

Cavalier Ambulance Service: An Emergency Room On Wheels

By Liz Beck
Pembina County 911 Coordinator



Photo credit of Barb Gunderson

Back row, left to right: Paula Gapp, John Werth, Dawn Fraser, Trudy Wileman, Kari Thompson, Jim DeMell, Sherry McDonald, Joanne Otto, Nicole Pelletier, Ervin Sott, Linda Otto, Jeremy Mattison, Daniel Garvens, Pamela Mattison, Sean Fraser

Front row: Claudia Kaercher, Brooke Carik, McKenzie LeTexier, Melissa Enerson, Andrew Hay, Lisa LeTexier, Cassandra Jarvis

Not pictured: Jan Samson, Jan Wileman, Jered Kemnitz, Lynn Ault, Andrew Kirking, Sandi McDonald, Tom Simmons, Deb Vivatson

If you are experiencing a heart attack or stroke symptoms, did you know that calling 911 for an ambulance can increase your chances for survival? Jim DeMell, a long standing member with Cavalier Ambulance, said "People lose more time driving themselves into the hospital, than they do calling an ambulance. You can actually take 15 to 20 minutes or longer, in the middle of the night, where an ambulance can make an assessment at the home, that this person is having a heart attack, and go straight to Grand Forks." From the patient's house, the ambulance crew can send test results of the patient's heart to the physician who will provide direction where to send the patient.

The life-saving care on a heart attack patient continues in the ambulance while on the way to the hospital. Jim explained, "If directed, we don't even go into the emergency room, we go right to the (hospital) 'Cath' lab," where the coronary arteries are examined. These ambulances are equipped with

the most modern of medical equipment, “Just as what one would see in ICU (Intensive Care Unit) in the movies,” said Paramedic Jan Samson. Jim added, “We have the trained personnel to supply them with the same treatment they’d get in an emergency room.”

When you see someone wearing an ambulance jacket or shirt with the service’s name on it, think of these members as highly trained in emergency medical response, receiving continuing education regularly with the most advanced medical techniques. They are not just ‘ambulance drivers’. “Having this advanced level of care is essential in these rural areas that have local hospitals. Not having advanced life support ambulance (ALS) in Cavalier would mean our local hospitals would have to wait in certain situations for an advanced transporting unit from Grand Forks or Devils Lake, or for a helicopter, adding a long wait and additional healthcare expenses to the patient,” said Jeremy Mattison, Cavalier Ambulance Service President.

This year in April, the North Dakota Emergency Medical Service Association (EMS), awarded Cavalier Ambulance Service not only the NE Regional Service of the year award, but the *2016 North Dakota EMS Service of the Year*. The award highlights the significant contributions to the provision, development and improvement of pre-hospital care and EMS education in their community.

“The ambulance service’s number one goal is to have the best patient care we can give,” emphasized Paramedic Joanne Otto. Jeremy added, “the public and their support, shows that they’re passionate also about patient care. Because the care they’re getting here, is the care that they’d get in Fargo. And they’re getting it out in the middle of rural North Dakota.”

The annual Christmas fund-raiser has brought in generous donations from the community, allowing the ambulance service to pay off the cost of the ambulance building. Joanne added, “Donations over the years has also allowed us to purchase tires for the rigs and stair chairs.” Jan continued, “We also got a power lift built into the ambulance, a second hydraulic lift cot, and a second ‘LUCAS’, or mechanical CPR (cardio pulmonary resuscitation) compression device.”

Jan said, “One of the ways our goals have been met is our comradery. We’ve definitely improved relationships between the ambulance services, the police department, the fire department. I think we’re all starting to work as a team in this county.” She added, “Everyone together makes for the best patient care in the county.”

If you would like more information about Cavalier Ambulance Service, please feel free to stop by the ambulance building between 8am-5pm, or contact the ambulance office at 701-265-8259.