



F-M AMBULANCE SERVICE

VITAL SIGNS



Winter 2008

Compassion, Excellence, Community Service

Local Heroes Given Lifesaving Award

Gilbert Schumacher, a construction superintendant and past F-M Ambulance First Responder student, and Ryan Schumacher, a mechanical engineer and past F-M Ambulance EMT student, were honored at F-M Ambulance for their role in saving the life of Dan Olson on August 18th, 2008. Gilbert and Ryan were awarded the *F-M Ambulance Citizens Lifesaving Award* on October 20th. Wanzek Construction was also given an award at the ceremony for providing the AED (automated external defibrillator) at the construction site and for training hundreds of their employees in CPR and first aid every year.

August 18th was a normal day for Daniel Olson. He was in Casselton, ND at a construction site to apply for a job with Wanzek Construction. Olson remembers arriving at the construction site, but everything after that is "a little fuzzy". Olson arrived at the site and took the employment test. As he was leaving, he didn't feel well. He was going to go straight to his car, but thought maybe he should stop in the construction office to get an aspirin. Olson sat down at the table while someone got an aspirin for him. When that person looked back at Olson, he was slumped across the table, obviously unconscious. He yelled for help, and Gilbert Schumacher responded. Gilbert did an initial assessment and determined that Olson wasn't breathing and didn't have a pulse. Gilbert yelled for Ryan, his nephew, to help. While Ryan started CPR, Gilbert ran and got the AED that Wanzek Construction has on site. Gilbert and Ryan attached the AED and delivered one shock to Olson's heart before Casselton Ambulance arrived on scene. Olson was transported to MeritCare Hospital by Lifeflight and spent approximately one week in the hospital. He is now recovering at home in Wisconsin.

Both Gilbert's and Ryan's heroic efforts and selfless acts helped save Olson's life that day. Wanzek Construction also helped save Olson's life. Without the AED at the construction site, the chances that Olson would have been revived from cardiac arrest were very small.

F-M Ambulance wants to extend our sincere appreciation for what Gilbert and Ryan Schumacher did that day. Without early CPR and early defibrillation, Daniel Olson may not be here today. When done correctly, CPR and an AED can save a person's life by restoring breathing and circulation and providing a shock to the heart until advanced life support can be given by a health care professional. The first thing Daniel Olson did when he got out of the hospital was to go visit Gilbert and Ryan at the site where he collapsed. "What a class act," says Olson. "I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for Gilbert, Ryan, and Wanzek Construction. I would love to come back to the area and work for the company that helped save my life".



Gilbert and Ryan Schumacher received their award from Don Martin, field supervisor at F-M Ambulance Service.



Representatives from Wanzek Construction receive their award from Don Martin.

Ambulance Involved in Accident

On the evening of November 8th, Tom Dobrzynski and Sam Welle left F-M Ambulance to take a patient from Fargo to Minneapolis. As part of every transfer, before the crew left, they had the dispatcher check the weather and road conditions. Wind and rain was forecasted, but the driving conditions were OK and the trip to Minneapolis was uneventful. They dropped the patient off at the hospital in Minneapolis and got in the ambulance to head back to Fargo. Tom called in to F-M Ambulance dispatch to tell them that they were on their way back. He asked the dispatcher to re-check the road conditions from Minneapolis to Fargo. There was a winter weather advisory and snow in the Fargo area.

As they were nearing Fargo, right around the Barnesville area, the roads became spotty and Tom released the cruise control and decreased his speeds. When they reached the Downer exit, Tom and Sam said the weather changed “like a lightswitch”. It began to snow heavily and they found that they were driving on patches of ice. As they hit the ice, the ambulance started to fishtail. Tom tried to correct, but as he turned the steering wheel he realized that the ambulance was not in his control. Tom and Sam were heading sideways down the interstate.

It happened very quickly. The ambulance hit the ditch and immediately started to roll. It ended up lying on the passenger side in a ditch full of water. Tom immediately turned to Sam and asked if she was OK. Sam said she was OK but her arm was injured. Tom realized that Sam was trapped. Her legs were wedged under the dashboard, and there were many things lying on top of her. Tom called dispatch and told them that the ambulance had been in an accident. After he was off the phone, he asked again if Sam was OK. She said that her neck was starting to hurt. Tom immediately jumped out of the ambulance (on top of it) and somehow got into the back. He grabbed the bag of c-collars and, through the back opening, managed to put a c-collar on Sam. He told her to hold still, and that he was going to get her out.

Mark Empting from the Clay County Sheriff’s Department had arrived on scene. Tom and Mark got Sam onto the KED board. Then they covered Sam with a blanket and broke the windshield – that was going to be the only way to get her out. They lifted Sam out of the ambulance with the KED board and placed her in the backseat of the squad car until another ambulance from F-M Ambulance arrived to transport her.

Sam was brought to MeritCare and released that same night. After a very thorough investigation, it was determined that the accident was not attributable to driver error. The investigation revealed that Tom took appropriate steps to deal safely with weather and road conditions at the time. Unfortunately, roadway ice and wind gusts which were not anticipated, coupled with the high profile vehicle design, made for a situation where Tom lost control and could not recover before the ambulance skidded and rolled in the median.

On November 19th, Tom was awarded a F-M Ambulance Service Award of Merit “for his performance on the morning of the 8th of November, where he maintained professionalism and composure in rescuing his partner from the wreckage of the ambulance that was involved in a roll-over incident.”



Did You Know...

F-M Ambulance Service Ambulance Service provides the cities of Fargo, Moorhead, and West Fargo rehab on scene for working fires.

Our paramedics and EMTs, working closely with Salvation Army volunteers, assess the firefighters after they have been working in and around a fire. They closely monitor their blood pressure, pulse, respirations, and pulse oximetry readings. If necessary, the paramedics and EMTs provide medical treatment to the firefighters.



The Realities of EMS Work

When I arrived at work the morning of November 8th, I was greeted by a darkened classroom filled with wet, muddy and even broken EMS equipment. It was an eerie sight for me. My heart sank and I felt a sudden urge to immediately find out if anyone had been hurt – I hadn't even noticed the busted up rig in the parking lot. I've been around EMS long enough to know the tell-tale signs of an ambulance accident without having to see the involved vehicle. For some reason, this one had me scared for the lives of our fellow team members. Maybe it's because I'm older now and I understand how quickly someone can be taken from us. I was very relieved to hear there were no serious injuries... or worse.

When things like this happen, it allows us a "do-over" of sorts. A chance to re-evaluate things. A chance to reflect. I don't mean to sound overly dramatic here, but as EMS providers we need to examine the things that we do every day and understand there are some simple things that we should be aware of as we go about our routines. Safety should be our #1 priority. Look back on what we've done at F-M Ambulance: RoadSafety, vehicle color schemes with high visibility, an emphasis on slowing down, safety vests, adding crews to cut down our response times without endangering the public or ourselves, better vehicle maintenance and an overall culture of safety. Nothing can prevent 100% of all mishaps. Black ice. Debris flying off of a truck in front of us. Rubber-necked observers driving by the scene without regard to your safety. It seems as if hazards are forever there; hiding in the background.



Don't underestimate your individual power to influence safety at our place of work. If you notice something that doesn't seem safe, take action. We need to look out for one another so we can continue to do what we love.

Contributed by Sherm Syverson, Education Manager

Thinking About Going to Paramedic School?

Are you an EMT and want to add to your skill set? Are you a volunteer and want to expand your knowledge and assessment skills? Do you want to be a firefighter and looking for a way to stand out from the hundreds of other applicants? Whatever your motivation, you may be considering a paramedic program.



The most important decision facing you now is which program will be the best for you. Paramedic courses come in as many different styles as there are flavors at your local frozen yogurt shop. While cost and location are always concerns, how the program teaches the course is much more important as a consideration. Programs that emphasize "teaching the test" and use only NREMT pass rates as their standard don't produce paramedics with actual experience running calls. Programs that emphasize "face-to-face only" instruction eliminate the rich on-line source of additional materials. Programs that have short classroom courses but extended clinical requirements produce paramedics who can follow protocols but don't understand why they are doing so. The best programs combine the good parts of all three

approaches. Finding one of those programs requires some investigation on your part. Ask local ambulance services where they hire their paramedics or the reputation of the area schools. Ask the hospitals whose students perform best in the clinical environment. We naturally think that the Paramedic Program at F-M Ambulance Service is the best in the area. However, we encourage you to ask questions and find the best program for you. For a list of questions, go to http://www.fmambulance.com/htmls/emt_paramedic.htm and click on the FAQs link. Ultimately, the program you attend can have a profound effect on your ability to get and retain a job, and more importantly, how to treat patients.

Contributed by Ron Lawler

Go Red for Women 2009 Lifestyle Makeover

The 2009 Go Red for Women event in the Fargo-Moorhead area is offering a five month Go Red Lifestyle Makeover to 50 women with risk factors for cardiovascular disease. The Go Red Lifestyle Makeover program is funded by a grant through Go Red North Dakota, a partnership between the American Heart Association and the Dakota Medical Foundation. Participants were selected in December based on information provided on their applications.

The Lifestyle Makeover will begin with a kick-off event held in January which will outline the Makeover in detail. The Makeover will have three components including one-on-one telephone coaching from trained Go Red Coaches, monthly education sessions and educational emails.

Each phone coaching session will focus on setting smart goals to help the women improve their health and wellness behaviors. Behavioral scientists have shown that one-on-one coaching is among the most effective approaches to helping people make and sustain improvements in their lives. A coach enables change by focusing on a client's stated agenda including needs, values, vision and goals and helping to bring out his/her personal best.

Makeover participants will also participate in monthly educational sessions (January – May). These sessions will each have a different educational focus relating to 1) Life Balance 2) Physical Activity and 3) Healthy Eating. Health and wellness professionals from the community will be secured to speak at each session.

Additionally, monthly emails with helpful wellness information and support will be sent to all makeover participants. The final wrap up event will include participation in the Fargo Marathon. Participants will choose an event to take part in ranging from water station volunteers to running or walking an event of their choice.

Some of the Lifestyle Makeover speaking events will be open to the public. Please contact Kristi at (701) 364-1759 for more information.



Winter Is Here!

It's that time of year again when the colder weather brings along with it snow and ice. Unfortunately, during the nice summer months, many people seem to forget how to drive on the snow and ice that comes with winter! Here are some winter driving tips:



- Let your engine warm up while you clear off any snow or ice on your car.
- Remember to clear snow off of the front and rear lights and all windows.
- Check weather reports with the State Highway Department before leaving for trips.
- Carry a car safety kit – this should include blankets, matches, candles, high energy dry foods, a flashlight with spare batteries, a first aid kit, map, ice scraper, flares, tow and battery jumping cables, folding shovel, a bag of sand, winter gloves, cell phone, and an emergency HELP sign that you can put in the back window if you need help.
- Try not to travel if blizzard conditions are expected.
- Decelerate well in advance of a stopping point or turn.
- Bridges and overpasses freeze quickly, be careful on these surfaces.
- Always keep your gas tank at least half full in case you get stuck somewhere.
- Make sure your windshield wipers are in good shape and work well.
- Check your tires. Make sure they are properly inflated and the tread is in good condition.
- Be more observant. Visibility is often limited in winter by weather conditions. Slow down and watch for vehicles that have flashing lights, such as snowplows.
- Allow extra time to get places when weather is not perfect.
- If stalled, stay with your vehicle and try to conserve fuel while maintaining warmth.
- Always wear your seatbelt – it could save your life.

F-M Wellness Committee

On Wednesday September 17th, employees and students of F-M Ambulance gathered to play a game of football against the MeritCare Engineering Department (Wade Mitzel's new friends). Although we had to share the field with MANY mosquitoes, everyone had a great time. There will have to be a re-match next fall – the game ended in a tie!



Classes, Classes and More Classes!

Fall is always a busy time for the team in the Education Department at F-M Ambulance. Along with the normal refresher classes we do every year (EMT-Basic refresher, First Responder refresher and Paramedic refresher), for some reason, the fall often brings a high demand for new classes, such as First Responder, EMT, and the beginning of Paramedic school. This fall has been no exception.

Integrity Windows hosted a First Responder initial course in October. There were participants from Integrity Windows Fargo, Integrity Windows West Fargo, Infinity Windows, and Tecton Products. They met daily for 2 ½ weeks, and they all seemed to have a great time in class (picture below).



The fall EMT-B / First Responder refresher was also held in October at F-M Ambulance Service. Nine people took part in the refresher course and they also seemed to have a great time in class (picture below)!



If you have questions about any courses that F-M Ambulance offers, please check out our website, at www.fmambulance.com, or call the education department at (701) 364-1750.

Welcome F-M Ambulance New Employees

Welcome to the F-M Ambulance team!

- Tracy Perhus – Sales, Merigen Medical
- Bryan Johnson – EMT-Basic
- Adam Hetz – EMT-Basic
- Juanita Gorder – EMT-Basic
- Lindsey Fields – EMT-Basic
- Jennifer Friesen – Administrative Assistant, Merigen Medical

When Should I Call 9-1-1?

Imagine one of these things happening to you or your family:

- You are sitting at home, when all of the sudden you feel a strange pain in your chest. You have never felt anything like this before – and it's getting worse. You think to yourself, "I should probably go to the doctor".
- You are having dinner with your parents when suddenly your dad starts slurring his speech and drops his glass of milk. You remember earlier in the night he said that he had a terrible headache.
- Your child accidentally cuts herself, and it's bleeding badly – it's bright red blood and it's squirting. You know she will need stitches.
- You see your neighbor putting up Christmas lights on his house when he falls off of the top step of the ladder. He is lying on the ground, and he doesn't seem to be moving.



Which one of these events should you call 9-1-1 for? The answer is ALL OF THEM. Whenever there is a serious medical problem, such as chest pain, shortness of breath, slurred speech, serious bleeding or a significant fall, 9-1-1 should be called right away.

What will happen when I call 9-1-1?

- When you call 9-1-1, the call will be taken by a dispatcher, who takes your information. Then the appropriate fire, police, or medical team in your area will be dispatched to the emergency.
- Local dispatchers use EMD – Emergency Medical Dispatching. EMD provides life saving instructions, whether it is giving simple airway maintenance instructions, controlling bleeding, delivering a baby or CPR instructions, to a person over the phone.
- When you call 9-1-1, the dispatcher will ask you many questions. Answering these questions does not delay response. As they ask questions, keep your answers as short and direct as possible. They are dispatching the appropriate people as you talk to them.

Why can't I just drive myself or my loved one to the hospital?

- Paramedics and EMTs can begin treatment immediately – BEFORE arriving at the hospital. Some of this treatment can be life-saving.
- Paramedics can send pictures of the heart by fax to the doctors at the hospital. Advanced treatment can begin as soon as you are wheeled into your room in the Emergency Department.
- Paramedics and EMTs can call in to the hospital before arriving – thus giving the nurses and doctors a "heads-up" so they can get everything needed ready for you.
- During certain emergencies, the heart could stop beating. This is called sudden cardiac arrest. Emergency personnel have the equipment to try to make the heart start beating again.

A basic rule to follow – if you are asking yourself the question, "should I call 9-1-1 or not", you should call. Time can be critical in a medical emergency – if you think you need medical help, call immediately!

Paramedic Refreshers Nearing an End

As we all know, fall not only brings colder weather but also refresher courses. Our paramedic refreshers have been interesting this year, but also a little painful. The classes included controlling the airway of a trapped trauma patient and using each other to practice restraint holds for behavioral patients. While fun and informative, a few people left the behavioral emergencies class with sore muscles.

"We have had great speakers this year that have gone above and beyond in their delivery of information," says Kathy Lonski, who coordinated the paramedic refresher this year. "I really want to thank them for their time." Some of the speakers included:

Jay Metzger, PA, Emergency Department, Bagley, MN
Arne Graff, MD, MMC Child and Adolescent Maltreatment
Heidi Lako-Adamson, MD, MeritCare Emergency Department
Tom Shaw, Fargo Police Department
Kari Schultz, RN, Innovis Cath Lab

DeDe Krieg, RN
Wyatt Mitzel, PA, Innovis Cath Lab
Deb Schneibel, RN, Innovis Cath Lab
Dawn Mertz, NREMT-P, Lifeflight

The Clinical Corner

By Kathy Lonski, Clinical Coordinator

F-M Ambulance Switched to the King LT Airway

We have recently completed training our staff on the King Airway which will eventually replace the Combitube. The King consists of a curved tube with inflatable cuffs. Like the Combitube, the distal cuff seals the esophagus, the proximal cuff seals the oropharynx and the patient is ventilated through openings between the 2 cuffs. Unlike the Combitube, the King can only be placed in the esophagus so there is only one tube to ventilate through.

We think the King LT will be a great change for our patients. The low-pressure cuffs reduce the incidence of airway trauma so the device can stay in place for longer periods of time. There is also a gastric access port that allows suctioning and it is latex-free.



The Merigen Minute

By Sherm Syverson

Have you ever shopped for something you didn't really want to buy? Maybe you had to make car repairs right around Christmas time. Have you ever had to shell-out a couple of hundred dollars to replace a cell phone that found its way into a toilet? Might you have run over a laptop computer with a Ford Expedition (Ken Krupich). How about paying for an ambulance ride that you really hadn't planned on needing or were you forced to attend a mandatory medical education course in order to keep your job or position on a volunteer rescue squad? The bare-bones reality of the situation is this: people pay for things every day that they really didn't want.

In today's world, it has become challenging for many businesses to compete against the internet or the larger competitors who can buy volume at reduced rates. F-M Ambulance Service feels the impact of the internet in the areas of education and in the retail sales division, Merigen Medical. Within the last decade, the EMS industry and the ancillary businesses that accompany it have become saturated with large market players. Recently, at the EMS Expo event in Las Vegas, NV, I witnessed first-hand the competitiveness of the large players in the industry. Physio-Control had a huge booth and advertisements posted on the sides of hotels and inside of the monorail cars. One thought kept occurring to me as I was bombarded by the sea of advertising: how much did this cost? Having managed the education department at F-M Ambulance for the past four years and Merigen Medical for the past four months, I can tell you that advertising on this level is inconceivable to me. Our total budget for advertising would have been eaten up by one of Physio-Control's billboards pasted on the side of the Las Vegas Convention Center. (On a side note, Barry Manilow's picture was on the side of the Las Vegas Hilton. It was impressive. Had he been "real", one of his nostrils could have inhaled a Volkswagen in a single sniff.) My point is this: Merigen Medical can't compete with the fancy catalogs and giant warehouses that some of our competitors have. We are simply not in a position to do this because of our size. But what Merigen Medical has that some of the others don't is a local connection. We are local people serving local people. You can call F-M Ambulance 24 hours a day in an emergency and it is likely they can track Janet, Tracy or me down. The same goes for our education department. Many of the customers who call on us are truly our friends. We have extra incentive to do the best by them. We don't want to let them down. And when we do, we fix the problem.

Merigen Medical recently began a transformation towards serving local and regional people—something our competitors on the internet can't do as well as we can; and a return to our original business model which focuses on North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota. Dedication to serving the customer is our born-again mission. Along with myself, the team now consists of Janet Salyer, Supervisor; Tracy Perhus (Kindred, ND, girl), Business to Business Specialist; and Jennifer Friesen, Administrative Assistant. Please contact any of these dedicated people if you have questions or need help with first aid products, ambulance and first responder supplies, OSHA compliance advice / supplies, CPR / First Aid courses, or safety equipment. The phone number for Merigen Medical is: (701)364-1777; or you can contact us by e-mail: sherm@fmambulance.com; for Janet: janet.salyer@merigenmedical.com; or for Tracy: tracy.perhus@merigenmedical.com.



The Rural Roundup

By Bob Klein, Liaison Coordinator

Greetings from Bob Klein, a.k.a. Farmer Bob,

I have returned from harvesting and have taken off my farmer hat and have replaced it with my EMS hat. I enjoyed spending time on the farm and in the combine. It was a very good crop year and I am already looking forward to next year's harvest.

Now, on to EMS news... on August 26th, the Buffalo Quick Response Unit hosted a National Night Out event in Buffalo, ND. Rural fire departments from Buffalo and Tower City took part in the festivities along with the Cass County Sheriff's Department, Red River Valley SWAT team, MeritCare's Lifelight helicopter and Casselton Ambulance. I brought the MIRU (Mass Incident Response Unit) truck from F-M Ambulance, which houses all of our MCI and communication equipment (top picture). Everyone showed their vehicles to the public and answered questions. Kids loved jumping in and out of the ambulance and seeing all of the equipment (second picture). A picnic supper followed at the Buffalo Park.

On October 7th, Harwood Rescue hosted an open house for the public at the Harwood Rescue Center. The community of Harwood came out to see what the Rescue Squad is all about and what exactly they do. Again, I brought the MIRU truck for everyone to tour. You can see, in the third picture, that it was a fun night with good food and a great opportunity for the people in Harwood to meet their rescue squad members, and for me to meet some people from Harwood.

I had the opportunity to go to Barnesville for joint training with Barnesville Ambulance and Barnesville Fire Department on October 30th. We did a difficult, delayed auto extrication exercise which involved a patient trapped inside a motor vehicle. This was an excellent exercise and training event and it was great to see the ambulance and fire department working so close together. The bottom picture is two Barnesville Ambulance members working together with the Barnesville Fire Department, trying to come up with a plan to get the "patient" out of the car. Great job, Barnesville!!!

On October 29th and November 8th, I taught "Rural EMS" to the F-M Ambulance paramedic students. We spent some time in the classroom and also went on a field trip to Casselton Ambulance. The students learned about Rural EMS first-hand from members of Casselton Ambulance and the Cass County Sheriff's Department. This was a great learning experience for the students and also a chance to have a little fun. Most of the students will have the opportunity to meet many of the rural responders through ALS intercepts with F-M Ambulance.

On November 10th, Glyndon Rescue held an auto extrication exercise. This was a delayed extrication and was very difficult. They used "Rescue Randy", a life-size training dummy, which was placed in the vehicle prior to the roll-over. This was a fun experience and we all learned from it. Unfortunately I didn't get pictures of this one.

Until next time, I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and I will see all of you soon!!!



F-M Ambulance Fall Citizens Academy

F-M Ambulance wrapped up its 2008 Fall session of the Citizens Academy in November. Citizens EMS Academy is a program that offers a hands-on opportunity for community members to learn what F-M Ambulance paramedics and EMTs do every day. It also educates participants about F-M Ambulance Service and emergency medical services, along with teaching skills that they would be able to use in actual emergencies. Participants have the opportunity to ride along with paramedics and EMTs and go on real emergency calls.

The academy focuses on hands-on training, showing and teaching the skills that an ambulance crew may use. Participants get to practice starting IVs, intubations, defibrillation, reading heart rhythms, and doing a full "code" on our SIMMAN manikin.

Participants in the 2008 Fall Academy (pictured below) included Amanda Boo, Shawn Hanson, Danielle Haugen, Rebecca Heyd, Jeremy Jensen, Timothy Jensen, Geoff Lowe, Cara Schroeder, Deb Schwandt, Katie Skadeland, and Susan Spooner. The F-M Ambulance Citizens EMS Academy has been an overwhelming success since it was started in 2006. It is the only EMS-based citizens academy across the nation. The next Citizens EMS Academy will take place in the spring of 2009. If you or anyone you know is interested in taking part in the next Citizens EMS Academy, please have them check our website, www.fmambulance.com, or call Kristi at (701) 364-1759.



Did You Know...

F-M Ambulance is celebrating 50 Years in EMS in 2009! As part of that celebration, we will be hosting an employee reunion and a paramedic school reunion in May 2009. If you or anyone you know has worked at F-M Ambulance or completed paramedic school at F-M Ambulance, please have them contact Kristi at (701) 364-1759 or kristi.engelstad@fmambulance.com. Invitations to the event will be mailed out soon!



We hope that you have enjoyed this edition of "Vital Signs", a quarterly on-line newsletter distributed by F-M Ambulance.

If you have any ideas, questions, or comments about "Vital Signs", please contact Kristi at (701) 364-1759, or kristi.engelstad@fmambulance.com.