

Village Ambulance Service

Winter 2012 -2013 Newsletter



Snow is in the air...

Welcome to the Winter 2012-2013 edition of the Village Ambulance Service EMS & Community Awareness Newsletter. This publication is aimed at keeping you updated on the progress of Emergency Medical Services in Berkshire County.

Employee Spotlight

Bryan Davis EMT-Basic/Paramedic Student



Congratulations to Bryan Davis for being this quarter's Employee Spotlight!

Bryan started working at Village Ambulance Service in 2010 after earning his EMT-Basic certification through VAS's accredited EMT program. He is currently enrolled in Greenfield Community College's Paramedic program, and recently completed the didactic portion of the Massachusetts Instructor/Coordinator (I/C) course. Following a lengthy I/C internship, Bryan will be able to coordinate and teach initial EMT-Basic programs in the Commonwealth.

While taking courses to earn an Associates Degree in Fire Science, Bryan volunteers as a Firefighter/EMT for the Town of Cheshire. "I've always



had aspirations of becoming a career Firefighter/Paramedic ever since I was a young boy" said Davis. "I didn't realize it was so much work!" he added.

In his spare time, Bryan enjoys hunting, fishing, boating and anything involving the outdoors. He currently lives with his parents and younger brother in Cheshire, MA.

Good luck with your studies, Bryan; all the hard work will pay off!

VAS 9-1-1 Coat & Can Drive Helps Local People in Need



Village Ambulance Service, the Berkshire Young Professionals group and the Williamstown Council on Aging have joined forces to collect clean, gently used coats and non-perishable food items as part of the 9-1-1 Coat and Can Drive community service project.

Just under 450 coats and 1500lbs of non-perishable food was collected and distributed to residents in the northern Berkshire area over the past three months. Drop-off centers included Village Ambulance Service, the Berkshire Mall and the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, while the Williamstown Council on Aging hosted a collection day on Friday, November 2, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

"The need has never been greater and it's never been easier to make a difference in your community. Here is a great opportunity to make sure that nobody goes without such a basic necessity as a coat or a warm meal this winter" said Shawn P. Godfrey, General Manager of Village Ambulance Service.

The year-long initiative, which is dedicated to distributing reusable coats and non-perishable food, free of charge, directly to local children and adults, is an easy way for the community to pass along coats and jackets they no longer need.

For more information on this project or to donate to the 9-1-1 Coat & Can drive, please call Village Ambulance Service at (413) 458-4889.

SAFETY TIPS



Village Ambulance Service

Offers Winter Safety Tips
For the
Greater Williamstown Area



Cold winter weather is fast approaching, and with it comes to a variety of health and safety hazards both indoors and out. To help ensure everyone in our community stays safe and warm this season, the members of Village Ambulance Service offer the following tips and suggest you post them where they can be seen by your family members and co-workers.

Driver Safety

Snow, ice, and extreme cold can make driving treacherous. In 1998, 131,000 motor vehicle crashes occurred during sleet and snowy conditions in the U.S. Before winter, make sure your car is ready for the season with a tune-up, snow tires or tires with good tread, a charged battery and sufficient antifreeze.

- Keep emergency gear in your car, including a cell phone, flashlight, jumper cables, sand or kitty litter, ice scraper/snow brush, small shovel, blankets, and warning devices. For longer trips take food, water, extra blankets, and required medication.
- If you must travel in bad weather, drive slowly and let someone your route and anticipated arrival time.
- Try to get to the store before a storm hits.
- Carbon monoxide kills. Don't sit in a parked car with the engine running unless a window is open. Don't warm up your car in the garage. If your car is outside, make sure the exhaust pipe and the area around it are free of snow.
- If you are stopped or stalled, light two flares, and place one at each end of the car. Stay in your vehicle and open a window slightly. Wrap yourself in blankets. Run your heater for a few minutes every hour to keep warm.

Snow Shoveling

While snow shoveling can be good exercise, it can also be dangerous for optimists who take on more than they can handle.

- Dress warmly, paying special attention to feet, hands, nose and ears.
- Avoid shoveling snow if you are out of shape. If you have a history of heart trouble, do not shovel snow unless your doctor approves.
- Pace yourself and don't work to the point of exhaustion. Shoveling can raise your heart rate and blood pressure dramatically. Take frequent breaks.
- If possible, push snow in front of you. If you have to lift it, pick up small amounts and lift with your legs bent, not your back. Do not toss snow over your shoulder or to the side.
- Don't drink alcohol before or while shoveling snow and don't smoke while shoveling.

Snow Blowers

Snow blowers or throwers aren't toys. These machines may help you efficiently remove snow from driveways and sidewalks, but they also cause thousands of emergency room visits each year.

- Make sure you understand your owner's manual safety procedures thoroughly.
- Be sure you have good visibility or light.
- Walk, never run.
- Keep the area clear of pets and people, especially kids.
- Clear the area of all obstacles that can clog the chute.
- Never put your hand in the snow blower to remove snow or debris. Turn it off and wait a few seconds, then use a stick or broom handle.
- Never leave the snow blower unattended and don't let kids operate it.
- Dress properly for the job. Wear boots that give you good footing on slippery surfaces and avoid loose fitting clothes that can get caught.
- Don't attempt to clear steep slopes.

"This is only a sample of the safety precautions we must take during the winter months," says RJ Pensivy, Paramedic at Village Ambulance Service. "Safety is a personal responsibility. If you are in doubt, think twice before doing anything that may prove hazardous to yourself, your property or those around you."

Service Advancements

The North Adams Transcript
Tuesday, November 20, 2012

WILLIAMSTOWN -- Village Ambulance Service took delivery of a new ambulance Friday morning to replace an older model on which the engine failed. The old model, a 2007 Ford, had just returned from a trip to Baystate Medical Center in Springfield when it "died."



The new ambulance, a 2010 Chevrolet, had been used as a demonstrator by the dealer, Yankee Fire and Rescue of Palmer, and was immediately available. The purchase was facilitated by a finance package put together by Williamstown Savings and the Hoosac Savings Banks.

Delivery was made by Keith Walker, president of Yankee, and accepted by Cory Thurston, board president of Village Ambulance.

The emergency ambulance replacement came just as Village Ambulance launched the nonprofit's 2013 Member ship campaign, mailing 5,555 brochures to the residents of Williamstown, Hancock and New Ashford, towns which depend on VAS for emergency medical transportation.

Renewal forms had no sooner begun arriving back at the 30 Water St. office when the EMTs reported the engine in their 2007 ambulance had given up after nearly 140,000 miles. The garage reported: "A rod went through the engine block."

That is the mechanical equivalent of a fatal heart attack, and the loss of one of the three vehicles VAS keeps on the road set off a frantic search for a replacement and more important, a way to pay for it.

The VAS was already running close to break-even. The costs of government-imposed operating regulations have been increasing faster than the fees ambulances are allowed to charge. And, changes in Medicare rules and regulations have reduced ambulance service revenues across the nation.

Nevertheless, VAS, which has been led by a new management team for the last year, had been holding its own. New operating procedures and financial policies had proven effective, but there was no cash reserve available to meet the \$100,000 to \$150,000 needed to replace an ambulance.

The VAS board's executive committee was determined to maintain the quality and effectiveness of patient services the communities have grown to expect. Last Monday, the committee authorized the immediate replacement of the ailing ambulance.

Fortunately the 2010 ambulance was located and delivery arranged for last week. VAS employees were at work on the new rig Friday installing medical supplies and equipment and putting on snow tires.

"We were extremely fortunate to obtain an ambulance so quickly," said VAS president Thurston. "It would have taken two to three months to order a new unit and get it delivered. Dealers don't just have these sitting around on showroom floors. Now we have to pay for it. We hope that this year's membership contributions will reflect the faith of the members in our ability to provide fast and effective medical transportation."

Village is already in the exploratory stages of a capital campaign to replenish funds depleted by this emergency ambulance replacement and by the downward spiral of the national economy in general and the health care system in particular. The service had been using the income from capital funds to buy new ambulances, but in the last few years, that income had dwindled and the fund needs to be built back up.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Williamstown EMTs Are Pretty In **Pink**

By **Andy McKeever**

iBerkshires Staff

WILLIAMSTOWN, Mass. — Village Ambulance employees are garnering a lot of attention this month for looking pretty... in pink.

EMTs and staff are wearing pink uniforms to show their support for breast cancer awareness month.

The staff designed embroidered polo shirts — with a pink ribbon on the right side and their logo on the left — to wear for the month of October.

"We wanted to do something fun, something different to show our support," Angela Swistak, who was one of the employees behind the idea, said on Friday.

Swistak and her co-worker Sean Peltier thought it up in the summer and had Cheshire-based Grapevine Embroidery & Design embroider the shirts — after receiving approval from the boss of course. And when the shirts came in last week, nearly all of the staff jumped on board to don the pink.

"We've had an overwhelming response," Swistak said. "Every year now we'll do this."

The polo-shirts have not only been highly supported by staff but everywhere they go, they are hearing compliments. From emergency room staff in multiple hospitals to nursing homes, the shirts are gaining attention. Godfrey said an Albany-based TV station called in the morning after hearing from staff at Albany Medical Center about the shirts.

"We've been getting a lot of feedback from emergency room staff," General Manager Shawn Godfrey said. "We've got an amazingly positive response."

The support is another level for the ambulance company which already has rainbow ribbons on their vehicles in a sign of support for all types of cancer.



Giving thanks, giving gifts and giving **BACK!**

If you are like many of us in the public service field, then you've never worked a day in your life. We do what we do not for the money, or the glory, but for the reward that comes from knowing you truly make a difference in people's lives every day.

The fact that our communities allow us to serve them is indeed an honor; one that we should routinely be thankful for. The holiday season offers a perfect opportunity for us to give back in a number of ways.

One way Village Ambulance Service is giving back is through the Berkshire Community Action Council's "Holiday Elf" program. Village Ambulance Service has agreed to sponsor and provide gifts to three children of a single family.

\$500 in monetary donations from over 25 employees was used to purchase suitable toys, clothing and wrapping materials for the family. The gifts will be anonymously delivered to the family just before Christmas day.

Holiday Elf Program Manager Aleta Moncecchi said 600 children will benefit from the Elf Program this year. The annual program allows individuals, local organizations and businesses the opportunity to sponsor children, up to the age of 12, from low-income families for the Christmas holiday.



Child Passenger Safety

Massachusetts state law requires all children under the age of 5 and below 40 pounds be properly secured in a federally approved car seat or booster seat. Further, they must be secured according to the manufacturer's instructions. Children ages 5 - 12 must wear a properly adjusted and fastened seat belt at all times.

Car seat safety checks can be performed by making an appointment or by stopping by our station. To make an appointment, please call Michelle Sawicky at 413-458-4889 or stop by our office at 30 Water Street, Williamstown, MA 01267.



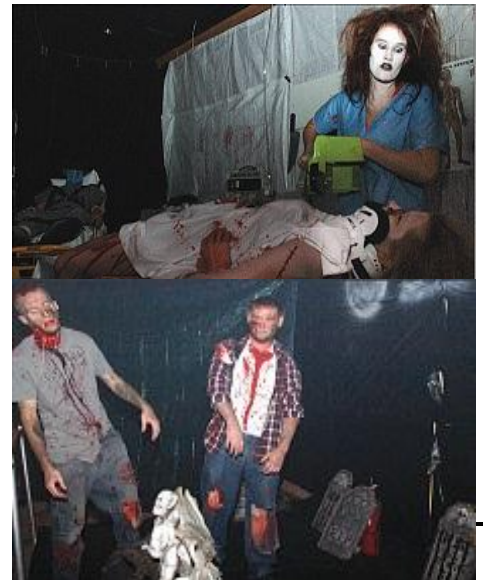
Third Annual Explorers' Horrors Haunted House a Huge Success!

The Village Ambulance Service EMS Explorer Post 911 held its third annual "Explorers' Horrors" Haunted House attraction the last two weekends in October at the Berkshire Mall.

More than 630 guests went through the converted former pet store space, which was outfitted to include four rooms.

The Autopsy Room; The Haunted Graveyard; The Torture Chamber, and The Nursery were used to successfully frighten mall-goers, which included people of all ages. An adult Advisor was in charge of each room, while the Explorers created the themes and did most of the design and decorating. 100% of the \$1400 raised will be used to subsidize future post events, purchase uniforms, meals, etc.

Thank you for the support!



Explorer Post to Host 2013 "First Nighter" Meeting

Since 2009, Village Ambulance Service has sponsored an Explorer Post for area youths interested in emergency medical services and community outreach. All new recruits must be between the ages of 14 and 21 and have completed the 8th grade.

The mission of the Post is to offer co-ed youth in our community an insight into the field of Emergency Medical Services, as well as instill the importance of community enrichment. It is also our

purpose to help these same young adults become responsible, caring, and productive adults who may one day become the face of area emergency medical services.

The Post will be holding its third annual "First Nighter" meeting in February 2013. Future meeting information can be found by visiting our website at www.villageambulance.com; click on Community then Explorer Post, or by calling our office at 413-458-4889.

During this brief meeting, the Post will cover what is expected from the Explorer, parents and the Post, and will allow prospective Explorers the opportunity to enroll into the program.

Congratulations! Explorer Becomes EMT

Village Ambulance Service is proud to announce that a third member of the VAS EMS Explorer Post 911 has successfully completed over 135 hours of Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)-Basic training.



Dean Stockley, of Pittsfield, has passed the official practical and written examinations to become certified as an EMT-Basic in Massachusetts. The course was held at the Berkshire Mall, Lanesborough, from February 2012 to June 2012.

Kevin Stant and Mary Tremblay, also Explorer Post members, became certified as EMTs in early 2012. All three are now employed at VAS and have expressed interest in becoming EMT-Paramedics.

The EMT-Basic course teaches initial evaluation, treatment and transport of patients with medical problems and/or trauma. Students learn to recognize and provide initial care for ailments including but not limited to, shock, heart problems, breathing problems, strokes, burns, diabetes, drowning and accidents.

EMT training information can be found by visiting our website at www.villageambulance.com; click on Training then EMT-Basic, or by calling our office at 413-458-4889.

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?



SPRING 2013 PROGRAM

WHERE

Berkshire Mall – Route 7 & 8 Connector Rd.,
Lanesborough, MA 01237

WHEN

Classes begin on March 7th and run until June
29th every Monday and Thursday evening from
6:00pm-10:00pm. (Saturday classes TBA)

COST

Program Cost: \$750.00
(\$150.00 non-refundable deposit with application,
Balance due first night of class)
Cash, Money Order, Bank Check, or Agency
Check Accepted

CONTACT

To obtain an application packet, please visit our
website, call our office, or simply scan the QR
code with your smartphone.

FOR A CAREER THAT COUNTS!

EMT – BASIC PROGRAM

The Emergency Medical Technician-Basic (EMT-B) Course teaches initial evaluation, treatment and transport of patients with medical problems and/or trauma. Students learn to recognize and provide initial care for ailments including, but not limited to, shock, heart problems, breathing problems, strokes, burns, diabetes, drowning and accidents.

For medical emergencies, they provide rapid response, initial evaluation and care, and transport to an appropriate medical facility. They also provide non-emergency transportation for patients who are bedridden and/or require continuous monitoring and basic-level care.

EMT-Basics are the foundation of American pre-hospital emergency medical care.



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