

# Young hero alerts, saves grandfather when fire breaks out in Oldmans Township home

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By Michael Williams/Today's Sunbeam



Staff photo by Britney Lillya

Oldmans Township School 4th grade student Damere Frazier, 9, right, talks about how he woke up his grandfather and jumped out of a second story window when their home, located at 19 Pointers-Auburn Road in the Auburn section of Oldmans Township, caught fire in the early morning of Jan. 5. Also pictured is Damere's mother Karen St. John.

**OLDMANS TWP.** — It was just after 3 a.m. on the morning of Jan. 5, and 9-year-old Damere Frazier said the sound of smoke detectors going off woke him up.

"I was sleeping and I heard the smoke alarms, so I got up and went downstairs, and the whole downstairs was on fire," Damere said.

A fire had broken out on the first floor of Damere's home at 19 Pointers-Auburn Road in the Auburn section of Oldmans Township.

Damere and his grandfather, George St. John, were the only two in the house that night.

St. John, 75, was sleeping with a noisy breathing machine and the television on at the time. He hadn't heard the smoke detectors, Damere said.

Though he was scared, Damere said he ran back upstairs to his grandfather's bedroom and shook him awake.

With fire blazing on the first floor, Damere said he and his grandfather had no choice but to climb out a second-floor window and then jump down to the ground below.

Damere and his grandfather then ran to a neighbor's house, where they were able to call 9-1-1.

When Auburn Volunteer Fire Co. arrived at the scene, fire could be seen showing through the side of the home, fire Chief Melody Reese previously said.

According to Reese, around 4:45 a.m. the roof of the home partially collapsed. The roof eventually caved in completely, and the second floor of the home — where Damere and his grandfather had been sleeping — dropped to the ground.

The fire was deemed under control around 7:26 a.m., but by that time the home was destroyed.

Karen St. John, Damere's mother, lives in Penns Grove and said she rushed over to the home shortly after Damere and her father made it out. She said it's clear that Damere probably saved his grandfather's life.

"I'm very proud of him," she said. "If he hadn't been there, I think we can imagine what would've happened that night."

Other than a few minor scrapes, Damere and his grandfather were uninjured.

Immediately following the incident, fire officials said the cause of the fire was undetermined. However, Karen St. John said she believes an electrical issue was determined to be the cause.

Damere attends Oldmans Township School and is in 4th grade.

District Chief School Administrator David Lindenmuth said he was impressed with Damere, and was surprised when Damere returned to school only a day after the incident.

"He wanted to be here. He wanted to be with his friends," said Lindenmuth. "I think that's a testament that he's a good kid."

Lindenmuth also described the tremendous support the school and community has shown toward Damere and his grandfather, who lost everything from clothes to Christmas presents in the fire.

Bags of clothes and other donations have been pouring in from the community, and each homeroom in the school has been collecting donations, he said.

"The community has been a big help," said Karen St. John, adding that she was grateful for the tremendous support they had received.

Anyone seeking to make a donation can contact Oldmans Township School at **(856) 299-4240**.



Staff photo by Britney Lillya

Oldmans Township School Superintendent David Lindenmuth, left talks about how proud he is of 4<sup>th</sup> grade student Damere Frazier, 9 right for reacting the way he did during a fire at his home, located at 19 Pointers-Auburn Road in the Auburn section of Oldmans Township, in the early morning of Jan. 5. Also pictured is Damere's mother Karen St. John.



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The house at 19 Pointers-Auburn Road after the devastating fire on Jan. 5.