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Ambulance Corps – A Lifeline for Teaneck

A klaxon pierces the night. Three bells follow, and an emergency ambulance crew scrambles to a waiting truck. One member is picking up a telephone, a direct line to police headquarters to get the address and hopefully the type of injury the team will find.

It is a process that is repeated more than 3,000 times a year by the more than 70 members of the Teaneck Volunteer Ambulance Corps.

Their shift is four hours, their errand is lifesaving.

The mission began in 1939 with 12 charter members and a used 1936 LaSalle Ambulance purchased with funds raised and donated by the residents of the Township of Teaneck. Some donations, according to Township historians, were as little as twenty-five cents from school children.

The Corps was the brainchild of the Township's Dog Warden Cornelius Van Dyk who launched the enterprise because hospital ambulance service was becoming inadequate. Before the Corps was formed, hospitals operated their own ambulances and Holy Name Hospital's was housed in a garage behind the building. That building is still standing. The driver regularly slept in the loft in the upper portion.

In those days a hospital intern regularly rode with the vehicle on calls. According to Ambulance Corps historians, undertakers were also operators of ambulance services and David Musicant was a charter member of the Teaneck Corps.

No one can remember the cost of the LaSalle which served as the Township's first ambulance, but today a fully outfitted rig will cost between $80,000 and $90,000.

Paul Ostrow is the Corps' current president. He, his fellow officers and the Board of Trustees are responsible for the fundraising as well as the administration of the service. The cost, this year, for the Corps is $135,000, of which $35,000 is a state limited contribution from the municipal governing body.

Twenty years ago, when Ostrow joined, Ambulance Corps members were only required to have completed lifesaving and CPR courses. Today, however, members are required to be certified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) and be recertified each year and complete a shorter version of the course and pass examinations every three years. The course is 120 hours the first time and 90 hours each time thereafter.

Also, members who drive ambulances are required to complete a driving course conducted in Paramus for Ambulance Corps members.

Calls to the Corps are regularly routed through the Police or Fire Departments. A police officer is dispatched to each scene of a call to complete a formal report. At fires, the Corps stands by in the event there are any injuries to residents or firefighters.

The membership is as diverse as the calls. A member may be a rabbi, a teacher, a public relations director, a sales manager or a student. In some cases, members are registered nurses or nursing students from Holy Name Hospital.

Vice President Lou Tiboldo, a 15 year veteran of the Corps, estimated that 25 percent of the calls are auto accidents, 35 percent are for breathing and heart problems and the remainder are miscellaneous injuries ranging from home accidents to minor burns.

The evening this reporter waited to ride with the volunteers, four calls went out for help including a routine transportation from a hospital to a nursing home.

There is no less than one crew at the headquarters, located on Windsor Road, at any one time, but the building is never closed. Volunteers drop in continuously, and at night a crew sleeps in to better be able to respond to emergencies.



The Corps claims that an ambulance is rolling within 70 seconds of receiving an alert, and an ambulance can be at any door in Teaneck, in an emergency, in four minutes.

The overnight crew took its first call at 11:33 p.m. to respond to a man who was complaining of pain in his foot. He was helped from his bed, guided down a narrow flight of stairs, placed into the ambulance and transported to Holy Name Hospital for treatment. The call was completed by 12:02 a.m.

The crew of three nurses, the crew chief, and a police dispatcher, whose names are Liza Garretson, Sheryl Fall, Sandi Greene and Chief Dee Costello responded and completed their tasks with quiet, confident efficiency.

Tubaldo said, of his involvement, "Everytime you go out you may be responsible for saving the life of someone else. It's very satisfying."

Memorial Day Observance

Teaneck municipal offices will be closed on Monday, May 30 in observance of Memorial Day. All full-time municipal employees will have the holiday off, with the exception of uniformed members of the Police and Fire Departments, who are on duty around the clock.