

# COLRAIN VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION, INC.

May 7, 2014

Dear Community Member,

In late 2007 I was approached by one of the members of Colrain Ambulance to see if I might want to join the volunteer ambulance service. I had recently moved to town and was well known in the region as a Paramedic for a private EMS provider in Franklin County. Begrudgingly, and to make a long story short, I agreed to help them out when I could. I wasn't too excited by the idea because Colrain Ambulance had a terrible reputation for their inability to respond to calls, their spottiness in training, and had a wreck of an ambulance to work on to boot. The association had however recently been awarded an AFG grant to purchase a new ambulance which was in the process of being built which made me feel a little better.

Mind you I had NEVER volunteered for anything that I wasn't being paid for, and Colrain Ambulance members had agreed 2 years prior that they would receive no compensation for running calls because they couldn't afford to pay people anymore. As I began to participate in the association I quickly saw that the members were dedicated to turning the ambulance service around from what, very obviously would have been the demise of ambulance service in town and the loss of another service in the region.

With the arrival of their new ambulance in early 2008, we sat in a meeting working on how we could make the best of a fantastic opportunity. My answer was to challenge the membership to run 100 (one hundred) consecutive calls for service with two EMT's without the need for a mutual aid response to transport the patient. I quite frankly thought there was absolutely no way they could do this. The members present took the challenge very personally as many of them were long term members and really didn't appreciate my obvious doubt of their ability to make this goal a reality.

What has happened since is a bit of a local miracle and has many still scratching their heads. **Colrain Ambulance has not missed a call since March 5th, 2008.** If another ambulance showed up in town it was only because Colrain Ambulance was already on a call or was out of service for maintenance. This has happened a handful of times, and emergency responders still went to the scene to assist well before the mutual aid ambulance arrived.

**To date we have successfully responded to 1047 consecutive calls for service.** We have averaged 4.3 EMT's per call. The association has grown from the service everyone sneered about to a volunteer organization that lives up to it's potential to be not only a service that provides ambulance transportation but one that looks forward to the next challenge of what they can do to improve the health of their community and the region as a whole.

They have strengthened and expanded their partnership with the Town of Colrain and Colrain Fire by developing a response team that provides extra manpower and equipment to neighboring towns for critically ill or injured patients with high potential for, or who are reported to be in cardiac arrest. The association purchased a LUCAS device [http://www.lucas-cpr.com/en/lucas\\_cpr/lucas\\_cpr](http://www.lucas-cpr.com/en/lucas_cpr/lucas_cpr) last year and deployed the device 10 times during the first 13 months of service. Without the devices help continuous effective CPR would have been almost impossible to provide especially during transport to the hospital which averages 25 minutes. With the device personnel can shift their efforts to airway control, medication administration and identification of reasons for the cardiac arrest.

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This year alone the device has been deployed 5 times and has resulted in positive return of circulation in 2 of the patients. Without the devices help continuous effective CPR would have been almost impossible to provide especially during transport to the hospital which averages 25 minutes. With the device personnel can shift their efforts to airway control, medication administration and identification of reasons for the cardiac arrest.

In recent years the service, with Colrain Fire and their firefighter's association, assisted in the funding for the development, acquisition, training and operation of an all terrain vehicle and rescue sled along with a "quick attack" snowmobile for rescue situations that we would had in the past managed on foot or through mutual aid response of equipment from outlying agencies.

We actively participate in the training of all levels of emergency responders as well, and provide education to the lay public in such areas as injury prevention, CPR, general safety and disaster preparedness.

With the help of the Town of Colrain and several business partners we transformed a vacant field next to the town hall into an adult sized softball field to encourage a healthy pastime many had forgotten. We are currently in the process of revamping the field surface which still bears the scars of damage from our good friend Hurricane IRENE.

With all that said my point is that we as an organization took that simple challenge and transformed it into much more than we could have anticipated.

To celebrate the milestone of reaching 1000 calls we are having a "1000 CALL CELEBRATION" on May 24th, 2014 from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm at the Colrain Fire Station in Colrain, MA. The day will include presentations from local, state and federal officials to celebrate this fantastic accomplishment. We look forward to a fantastic turnout of supporters and well-wishers.

A BBQ with all the fixings will be provided for all who attend, and will give us a chance to say thank you to everyone who has and continues to support the service and EMS as a whole.

We are asking our partners in business to assist us in making this a day to remember. Any assistance you may be able to provide would be greatly appreciated.

As we are a 501(c) 3 non- profit corporation all contributions are tax deductible. More importantly all contributions allow you as a business to know that you are supporting a dynamic organization that will be there when you need them and will continue to serve the community in a progressive and thoughtful manner.

Please look through the attached lists of needed items to see what you may be able to help with. And please, whether you are able to help or not, join us on May 24<sup>th</sup> to celebrate and thank these fine men and women for their contribution to all of our health and well-being.

Sincerely,

Gary W. Ponce EMT-P  
CEO/Director  
Colrain Volunteer Ambulance Association, Inc.

**ITEMS AND SERVICES NEEDED FOR 1000 CALL CELEBRATION**

1. BBQ fixings to include 100 person amounts of:

Hamburger patties meat and vegetarian  
Hamburger buns  
Hot dogs, meat and vegetarian  
Hot dog buns  
Fruit salad  
Macaroni Salad  
Chips  
Paper plates, 300 ea.  
Napkins  
Plastic utensils for 150  
Soft Drinks, assorted 200 each  
Ice approx. 150 pounds cubed  
Bottled water 100 each  
Propane for BBQ grill, 2 tanks  
Large Ice Chests x 2

2. Staging for presentation
3. Helium for balloon filling
4. Volunteers to assist in set up and clean up
5. Volunteers to help in preparing the Softball Field
6. Signage to recognize contributors

To arrange a contribution please feel free to contact Gary Ponce at his home @ (413) 624-0128. He may also be contacted via email at 8med4@live.com.