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Saratoga Hospital honors EMS volunteers

By ANN MARIE FRENCH, The Saratogian
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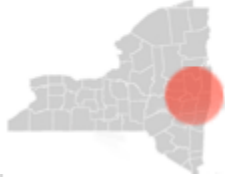
SARATOGA SPRINGS - Under normal circumstances, the patients coming through the doors of Saratoga Hospital are the priority of its medical staff, but Thursday night the hospital and its emergency services department presented its First Annual EMS Recognition Evening to highlight the work done in the field by the area's first responders.

"We were looking for a way to build relationships with EMS communities and recognize the

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importance of the incredible pre-hospital care the providers are doing for us," said Dawn Parker, director of the Saratoga Hospital Emergency Department. "We wanted to let them know how much we appreciate the incredibly hard job they have."

Parker said the Oct. 30 ceremony was a collaborative event between hospital officials and the squads who are affiliated with Saratoga Hospital. She said hospital President and CEO Angelo Calbone and Vice President for Strategy and Market Development Brad Sexauer assisted her in brainstorming for ideas as to the best way to accomplish the goal. In the end, the three each used a variety of past experiences to come up with the foundation of the ceremony.

Parker said a request also went out to the squads asking them what kinds of things they wanted to see as part of the event.

Six award categories were created, each with different criteria, and only one winner per award. Parker said the response was positive with a large amount of applications to review. She said some of them were very moving and suggested that the independent panel reviewing the applications had a difficult time in making their selections.

Unique about the selection process was that it was done blindly, Parker said. The applications were reviewed by the panel without any identifying information accompanying them so panelists were strictly voting on the information rather than the names of individuals or departments.

"It was nice to see people take the time to recognize their peers, colleagues and others out in the field," Parker said. "They took time to write glowing nominations." People and agencies could be nominated by someone from within, a hospital staffer, patients or community members.

The Wilton Emergency Squad received the Saratoga Hospital EMS Commitment to Quality Award. The award was given to them for their demonstration of commitment to the principle of quality improvement, customer service and excellence in EMS. Parker said the Wilton Emergency Squad has been a leader in pre-hospital care since the mid-1990s, and in the past few years embraced the philosophy of total care management. The squad strives to be a leader in the industry by employing the latest procedures, equipment and technologies.

The EMS Community Service Award was presented to Mark Spiezio from the Cambridge Valley Rescue Squad. The criteria for the award requires that it must recognize someone who has made an outstanding commitment to the non-patient care aspects of the community's EMS system with a special emphasis on public information, education and relations. Spezio is credited with turning around the squad with his dynamic leadership in the past five years.

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The squad has doubled the number of calls it has responded to without using mutual aid assistance and improved the certification and training of its responders.

The EMS Medical Director of the Year award was presented to Al Jagoda. Nominated by the Corinth EMS squad, Jagoda receives no compensation for the time he dedicates to the three EMS squads he serves. Jagoda is intensely involved in the quality assurance and quality improvement aspects of the squads and is credited with improving the standard of care for the communities of those squads.

Denise Milnyczuk was honored with the EMS Provider of the Year Award for 25 years of volunteerism. Parker called Milnyczuk "unselfish, dependable and very loyal to her squad." She added Milnyczuk's squad members "believe that she is the main reason that this volunteer emergency squad is still in existence."

Community Emergency Squad's Doug Faulisi, Pete Frolish and Brian Heaney won the EMS Cross/Best Save Award for their efforts at the Saratoga County Fair this summer. When a young girl was struck by lightening, it was this group who responded to the call. Finding her not breathing with her heart stopped, the men used a defibrillator to get her heart started again and kept ventilating her until they reached the hospital.

The final award went to Joyce Eichorst, who received the Nurse/Tech Award. Eichorst is an emergency department tech but also instructs volunteer EMS students as an ancillary activity. According to her nominator when Eichorst was asked to conduct a session for the emergency department skills day, Eichorst "demonstrated exemplary initiative and enthusiasm." Parker complimented Eichorst's teaching style saying it was confident, knowledgeable and non-threatening.

Parker said the evening's events would be the first in a series of annual recognition awards to be given to local emergency management squads.

"There is a growing community out there. It is really important what they do," Parker said. "This is a tradition we look forward to establishing in this area."

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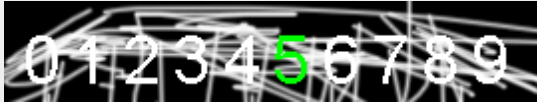
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