

## **Museum's demise threatens memorial: Today's National EMS Memorial Service may be the last one**

By Amanda Codispoti  
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ROANOKE, Va. — To the Rescue museum is likely gone from Roanoke for good, and soon the annual National EMS Memorial Service may be, too.

The Julian Stanley Wise Foundation, which oversaw the emergency medical services museum, packed up in March 2006 after its lease with Tanglewood Mall was terminated.

The foundation had said it wanted to reopen the museum in Roanoke, where Roanoker Julian Wise founded the country's first volunteer rescue squad.

But a lack of personnel, money and available spaces hindered the search.

In September, the foundation ran out of options. It turned over the museum's contents to the Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads, said Karen Wagner, former president of the foundation.

The association, which gave the museum some financial assistance in its 15 years, will donate the items to a national EMS museum, if one is built, said Tarry Pribble, president of the association.

The loss of the museum may also mean the end of the National EMS Memorial Service in Roanoke. The service takes place today at First Baptist Church on Third Street Southwest in Roanoke.

The annual service, which honors medics who lost their lives in the line of duty, was brought to Roanoke 15 years ago to help the museum gain recognition, said Kevin Dillard, president of the National EMS Memorial Service.

The museum's closing is disappointing to families who have come to Roanoke each Memorial Day weekend to remember their loved ones and see their names on the Tree of Life, a memorial at the museum.

"It's almost a slap in the face to those people," Dillard said. "We've had to deal with a lot of very serious comments from family members."

Some families have donated their loved ones' uniforms and other sentimental items to the museum and want them back. Pribble said the Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads is in the process of contacting families regarding their donations.

Whatever items the association retains could become part of the National Emergency Medical Services Museum, which recently started online as a virtual museum.

That museum's foundation plans to expand it to a traveling exhibit and eventually build a permanent home, according to its Web site.

Meanwhile, the National EMS Memorial Service board has asked cities and organizations to submit proposals for a new memorial.

The board has received proposals from Kansas City, Mo.; Denver and other cities, but only a letter of interest from the Virginia EMS advisory board and the Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads.

Wagner, the former president of the Julian Stanley Wise Foundation, is a chairwoman of the state EMS advisory board.

She said she has appointed a task force to look into finding a permanent place in Virginia for the EMS memorial.

"That museum is gone from there, and we don't want that to happen to the memorial," Wagner said. "We want the memorial here in the commonwealth."

The National EMS Memorial Service board hopes to move its annual service to the site of the new memorial by 2010, Dillard said.

"I'm hoping somehow or another we'll get the attention of people here in Virginia," Dillard said.

"It's kind of a shame we're looking at losing it."