

Mayor of Souderton Dan Yocum Mayor's Memo!



When you or a loved one is having a medical emergency and you call 9-1-1, you expect an ambulance to quickly arrive at your house and efficiently treat the patient. Other than that, you might not think much about EMS. How are they funded? How does the organization operate? Who are the dedicated men and women on that ambulance that help to save your loved ones life?

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Pennsylvania operate very differently than many of your other emergency services. For example, your Police Department is housed and funded directly under our municipality. Their budget is in the Borough's annual budget and the Mayor and Borough Council oversee their activities. The Perseverance Volunteer Fire Company is their own organization but have a Special Fire Tax that provides some (though certainly not enough!) funding to their operations. Your local EMS service on the other hand receives almost no funding from the Borough and operates on its own as a completely independent organization. They primarily rely on insurance billing as their source of revenue. For small ambulance associations across the country, that has become an issue. Souderton Community Ambulance Association is no exception.

Most ambulance crews once operated like your local fire companies as all-volunteer organizations. In the 1980's, the pendulum shifted in the insurance world so that it became very lucrative to operate an ambulance corps. Today, most EMS personnel are paid staff with very few volunteers. However, since then, the pendulum has shifted back. Due to changes in healthcare laws, insurance payouts have decreased dramatically. Medicare, which insures a large percentage of the ambulance-riding population, may only reimburse an EMS provider pennies on the dollar for a transport to a local hospital. Other private insurers also tend to put up a fight with payment. Nonetheless, the cost of readiness for a fully staffed and equipped ambulance is expensive. Though the cost of *not* having one is far greater.

Thus is the cyclical plight of Souderton Ambulance. Without enough resources to effectively bill and track down payments, their funds have depleted. This makes it difficult to pay employees and staff an ambulance. Without proper staffing, they can run less calls, which further decreases their ability to bill for services. And the vicious cycle continues.

In the Spring of 2022, Telford Mayor Jerry Guretse and I began efforts to find a solution. Our residents did not have the adequate EMS coverage they deserved and something needed to change. After months of fact-finding, analysis, countless interviews and meetings, Souderton Borough, Telford Borough, Franconia Township, and portions of other surrounding municipalities have agreed to partner with VMSC of Lansdale (previously known as Volunteer Medical Services Corps) to provide a regionalized EMS service. Souderton Community Ambulance has merged with VMSC and will operate together under the name *Indian Valley EMS*.

COMMUNITY UPDATE

Be sure to check out the new playground equipment at Souderton Community Park! Including play structures for all ages, a new gaga pit, and outdoor fitness equipment for adults. And even more improvements still to come!

Thanks to the Souderton-Telford Rotary Club and all our generous sponsors for their continued efforts in this exciting renovation of the Park!

"VMSC is excited to partner with the Indian Valley communities to deliver reliable Emergency Medical Services to the area. VMSC shares a ninety-year connection with the Indian Valley as a secondary ambulance provider; many of our staff live in and have family here. Our staff, board, and surrounding communities welcome this change. We appreciate the trust given to us by the local governments and look forward to many years of service as VMSC Indian Valley EMS."

-Shane Wheeler, Chief of VMSC



By partnering with a local regional organization, we can be assured that appropriate staffing will be in place so that when you call 9-1-1, you know there is an ambulance in the area that can come to your rescue. They will house an Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulance on Reliance Road on the Souderton-Telford border. The local municipalities have all agreed to their services for a trial period of one year. We are optimistic and hopeful for a mutually beneficial relationship that will last long into the future.



VMSC at 3rd Friday in 2022

In December you received a membership campaign from Indian Valley EMS. This membership provides you with a safety net so that should you need an ambulance during the year, you will not receive an enormous bill for their services. Please consider subscribing as a member. Indian Valley EMS has agreed not to request funds from the municipalities. In other words, this change will not result in a tax increase! However, that may not be the case forever. A successful membership drive is a key factor in their fundraising efforts. So it benefits you and all your fellow residents to subscribe if you are able.

Mayor Guretse and I extend our deepest appreciation to the Board and staff of Souderton Community Ambulance Association for their hard work and dedication in protecting our communities since 1946. We are excited for what the future holds for Indian Valley EMS. We are proud and excited by this partnership and believe that you will notice a tangible difference in your local ambulance service. They have assured us that they will be community-minded, so look for them at events and introduce yourself! It is my sincere hope that you never need an ambulance, but if you do, we are optimistic that the speed and service quality that you will receive from Indian Valley EMS will be second to none.

Stay tuned for the next *Mayors Memo* newsletter included in your utility bill!



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