



North Central Ambulance Sales & Service



FARMERS



Professional Ambulance Association of Wisconsin



Fourth Annual
Professional Ambulance Association of
Wisconsin

Stars of Life Recognition Program

March 4, 2009

On behalf of the Professional Ambulance Association of Wisconsin, we honor and recognize the outstanding contribution you have made to the emergency field and the Wisconsin communities you serve.

Patrick Ryan, PAAW President



Robert Bliemeister, EMT
Germantown, Wisconsin
Paratech Ambulance Service

Bob is being honored by Paratech Ambulance for his loyalty, dedication, professionalism and selflessness.

In his 29 years, Bob has been an example for many new EMS personnel to pattern their career after. One example of his professionalism occurred in June 2008, at approximately 9:30 p.m. An automobile had been racing down the Parkway with a teen riding on the hood of a car. The auto had just crashed into a tree throwing the teen from the hood of the car. While on his way home, Bob came upon the crash. His instinct jumped into action and he began to render care to the teen until EMS could arrive. Although the outcome was not as positive as he would have hoped, the action Bob took without a second thought gives us all the understanding of his committed nature to EMS.

Paratech Ambulance Service is very fortunate and honored to have such a wonderful loyal human being working in the EMS field.

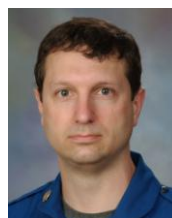
In his personal life, Bob enjoys golf, bowling, coaching girls fast-pitch softball and his family.



Melissa Seefeld, EMT
Hilbert, Wisconsin
Calumet Medical Center Ambulance

Melissa is being recognized for her devotion and self-sacrificing work ethic she brings to emergency medical services in Calumet County. Working as an EMT on the ambulance and an ER Tech in the hospital gives Melissa an advantage of seeing both sides of patient care. She is willing to help wherever needed, always ready to learn something new, and treats patients and co-workers as she would want to be treated.

As a wife and mother of two, Melissa finds time to not only work in the hospital, but to work countless hours on call for the community she lives in. She has been bitten by the EMS bug and loves what she is doing and it shows by her dedication and compassion towards others. Melissa enjoys spending time with her husband Kurt and children Nicolas and Ariel. She enjoys painting and loves NASCAR.

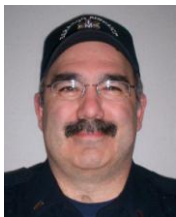


Jeffrey Stearns, RN
Eau Claire, Wisconsin
Mayo Clinic Medical Transport

Jeff is being recognized for providing outstanding care and exceptional customer service to the patients and customers of Mayo One in Eau Claire. Jeff was formally recognized by team members, leadership, and customers of Mayo Clinic Medical Transport in his nomination for recognition as a Star. The comments included: "Jeff dedicates his time not only to providing the highest level of patient care, he also works tirelessly to advance patient care through quality assurance and research activities" and "He has a deep understanding of the rights of the patient and is careful to protect their dignity".

Jeff is also active at the national level, participating in quality assurance and research committees that allow him to collaborate with other organizations to continue to advance the quality and value of patient care provided in the pre-hospital setting.

Jeff is married and has 3 children and is actively involved in children's programs like boy Scouts. He lives on a small acreage where he enjoys raising his horses.



**John Rago, Paramedic
Baraboo, Wisconsin
Baraboo District Ambulance**

John is being recognized for his untiring commitment to the service, both on and off duty. John has been a loyal employee for 15 years.

John is a Lieutenant and Paramedic for Baraboo Ambulance. He is the lead CPR Instructor and is a Tech 3 certified with the Rope Rescue Division. John adores his three year old grandson, Russell, and his daughter who has served for the US Military Intelligence in Iraq.

Over the years, John has been the lead medic on several medical and trauma saves. John is responsible for over 400 citizens being trained in CPR and to date 19 AEDs being placed in local schools and businesses. John established this program and made it a huge success for Baraboo Ambulance. His program teaches CPR and First Aid, and for those needing assistance he purchases an AED, installs the unit and educates a group for minimal cost. John dedicates time above and beyond his normal shift every week to this, his true passion – education.

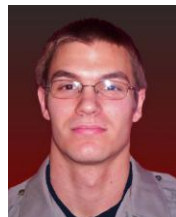


**Jim Saladino, Paramedic
Manawa, Wisconsin
Calumet Medical Center Ambulance**

Jim is being honored for his compassion and dedication towards EMS and the community he serves. Jim began his career back in 1971 as an EMT and became a paramedic in 1989. Because of Jim's vast experience, he brings calmness to chaotic situations and handles them with confidence and reassurance. Jim has been chosen to be a "Star of Life" because of the way he handles himself with patients and co-workers.

He is a leader, mentor, and has a sense of calmness to him that gives him the ability to control hectic and chaotic situations with ease. Jim has made such a difference in the lives of his patients and co-workers and does so quietly never looking for credit or a pat on the back.

Jim is a father of two daughters, Becky and Jenny and is married to Cindy. On Jim's days off he enjoys working with his two German Shepherds and you might even hear him speaking in German.



**Andrew Canak, EMT
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Meda-Care Ambulance Service**

Meda-Care Ambulance in Milwaukee is recognizing Andrew Canak as a Star of Life.

On August 3, 2008, while off-duty, Andrew performed CPR on a gentleman who had exited the freeway on his motorcycle. The man got off his motorcycle on the exit ramp and collapsed. Andrew and two other bystanders witnessed the collapse and started CPR after they had determined the man was pulseless and not breathing, and continued CPR until the Greenfield Fire Department arrived on the scene. The patient not only survived, but is also neurologically intact and doing fine! Andrew was commended by the Greenfield Fire Department for his life-saving actions.

Andrew has worked at Meda-Care Ambulance for three years and is a past member of the Big Bend/Vernon Fire Department.

When not working as an EMT, Andrew is an avid hockey player and also enjoys racing cars.



**Robert Durig, EMT
Hilbert, Wisconsin
Brillion Ambulance Service**

Brillion Ambulance is recognizing Bob Durig as a Star of life.

Bob got a late start in EMS, beginning it after his retirement. He has been with Brillion Ambulance now for five years, working as an EMT on the ambulance.

Dedication is the word that comes to mind when one speaks of Bob. Bob has always been active with civic organizations, he has retired from the Brillion Jaycees and the Brillion Lions Club. He is a ten-year retired veteran from the Brillion Volunteer Fire Department. Bob serves on the board of the church he attends, of which he has held various offices.

Away from ambulance work, Bob likes to engage in the shooting sports as well as fishing, gardening and reading. Both Bob and his wife, Mariann enjoy traveling to various parts of the country, visiting their children and three grandchildren.



**Brian Effert, Paramedic
Pulaski, Wisconsin
N.E.W. Para-Medic Rescue**

The management and staff of N.E.W. Para-Medic Rescue are proud to recognize Brian Effert as a 2009 Star of Life.

Brian started as an EMT-B in 1989 for a small town volunteer ambulance service. During the next decade he was in and out of the emergency medical field. By 2002 he completed IV Tech school. After encouragement from his family and friends, he decided to further his education and received his Paramedic Degree in 2006.

Brian is married to Rose and they have two sons, Justin and Robert, as well as two stepsons, Jeremiah and his friend, Christina, their children Austin, Zayden, and Montana; and Joshua and his wife, Nichole and their son, Dominic.

Brian's interests away from work include riding his Harley and going up north to his land to get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Camping has always been a favorite activity of his and now that he has the land up north, he can invite family and friends to camp as well.



**Denis Fellows, Paramedic
Plymouth, Wisconsin
Plymouth Ambulance Service**

Denis has worked for Plymouth Ambulance Service since it began almost 25 years ago. Denis started his EMS Career as an EMT.

Denis has always presented himself as an EMS Professional and continues to demand that type of professionalism from his co-workers. While serving as a Crew Chief, Denis has been instrumental in training, guiding, and befriending all who come through the Plymouth Ambulance doors.

Denis is an important part of Plymouth Ambulance as well as the entire community. He is an Assistant Chief of EMS for the City of Plymouth and an active Adjunct Instructor for Lakeshore Technical College.

While Denis is not working he enjoys the company of his wife Cheryl and all of his children and grandchildren. Denis is a true Star of Life for all of his years of service as well as hours of educating several other EMS Professionals.



**Troy Noe, First Responder
Green Bay, Wisconsin
County Rescue Services**

Troy began his public service career in 1983 as a firefighter for the Village of Suamico Fire Department where he has been the Assistant Chief since October of 2008. His dedication to the Suamico community carried over to the EMS sector in 2002 when he came to work as a Volunteer, Certified First Responder for County Rescue Services. Troy is known throughout County Rescue as a pivotal asset to both the company and the community in which he serves.

He juggles a 90% response rate with his busy personal life and his full time position with the Village of Suamico Department of Public Works, all while exhibiting an upbeat attitude. Troy responds anytime, both day and night, regardless of weather conditions and whether the call is minor or of a more interesting serious nature. Troy has been described by his colleagues as "efficient, professional, and invaluable." One employee went so far as to say that "Troy's excellence as a first responder is taken for granted sometimes because it is present on virtually every Suamico call that comes out."

Troy enjoys spending time with his family (his wife, Kim and his two sons, Taylor and Tucker) and watching his boys participate in sports.



**Kurt Opgenorth, RN
Platteville, Wisconsin
Ryan Brothers Ambulance Service**

Kurt was honored as Ryan Brothers Ambulance Employee of the Year for 2008.

Kurt is a person of great honesty and integrity and is committed to providing the best patient care available. Kurt is a huge sports fan and enjoys spending time with his family: wife Jennifer, daughter Emma and son Carson. Kurt thoroughly enjoys nursing in both the EMS setting, as well as the Emergency Department. He works hard to set a good example for co-workers with a positive attitude and outstanding work ethic.

Kurt is the epitome of a "team player". He is strongly committed to his family and faith and works hard every day to contribute to the organization in any way that is needed. He has recently volunteered to be a Preceptor to new employees and shows great ability in being a knowledgeable and patient teacher.



Rob Lulling, EMT
Janesville, Wisconsin
Ryan Brothers Ambulance – Fort Atkinson

Rob Lulling is recognized for his efforts in managing the Ryan Brothers service in Fort Atkinson since 2002. Rob has forged a strong relationship with Fort Atkinson Fire Department and both organizations work seamlessly together to serve the citizens of Fort Atkinson.

As the RBA Fort Atkinson Director of Operations, Rob has proven to be a tireless worker, is highly organized and makes sure that even the smallest details are addressed. He has furthered his education and he has grown professionally with the organization. He has shown the ability to work independently extremely well as he has taken a 911 service from its infancy to a very well respected Paramedic service that covers a community of nearly 15,000.

Rob has been a volunteer firefighter and has a Bachelor's degree in Biology. Away from work, he enjoys hunting, being out on his motorcycle or cruising the lake on his boat.



Tim Martin, Paramedic
Appleton, Wisconsin
New London Family Medical Center Ambulance

Tim is being honored as this year's Star for his compassion to our communities.

Recently, Tim recognized that an Amish father didn't understand the procedures his newborn baby was experiencing as staff worked to save this tiny life. Tim quietly moved to the father's side and in a very gentle and caring manner connected with the distraught father. Tim listened as the father explained what had happened during birth and how he had tried to revive his new born son with CPR. Tim validated the father's feelings, explained procedures, talked about the need to transport by air and ensured that the new father had directions and a ride. He made all necessary calls so the father could remain at the bedside with this baby.

For many years Tim has volunteered for the Disabled Hunter's Weekends. He started working with this organization when he lived in Texas and joined the area organization about 5 years ago. Tim enjoys this time working with the disabled. It challenges his skill set, but it is the time with the people that he enjoys the most.



Steve Gerbers, Lead Dispatcher
Hortonville, Wisconsin
Gold Cross Ambulance Service, Inc.

The employees of Gold Cross Ambulance Service are proud to recognize Steve Gerbers as our 2009 Star of Life. Due to his recent unexpected death, Steve is being honored posthumously for his loyalty, dedication, professionalism and leadership.

Shortly after finishing his tour of duty in the U.S. Navy, Steve began his EMS career in 1974 with Izzy's Ambulance in Green Bay. He worked there until 1976 when he went to work for Metro Rescue and Ambulance (now known as County Rescue) until August of 1979 when he came to work for Gold Cross Ambulance Service. He had worked as a paramedic and then shift supervisor until 1991 when Gold Cross was sold to the four Fox Valley area hospitals. Steve worked his last years as the lead dispatcher and buyer for the organization. Steve was responsible for Gold Cross's Communications Center and also for supply inventory and purchasing.

Steve always presented himself as an EMS professional. He was as loyal as the day is long. One recollection is the time he had hip surgery, normally with a six to eight week recovery period. Steve decided to come back after a few weeks. When asked what he was doing back so early, his response was, "I have work to do! I can't just sit around home doing nothing."

Steve always strived to live the vision of Gold Cross every day he worked. "To be the BEST in EMS" was his work life's goal.

When not working at Gold Cross Ambulance, Steve enjoyed his cabin up north with the family and all the outdoor pleasures that come along with it. He was also an avid Green Bay Packer fan, win or lose, he was there for them.

Gold Cross Ambulance feels very honored to have Steve Gerbers nominated as its 2009 PAAW "Star of Life" recipient.

*Thanks Steve for doing what you did ... **BEST!***



**Rick Hlavka, Paramedic
Sheboygan, Wisconsin
Orange Cross Ambulance Service**

Rick Hlavka is being honored for the Stars of Life program based on his commitment to Emergency Medical Services. Rick's current role with Orange Cross is dispatching EMS units to the sick and injured. Rick has been training EMT's for 30 years and continues to actively train future emergency medical service providers. His experience and knowledge has inspired many students to become excellent EMT's. Rick retired from the Sheboygan Police Department after serving over 30 years. He received national recognition as part of the national public service announcement via television educating the public with the awareness of enhanced 911 telecommunication system.

Rick continues to be an integral part of a team of law enforcement officers in Sheboygan County, raising money for the victims of 9/11. Rick and the original team of fund raisers continue to travel to New York as part of the camaraderie established with law enforcement officers in New York.

Rick and his wife Sandy enjoy traveling abroad taking pictures and sharing their experience with family and friends.



**Larry Knuth, Vice President
Hutisford, Wisconsin
Paratech Ambulance Service**

Larry is being honored by Paratech Ambulance for his dedication, professionalism and contributions to the private ambulance industry in the State of Wisconsin.

Larry's most distinguishing trait is his passion for the health care and the growth of the private ambulance industry. Larry's EMS career began in 1974 with Paratech Ambulance Service. In his 35 years, Larry has given his time as a member of several EMS committees at the city, county and state level and was fundamental in the organization of PAAW. Before Larry's administrative roll in EMS, he was an EMT taking care of patients one call at a time. His personal demeanor with any person, whether it be a patient or in a working relationship, demonstrates his belief to always treat people with respect and dignity. This dedication is something that all EMS professionals should hope to attain. In his spare time, Larry enjoys golf, boating, his family and especially his granddaughter.



**Kevin Kuchar, Paramedic
Galesville, Wisconsin
Tri-State Ambulance Service**

In his 28 years of employment and nearly 20,000 patient contacts, Kevin has honored Tri-State Ambulance as a true emergency medical services professional. He is highly committed to ensuring that his patients, co-workers and fellow EMS professionals are treated with dignity and respect. In addition to Kevin's long list of accomplishments and endeavors, he has always excelled at providing the highest quality patient care and compassion to every patient he comes in contact with. Kevin has been a field paramedic, a supervisor, a flight medic, the lead medic on the first ever around the world Blue Planet Run, and was expressly assigned to accompany elderly WWII veterans on the Freedom Honor Flight to Washington D.C. Kevin is also currently in charge of Tri-State Ambulance's Bicycle Response Team.

In January of 2000 while working as a flight medic and performing a "hot unload" of a patient, Kevin acted promptly and decisively to grab an individual who was about to walk into the rear rotor of the aircraft. This is but one example of the countless lives that Kevin has positively influenced or saved.

