

The Responder

*The Community Newsletter of the
Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association*



Volume 2, Number 1

Winter 1992

For emergencies:

Dial 911

Police

Fire

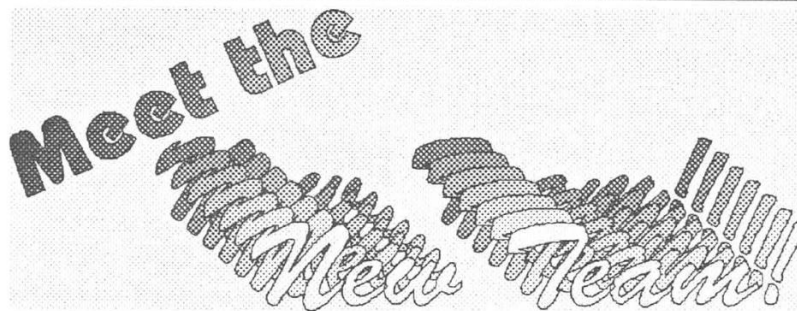
Ambulance

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At their Annual Meeting on September 14, SVAA members held the annual election of Directors. SVAA Directors are elected by the members to 3-year terms of office. Re-elected were provider member¹ Penny Hermann, and non-provider member Vic Mathieu. Joe Vorih, a provider member, was elected as a Director for his first 3-year term.

At their September 16 Annual Meeting, the SVAA Board of Directors elected officers for 1-year terms. After having served as Treasurer and Vice President, Don Miner was elected to his first term as SVAA President. Don succeeds Nick Mickelson who served as President for the past 3 years. The term of President is limited by the Bylaws to no more than 3 consecutive terms.

Penny Hermann, who served as Secretary for over 2 years, was elected Vice President, Ken Pascoe was re-elected as Treasurer, and Joe Vorih was elected Secretary. Nick Mickelson was elected Vice President and Liaison to the Board of Trustees succeeding Susan Cranmore who served as Vice President and Liaison to the Board of Trustees and Co-Chair for 2 years. The Board is now comprised of the officers and Directors Joan Bond, Esq., Vic Mathieu, Kathy Murphy, and Sonny Osowiecki.

In October, following the election of SVAA Directors and Officers, the SVAA's Board of Trustees elected their leaders for the coming year. Elected to serve as Chairperson was Nick Mickelson. Vice Chairperson will be incumbent

¹ Provider members are those who are certified to administer emergency medical service and who respond to emergency calls.

Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association

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Penny Hermann

Editorial Staff

Nick Mickelson
Margie Osowiecki

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President: Don Miner
Vice President: Penny Hermann
Vice President: Nick Mickelson
Secretary: Joe Vorih
Treasurer: Ken Pascoe, CPA
Directors: Joan Bond, Esq.
Vic Mathieu
Kathy Murphy
Sonny Osowiecki

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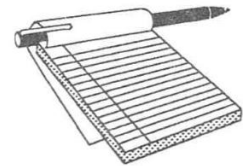
Trustee Michele Basile. Harriet Glans will serve as Secretary of the Board of Trustees.

Filling the Executive Committee will be the officers and Maggie Philippon, Michael Hickey, Helen Christian, and Penny Hermann. Along with the members of the Executive Committee; Bill Phelps, Betty Stroh, Michelle Markowski, Mary Anne Zak and newly appointed members David Petursson, Peggy Parks, and Nancy Viggiano will serve as Trustees. Departing Trustees, Susan Cranmore, Barbara Chain and Louise Cannon will continue as advisors to the Trustees.

The Board extended their thanks to provider member Judy Chapman, who served as an interim Director for the past year and to Susan Cranmore who served effectively as Vice President and Co-Chairperson of the Trustees during the past 2 years.

A special thanks was extended to Nick for his hard work, dedication and effective leadership over the past three years. Nick will continue to support and serve the SVAA in the coming year.

Past President's Message



by Nick Mickelson

It is impossible to describe the silence that overcame me as I walked through the door after my last meeting as President of the SVAA. It was the same kind of silence that one experiences after a long snow storm. The 3 years were so consuming that it's hard to imagine that the SVAA's objectives weren't always a part of my life's mission.

Emotions were jumbled and confusing. On one hand there was a tremendous feeling of relief and calm. On the other hand, it felt as though I had lost a part of me. In the main we've accomplished a lot. There are some things that still need to be done.

Compressed within the 3-year term was about 10-years' work. During that time I had the opportunity to meet and work with many different kinds of people in many different ways. Most of those encounters were rewarding and productive. A few were very forgettable.

In parting from the office I've been asked to reflect and render a few words of wisdom. Two promises--wisdom and few words--that will be difficult to keep!

All-in-all, the SVAA experience has been an important and challenging one; and one that has benefited me as well as others. I guess the overwhelming lessons learned revolve around genuine, selfless community service. The kind of service that promises no obvious personal benefit or even recognition to the individual.

Today, with family members being torn away from one another through multiple career demands and increased competition in the workplace, public service suffers from reduced numbers of volunteers and split commitments.

**Past President's
Message continued...**

*"...there is less time
and energy left for
community service
when our lives are so
consumed in our own
pursuits."*

*"Take care, keep up
the good work, and
remember--compassion
is our last great
hope."*



Consequently, there is less time and energy left for community service when our lives are so consumed in our own pursuits.

We are trying to crowd more and more into our lives all the time. The importance of tolerance and understanding on the part of our friends and families is more essential now than ever before.

Fewer individuals contributing time and energy, and greater need for volunteer service, means an increase in the demands on each one of us who strives to help. The increased demand means more stress and pressure on those who remain. As a result, we lose good, hard-working people from exhaustion and fatigue. Those who continue, work harder still.

People should appreciate that there are many among us who are not in the spotlight "responding to calls," but who serve admirably nonetheless.

There are several who are doing both!

When was the last time you thanked commission or board members for spending hundreds of hours planning, budgeting, supporting and defending our best interests?



When was the last time you talked about the good things that the Town agencies have accomplished? Did you ever drop a note to a volunteer to thank them for their time and effort? Each person fills a need. We are all important in some way to the end result--a better community.

Sure, the budget is important; but, I'd like to urge people to make an extra effort in the coming year to tell each other that you care and appreciate one another.

I suppose in parting I could have written about the SVAA's new accounting and management procedures, the financial security and fees, the new and formalized awards program, the Pager and Responder, the new vehicle, the streamlined command system, becoming EMT-I and D, and the improved image. Or maybe you would have liked to have heard about the transformation of our staff to professional managers. It probably would have been pretty boring.

Thanks to all of you who helped me and the SVAA during the past 3 years. Take care and remember--compassion is our last great hope.



*Happy
Holidays*

Profiles in Service

Chief Christian (Chris) Schmeck



I've stayed in Suffield because I believe that we are doing something special here and can continue with that tradition. I get satisfaction out of being there for the members and the community."

Chris, SVAA's Chief of Operations, is celebrating his 10th anniversary with SVAA this month. He joined the SVAA on December 16, 1982 after serving as an EMT with Professional Ambulance in Hartford and the Windsor Volunteer Ambulance Association.

When asked about the changes SVAA has gone through over the past 10 years, Chris sites many. The number of provider members has grown from approximately 60 to 90 and the number of ambulance calls went from 376 to 775 in 1991. The level of certification of the Association and providers has increased. He is particularly proud of the increased level of medical care provided to the residents of Suffield. Once staffed by CPR Drivers, MRT's (Medical Response Technicians) and EMT-A's (basic level of Emergency Medical Technician), the Ambulance Association is now certified at the "I" or Intermediate level to provide Advance Life Support (ALS). In addition to the traditional levels of certification, members are also certified at the EMT-D level (defibrillation) and EMT-I level. Chris noted that while the number of provider members has increased, the changes in society over the last 10 years has made his job of filling shifts much more challenging. Where he might have had three or four openings in a month, he now has many, particularly Monday through Friday during the day and on weekends.

The Chief is responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the Ambulance Association which includes effectively operating within the budget, maintaining supplies and equipment, recruiting new volunteers and supervising all of the provider members. Chris has strengthened the operational organization through appointment of officers and duty officers who are assigned to supervise every shift. In addition to his management responsibilities, Chris staffs the ambulance on weekdays and is on-call 24 hours a day to assist in emergencies.

SVAA requires that the Chief be certified as an EMT-D, EMT-I and EMS-I (Emergency Medical Services Instructor). In addition to these qualifications and his duties with SVAA Chris teaches MRT and EMT courses, is a New England Council Mass Casualty Scene Management Instructor and Pre-hospital Trauma Life Support Instructor, a Director of the North Central Regional EMS Council, and a Director on the State Board of Directors of EMS Instructors. He also volunteers as a fire fighter in Suffield and is a qualified Fire Fighter I and II instructor.

Chris lives in Suffield with his wife Barbara and their three children, Brian, Heather and Michael.

When asked to comment on his tenure with SVAA, Chris responded, "It's been an experience! I have learned a great deal and met a lot of great people. Even though it has been frustrating at times, I've stayed in Suffield because I believe that we are doing something special here and can continue with that tradition. I get satisfaction out of being there for the members and the community."



President Don Miner



Don joined the Ambulance Association in 1989 as an MRT and later became an EMT in 1991. Don was appointed to the Board of Directors in early 1990 to fill a vacancy. He was subsequently elected a Director in September of 1990. He has served on the Board as a Director, Treasurer and Vice President. He was elected President in September of this year. In addition to his responsibilities on the Board, Don is a regular member of the Wednesday and Thursday night ambulance crews and often fills in as an EMT or driver when needed.

In his "real life," Don is President of Anders, Inc., a manufacturing firm in Simsbury. He is also Secretary of the Suffield Rotary Club. Don lives in Suffield with his wife Debby and their three children.

When asked about the goals of the current administration Don mentioned, "...enhance the training programs; complete the building renovation to provide adequate housing for the equipment, members and staff; increase the number of active providers, particularly CPR drivers and high school students; and continue to maintain and build upon the strong community support we've received."

Thanks to Fargo Foto Service for their generosity in supplying the photographs of the members featured in the Profiles in Service column.

Building Progress



We reported in the spring edition of the Responder on the SVAA's long-standing struggle to obtain a proper facility. At that time the funds had been approved and secured from special State grant money intended to renovate the Town Hall Annex. Funds were approved by the voters, with the passage of the 1992-93 budget, to lease space to relocate the other agencies that occupy the Annex currently along with the SVAA. We are sad to report that while we are closer than ever to obtaining a renovated headquarters, as of November 26 it has not come to fruition.

The SVAA has been constrained to a total space of about 600 sq. ft. since its inception. The operation has grown tremendously in its size and scope since 1976. Offering training classes for members and the public, providing an advanced level of care called EMT Intermediate and defibrillation (EMT-I and EMT-D), and responding to a predicted 800 calls in a year, requires increased space. Currently there is only room to garage 1 vehicle of the 2 that we operate. Oxygen must be kept off-site, training classes are held in the home of the training officer, and out-of-town members must sleep on the floors of in-town members' homes. This severely reduces the efficiency of the agency.

Recognizing the urgent need to correct the SVAA's operating space shortage, the Board of Selectmen appointed an Ad-Hoc Committee to review the town's office space needs and identify alternative lease space options. Committee members included Debbie Fabi, Susan Cranmore, Nick Mickelson, Tom Bellmore, Peter Purrington and John Potter. Serving as advisors were the Building Inspector and the heads of the various agencies involved in the move.

Building Progress continued...

Milestones in SVAA's History



After weekly meetings and an enormous amount of time and effort by the committee members, the committee presented its recommendation to the Board of Selectmen. The proposal was approved and presented to the Board of Finance. The Board of Finance deliberated, and after a few questions were answered and details worked out, it was approved for action by the Selectmen.

While both the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance endorsed the plan, the funds have not yet been allocated nor a contract signed. It was hoped that the project would be underway by now and that we would occupy the finished building again by February 1. We patiently await a decision and affirmative action.

16 years ago...

- ☞ the newly formed Suffield Ambulance Association began its first fund drive.
- ☞ the policy of paying drivers and attendants which was in effect prior to incorporation of SAA was discontinued. The ambulance began to be staffed by volunteers.
- ☞ a contract was signed to purchase SAA's first ambulance, 139-1.

15 years ago...

- ☞ the first paid ambulance staff was hired, William Phelps, Coordinator.

10 years ago...

- ☞ Chief Schmeck joined SVAA.

7 years ago...

- ☞ LifeStar began providing service.

5 years ago...

- ☞ Ray and Ina Perrault donated funds to purchase a second ambulance for SVAA, 139-2.

3 years ago...

- ☞ the first 6 SVAA EMT's passed the EMT-I course and SVAA applied to the State to upgrade the service to the Intermediate level.

2 years ago...

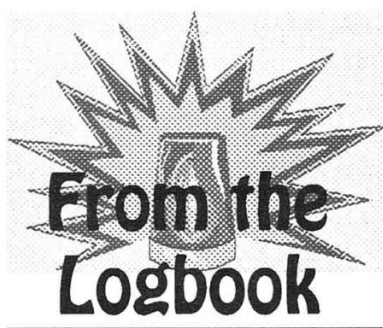
- ☞ the Trustees held their first meeting to begin to help the SVAA with the fund raising campaign.
- ☞ SVAA began its successful billing program based on recommendations received from members of the community.

1 year ago...

- ☞ plans to develop an endowment fund to ensure SVAA's future were set into motion.



Learn How to Save a Life



The SVAA regularly sponsors classes for certification and recertification in CPR. Contact Lisa Shelanskas, SVAA Training Officer for information regarding class schedules. These valuable skills are learned in just a few short hours.

Members of Chief Schmeck and Training Officer, Lisa Shelanskas also teach MRT and EMT certification and recertification classes throughout the year. For additional information, contact Lisa at 668-5132 or Chris Schmeck at 668-5249.

It was 4:30 a.m. when the piercing “beep, beep, BEEEEP” of the “tones” went off to alert the SVAA crew to a medical emergency. EMT Don Miner was in his kitchen enjoying an early breakfast, having just returned from another call--a false alarm. This one sounded real - a man had collapsed.

Minutes later Don and EMT Lisa Cahill pulled the ambulance out of the garage and were in route. The dispatcher reported that Bradley Airport Paramedics were on the way. (SVAA has a mutual aid agreement with Bradley to provide paramedic service when a patient needs drug therapy.)

At the scene, Police Sergeant Chet DeGray found the man sitting in a chair complaining of general weakness. He had undergone surgery two weeks earlier to repair an aneurysm (weak spot) in his aorta (the main artery from the heart). Sgt. DeGray delivered oxygen to the patient.

The SVAA ambulance crew, Bradley paramedics and SVAA Duty Officer (Jay Nash) arrived at the house almost simultaneously. The patient had a dangerously low blood (80/50) pressure and other signs of significant internal bleeding. He was moved quickly to the ambulance where IVs were started in both arms to stabilize his blood pressure.

Within minutes the ambulance was racing through traffic as Paramedic Tim Hughes consulted with a doctor over the radio. Sixteen minutes later, the ambulance arrived at the hospital where a medical team was ready and waiting.

By the time the crew had finished their paperwork, the patient's blood pressure had stabilized indicating that he was out of immediate danger. He underwent a battery of tests which indicated that fortunately, the bleeding was from an ulcer, not the aorta. He was treated and released after 11 days and has fully recovered.

Although this was not one of the most sensational calls, it is likely that a prompt response, the ability to start IV fluids and the rapid transport saved the patient's life. This service is made possible through the commitment of dozens of SVAA volunteer provider members who supply around-the-clock service, many volunteers who work with little thanks on SVAA's many boards and committees and the hundreds of citizens who donate so generously.



Who Are We?



- ☞ We are Republicans, Democrats, and Unaffiliated...
- ☞ We are of many faiths...
- ☞ We are female and we are male...
- ☞ We are young, old, and middle-aged...
- ☞ We are politicians, professionals, blue collar workers, housewives, retirees, business owners, laborers, and students...
- ☞ We are compassionate, concerned, involved, willing to serve and ready to sacrifice for our community...
- ☞ We care about you and your loved ones...

Who are we?

We are the Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association and we are here when you need us.

Please send your financial contribution today. Use the accompanying envelope or mail to Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association, P. O. Box 642, Suffield, CT 06078. Make checks payable to SVAA.

Help us to continue a tradition of high quality emergency medical care in Suffield.

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