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Colonie paramedics, from left, Shawn Powers, 26, Frankie Rodriguez, 37, and Chief Jon Politis, 54, have received commendations for their role in the helicopter rescue. (Jordan Carleo-Evangelist / Times Union)

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## Daring rescue wins praise

Colonie paramedics and State Police helicopter crew earn recognition

By **JORDAN CARLEO-EVANGELIST**, Staff writer

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As he was dangling from a State Police helicopter hovering precariously in a tight Greene County canyon, Colonie Paramedic Frankie Rodriguez's work had just begun.

Rodriguez, 37, descended swiftly toward the ground on a winch operated by his boss, Colonie Emergency Medical Services Chief Jon Politis.

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a commendation from Acting State Police Superintendent Preston L. Felton.

The State Police air crew -- pilot Bruce Mesh and co-pilot Kathy Sweeney -- also received commendations from Felton, State Police spokesman Sgt. Kern Swoboda said.

"Your ability to think and act clearly under pressure was instrumental in successfully accomplishing this demanding mission," Felton wrote.

The rescue was one of about four over two weeks this summer that town paramedics, who routinely fly with State Police, were dispatched to -- an unusually busy stretch of summer. The rescues often coincide with summer weather that lures people into woods and canyons and, sometime, into peril.

Powers, Rodriguez and Politis are three of about 20 town paramedics trained to fly rescue missions with State Police aviators based at nearby Albany International Airport, Politis said. The town is reimbursed for the services its employees provide.

Rodriguez, of Amsterdam, has been a town paramedic for six years. Powers, 26, of Colonie, has worked for the town for more than three years. Politis, 54, has been the EMS chief for 19 years.

"This is something we train for a lot," Politis said, praising the work of the State Police crew, who he said had the "mentally taxing, challenging task" of keeping the helicopter steady while the paramedics tended to the boy.

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"What made it so unusual was how critically injured the patient was," Politis said.

The Colonie paramedics also praised the work of the Greene County rescuers, who treated the boy on the ground.

Once the boy was pulled from the falls, he was flown to the landing zone where Powers helped transfer him to another waiting helicopter that flew him to the hospital.

As is often the case, the rescuers do not know what became of the patient. Busy schedules and privacy laws often prevent them from finding out the fates of the people they rescue, they said.

"I'm really proud of these guys," Politis said. "They did a great job."

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