

## Top honor for volunteers

The New York State Volunteer Ambulance & Rescue Association, which was founded in Rockland more than 70 years ago has honored the Spring Hill Community Ambulance Corps with a unit citation as the state's top volunteer corps for 2009-10.

Despite the organization's roots, Spring Hill, which is based in New Hempstead and serves parts of Ramapo and Clarkstown, is the first volunteer corps from Rockland to earn the honor. The association also honored several Rockland volunteer and professional emergency responders last weekend at its annual Pulse Check educational conference in Albany.

Rockland volunteers and paid emergency medical professionals won several other statewide awards and two won association scholarships.

Spring Hill won the unit citation in competition with three other agencies from around the state. A committee of judges reviews nominations with all identifying information masked, preventing decisions based on personal or regional likes or dislikes.

Spring Hill's Steve Kaye, who has been a member for 40 years, says he's honored by the award for the agency he's guided as chief for 24 years. "It's a big honor to be recognized by your peers," he says, sitting just a few feet from the plaque he received in 2006, when he was honored as Emergency Medical Services Leader of the Year.

Spring Hill was founded in 1967 as an offshoot of the Ramapo Valley Ambulance Corps, to serve growing areas of Ramapo and Spring Valley.

At first, volunteers responded to emergency telephone calls from their homes, driving to an unheated garage to pick up a used Cadillac ambulance purchased from a corps in Westchester.

As Ramapo and Spring Valley grew, so did Spring Hill's call volume, which hit about 4,000 calls a year by 1995.

Now, says Steve Kaye, that number is about 5,000 calls each year, with injuries involving motor vehicle accidents down substantially — except for motorcycle accidents — in the era of seat belts and air bags. More and more, Kaye says, the EMTs deal with intoxication, drug overdoses and assaults.

Especially on weekends, Kaye says, "The violence is incredible."

In nominating Spring Hill for the EMS Unit Citation, Haverstraw Ambulance Corps Capt. Angelo Minervini cited both the corps' own excellence and its willingness to help other units improve.

"Spring Hill Ambulance Corps is without a doubt the ultimate example of what an ambulance corps should strive to become," Minervini wrote. "It serves as the role model for all ambulance corps because of its excellence in professional standards and furtherance of education in all aspects of the EMS profession."

Minervini says that in addition to handling a call volume that makes it the busiest volunteer-supported corps in the Hudson Valley, they supply training aides and share bylaws and standard operating procedures and even lend ambulances to other corps.

After several decades in cramped quarters on Brick Church Road, Spring Hill in 2005 dedicated a modern 17,000-square-foot headquarters there, complete with living quarters for overnight crews, study and video game rooms, a stocked pantry and kosher and nonkosher kitchens for members.

The building also features medical and oxygen supply rooms, ambulance bays, a decontamination room for staff and heavy equipment.

"What's good for the members," Kaye says, "is good for the corps." The proof of that, he says, is that



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both volunteer and paid EMTs join Spring Hill "because they like the action, the good atmosphere and good people."

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#### Honors for Rockland

Other members of Rockland's volunteer and professional emergency medical response communities honored at this year's Pulse Check conference included:

**Teresa Sullivan** of the Nyack Hospital Emergency Department, who also is affiliated with the Piermont Fire Department Emergency Medical Services unit, was honored as the NYSVARA's Registered Nurse of Excellence.

**Jamil F. Rizqalla**, a doctor of osteopathic medicine, also of the Nyack Hospital Emergency Department, was honored as the Licensed Emergency Medical Care Provider of Excellence.

**Teresa A. Hamilton** was honored as the EMS Communications Specialist of Excellence. She is a full-time Haverstraw Police dispatcher and also volunteers with both Spring Hill and Haverstraw Ambulance Corps.

**Jonathan Eshbach**, 15, who is affiliated with both Haverstraw Ambulance Corps and Rockland Mobile Care, was honored as EMS Youth Squad Member of the Year. According to Hamilton, who is also secretary of NYSVARA, Eshbach missed the award presentation to stay at home with his corps, participating in the Rockland Fire Parade.

**Rachel Mongiovi** of Haverstraw Ambulance was awarded the NYSVARA Robert Radenberg Memorial Scholarship and Ana Molina, also of Haverstraw Ambulance, was awarded the Bon Secours NYSVARA Ernie Stonick EMS Scholarship.

**Stony Point's Youth Squad** won a first place and two second places in a skills drill competition, showing off their training against members of units from around the state.

