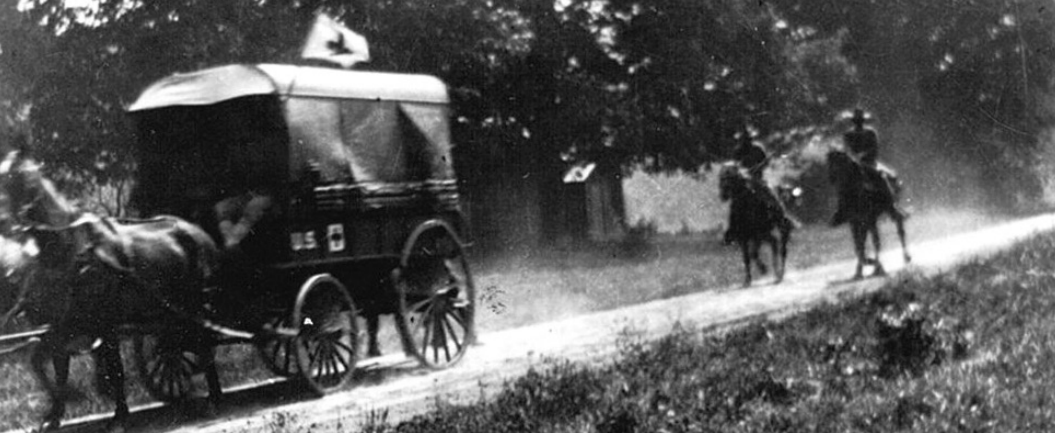




[www.villageambulance.com](http://www.villageambulance.com)

# THEN...



The history of ambulance service in Williamstown dates to 1927. For years prior to that, residents of Williamstown, New Ashford and Hancock had been voicing concerns about the lack of emergency medical care, which in those days relied on transportation of patients to doctors' offices (which were often in their houses) in personal vehicles or police cars.

So, in the spring of 1927, Everett W. Miller, president of Williamstown's Board of Trade and proprietor of a funeral home and furniture business on Spring Street, bought a DeSoto ambulance from Alvan T. Fuller, then governor of Massachusetts. The self-made millionaire owner of the Packard automobile franchise in Boston, Fuller was handicapped and had commissioned the modification of the DeSoto with side-opening doors to allow a stretcher to

be loaded. The vehicle was believed to be the first of its kind in the commonwealth.

Over the next 55 years, the Miller family's Hopkins Ambulance Service was a successful private business, regularly updating its equipment, investing in advanced medical training, expanding its staff and widening its coverage area. However, increased competition, combined with sweeping changes in all aspects of health care, forced Everett Miller's grandson, Albert, to announce that Hopkins Ambulance would close on March 15, 1982.

That day, the Williamstown Select Board declared that the town should not be in the ambulance business. However the board endorsed the creation of a non-profit organization and pledged to support it with in-kind funds. The Miller family agreed to operate the service and did so until a new professional management team took over in 2012.

Dedicated staff and management, encouraged by continuing public support, saw

# ...AND NOW

VAS through difficult times. They look forward to growing the business and increasing its value as an essential public service and a community asset.

In 1927, five people staffed the town's ambulance service. The single ambulance was operated by employees of E.W. Miller; most of them had only basic First Aid training.

Today, Village Ambulance Service employs 45 people. Of those, 13 are paramedics, four are EMT intermediates and 28 are EMTs.

VAS has four ambulances, one of which, a 2010 Chevrolet with 160,000-plus miles on it, is scheduled to be replaced within six to eight months. Under a recently-announced agreement with Williams College, the VAS fleet will include two 2014 Ford Econoline paratransit vans. Purchased by the college, the vans will provide non-emergency transportation of Williams students to medical appointments.

Although VAS receives in-kind services (call dispatching) from the Town of Williamstown,

it is not otherwise supported by local taxpayers' dollars. Many ambulance companies charge an annual contract fee – some in excess of \$1 million – to provide emergency medical services to cities and towns. VAS does not charge any town in its “catchment area” a fee for service. It simply bills the patient's insurance.

With the average cost of a call for transport – emergency or otherwise – at about \$400, insurance payments often do not keep pace with the true costs of providing such services, so VAS relies heavily on the generosity of residents of

Williamstown, Hancock and New Ashford to close the gap. This challenge became especially daunting when North Adams Regional Hospital closed earlier this year, requiring longer ambulance “runs” to and from Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield or Southwestern Vermont Medical Center in Bennington.

Demand for ambulance service has increased steadily over the past five years: In 2009 some 2,000 calls were logged; by July 2014, that number had jumped to about 3,200.



# VAS BOARD PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



2014 has been an eventful year for VAS. In January, a reconstituted Board of Directors, which includes a broad representation of our communities, took office. This Board is dedicated to providing the highest quality of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to the communities we serve - Williamstown, New Ashford, Hancock and southern Vermont.

During 2014, VAS received full restitution of the funds that were misappropriated by the previous office management. Because of increased call volume, a fourth ambulance was added to our fleet. This summer VAS entered into an innovative, mutually beneficial agreement with Williams College to provide non-emergent medical transport for Williams students. Both the College and VAS are hopeful that the experience gained with this prototype service will allow similar services to be offered to the public in the future.

However, there are still challenges to face. The closing of NARH, even with the opening of the BMC satellite emergency room, has placed a strain on personnel and equipment. Third party reimbursement to EMS providers has been decreasing nationally. Nonetheless our professional management and highly skilled Paramedics and EMTs continue to provide emergency services that, as a physician, I can assure you are second to none!

The health and well being of our communities depends on the rapid response of VAS. We, in turn, depend on the support of our residents to maintain and expand those services. I urge you to contribute to our annual campaign.

*Erwin Stuebner, MD and President of the VAS Board*

# ASK THE GM

*Shawn P. Godfrey, General Manager*



Why are ambulances parked in public places, like grocery stores and convenience stores?

Village Ambulance Service Inc. employs a dynamic dispatching strategy to reduce response times. This strategy may place emergency medical technicians at a fixed location (e.g. grocery store parking lot or convenience store) or require them to roam in a pre-determined area. VAS' average response time to an emergency incident is five minutes, well under the nationally recommended eight-minute response time standard.

In addition, EMTs buy food or other necessary provisions while on-duty. Our EMTs work long shifts: They eat, sleep, and work either at the ambulance station or while posted off-site. They may need to purchase food to prepare meals for the lengthy shift or fuel the ambulance before the next call for service. Our crews must be readily available to respond to emergencies, so they are required to stay together and close to the emergency vehicle at all times.

Community outreach is an important aspect of Village Ambulance Service's mission. Several of our outreach programs require an ambulance to park at a public place for an extended period of time. For example, our annual 9-1-1 Coat & Can Drive requires our crews to transport food and other supplies in an out-of-service ambulance from a nearby grocery store to the local food pantry. Over the past six years, this program has supplied more than 20,000 pounds of food and 2,000 clean and usable coats to those in need.

Village Ambulance Service welcomes your questions and is always pleased to respond to inquiries about service and practices. Feel free to contact me at 413-458-4889, ext. 2, or by email at [shawngodfrey@villageambulance.com](mailto:shawngodfrey@villageambulance.com). Frequently-asked questions and their answers may appear in future VAS newsletters.

# TESTIMONIALS

*I was in a serious car accident last August and sustained multiple injuries. The Village Ambulance was called and the response was immediate. I was stabilized, transported to Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield where it was determined Bay State Hospital in Springfield, MA was a better place for my needs.*

*My family was well satisfied with the care I received from the VAS and medically things went as well as possible given the circumstances. We continue to be happy there is such a superior service in the community and now with the closing of the North Adams Hospital, transportation becomes more important. The VAS is highly professional. I have confidence as a person who has benefitted from the professionalism and also as a physician. I depend on the competence and care for my patients who require admission to a hospital. I want to stress how necessary the VAS is to Williamstown.*

*Dr. Stephen Payne  
Family Medicine in Williamstown*

*My husband Irwin was diagnosed with cancer in 2007. Aggressive treatment allowed for five good years. In 2012, his liver began to shut down and he was unsteady on his feet. He kept falling and didn't have the strength to get up. Each time, the Village Ambulance arrived within minutes, the paramedics calm and unbelievably kind to all of us. They brought the stress level down and made us feel as cared for as my husband was.*

*It was the little things that made the difference. The team didn't just drop my husband in the emergency room and take off. They waited to make certain he was stabilized and we knew what was happening. They spoke to us every step of the way whether it was on the first trip to the hospital or the fifth.*

*When my turn came to be rushed to the ER, the team was every bit as caring. I rode back to Williamstown in an ambulance from Baystate Medical Center and there was no comparison. The VAS is an excellent service for Williamstown and we are lucky to have them.*

*Bernice Shainman*

*When I needed emergency services, The Village Ambulance responded rapidly with support and professionalism. I immediately felt as if I was in good hands and was able to relax. The team was exceptionally responsive to my wife and she could calmly do what was needed.*

*I was transported to BMC and the VAS team stayed with me to make certain I was comfortable and well informed as to what to expect every step of the way. I was discharged a short time later and able to return home with my wife driving our car.*

*When you are in a situation like that the superior level of care is very important.*

*David Rempell, Director  
Williamstown Youth Center and Board Member of the VAS*

# WISH LIST

This year, we are pleased to have been able to make some vital improvements to the VAS. We installed a generator to safeguard against power outages, purchased a new radio system and bought new furnishing for the base. These expenditures will positively impact our service.

We continue to look for ways to enhance the care VAS crews provide to those we transport. Perhaps there's an item on our "wish list" that you might underwrite or contribute to.

For example, a Lucas Chest Compression System can be used during transport and can positively impact the initial treatment of a patient in cardiac arrest. The VAS currently has one unit but each vehicle should carry one. The cost per unit is \$15,000.

Many of our calls involve the transport of an obese person. The traditional cot is not adequate for these patients and can cause injury to the paramedics and

EMTs. The MX-Pro Bariatric Transport is designed for easier access through tight thresholds, added comfort for the patient, and reduction of strain on the operators. The cost of the MX Transport is \$30,000.

The LifePak-15 Defibrillator / Monitor is a state-of the-art device and three of our rigs carry them. We use them to guide CPR compressions and ventilations and the device measures oxygen and carbon monoxide levels in the body. We would like to equip the fourth ambulance with one of these devices. The cost is \$35,000.

When the North Adams Hospital was operating, we used their linen service. We currently pay for monthly laundry service, but would like to have a washer, dryer combination at the base to save money. The cost is \$1,500.

We are grateful for any financial support from people living in our service area. Every little bit helps. This year, we ask you to increase your donation seventy-five to one hundred dollars. We need to make our community ambulance stronger.

# PLANNED GIVING

*Planned Giving VAS by Kathy Therrien, Williams College Director of Trust and Estate Administration and VAS Board Member*

In supporting VAS, you may wish to consider the following gift assets you may have overlooked. They can be extremely beneficial in making a significant gift to this institution that supports our community in so many ways.

## **Give appreciated stock**

Donating appreciated stock (held for more than a year) enhances your giving power. If you give \$1,000 in cash, the gift costs you \$1,000, and you receive a charitable deduction for the same amount, which is great! If, instead, you donate \$1,000 in stock, you not only receive the same charitable deduction, but you also pay no capital gains tax on the stock donated.

## **Donate a life insurance policy you no longer need**

Naming VAS as the owner and beneficiary of a whole life insurance policy is a great way to support the service. You receive a charitable deduction equal to the policy's cash surrender value or premiums paid, whichever is less, and since the policy no longer meets your initial intentions, it now provides much needed funds to support the mission of VAS when the policy is surrendered.

If you are interested in making these types of gifts, please call VAS at 413-458-4889 and they will be pleased to assist you with the process.



**Village**  
**Ambulance**  
*service*

30 Water Street  
Williamstown, MA 01267

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*Dave Rempell*

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