

- [Firefighters](#)
- [Communities](#)
- [State and Municipal \(SAM\) Facilities Grant](#)



OLEAN – Senator Cathy Young presented a \$200,000 check to the Gowanda Fire Department Tuesday to help the department purchase a new fire/rescue truck, which will respond to emergencies throughout the fire district, particularly in the Zoar Valley gorge.

Senator Young (R,C,I-57<sup>th</sup> District) secured the funding through a \$200,000 capital grant in the 2018-19 New York State budget.

“This new rescue truck will be used on every non-EMS rescue call the Gowanda Volunteer Fire Department responds to,” Senator Young said. “Securing grant funding like this is the best way to ensure our volunteer first responders have the equipment they need without imposing an added burden on local property taxpayers.”

The Village of Gowanda is contributing \$230,000 to cover the \$430,000 total project cost. It will replace a 29-year-old truck, which is no longer reliable.

“Zoar Valley is beautiful, but its remote location and high cliffs make rescue operations difficult,” Senator Young said. “This new truck will enable Gowanda firefighters to continue their life-saving mission.”

The vehicle will carry specialized rope-rescue and water-rescue equipment used by the specially trained members of the Gowanda Fire Department on an average of 130 rescue calls per year. It will also carry state-of-the-art emergency lighting

required for rescue operations in the Zoar Valley Multiple Use Area along the gorge.

Gowanda Fire Chief Nicholas Crassi thanked Senator Young for her support, adding that the old rescue truck needed to be retired.

“There is no way to show how we appreciate Senator Young's love and care for our firefighters and the Gowanda Volunteer Fire Department,” Chief Crassi said. “Like all fire departments, finding money in these tight budget times and being very sensitive to taxpayer dollars in smaller communities is very tricky.”

While the fire department has rescued many lost hikers, stranded kayakers and rafters at Zoar Valley, there have been at least seven deaths over the last 15 years.

During Memorial Day weekend, three hikers were rescued after becoming disorientated and lost prior to nightfall. In July, Connor Long, 20, of Boston, New York, died when he fell off a 70-foot cliff at the gorge.

In August of 2017, Amanda and William Green of South Buffalo died after slipping down a 100-foot cliff. Their 7-year-old son Jacob and 4-year-old son Alexander were injured, but survived.

“The Gowanda Volunteer Fire Department has been responding to calls over the years in an old, much needed to be replaced, rescue truck. Our rescue truck responds to all calls including, auto accidents, fire calls, and it responds to all emergencies to the Zoar Valley area. Some of the Zoar Valley calls can be life or death situations and can last hours and even days,” Chief Crassi said.

Senator Young said because their services are vital to the community, supporting volunteer firefighters and first responders is always a priority.

“The Gowanda Fire Department Special Rescue Team is the only team of its type in the immediate vicinity of the gorge,” Senator Young said. “The men and women who volunteer as firefighters and first responders are true heroes. They love their communities so much, they sacrifice time away from family and friends and risk their own health and safety to protect others. They need and deserve to have the proper equipment.”