

NewCityPatch

VOLUNTEERS IN THE NEWS

New City Ambulance Corps Celebrates 50 Years of Saving Lives

Volunteer group has grown with New City community.

By **Robert Berczuk** June 19, 2010

The New City Volunteer Ambulance Corps/Rescue Squad (<http://www.newcityems.org/>) celebrates 50 years of service to the community tonight with an anniversary event at the Colonial Inn (<http://www.colonialinnnj.com/auto.html>) in Norwood, N.J.

Past and present members are set to gather to reminisce and talk about the history of a group that has grown along with the area it has served since 1960.

During the late 1950s, as the area aggressively developed following the opening of the Tappan Zee Bridge, members of the Nanuet Community Ambulance Corps who lived in New City realized the need for a local emergency medical service. The small group of about 15 volunteers was granted a state charter June 22, 1960, for the new ambulance corps.

The men used their own money to buy the group's first ambulance, an old Pontiac it kept at rented space on Third Street in New City.

The corps would get calls dispatched from the police department to their homes, said Fred Rogoish, the group's longest-serving current member at 41 years.

"You had to stay home and sit by the phone for any emergency so you could respond to it in a timely fashion," he said.

Crew members also were more likely then to work in the area and have their employers let them leave on calls during the day, Rogoish said. That doesn't happen as much now.

"Most people now don't work in the area and some are in New York City," he said.

Manpower and communication difficulties weren't the only issues in the early days. Another problem was with the size of the group's first ambulances, Rogoish said. They weren't the tall, boxy type you see today, but were hearse-style vehicles.

"You were very restricted in how you could administer aid," he said. "You couldn't stand up in them."

Another aid impairment back then was basic knowledge, he said. Most group members knew basic first aid but not the advance emergency medical training possessed by today's corps members.

"It was a limited element of training at the time," Rogoish said. "Now, it's much more sophisticated."

The members were so limited in their ability to aid victims they couldn't even use the doctor's bag carried on the ambulance, he said. It was sealed and only could be opened and used by a licensed physician, he said.

Financing the group also was more difficult in the early days. The group had to have fundraisers and go door-to-door to get money. The corps also was prominent at community functions (sports games, parades, picnics and fairs) in an effort to raise money.

Now, the group has annual contracts with the communities it serves to provide a stable level of money for its operations.

More than financing the corps has changed throughout the years.

The corps moved several times from its first home before finally settling into its current Congers Road location in 1974. It's also expanded from one vehicle to four and the number of annual calls it receives has more than quadrupled since the start, mirroring the growth of Clarkstown (<http://town.clarkstown.ny.us/>) during the same time period.

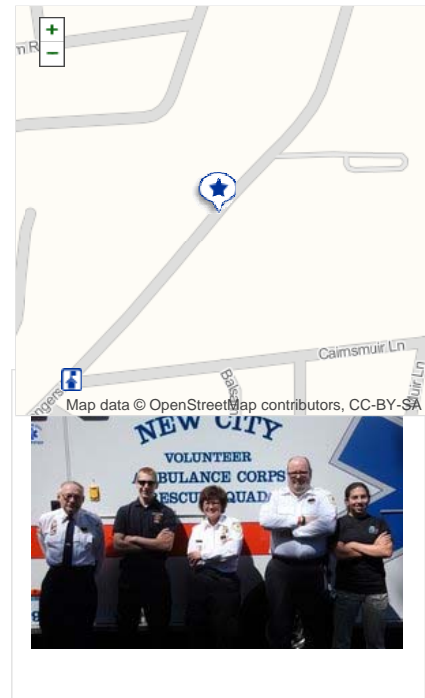
It also saw its membership change. That early group of 15 or so has grown to about 85 active volunteers today, about one-third of which are women. Women first joined the corps in the late 1960s, Rogoish said. The average age also has changed, from around 35-40 at the beginning to a much younger 18-25 now, he said. The corps also has about 40 youth corps members ages 16-18, which serves as a training ground for future members.

The group has served as a launching pad for many members who went on to jobs in the medical field, Rogoish said.

Tonight's anniversary event is a chance for the corps' members to celebrate their decades of work, said Regina Jacobsen, the group's current president and a 25-year member.

"It's the culmination of people giving their time to the community," she said.

"The men and women who have served the community deserve a big applause," Rogoish added.



Also deserving of thanks are the family members of the volunteers, Jacobsen said. They are supportive of a lifestyle that requires volunteers to work between 40 and 60 hours a month plus take time for additional training and certification, she said.

"They are the unsung heroes; they're there to support us when we get back from a call," Jacobsen said.

That type of dedication to the community is something the public often doesn't see, Jacobsen said.

"I don't think many people realize what we do and what goes into it," she said. "It's a lot of commitment. . . . It's not always easy, but there's a satisfaction in it."

It's that shared satisfaction that helps bind the corps members, Rogoish said.

"The group develops a camaraderie," he said. "You're working so closely together as a team that you become a family. Once you get in, you rarely leave."

That sense of family extends to the community the corps serves, Rogoish said, because the people being served by the volunteers often are friends and neighbors, not some stranger in another town where you just happen to work.

"This is a labor of love," he said. "You have something that's more personal in a volunteer, and the people here have to be grateful they have someone above the ordinary who's willing to go out and help."

Looking to the future, Jacobsen said one of the biggest challenges facing the ambulance corps is to find more volunteers who are available to answer emergency calls during the daytime on weekdays. Jacobsen said that New City, like other volunteer ambulance organizations in Rockland, is hard-pressed during the day because of the economic demands on local families - where both spouses must work to pay the bills.

On shifts when the ambulance corps members know they won't have volunteers available, the organization pays emergency medical workers to be available to respond to calls.



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