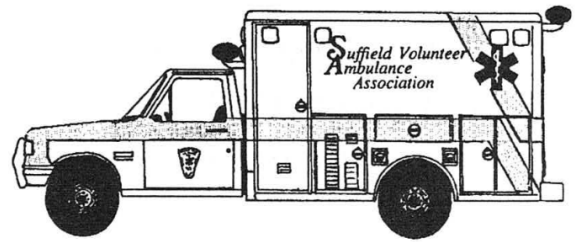


The Responder

The Newsletter of the
Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association



Summer 1990

Volume 1 Number 1

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911

Suffield's Emergency Number

**Police
Fire
Ambulance**

The Responder is published by the
Suffield Volunteer Ambulance
Association, 97 Mountain Road,
Suffield, CT 06078. Telephone
(203) 668-5249.

Ambulance Offers Advanced Care

New Status Means Better Care for Suffield Citizens

Suffield Ambulance crews can now administer lifesaving intravenous fluids which can dramatically increase the chance of survival for critically injured or ill patients.

The upgrade to the Intermediate level from our Basic Life Support status was approved by the Office of Emergency Medical Services in early April after twelve of our personnel passed an extensive training course in intravenous (IV) care, advanced airway management and critical patient assessment. State regulations require that at least one IV technician be available for calls around the clock.

critically ill patient's blood volume up. This is especially important in serious accidents where a patient who has lost a lot of blood may be trapped in a car for long periods of time.

Prior to obtaining IV status, when called to assist a critically injured patient, Suffield Ambulance relied exclusively on the Bradley Airport Paramedics who are also IV-certified. However, at times the paramedics were on another call or otherwise not available. Suffield's own ability to perform IV patient care will improve our service to you.



Using newly acquired lifesaving skills, Suffield EMTs will be able to stabilize critically injured patients more effectively.

Additional medical equipment required for IV status was also purchased or donated and placed on board our two ambulances. The IV technician on the scene now has the ability to start an IV line and introduce D5W or Lactated Ringers solution which can help keep a

While the cost of running an Intermediate care service is a bit higher, SVAA feels it is worth it. By advancing to Intermediate status, SVAA continues its commitment to providing Suffield with the highest quality care possible.

What's On Our Mind?

Issues That Concern the SVAA

A New Building

The SVAA has outgrown its existing facility in the Town Hall Annex (see the picture below.) We currently have only one bay for our two ambulances, one small office, no bunk facilities for the night crew, and cramped office space.

We are working toward obtaining a new facility to house our equipment and members.

While funding is our biggest concern, a new facility is a most urgent need. After eight years of unsuccessful attempts with the Town to either expand our use of the Annex or build a new facility, our space shortage is now critical.

SVAA has been and remains open to any viable solution to acquiring more space, including private donations of land to build a new facility.

Funding

Contributions have not kept pace with the cost of providing Suffield with quality ambulance service. The SVAA is deeply concerned about where our funding will come from. Projections indicate that within one year we will be out of money, and have to discontinue our current method of operations.

The SVAA Board of Directors has retained a fundraising consultant to determine our viability as a privately-funded organization. After careful study, it has been determined that an aggressive fundraising effort would help but not completely solve our funding problem. Therefore, the SVAA is considering these options:

- Charging patients for using the ambulance (this would fund approximately 1/3 of our budget.)

- Becoming a town agency (which would provide complete funding through increased taxes.)
- Closing down completely, (which might require the Town to contract with a commercial ambulance service, probably from the Hartford area.)

It is the Board's belief that through increased public support and some changes to our method of operation the SVAA will be able to continue the same quality emergency service that we have offered since we began.

Public Involvement

The SVAA's new Board president, Nick Mickelson, has promoted increased involvement by town residents in the day-to-day functions of the SVAA.

While new MRT or EMT members have always been sought to drive or provide patient care on the ambulance,

Mickelson has specifically directed the Board and membership to enhance our non-provider member category. This segment of our membership is the fastest growing, and includes the Cadet program (for youth under 16), office helpers and advisors.

Townspeople who wish to serve the ambulance in this capacity will be beneficial to the growth and stability of the SVAA in the 1990s.

Training the Public

SVAA is committed to training Suffield's residents in Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid. Quite often our ambulance crews arrive at accidents or medical scenes and find that the victim had received lifesaving CPR or other aid prior to our arrival. SVAA teaches these courses to residents frequently and will continue to do so because it really does make a difference.



Good News, Bad News

The good news is that SVAA now operates two ambulances to serve you better. The bad news is that we have only one garage bay!

What's On Your Mind?

Questions and Answers About SVAA

I don't understand all the concern over money. Aren't you a Town agency supported by my tax dollars?

No. While the fire and police departments are Town agencies, the Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association is a private, non-profit group whose mission is to provide Suffield with emergency ambulance service. In return, the Town does provide the current Annex garage and office, salaries for our two full-time people, and pays for some of our insurance bill. The rest of our support comes from voluntary donations of the people we serve.

I've thought about joining, but I'm concerned about the time commitment. I've got a daytime job and young children. How much time is involved?

Less than you would think. Once you've been trained and certified, our volunteers are asked to work just two shifts each month — but we're flexible because we know you have other commitments. We can use people either day or night.

When you are on-duty (a full shift is 12 hours from 6 to 6) you are free to move about town or stay at home. On a shift you might have one or two calls, each taking about two hours.

Every two years our members are required to recertify to ensure that your medical skills are adequate. Recertification takes about 20 hours of class time.

For people who wish to be involved with the SVAA in non-medical roles, we have a lot of things that need to be done. Please see page 6 for ideas on what you can do to help the SVAA.

Does Suffield really need two ambulances? How did we get along with just one all these years?

We feel two ambulances are necessary. First, we have twice as many calls as we did 10 years ago. Also, when our first ambulance is out on a call, or being repaired, we use the second one. Before, we had to rely on an ambulance coming from another town in these situations.

Second, an ambulance can care for at most one or two patients. In motor vehicle accidents with many injured, our second ambulance is called to the scene to transport the other patients.

Since our mission is to provide ambulance service to Suffield, we want to make sure that an ambulance is still available quickly when our first one is busy. It is our policy to keep the second ambulance in town and not use it for mutual aid to other towns except in the most urgent of cases such as a serious accident or disaster.

Lastly, we feel you should know that

the entire cost of our new ambulance was donated by a thoughtful Suffield couple who generously acted on our need for a second ambulance.

Do you offer free ambulance service because you are a volunteer group?

Actually, no. Not all volunteer ambulance groups offer free services. We have always done so because until recently we were financially able to. Now we must look at fair and equitable ways of making up the difference between our donations and our expenses. Charging patients is one way to close the gap, but that involves a lot of red tape and State regulation which itself would be time-consuming to manage. We prefer instead to encourage donations from our patients which can amount to almost the same benefit without all the paperwork.

Our expenses are relatively low compared to a commercial service because the largest expense in running an ambulance, the labor, is saved by using volunteers.

Mobile Open House Program Visits Neighborhoods This Summer

Do you have more questions? Ask them when we come to your neighborhood!

Once again this summer SVAA will be visiting many Suffield neighborhoods as part of the Mobile Open House Program.

Every Tuesday evening beginning in mid-June, SVAA will bring both ambulances out to a neighborhood and open them up for inspection. Area residents can then walk down the block and see our equipment, ask questions about medical emergencies and learn about the SVAA.

The Mobile Open House Program has been a great success the last two years

with over 200 residents stopping by and seeing the ambulances firsthand. The kids especially enjoyed the visits, often becoming eager volunteers to take part in a mock rescue or medical call.

Demonstrations include all our equipment carried on the ambulance, extrication from a car at a simulated accident, and CPR (Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation).

If you are interested in having the ambulances come to your neighborhood this summer, contact us at our office during normal working hours at 668-5249.

Profiles In Service

The most important part of our service is our many volunteers who devote their time and energy on a regular basis. These are your neighbors — residents of Suffield and surrounding towns. Here are just three of them.



Jennifer Borgio, MRT
2 years service

Jennifer Borgio (Catherine Lane) is a Senior at Suffield High School planning a career in Early Childhood Education. She credits her brother, Jeff, a paramedic in Hartford and SVAA volunteer, with sparking her interest in emergency medical services (EMS). She joined the Ambulance Association two years ago, primarily for the training which she felt would be important to her career.

When she isn't volunteering, Jennifer keeps herself busy with school. A consistent high honor student, her extracurricular activities include sports. She is captain of the girls' cross country team and manager of the varsity and junior varsity basketball and varsity baseball teams. Jennifer is also involved with the Suffield Task Force on substance abuse, the Safe Prom Party, and Spaulding School's Project Hug.

In keeping with her interest in early childhood education, Jennifer works part time at a local preschool. She is planning to continue her education at the University of Connecticut or Eastern Connecticut State University in the fall.

Jennifer points out that all it takes to join the SVAA is an interest and some time for the training. "A lot of people think you have to be big and strong to do this, but I'm only 4'10" and I do a good job."

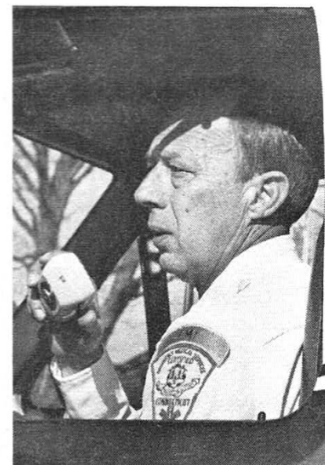
For Stanley "Sonny" Osowiecki (Bridge Street), joining the SVAA was a logical extension of his community service. A past member and president of the Jaycees and early supporter of the minibus program, Sonny heard about the SVAA's need for drivers one night after a bad automobile accident in town.

"I didn't know much about EMS, but I could drive and I was already CPR certified, so I joined. After a while, I wanted to do more, so I took the Medical Response Technician (MRT) course (about 50 hours of training). Later I took additional training and became an EMT," he explained. A year ago Sonny was appointed Assistant Chief, which is the number two operational position in the SVAA.

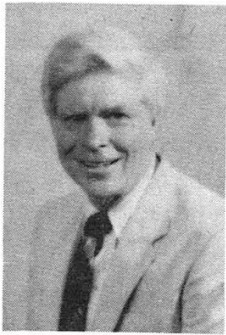
Sonny's most memorable EMS experience involved a friend who had started bleeding a few days after surgery. "It was pretty serious, because she'd lost a lot of blood. The paramedics assisted us and we got her stabilized and to a hospital in time. As I was leaving the hospital, I said a few words of reassurance and gave her a peck on the cheek, which surprised the doctor. The next time I saw her she threw her arms around me and cried."

For Sonny, service with the SVAA has become something of a family affair. His daughter, Judi, an X-ray technician at Mt. Sinai Hospital, is an EMT and his wife, Marge, is a non-provider member. Cousins Chet and Peter are both former members.

When he's not giving his time to the Ambulance Association, Sonny works in data processing and telecommunications at Hamilton Standard in Windsor Locks where he has been employed for 32 years.



Sonny Osowiecki, EMT
Assistant Chief
8 years service



**Blair Childs, CPR-Driver
2 years service**

Blair Childs (North Street) found himself with a little extra time on his hands after retiring from Hamilton Standard two years ago, so he joined the SVAA. He took a course in CPR and schedules himself to drive the ambulance every Tuesday daytime.

Blair seems to be more active in retirement than most people half his age. He continues his participation in town government as vice chairman of the Board of Finance, having previously served as its chairman. He was also chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission for many years. Blair's other activities include working with the Literacy Volunteers of America twice a week and working part time as a manufacturer's representative for several small machine shops and sheet metal companies.

An avid platform tennis player and member of the Suffield Country Club, Blair and his wife, the former Carol Alcorn, moved to Suffield in 1965.

Blair thinks there is a great opportunity for other retired people to get involved with the Ambulance Association, as drivers or even EMTs. "It's a very satisfying way to make a contribution to the community," he says.

Suffield's Best Bargain

A Financial Perspective on Running an Ambulance Service in Town

In this day of high taxes and hard choices about services, the citizens of Suffield have a unique bargain in one of their vital services.

We're referring of course to the emergency medical services provided by the Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association. Some 50 members provide a 24-hour service 365 days each year without any charge to the patients. When the situation is serious, the Bradley Airport Paramedics respond, also without charge. In a situation where more than one ambulance is needed, we can rouse a second crew for our backup ambulance in minutes.

But since SVAA doesn't charge its patients, where does the money to operate come from?

The largest share of our \$150,000 operating cost comes from private donations and memorial gifts. The Town pays for our two paid staff people who cover daytime shifts, and most of the insurance bill - all totaling about \$65,000. The town also provides housing for one ambulance and our office, costing about \$10,000.

The 22,000 hours donated each year by our volunteers and the financial support of the community saves a lot of money.

But what would happen if the SVAA wasn't here? The Town would have to look to a commercial ambulance company to provide this important service, and the costs would be significantly greater. Here's why.

First, the EMTs would have to be paid. Using prevailing wage rates, this would cost \$200,000. Other costs for fuel, supplies, equipment, and vehicle maintenance would probably cost another \$100,000. An adequate facility (sorry, but the SVAA offices are inadequate) would cost them another \$20,000 per year. Overhead and profit might add another \$50,000 for a total operating cost of \$370,000.

This cost would be partially offset by

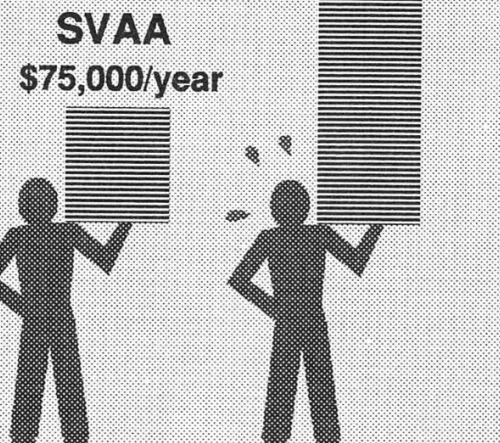
billing patients at the State-allowed rates of about \$250 per call for each of the 750 calls per year. Since this would only generate \$190,000, the Town would be asked to pay the balance of about \$180,000 as a service fee to the commercial service. This is the general pattern in most towns that depend on commercial ambulance services rather than volunteers.

As a resident and taxpayer of Suffield, you'll agree we get an excellent service at truly a bargain price. Let's work to keep it that way.

Easing the Suffield Taxpayer's Burden

A comparison of what Suffield taxpayers spend today to support SVAA's ambulance service versus the cost of a contracting with a commercial ambulance service.

Costs are estimates



Would You Like to Help the SVAA? Here's How!

If you are medically inclined . . .

We can always use more people to become medically trained and work on the ambulance. Here is an explanation of the kinds of training we use.

EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians) are the backbone of the SVAA. These dedicated people are the most common providers of medical care in our organization, but they are not alone.

EMTs are just one of the many different levels of providers we use on the ambulance. Below is a list of these levels and the training required:

- MRT (Medical Response Technician) - MRTs are certified to perform patient care alongside EMTs after a 50-hour course which includes Advanced First Aid.
- EMT-A (Emergency Medical Technician) - EMTs must pass a 120-hour course which includes MRT training and additional patient care skills.
- EMT-I (Intermediate) - An EMT-I attends an additional 100-hour course and emergency room training and may start an

intravenous line (IV) in a patient, insert a special airway in a non-breathing patient and perform other advanced care.

The only higher EMT level is the EMT-P (Paramedic) which requires over 600 hours of training. We rely on the Bradley Airport Paramedics to provide their advanced skills at the most serious cases.

Our MRTs, EMTs and EMT-I technicians are certified by the State of Connecticut, so that you are assured of the highest quality care possible. The only difference between SVAA ambulance personnel and those of a commercial ambulance service is that they are paid and we volunteer our time.

And if you are not . . .

The nearly 50 volunteers who staff your Suffield Ambulance are first and foremost medical personnel who are willing to do the kinds of rescue and first aid that make most people turn their heads. We're trained and willing to assist people injured in accidents, suffering heart attacks, stricken with illness or even someone who is just depressed.

But few of us are capable of performing the many other tasks required to keep the SVAA going. We're not fundraisers, publicity experts or politicians. As times have gotten tougher financially, we've been forced into performing these and other roles in addition to our primary interest which is responding to someone's rescue.

This is where you can help. You can join the SVAA as a non-provider member and help us in the areas where we're not qualified. Every time you see the ambulance responding somewhere in town you'll know that you're as much a part of the organization as the EMTs and others who are providing medical care.

We need people with:

- Fundraising experience, to help us drive a successful fundraising campaign
- Business acumen, to act as advisors to the Board and help us run our operation as efficiently as possible and for the least cost.
- Vehicle maintenance knowledge, to help us keep our ambulances clean and in top condition.
- Special projects ideas, such as getting residents to display street numbers on their houses so we can locate them in emergencies.
- Ham radio skills, to help develop our radio communication system.
- Youth Advisors to our Cadet program with after-school meetings and trips.
- Senior citizens, to help us staff information tables at town events and do various other tasks.
- Office skills, to help out with mailings, newsletters, the fund drive and gift acknowledgements.

- Public relations skills to coordinate press releases with area newspapers.
- Seamstress skills to keep our uniforms in top-notch condition.
- Follow-up skills to visit patients we have served, send get-well cards and encourage their recuperation.
- Management skills, to be able to properly manage all of these new people and projects!

You might not wish to get involved on a regular basis, but still desire to help in some way. Here are some more ideas:

- If you run a business in Suffield, would you consider doing a cooperative fundraising event with us? Or, perhaps you would offer your business to help us print flyers, donate food for an event or provide other considerations.

Continued on next page

Helping the SVAA

- How about rallying your co-workers or neighbors for a CPR class? We'll provide the instructor and come to your offices or home. CPR really does save lives.
- When our ambulances come to your neighborhood for the Mobile Open House, would you be willing to help us organize the event and contact your neighbors?

People frequently ask us about donating furniture, typewriters, and so forth. Our needs in these areas are fairly well set since our office space is so cramped. But ask anyway. Our needs change daily.

It sounds trite, but our most appreciated donation besides your time is money. As an ambulance service, we must continually buy rescue equipment and supplies which cannot be reused for disease control reasons. Several organizations in town have graciously donated proceeds from an event to allow us to buy bandages, oxygen and more permanent fixtures such as stretchers, linen, medical kits and so on. If your organization would like to do this too, please call our office for an idea of what equipment is needed.

Special Thanks

The Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association would like to thank the following organizations for these recent equipment donations:

- The Friends of Suffield for a pair of Medical Anti-Shock Trousers (M.A.S.T.)
- The Suffield Rotary, for an Intravenous Medical Kit
- The Suffield Fire Department, for a Child CPR mannequin.

And as always, we appreciate all those who support us in our Annual Fund Drive and with donations throughout the year.

The Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association

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Cindy Nicholson

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Shawna Wencil
Owen Wilson

Resident or Boxholder
Suffield, CT 06078
West Suffield, CT 06093

*Suffield Volunteer
Ambulance
Association*
97 Mountain Road, P.O. Box 642
Suffield, CT 06078

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NO. 8

Ambulance Cadets Learn Rescue Skills After School

Student Volunteers Provide Service to the Community

When the school bell rings and school lets out, several enthusiastic students get ready for an exciting evening. These are the students who are part of SVAA's Cadet program.

The Cadet program is open to students who are in the 5th through 8th grades. The meetings and activities teach the Cadets about lifesaving, CPR, First Aid and ambulance work. To acquaint them with the various emergency services, the students take field trips to local police and fire departments and help keep the SVAA ambulances clean and in order. The Cadets also take part in various SVAA activities and march in parades with the regular members.

Cindy Nicholson, Cadet Program Advisor and a teacher, sees the program as an outlet for the students to develop responsibility and provide service to the community as well. An added benefit is that the program also acts as a feeder into the ranks of the SVAA.

Recently four Cadets have gone on take additional Medical Response Technician training and now ride as observers with the ambulance crews. Eventually, they will take full-time shifts.

Now in its second year, the Cadet program has over 20 students and is growing fast. If you know of a young person interested in becoming a Cadet, contact the SVAA office at 668-5249.



Several of the SVAA Cadets take a break from the recent Memorial Day Parade activities to help with checking out the ambulance equipment.