

# Ambulance Museum a Canadian first

By Andy Comber

There were paramedics everywhere but no emergency, just the celebrated opening of Canada's first-known ambulance and E.M.S. museum, at the Canadian Transportation Museum and Heritage Village, June 27.

"It looks better than when we had it!" exclaimed Garnet Fox of Amherstburg, speaking of a restored 1947 Cadillac rescue ambulance that saw service with the Amherstburg, Anderdon and Malden (AAM) Rescue and First Aid Squad beginning in 1962.

Fox was a volunteer with the AAM for 19 years, and his wife, Diane, served a remarkable 31 years as a volunteer emergency dispatcher. The couple was among over 100 guests present for the grand opening of the Southwestern Ontario Ambulance and Emergency Services Museum.

Restored to its 1960's AAM appearance by the Historic Vehicle Society, the 1947 Cadillac was originally custom-built for a first aid squad in Manasquan, New Jersey. The



Hannah Winger, 6, of LaSalle, checks out the kid's corner at the Southwestern Ontario Ambulance and Emergency Medical Services Museum, June 27.

tourists and local residents, while paying tribute to the men and women involved in emergency services.

McDermott said the ambulances at the museum might also remind people of their first ambulance ride, remembering his own as a Grade 9 student at Essex High, after an attack of appendicitis.

"I asked the driver to sound the siren as we passed the school on the way to the hospital," said McDermott.

The ambulance museum boasts about a dozen vehicles and an amazing collection of emergency paraphernalia, including stretchers, first aid kits, switchboards, emergency lights and sirens, and more.

"Yes, you can turn on the switches," reads a notice to children in a special kid's corner.



A major contributor, Len Langlois, second from left, cuts the ribbon at a grand opening of a new ambulance museum. Len was joined at the ribbon cutting by his sons, Kevin and Ken and Canadian Transportation Museum and Heritage Village president Harry Bergman, left.

Manasquan squad donated the vehicle to the newly formed AAM at an ambulance service convention in Montreal, in 1962. AAM volunteers drove the ambulance back to Amherstburg where it remained in active service for more than a decade.

"How do you put a value on this," said Len Langlois, the former operator of the Chatham and District Ambulance Service, a life-long collector whose family helped make the museum a reality.

"We thought this would be a great place to display the past, present and hopefully the future of ambulances," he said.

Langlois was joined by his two sons, Kevin and Ken, both paramedics, and the transportation museum president, Harry Bergman, for a ribbon cutting ceremony to officially open the new building.

Essex Mayor Ron McDermott said the ambulance museum is an important addition to the region, sure to attract



Garnet and Diane Fox of Amherstburg stand by the 1947 Cadillac rescue ambulance he drove as a volunteer with the Amherstburg, Anderdon and Malden Rescue and First Aid Squad.

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