

FOCUS ON: NORTH LEEDS AMBULANCE SERVICE

On October 19, 1985, the North Leeds Ambulance Service Inc. held the official opening to its new ambulance base located 2 miles south of Elgin on Highway 15 at the site of the former Oasis Restaurant. In attendance were Jennifer Cossit, Leeds-Grenville MP and Bob Runciman, Leeds MPP. "We often don't think of how much we appreciate a service like this until we are in need ourselves", said Cossit. The new facility includes an office for the co-ordinator, a training area, kitchenette, storage area and heated garage. "I think this facility is going to encourage a lot more people to get involved and stay involved", said Runciman.

During the ceremonies plaques were presented to the Gibson family - Kingsley, Joyce, Tim and Larry and Dr. Stanley Webb who were instrumental in initiating the ambulance service. Letters of appreciation were given to former managers - Ross Ramsay, Pat Thompson, Marian and Bruce McLeod for their long, often invisible, hours of service. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held after the presentations and speeches by Ministry of Health personnel.

This occasion, as Jim Raffan, a former volunteer attendant-driver, said, marks not the initiation of a new service but rather a continuation of existing service begun 25 years ago by concerned and caring individuals in Seeley's Bay. Particularly instrumental in the initiation of the service were Dr. S. Webb, the Gibson family who at that time owned Carveth Nursing Homes and the Seeley's Bay Fire Department. For years the ambulance operated strictly out of Seeley's Bay manned by area residents. Numerous services were rendered without remuneration to either the attendants or the Fire Department for initially it was the patient's responsibility to pay directly for the service.

In 1968 the Ontario Government--the Ministry of Health formed the Emergency Health Services Branch and supplied the service with an equipped vehicle, radio communication devices and operational funding. The Ministry of Health continues to fund the operation of this service which in turn is accountable to the Ministry and must comply to the Ambulance Act and ministry procedures.

In recent years, with the installation of new centralized dispatch and paging systems, the ambulance could be stationed in more locations in the area that it covers. Volunteers are people living in the areas around the south of Seeley's Bay to Elgin and the ambulance was placed near them to reduce the response time.

From time to time, the ambulance service has experienced near crises in terms of dwindling numbers of volunteers who were actively involved. However, the community and concerned individuals rallied to keep the service active. At one time, the ambulance was stationed at Rideau District High School during school hours with the permission of the Board of Education and the then principal George Gratton. Four teachers who were trained volunteers had daily emergency lessons prepared at all times in case of being called out. Without these arrangements the ambulance would have had to go "out of service" and any emergencies would have to rely upon other services such as Smith Falls, Gananoque, Kingston or Brockville for help.

At other times, a few women who were available during difficult day hours carried the service when other volunteers were at work out of area or at employment that could not be left. Two such volunteers are Mary Moulton and Rose Bevins who have given and continue to give great commitment and compassion to the service as well as their competence and enthusiasm. There are still many women volunteers on the service.

In 1983, the Ambulance Service experienced a new change to North Leeds Ambulance Service to better reflect the regional nature of the volunteer organization although Seeley's Bay will always remain the spiritual home. The area served stretches roughly from Brewer's Mill to Portland, California to Delta, Newboro to Westport. In November, 1983, the service took delivery of a new Ambulance rig. Until then, like most volunteer services, it has used the best ambulance handed down from full time services. The new rig was seen as a vote of confidence in many years of quality care and was another step in the long term goal of providing

the best ambulance service to the area. Neighbouring professional services, particularly Kingston Ambulance, have been generous in their support. The highly trained and competent professionals on the Kingston service frequently provided in-service training and advice as well as moral support.

The Ambulance Service became an incorporated body in 1984 with the following appointed as a Board of Directors - Marian McLeod (Pres.), Bruce McLeod (Sec.), Clint Halladay, Albert Angenent and John Duncan. In December 1984, a full time co-ordinator of Ambulance Services was hired - Mr. Chris Lloyd, Emergency Medical Care Assistant and Auxiliary Training Officer. As well as being a fully qualified ambulance attendant, he is a CPR instructor (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation), a St. John First Aid instructor and is authorized to instruct both a Restricted Radio Operator Course and an Emergency First Response Program. He brings to the service 13 years of experience in ambulance service and a longtime family involvement in St. John Ambulance. Mr. Lloyd is responsible for the daily operation of the NLAS, training of the volunteers, community relations and is a permanent member of the day crew. Mr. Lloyd's personal vehicle is equipped with an Emergency First Response kit from the Ministry of Health.

He is often seen responding to emergency calls when the NLAS is engaged on a call in Kingston or another area or when the call warrants extra assistance as in the case of the recent tornado.

Volunteers are required to be 18 years of age or older, hold an F-class license and trained in First Aid and C.P.R. Training is provided by the ambulance service as are the uniforms. Training and information meetings are held at the base on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday. On the average, a volunteer is on call every 5th week when working the night shift.

The North Leeds Ambulance Service is experiencing increased emergency calls. From January to September 1985, it provided 298 patient carrying calls. September 1985 - 28 emergency calls and 9 patient transfers. October (to Oct. 23) 1985 - 25 emergency calls and 5 patient transfers. The ambulance will also cover local fire departments at "working fires" at their request. The ambulance service is generally not visible in the community but when sudden illness strikes, a serious accident occurs or a natural disaster such as the recent tornado, hits a community, it is there to offer trained help.

The satisfaction of knowing that they are helping members of their community in times of need keeps the volunteers committed. Current volunteers are: Tina Angenent, Albert Angenent, Mary Moulton, Pat Thompson, John Vogelzang, Cliff Bush, Barry Haskin, Bob Bennet, Bruce McLeod, Brent Nontell, Chuck Fitzgerald, John Duncan, Susan Duncan, Mark Little, Rose Bevins, and Steve Gordanier. We welcome people who are interested in becoming volunteer ambulance attendant-drivers.

Ambulance Numbers: Non-Emergency Business Telephone - 359-1122
Emergency calls only - 544-5555 or 1-800-267-0991



NORTH LEEDS AMBULANCE SERVICE

From a User Perspective.

Perhaps my view of the North Leeds Ambulance Service is somewhat biased, having had a family member actively involved in serving with the unit. However, knowing how many hours of time for instructional training, constant up-dates in practical applications and the dedication and compassion of the members of this volunteer service only adds to my admiration for this dependable and essential service to rural residents.

Having lived in a city where medical assistance from doctors or hospitals was no more than 25 minutes away, the access to ambulance service in an area where, in emergency situations, trained medical help can only be reached by a hair-raising 40 to 60 minute car ride, is more than a little appreciated!

My one and only experience as a user of the North Leeds Service occurred this summer following a freak accident to a member of my family.

One quick call brought the ambulance and the trained attendants to the site, where, under the direction of co-ordinator Chris Lloyd, the patient was carefully examined, reassured and transported post-haste to Hotel Dieu Hospital in Kingston. Needless to say, it was reassuring to know that even though the journey seemed to take ages, the ambulance can travel at greater speeds than a car, without danger of having the O.P.P. on its tail.

While learning later the accident was not life threatening, it was comforting to know that trained staff monitored the patient throughout the trip and continued to do so until hospital personnel took over.

The quick and efficient response on this occasion was just routine! Our volunteer ambulance staff give the same excellent and compassionate service at every call and, perhaps because they are either our neighbours, or acquaintances, it is very comforting to receive calls of enquiry from the attendants after the incident.

Many residents of the area have used the services of the North Leeds Ambulance, many more may have to in the future. Rest assured our local service will match that of any city or rural service in the province. The caring, well-trained volunteers, along with co-ordinator Chris Lloyd, make sure that the residents of our communities have top-notch emergency care.

While we tend to forget, in times of emergency, to appreciate these dedicated workers, I am sure, all residents, whether having used the service or just thankful that it is available, will join me in congratulating and thanking the group for their dedication to what is really an essential service.

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