

The Millersburg Area Ambulance Association has had the privilege to provide Emergency Medical Service to Upper Paxton Township, Millersburg Borough, and its surrounding Communities for many years. The first Ambulance to serve our two Municipalities was placed in Service on June 6, 1955, as a joint venture between the Millersburg Fire Company and American Legion Post 326. In 1988 the organization transitioned from an EMS provider within the fire department, staffed by Volunteers, to a separate entity, The Millersburg Area Ambulance Association. The Ambulance would remain housed at the Fire House on Center Street until January 1, 2009, when the Ambulance took occupancy of their newly constructed building in the 300 block of Berrysburg Road. The Ambulance operated as a separate entity, staffed by Volunteers until the late 1990's. At that time the service was unable to staff the ambulance with Volunteers, as the emergency call volume exceeded 600 calls a year. At that point, the Ambulance organization was still able to have many of their management and administrative needs filled by volunteers but could no longer staff the ambulance. A program was put in place to compensate the Ambulance crews for \$5.00 for each call they took. Those wages were not and remain insufficient. The wages for the EMS crew were paid for with funds obtained from a yearly membership drive, insurance payments from Emergency Calls, grants, relief funds and generous donations from many community members.

As the years have passed, volunteerism has decreased to the point of being almost extinct. Vehicle expense, fuel cost and insurance premiums have drastically increased creating a financial toll on all Emergency Services, and The Millersburg Area Ambulance Association is no exception.

In 2010 with the creation of the Affordable Care Act many unforeseen loopholes and issues were created for EMS agencies on how insurance reimbursements were received. Many insurances have implemented Co-pays and Co-insurance that are often not able to be collected by the EMS service. To recoup these funds from nonpayment would require legal action our organization simply cannot afford to undertake. Millersburg Area Ambulance cannot and will not ever refuse service due to inability to pay, however the loss of funding has added to a significant financial shortfall. Adding to the financial deficit is a change in the law that governs the distribution of Fireman's Relief funds. In 2013 The Auditor General's office deemed Millersburg Area Ambulance Association, like most all EMS agencies, were no longer able to receive/ use Relief Funds under the current statutes. Up to this point, The Millersburg Area Ambulance Association has been able to survive through responsible budgeting and use of insurance payments, several generous estate donations and dedicated individuals that kept the ambulance in service for very little compensation.

As the COVID-19 Pandemic hit our Country by storm, it hit the EMS community particularly hard. Most individuals that work in the EMS community are forced to work for more than one organization to make ends meet. Unfortunately, EMS has been a profession that has remained drastically under paid. Millersburg Area Ambulance has been a part-time employer staffed by providers that all have other full-time jobs and remains that way. The average rate of pay at that time for an EMT was \$10.00 an hour. With the COVID-19 restrictions and precautions several of our employees had to reduce or completely cut their hours due to their full-time jobs placing limitations on them, to reduce exposure risk to our patients and communities, resulting in understaffing. The

COVID-19 Pandemic created a reduction in call volume in the spring of the year which in turn created a reduction in income from insurance billing.

The combination of these things has created a crucial financial shortfall that we can no longer overcome on our own.

Over the last 10 years many EMS organizations have been forced to close their doors or merge with bigger EMS organizations that receive steady funding from an external source. Many of these EMS organizations are hospital based and funded through their Parent Company's Budget. Millersburg Area Ambulance Association has been committed to remaining a small community-based organization and to maintain the business as a not-for-profit organization. Several meetings and discussions have been held over the last 18 months with our Community Leaders attempting to secure the future of The Millersburg Area Ambulance and its continued operation in our community.

The time has come that we need to think outside the box and make some difficult decisions about what is best for not only the future of our organization but also for our Community Members. It is our responsibility to ensure that our community is receiving the best Emergency Service Care possible. This also includes exploring options that will keep access to Emergency Services affordable and accessible to all individuals. Currently the Millersburg Area Ambulance and Halifax Area Ambulance Services have made the decision to explore the possibility of a joint merger to maintain a community-based EMS service, to avoid the threat of a hospital-based service taking over our coverage area. These discussions are in the early stages and further information will be made available as the process emerges.