

# Volunteer brigade wins prestigious award



Walt Lesenke, fire operations supervisor and Barry Skinner, fire management technician pose with volunteer fire chief for Pellatt United Fire Fighters, Barry Bennett (centre) in front of one of three signs that helps spread fire safety messages. PUFF won the Great Lakes Fore Fire Compact award after being nominated by the local MNR. Photo by Bonnie Baltessen

By Bonnie Baltessen For the Miner and News

The Pellatt United Fire Fighters received high praise from the Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact in the form of an award on Sept. 19 at Fire Con 2009 in Thunder Bay. Ranking first among fire departments representing the compact was a shock for Fire Chief Barry Bennett.

“I know we put in a prevention plan, we look after FireSmart and do the education but to be recognized by the Ministry of Natural Resources which is a huge organization, to recognize our small little fire department, it blew me away,” said Bennett.

While Fire Con is a huge training venue for fire departments from the Manitoba border to Wawa, the award represented a much bigger area. The Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact represents fire departments from Ontario, Manitoba, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota sharing a common border and similar issues.

The nomination for the award was submitted by the local Ministry of Natural Resources office. For Barry Skinner, fire management technician, and Walt Lesenke, fire operations supervisor, the choice was easy. The rural volunteer fire department serving the unorganized townships of Pellatt, Gidley, Pelican and Umbach works tirelessly to get the FireSmart message out to the population it serves.