



# SANFORD AMBULANCE VITAL SIGNS

Winter 2024

Compassion, Excellence and Community

## 2024 Star of Life Award

The American Ambulance Association's Stars of Life program celebrates the contributions of ambulance professionals who have gone above and beyond the call of duty in service to their communities or the EMS profession. Sanford Ambulance paramedic Nate Dutt has been named a 2024 Star of Life recipient.

Nate has been an integral part of Sanford Ambulance since 2009, demonstrating dedication and excellence in both pre-hospital care and emergency telecommunications. Nate's EMS journey began in high school, where he developed a passion for law enforcement and medicine through the Fargo Police and F-M Ambulance Explorers programs. A scholarship from F-M Ambulance allowed Nate to attend EMT training after graduating high school in 2007, and by 2008 he was enrolled in paramedic school. Over the past 15 years, Nate has taken on multiple roles, becoming a full-time dispatcher in 2021 while continuing to maintain his Paramedic certification.

Throughout his career, Nate has been an active member of the Disaster Response Team, Honor Guard, and the Peer Assistance Crisis Team (PACT), which he helped develop in 2019. As a Communications Training Officer (CTO) and Charge Dispatcher, Nate plays a vital role in training new dispatchers and overseeing operations. His leadership in these roles, coupled with his involvement in the Communications and Operations Steering and Oversight Committee, has greatly enhanced the efficiency and quality of emergency communications at Sanford Ambulance.

In addition to his professional achievements, Nate has volunteered in search and rescue for six years with his K9s, Ziva and Sully, assisting in locating lost and missing persons. He is now training his dog Valor to be a Facility Therapy Dog. Outside of work, Nate enjoys spending time with his family, watching his nieces' and nephews' sporting events, and camping at the lake.

Nate is a compassionate and skilled provider who consistently goes the extra mile for his patients and colleagues. His extensive experience in both fieldwork and dispatch made him a standout candidate for the 2024 American Ambulance Association Star of Life Award. Nate's dedication, professionalism, and commitment to improving EMS operations make him a deserving recipient of this prestigious honor.

Sanford Ambulance Senior Director Tim Meyer accompanied Nate to Washington, D.C. in November. As part of the three-day awards ceremony, Nate and Tim got to meet with members of the Congressional staff to discuss the future of EMS in North Dakota and Minnesota. Sanford Ambulance is proud of Nate's continued dedication, commitment and compassion to patients, to the profession of EMS, and to the community that he serves, and is honored to have him on our team.



# Jon “JP” Peterson

On Friday, September 13, Sanford Ambulance lost a member of our EMS family. After a lengthy medical fight, Paramedic Jon Peterson passed away surrounded by family and friends at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN.

Jon, known to many as JP, was an integral part of the Sanford Ambulance family. From the very start of his career, JP was known for his deep dedication to EMS. Not only was JP an excellent paramedic, he was also an incredible educator and mentor.

After joining F-M Ambulance in December 2012 as a Paramedic, Jon made a profound impact on the lives of his patients and colleagues. He became a backup telecommunicator in 2017 and has received numerous honors for his contributions. These include the Service Ribbon (2013), Preceptor of the Year (2015), Stork Award for delivering a baby in the field, and the Disaster Services Ribbon. In 2016, he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal and Star of the Year. Jon also earned the Critical Life Saver Ribbon twice, in 2019 and 2020, for his role in resuscitating cardiac arrest patients. In 2021, JP transitioned from a street medic to an instructor position for the Sanford Health EMS Education department, where he was able to share his wealth of knowledge with students. In December 2023, he joined the North Dakota EMS Association Board, representing EMS from Sanford Ambulance and the Southeast Region of North Dakota. He also served as a liaison officer for Kindred Ambulance, offering education, training, and guidance to rural EMS providers. As a union steward for UFCW Local 1189, Jon was a strong advocate for his peers, ensuring their voices were heard and their rights were protected.



Throughout his career, JP helped thousands of patients in our community, but his leadership and dedication extend beyond the ambulance. JP's role in mentoring his students was more than just teaching - it was about fostering a sense of community and encouraging others to be the best versions of themselves. Tragically, Jon was diagnosed with Immune-Mediated Necrotizing Myopathy (IMNM), a rare and debilitating disease that causes severe muscle weakness and heart complications. Despite receiving care from top hospitals and undergoing numerous treatments, the disease progressed rapidly. On September 13, 2024, Jon succumbed to IMNM, leaving behind a legacy of service and dedication that will not be forgotten.

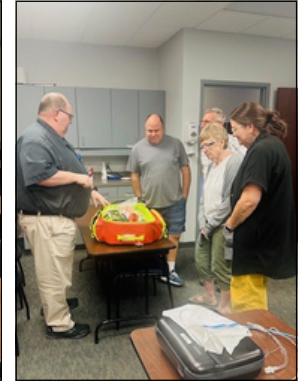
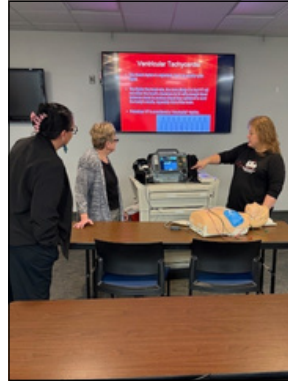
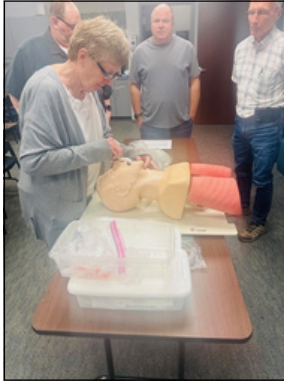
Because of his expertise, knowledge, compassion, and dedication to community service, JP was a recipient of the 2024 Stars of Life award. JP was an outstanding paramedic, deeply devoted to caring for the community he served. His passion for EMS and dedication to helping others made him a vital part of the Sanford Ambulance team. JP truly embodied the values of excellence and commitment in EMS. His selfless attitude and compassion for his patients and family is greatly missed by his wife, two daughters, his Sanford Ambulance family, and throughout the EMS community.





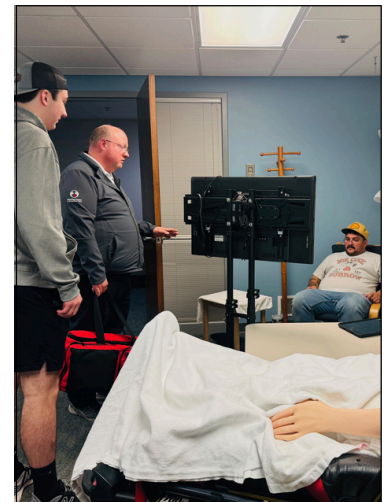
# Citizens Academy

Five local residents spent their Wednesday evenings this fall at Sanford Ambulance, learning about what it takes to work in the EMS field. Participants got an inside look at what paramedics and EMTs do every day while learning how to recognize and respond to medical and traumatic emergencies. They also had the opportunity to see what a typical EMS shift is like by riding along with an ambulance crew for the day. The next Citizens EMS Academy is scheduled for the fall of 2025.



## Skills Fairs

Each quarter, Sanford Ambulance EMTs and paramedics participate in skills fairs to help maintain skills proficiency. The sessions typically focus on scenarios with skills that might be performed infrequently and require timely treatment in order to save a patient's life. Participating in skills fairs helps EMS providers develop critical thinking skills, refresh on skills that aren't used often, and receive training on new equipment. Skills fairs also offer an opportunity for crews to work as a team, focusing on things such as situational awareness, history gathering, patient assessment, and communication. The skills fairs are an opportunity for instructors to give constructive feedback on the team's critical thinking and decision making skills as well as their emergency medical skills in a controlled environment. The fall 2024 skills fair focused on patient refusals, cervical collars, trauma alerts, pacing, and orthostatic vital signs. Topics for Sanford Ambulance skills fairs are determined through a QA process during run review, crew member questions, or suggestions.



## Welcome to the Team!

Rhys Schwitters  
Anthony Nelson  
Dayna LittleDog  
Jack Cheesman  
Mitchell Krings  
Mukta Abdul-Mumin  
McAyla Clarke  
Katelyn Alaniz  
Mackenzie Stegner  
Alex Dahmash

EMT  
Paramedic  
AEMT  
Dispatcher  
EMT  
Paramedic  
EMT  
EMT  
EMT  
Paramedic

*Are you an EMT or paramedic who is interested in working in a fun, fast-paced atmosphere? Sanford Ambulance is hiring!*

*Check out [sanfordhealth.jobs](https://sanfordhealth.jobs) to see what positions we have available! We'd love to have you join our team!*



**SANFORD**  
HEALTH

# HEALTH HIGHLIGHT

## Cardiac Arrest vs. Heart Attack

Do you know the difference between a heart attack and someone in cardiac arrest? Many people don't know that these terms are not the same.

### CARDIAC ARREST

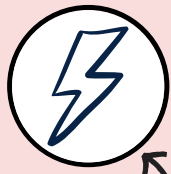
VS.

### HEART ATTACK

#### WHAT IS CARDIAC ARREST?

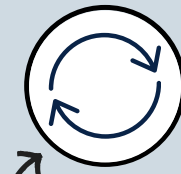
##### CARDIAC ARREST

occurs when the heart malfunctions and stops beating unexpectedly.



Cardiac arrest is an "electrical" problem

#### WHAT IS A HEART ATTACK?

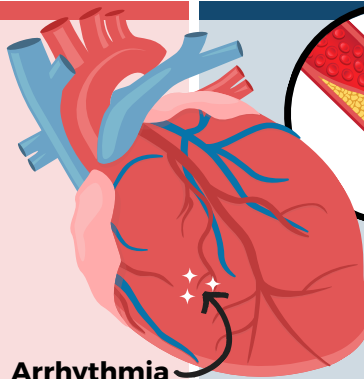


A **HEART ATTACK** occurs when blood flow to the heart is blocked.

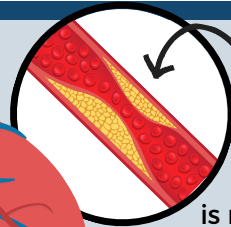
A heart attack is a "circulation" problem

#### WHAT HAPPENS

An electrical malfunction in the heart causes an irregular heartbeat (**arrhythmia**). With its pumping action disrupted, the heart cannot pump blood to the brain, lungs and other organs. When this happens, the person becomes unresponsive, is not breathing, or may be gasping. Death occurs within minutes if the victim does not receive treatment.



#### WHAT HAPPENS



A **blocked artery** prevents oxygen-rich blood from reaching a section of the heart. If the blocked artery is not re-opened quickly, the part of the heart normally nourished by that artery begins to die. The longer a person goes without treatment, the greater the damage to the heart.

#### WHAT TO DO

First, call 9-1-1 and start CPR right away. Then, if an Automated External Defibrillator is available, use it as soon as possible. Cardiac arrest can be reversible in some victims if it's treated within a few minutes.

#### WHAT TO DO

Even if you're not sure it's a heart attack, call 9-1-1. Every minute matters! EMS can begin treatment as soon as they arrive - up to an hour sooner than if someone goes to the hospital by car.

To learn more about hands-only CPR, go to [cpr.heart.org](http://cpr.heart.org)

Information from the American Heart Association - [www.aha.com](http://www.aha.com)



# Community Collaboration

Often times, the Fargo, Moorhead and West Fargo fire departments respond to medical calls with Sanford Ambulance. These firefighters are all nationally certified EMTs who are trained to provide immediate life-saving care if they are on scene before the ambulance arrives. Because firefighters work so closely with ambulance personnel, it's important that they are comfortable with the specialty equipment that might be carried on an ambulance, but is not found on a fire truck. Each year, the three local fire departments spend time at Sanford Ambulance reviewing key procedures and refreshing on ambulance equipment. Sanford Ambulance is grateful for the collaboration with all of the fire departments that we work with and thankful for the help that firefighters provide prior to our arrival.



## Sanford HERO Award

Last week, our very own Community Paramedic Dawn Mertz and her friend Lynne were awarded Sanford Hero Awards for their commitment to caring for our community.

Recently, Dawn was working in her office when she heard a 911 call come in for an overdose at local shelter. Dawn knew that her friend, Lynne, was working at the shelter that day, and she knew that Lynne could be at the patient's side in seconds. Dawn texted Lynne and asked her to get the narcan kit and find the patient. Lynne immediately stopped what she was doing, grabbed the narcan, and found the patient, who had agonal respirations. Lynne administered the narcan, and the patient immediately started breathing on their own again.

Dawn and Lynne were awarded the Hero Award for their teamwork and willingness to do anything it takes to help patients in our community. Congratulations, Dawn - we are SO proud to have you on our team!!





# Citizens Lifesaver Award

On Saturday, July 13, Lori Heideman sprang into action when her husband, David, experienced a life-threatening cardiac arrest at their home. After noticing concerning symptoms earlier in the day, David collapsed while preparing to head to the emergency room. Drawing on her nursing expertise and prior CPR training, Lori immediately began chest compressions while their son, Austin, called 911.

Guided by a 911 dispatcher, Lori performed life-saving CPR for several critical minutes until first responders arrived. Paramedics were able to restart David's heart after delivering two shocks with a cardiac monitor. Paramedics saw that David was experiencing a ST elevated myocardial infarction, or STEMI. They quickly transported him to the hospital, where he immediately went to the cath lab and received a stent to open up the blockage in his heart.


Cardiac arrests are not an everyday occurrence in our community, but when they do happen, the patient has the best chance of survival if they receive immediate CPR. Unfortunately, only around 37% of sudden cardiac arrest victims in our community receive bystander CPR. Because of the immediate actions of Austin and Lori – because they were able to call 911 and perform CPR – David is alive and well today. Lori happened to be certified in CPR before this even took place, but you don't even need to be certified to save a life. CPR is very easy to learn and do – you push hard and fast in the center of the chest.

Sudden cardiac arrest isn't just a job for emergency responders; it's a community issue that requires community response. CPR is easy to learn – it only takes a few minutes – and you never know when you might need to use it to save someone's life. For more information on hands-only CPR, go to CPR courses, go to [www.handsonlycpr.org](http://www.handsonlycpr.org), and for more information on CPR courses, go to [www.shemse.org](http://www.shemse.org).



## EMS Education

The Sanford Health EMS Education (SHEMSE) team has been busy! Check out all of the exciting things happening!

- Our newest full-time educator is Kyle Anderson. Kyle has been with Sanford Ambulance since 2016. He has served as a paramedic, FTO, and as a tactical medic with the Red River Valley SWAT team. Kyle is joining the paramedic program as an instructor. Stop by and welcome him to education! 
- Sanford Health EMS Educator Seth Murray is running for a seat on the regional North Dakota EMS Association board, and SHEMSE Director Ron Lawler has been nominated for the Vice President seat at the state level. If you are an EMS provider and haven't joined the North Dakota EMS Association, please join - we need your voice in an organization that is committed to supporting and serving you!
- The Rural EMT Training Grant through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Agency (SAMHSA) has started to switch over from primarily EMT students to adding in a few slots for rural paramedics or community paramedics (CP). If you know any EMTs who are looking to move up to paramedic, or paramedics looking to try CP, and work in a rural area, this grant will cover their tuition at SHEMSE/NDSC. With live video lectures and monthly labs, this option may fit better than all online or all in person courses. Information for all levels is available on our website or by calling 701-364-1750.
- Trista and Seth started EMR courses in area high schools this fall including Northern Cass, Moorhead Career Academy and Fargo. Jessie Pestel, a SHEMSE casual instructor, is also teaching an EMR course at Horace High School. The one semester EMR course gives students a solid grounding in immediate emergency aid and is approved for testing at the national level (which is required for licensure). Employers also love seeing the EMR certification on a resume! The high school EMR students are doing well and excitement for next semester is building. Our goal is to also add EMT to these schools, and other schools as well. If your school is interested, have them contact us at [emseducation@sanfordhealth.org](mailto:emseducation@sanfordhealth.org).
- SHEMSE was again proud to sponsor the continuing education hours at the Greater Northwest EMS Conference that took place in October in Mahanomen. There were many great speakers, including a couple of our own SHEMSE instructors.
- Sanford Health EMS Education spent the day at the Northern Valley Career Expo in October! More than 1,800 sophomores from 50+ school districts across 11 counties around the northern valley region got to participate in this one-day career event. Students got to explore in-demand careers from over 60 employers.





## **Sanford Ambulance**

2215 18th Street South

Fargo, ND 58103