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MEDIA RELEASE

FIRE BRIGADE HELPS RURAL COMMUNITY UNITE

Like many small rural areas, Beazley's Bridge no longer has a football, netball or cricket team...but it does have a fire brigade.

The brigade's competition teams are filling this community sporting void for the small community between Ararat and St Arnaud, and regularly proving to be giant killers.

This year three senior teams and one junior team will compete in the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) state rural senior championships on April 7-8 in Warrnambool.

They have been training with neighbouring brigade Stuart Mill, which has three senior and two junior teams in the championships. Last year Stuart Mill won the under 13 competition and narrowly missed winning the under 15 event, while Beazley's Bridge runners won individual state championships.

The Wiseman family has been a cornerstone of the Beazley's Bridge brigade since 1970, with Barry Wiseman coaching the teams alongside Kevin Haynes, and occasionally filling gaps in the competition even though he's approaching 60.

Barry's three children and their partners and children are actively involved in the brigade and the competition teams.

"We've got no tennis, football or cricket club; you have to go away to for everything," Barry said. "This is the one thing we do here as a community activity, which is important. It brings everyone together for those couple of months of the year."

Barry is also secretary of the brigade, and joins his fellow trained volunteers in responding to a variety of calls, ranging from house and grass fires to car accidents.

"I don't know which came first; running or being part of the brigade, but once you're in, you're in," he joked.

One of his priorities is to continue the junior brigade, not only for the community sporting benefits but as a training ground for future volunteers.

VFBV CEO Andrew Ford said junior brigades and the championships were the best way for young people to become engaged and learn practical skills before being old enough to attend fires.

“The VFBV state championships can set young people on a pathway to serve their communities,” Mr Ford said.

“They encourage family participation and help to instil a sense of community service and volunteerism in young people while raising the importance of local fire brigades,” he added.

PHOTO CAPTION: (from left) Nick Wiseman, Diana Hermansyah, Rendelle Gale, Martin Gale, Connor Gale, Joanne Wiseman, toddler Alexis, Barry Wiseman, Zoe and Daniel Wiseman.

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