

► Southern Tier

Emergency medical service providers' efforts recognized

By John Eberth
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The route Dan Parr traveled to become emergency medical services (EMS) captain of the Portville Fire Department is one with which many volunteers are familiar.

He followed his friends and family. His father was a volunteer firefighter as was his grandfather. The guys he worked with at the old Portville Quaker State gas station when he was in high school would often leave him to mind the station while they fought fires.

"I joined the department my senior year in high school because my family was always involved in the emergency services. I became an EMT (emergency medical technician) because even back then most of the calls were for emergency medical service," he said. "But then I learned I liked it. I liked being able to help people."

Capt. Parr is one of the more than 1,000 volunteer and professional emergency medical service providers who aim to protect the Southern Tier. Capt. Parr is a paramedic, the highest certification an emergency medical responder can achieve in New York.

Beginning Sunday, the country will celebrate EMS Week. Emergency medical service providers answer the call of duty regardless of the weather or the personal hardships they must endure. They miss holidays, anniversaries and the birthdays of sons and daughters to save the lives of strangers.

Olean General Hospital Emergency Department Director Dr. P. Henri Lamothe



Photo submitted

Capt. Dan Parr of the Portville Fire Department stands at the back of one of the department's ambulances. Capt. Parr is one of 1,150 emergency medical service (EMS) providers who respond to medical emergencies in the Southern Tier.

is medical director for local EMS agencies. He said the area is lucky to have the EMS providers it does.

"They do an excellent job," Dr. Lamothe said. "The better the care they provide patients in the field, the better we're able to help patients once they reach the emergency department."

Dr. Lamothe said area EMS providers strive to enhance their skills and he enjoys working with EMS providers to improve patient care.

Ninety-two EMS agencies protect people in Allegany, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua counties. Southern Tier Emergency Medical Stems (S.T.E.M.S.), a program of Southern Tier Health Care System Inc., provides those agencies with training,

reviews their patient-care reports and acts as a liaison and voice for them with the state Department of Health.

According to S.T.E.M.S., there are 1,150 EMTs in the Southern Tier and they responded to 50,189 emergency medical calls in 2009.

Tom Sampson is a critical-care technician with the Houghton Fire Department and chairman of the Southwestern Regional EMS Council. The council coordinates the efforts of EMS agencies in the Southern Tier. He said in his experience, EMS volunteers join the emergency service out of a sense of duty to their communities.

"The sacrifice the volunteers make in terms of family time in order to be there for their communities is tremendous," he said. "The rational

person who sat down and calculated the cost in terms of time away from family and things like missed Little League games wouldn't do it."

He asked that during EMS Week, people take the time to think about the life-saving service EMS providers give their communities.

Becoming an EMS provider is a major commitment. It takes a minimum of 125 hours of training to become a basic EMT; 325 hours to become an intermediate EMT; 525 hours to become a critical-care technician and at least 1,125 hours to become a paramedic.

For more information about area EMS agencies, visit the Southern Tier Health Care System website at www.sthcs.org and click on the S.T.E.M.S. site link.