

COUNTY OPT OUT OF HUNTING SEASON HUBBARD CAMPAIGN LAUNCH



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Local Council Hopes to Inform Public About EMS Crisis

By Liz Page

STAMFORD – A committee of community members has formed to educate and inform the public about the alarming reality of reliable ambulance service. As one state Emergency Medical Service (EMS) official recently put it, EMS is on life support. It is not just a rural issue, the EMS system is deteriorating across the state and the nation, including urban areas.

The Northern Catskills Emergency Medical Services Council has been meeting regularly to brainstorm ways to get critical information out to the public and to develop various media platforms to provide that information, based on local ambulance service.

Lori Cioffi, one of the council's members, was alarmed when she first learned that calling 911 with an emergency does

not guarantee an ambulance will arrive within an acceptable time frame, and in some cases, may not arrive at all. She was so concerned about the lack of reliable ambulance service, she volunteered her marketing expertise, along with others who have expertise in various areas and knowledge about what is taking place locally.

The group has established a logo and is in the process of developing factual information to be posted on a website and social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. Recent articles have been posted, or links to recent articles reporting the concerns and the effort to establish a reliable emergency ambulance service in the towns of Stamford, Harpersfield and Kortright.

In a recent presentation to the state Emergency Medical Systems Council,

one EMS provider outlined 'EMS in New York State is In Crisis'. In that presentation, he stated, there are many geographical areas in the state that are currently without adequate EMS coverage.

He listed the issues affecting the coverage, such as staffing shortages, the decline of volunteerism, stagnant reimbursement, hospital overcrowding, inadequate coverage, use of mutual aid, pay disparities, absence of consistency in EMS models and the lack of EMS educational opportunities. He said they have yet to address the "crumbling EMS system" and stated it will take a collaboration of all EMS disciplines, including commercial, hospital, county, fire, municipal, not-for-profit, collaborative and independent. "We are all in this together."

The NCEMSC is hoping to generate public sup-

port to help change the system and establish adequate local service. As Cioffi stated, "This is a life and death matter and I don't think the public is aware. They have no idea."

One of the most surprising facts is that unlike fire service, ambulance service is not an essential service in New York State. Because it isn't an essential service, it is not required to be provided by municipalities and is not open to government funding sources. Originally, funeral homes provided transport, as they had vehicles to accommodate a person lying on a stretcher. Fire departments then voluntarily picked up EMS services without being obligated to do so with few requirements other than basic first aid. Now the state Bureau of Emergency Services, under the state Department of Health, regulates high

levels of certification to provide EMS. Those requirements are the same for everyone, volunteer or paid.

These are just some of the facts that will be coming out from the NCEMSC. They will provide information about the number of calls in the Stamford Joint Fire District, which has a first responder unit and fly car, but no ambulance. It sometimes requires going down a mutual aid call list of providers that can be an hour away over three neighboring counties. Patients are waiting as long as three hours, in a few cases, with an average response from a paid service of 30 to 45 minutes. Sometimes, the paid service has "no rigs available" to provide backup, which means 911 dispatch polls all agencies to find the nearest mutual aid available until they get a response.

One call polled 25 agencies with the patient eventually told to find their own transportation. And the situation is only getting worse.

Surrounding counties have established municipal ambulance services to help bridge the gap of EMS ambulance service. Otsego County just established one and Schoharie County is getting kudos for providing a county-run ambulance service to back up, or mutual aid, to primary ambulance services.

The NCEMSC has also been inviting community members to sit in and provide input and insight to the group, which is hoping to launch its information campaign, by providing tidbits through the website, Facebook and Instagram.

It will allow members of the community to ask questions and provide links to learn the facts.

SK Rams Headed to State Final Four

By Vito Giambanco

The South Kortright Rams defeated the Belleville Henderson Panthers last Saturday to advance to the state final four in Class D soccer today. SK shutout the Panthers 1-0 in the New York State Public High School Athletic Association Boys Soccer Regional championship at the Wright National soccer campus in Oneonta.

While there were many games being held at the campus, this regional

game attracted the many faithful Rams fans, who were out in force despite the colder temperatures. It was a very physical back and forth game with the only goal of the game scored by Eoin Byrn (13). Two yellow cards were given in Saturday's game with one given to the Rams Jacob Morton (11) and one to a Belleville Panther, but it didn't take away from the boys' determination to win the game. "We played a very defensive game, we

pushed through and were able to win this game," Eoin Byrne recalled.

The last 20 minutes were of the most intense of the game. The Rams adjusted their field positions in an attempt to keep their lead while the Panthers looked to tie it up. The boys were able to keep their lead and hold off the Panthers to kick themselves up the playoff bracket and into the State Semifinals. With the game clock running out of time with 1-0 on the scoreboard, the Rams were all smiles, embracing each other and their families with yet another playoff win in their pocket.

The Rams will host the Mount Academy Eagles at the Twin Towers Field at Middletown Middle School this Saturday, Nov.13 at 9:15 a.m. to try to advance to the State Championship game the following day. They played the same school in 2017, losing their bid to advance to the Section 9 team. However, the Rams fans will be there rooting for the advance.

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The Rams receiving their Class D Regional Championship plaque after defeating the Belleville Panthers. Photo credit Nick Gennusa



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