

SANFORD AMBULANCE ANNUAL REPORT

2023

Fargo • West Fargo • Moorhead
and surrounding communities

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As we close the door on 2023, I want to thank all of the Sanford Ambulance team members – the paramedics, EMTs, dispatchers, supervisors, leaders and support staff for making this organization work. Without their dedication and focus, we would not be the high-performance ambulance service that we are. It takes constant attention, training, and re-training in a repeated cycle to ensure that we are ready to handle any and all emergencies.

In addition, the EMS system needs strong public safety partners to ensure we are protecting the public. I would also like to thank all of the area first responding agencies, neighboring ambulance services, and area hospitals that work with us every day to keep our citizens and visitors safe. As you can see, it is quite a list of agencies:



Tim Meyer
Senior Director of Emergency Services

<i>Barnesville Ambulance</i>	<i>Glyndon Rescue</i>	<i>Moorhead Fire Department</i>
<i>Buffalo Quick Response Unit</i>	<i>Grandin QRU</i>	<i>Moorhead Police Department</i>
<i>Cass County Sheriff's Department</i>	<i>Harwood Fire and Rescue</i>	<i>North Dakota Highway Patrol</i>
<i>Casselton Ambulance</i>	<i>Hawley HERT</i>	<i>Page Ambulance</i>
<i>Clay County Sheriff's Department</i>	<i>Hawley Police Department</i>	<i>Red River Regional Dispatch Center</i>
<i>Dilworth Police Department</i>	<i>Horace Fire and Rescue</i>	<i>Sabin Rescue</i>
<i>Essentia Health</i>	<i>Hunter Ambulance</i>	<i>Sanford AirMed</i>
<i>Fargo Fire Department</i>	<i>Kindred Ambulance</i>	<i>Sanford Medical Center Fargo</i>
<i>Fargo Police Department</i>	<i>Leonard Quick Response Unit</i>	<i>Ulen Rescue</i>
<i>Fargo VA Hospital</i>	<i>Mapleton Rescue</i>	<i>West Fargo Fire Department</i>
<i>Felton Rescue</i>	<i>Minnesota State Patrol</i>	<i>West Fargo Police Department</i>
<i>Glyndon Police Department</i>		

It is surprising how many people and agencies are involved in public safety and health care. Sanford Ambulance is proud to work with our partner agencies and serve the citizens of Cass County, North Dakota and Clay County, Minnesota. As the largest ambulance service between Minneapolis and Seattle, we span counties in two states and operate in multiple cities. I hope you are all proud of the vast network we have in place in our communities. Our EMS system, which is comprised of highly trained and dedicated individuals, is as good as any place in the United States.

Workforce continues to be the great challenge for our ambulance service. We are not unique in this dilemma – there is a national shortage of EMS workers. Sanford Health has taken bold steps to increase the number of paramedics in our training program. Last year we established the Sanford Paramedic Apprenticeship. Sanford Paramedic Apprenticeship students are paid a salary and have their tuition waived. This model removes a substantial barrier for an adult learner to return to school. At this point, we expect to have nine new paramedics trained and working for us this summer.

Later in this report you will see several stories from former paramedics that used their EMS experience as a basis to launch into another career - some in healthcare, and others in different areas of emergency services. This highlights one of the best-known secrets in EMS – paramedics and EMTs learn so much about healthcare, about making decisions under stress, and have developed a polished bedside manner that they are well-suited for many professions.

Thanks again for learning about Sanford Ambulance’s performance in 2023. We intend to continue towards intelligent growth to best serve the community with a commitment to high-performance ambulance operations and fiscally sound practices.



2023 CITIZENS ACADEMY

Eleven local residents spent their Thursday evenings in September 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 shift is like by riding along with an ambulance crew for the day.



Citizens Academy participant Jackie LeFevre said, “It’s been amazing to learn about the things that happen behind the scenes of an ambulance call - these are all things that you just don’t normally think of or know about.”

The next Citizens EMS Academy is scheduled for the fall of 2024.



2023 Highlights



2023

January

- Sanford Ambulance paramedics helped raise over \$152,500 for Sanford Children's Hospital by answering phones during the 2023 Cares for Kids Radiothon.



2023

March

- Sanford Ambulance's Clinical Improvement Advisor Kathy Lonski was nominated for the 2023 YWCA Woman of the Year award, and Sanford Ambulance educator Jaymes Feil was named a MN Ambulance Association Star of Life award recipient.



2023

April

- West Fargo resident Brad Reed received the Sanford Ambulance Citizens Lifesaving award for the immediate action he took when his wife experienced sudden cardiac arrest. Brad performed CPR and used an AED, which helped restart his wife's heart and save her life.
- Leaders from Sanford Ambulance services across ND, MN and SD met in April to share ideas, brainstorm, and work together to make each service better.



2023

May

- In May, Sanford Ambulance lost a team member and friend to suicide. Eli started working at Sanford Ambulance in January 2022. Eli's death deeply impacted his friends and co-workers. Eli's sharp wit and humor is greatly missed by everyone at Sanford Ambulance.



2023 Highlights



2023

May

- A community celebration was held in honor of EMS week. Community members joined Sanford Ambulance and other emergency responders for a picnic at Rheault Farm; participants also had the opportunity to tour several emergency service vehicles. Later that week, Sanford Ambulance crews were treated to a lunch from the Detroit Deli food truck.
- Sanford Ambulance assisted at the 19th annual Fargo Marathon. An incredible amount of planning goes into preparing for the Fargo Marathon each year. Fortunately, this year there were very few medical emergencies at the event.

2023

July

- Team members from the Sanford Ambulance PACT Team, NEAT and Honor Guard attended a F-M Redhawks game in appreciation for the services that they provide.

2023

August

- Several Sanford Ambulance team members participated in the 2023 F-M area Pride Parade.
- Sanford Ambulance hosted a “Back the Blue” blood drive in honor of the officers injured and killed in the July shootings. A total of 27 volunteers donated blood, with 11 of the donations coming from first-time volunteers. The blood collected at the drive had the potential to help save 87 lives.

2023 Highlights



2023

September

- The first session of the 2023 Sanford Ambulance Citizens EMS Academy was held in September. Eleven local residents took part in the 6-week program that taught participants what to do before an ambulance arrives in addition to other skills to use in actual emergencies.



2023

October

- Sanford Ambulance hosted ride-alongs for elected officials from Minnesota to help increase their understanding of the challenges that EMTs and paramedics face.



2023

November

- Sanford Ambulance paramedic Ryan Whiteford won the 2023 United Way Chili cook-off!
- Long-time Sanford Ambulance paramedic Tom Tomaino retired after 28+ years in the EMS field.

2023

December

- Over 4,000 area high school students got to check out career options in EMS at the 2023 Health, Tech & Trades Career Expo at the Fargodome.
- Sanford Ambulance paramedics rang bells to help raise money for the Salvation Army. Along with area first responders, the Salvation Army plays a large part in assisting disaster survivors in our community.



PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT JASON SMITH

Looking back on his 30-year career in the healthcare field, Jason Smith would have never imagined being where he is today. "I took the EMT course in Rapid City, SD in 1994 mostly because I didn't know what I wanted to do in life. My love of emergency medicine started there – I absolutely loved it!!" Between the adrenaline rush and getting to help people on their worst day, Jason had found a career that he was excited about.

Jason worked as an EMT in Rapid City until 1996, when he moved to Fargo to be closer to his wife's side of the family. He had always wanted to continue his education in EMS, so Jason enrolled in F-M Ambulance Service's paramedic program. After completing the program, he became a paramedic in May of 1997 and was hired by F-M Ambulance Service.

Jason thoroughly enjoyed emergency medicine, but after 13 years of working as a paramedic, he was ready for a different challenge. In 2010, Jason switched shifts with co-workers so that he could work straight nights while finishing his undergraduate degree in Health Sciences at the University of North Dakota. In May of 2014, Jason resigned from F-M Ambulance when he was accepted into the Physician's Assistant program at the University of North Dakota. Today, Jason enjoys working as a PA in the cardiology department at Sanford Health, where he performs angiograms, stents, heart valve repairs and replacements, and other similar procedures.

Jason says, "I have many great memories from my years at FMA, as well as some not-so-great ones, but that is EMS". He encourages anyone interested in a career in the medical field to consider taking an EMT course, which offers a strong base for any career in medicine. Jason says that the experience gathered through working in EMS is invaluable. "There is so much that you just can't learn in a book. The time that I spent in the back of an ambulance taught me many of the skills that I still use today. Because of my training in EMS, I am able to effectively communicate and listen to my patients, work as a team, and to recognize when someone is acutely ill and needs immediate intervention. EMS offered me opportunities to serve my community and challenge myself during some of the most intense situations. EMS is a physically and mentally challenging career, but the rewards are worth every second of hardship."



NURSE PRACTITIONER

MELANIE FYLLING

Melanie Fyelling had no intention of working in the medical field – she grew up with a passion for kids and wanted to be a teacher after she graduated from high school. When a friend mentioned that she was in paramedic school, Melanie thought it sounded interesting, so she enrolled in an EMT class thinking that she might learn a few skills that would come in handy as a teacher. Little did she know that the EMT class was only the first step in her nearly 20-year career in the medical field.

Melanie enjoyed the EMT class so much that she immediately enrolled in paramedic school. Melanie’s life revolved around EMS during this time - she was working part-time as an EMT while attending paramedic school full-time. “I found EMS to be fascinating and extremely rewarding. I loved what I was doing, and I wanted to do more – I wanted to be the one starting IVs, giving medications, and intubating people. I was ready to be challenged even more.”

Once she was a fully certified and licensed paramedic, Melanie stepped into the role of a full-time paramedic, and also began teaching EMS courses like CPR, Advanced Cardiac Life Support, First Responder, EMT and paramedic school.

Melanie thoroughly enjoyed the fast-paced, organized chaos part of emergency medicine, but in 2009, she was ready to be in a more controlled environment. Melanie knew that she wanted to stay in medicine, because patient care was the most rewarding aspect of her career. After discussions with her family and reflection on where she wanted to be in the future, Melanie chose to further her education by attending the NDSU School of Nursing. While attending NDSU as a full-time student, Melanie continued to work at F-M Ambulance part-time. She says that there were ample opportunities for her to pick up shifts in education, working on the ambulance and working standby shifts at various special events around town. She completed much of her homework during downtime on her shifts. After completing her nursing degree, Melanie continued on to get her doctorate degree in 2019, specializing in adult gerontology acute care. Today, she works in the Palliative Medicine department at Sanford Health, helping her patients make educated medical decisions when faced with serious, complex, or terminal illnesses and end-of-life care.



“ I use many skills in my current job that I learned during my time at F-M Ambulance. While working as a paramedic, I was faced with numerous encounters that required good communication skills, collaboration, and the ability to adapt in difficult situations. I learned those skills as a paramedic, and continue to use them in my work as a Nurse Practitioner today. ”

— Melanie Fyelling, DNP

Melanie says that working as a paramedic played a role in preparation for her time as an ICU RN, PACU RN, and now, in her current role as a Nurse Practitioner in Palliative Medicine. She is appreciative that her F-M Ambulance partners and leadership were always supportive of the decision to further her education. "Throughout my career at Sanford, my colleagues and leadership from the past and present have continued to support my education and career pathway."

While Melanie says that she has many good and bad memories from her time as a paramedic, the positive interactions with patients outweigh the difficult ones. One of her most memorable calls was she helped deliver a baby in a car when the mother didn't make it to the hospital. Once the family was discharged from the hospital, they reached out and asked to meet the people who helped them that day. Another memorable event was the flood of 2009. Melanie says that she learned a lot while evacuating a hospital as well as several nursing homes, while still trying to support the 911 calls throughout the community.

Melanie's favorite thing about working at F-M Ambulance was the continuous laughs and support that she shared with her co-workers each day. Melanie encourages anyone looking into EMS to take an EMT course and participate in a shadow experience on the ambulance. She says, "You will learn things in the EMT course and paramedic school that can be used throughout your life. Even if you don't choose EMS as a full-time career, you will use the knowledge and skills that you learned in many other ways. Either way, the experience will be worthwhile."



PHYSICIAN

STEVE BRIGGS

The great thing about EMS is that it can take you in directions that you would not have imagined, and Steve Briggs's career path is a great example of that. Steve started college at the University of Minnesota with a plan to graduate with an engineering degree. After taking some courses, Steve realized that engineering probably wasn't the right fit for him. "I didn't realize it at the time, but what I really needed was a career that was meaningful to me, which meant helping people."

In 1989, Steve enrolled in an EMT class in the twin cities to see if he would enjoy the medical field. After completing the EMT course, he knew that he wanted to continue on to paramedic school. Steve decided to move to Fargo and enrolled in F-M Ambulance's paramedic program. "The EMT class really opened my eyes to medicine – I enjoyed that class so much that I decided to go on to paramedic school. These courses exposed me to many different areas of medicine."

After obtaining his paramedic certification, Steve worked full-time at F-M Ambulance while attending Concordia College part-time to complete his bachelor's degree. For the next three years, between his 24-hour shift schedule and his coursework, Steve's time was spent in an ambulance or studying. When Meritcare started hiring paramedics for its flight service, Steve accepted a position as a flight medic that allowed him to work weekends so he could go to school during the week.

One of Steve's favorite memories from his time at F-M Ambulance is the camaraderie with his partners and other first responders. "Because of the job – because of the things that you see and the things that you do, there's a special bond between first responders. There's a special bond that goes with that type of job." He says, "There are some calls that stick with you – some good, others are more painful. All of them teach you a lesson – even the difficult memories are good because of the value that they bring. For a person in their twenties, being a paramedic is a great way to figure out how to be an adult. You grow up a lot in this profession."

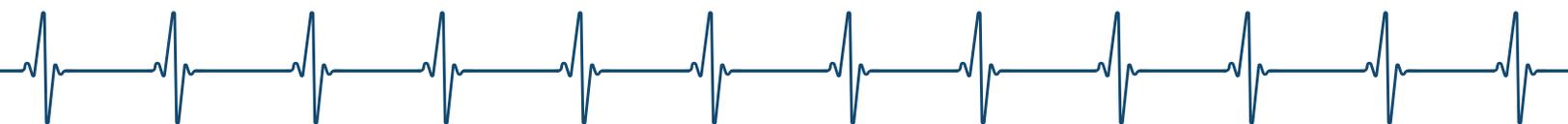
Steve continued on to medical school and was eventually hired as a trauma surgeon at Meritcare Hospital in Fargo, where he helped develop the trauma program and the acute care surgery program. He served as the medical director for trauma services for many years. Because of his critical care and flight experience, he was also involved in Sanford's Airmed program early on as their medical director.



“ I think one of my greatest accomplishments is being a role model. Over the years, I've recognized that I am a role model for others that are following a similar career path. I hope that I've shown people that you can go anywhere you want with the skills that you learn in medicine. You can contribute to the world in many different ways in this field. — Steve Briggs, MD ”

Steve credits his love of medicine to his first EMT class and the ride alongs that he did with various ambulance services. He says, “The medical field requires time and commitment, but in the long run, the dividends that you get from the investment of your time and energy are very rewarding”.

From the start of college when he had no idea what he wanted to do, to becoming a surgeon, Steve says that he is grateful to have stumbled into medicine the way that he did. The EMT class opened his eyes to the possibilities in the medical field. Steve encourages anyone that is interested in a career in the medical field, or anyone who isn't sure what they want to do in the future, to take an EMT course. “You will learn skills that you can use throughout your life, whether you end up in the medical field or not.”



EMPLOYEE HIRING AND RETENTION

In 2023, Sanford Ambulance refined the hiring process for EMTs. When the Non-Emergency Ambulance Transport (NEAT) department was developed in 2022, EMTs were hired for either the NEAT team or 911 operations, which made it difficult to decide which department new hires started in. At the end of 2023, the hiring process was changed; now 100% of EMTs start with NEAT. This allows new hires to be trained, prepared, and gain experience with Sanford Ambulance procedures before being considered for a position on the 911 operations team. Once an EMT feels ready to step across to the 911 operations side, they have a meeting with their leader to develop a plan for their next steps. Due to this new process, there has been an increase in hiring of EMTs as well as increased moral on both the NEAT and the operations teams.

52

New EMTs and paramedics hired in 2023

85%

Retention rate

LEADERSHIP

SHERM SYVERSON

Sherm Syverson began working as an EMT while enrolled in F-M Ambulance's paramedic school in 1990. Sherm says, "My hiring was unconventional and happened when one of the operations supervisors, Kevin Lee, came into the classroom when Russ Fenlason was teaching and stated, *"Raise your hand if you're willing to go on a transfer to Rochester, Minnesota in an hour!"* For whatever reason, he selected me from the four or five hands that were in the air. No formal interview. No extra background check. No orientation!"

Sherm graduated from Enderlin (ND) High School in 1987. While in high school, he volunteered as a first responder for the Enderlin Rescue Squad and later as an EMT. Sherm's mom was an EMT and she would let him tag along with her on calls and to meetings. This gave him insight into what a career in EMS might look like, but he didn't really get the itch to explore becoming a paramedic until after a year at NDSU and another at UND. After working "the streets" at F-M Ambulance for about two years, Sherm was selected to be a flight paramedic with MeritCare LifeFlight in Fargo. In those days, flight paramedics were not based at the hospital. Flight paramedics were expected to work on an ambulance crew (24-hour shifts) and carry a flight pager in case the flight team was called out. Sherm remembers many times riding in the back of the ambulance and changing into his flight suit while his partner drove code-3 (lights and sirens) to get him to the helipad as quickly as possible. "Usually, the blades were spinning when they arrived and there was little time to think about anything other than getting your seatbelt fastened."

In 1994, LifeFlight began staffing flight paramedics for 12-hour shifts in-house. Sherm jumped at the opportunity to fly full-time, which allowed him to attend Moorhead State University (now MSUM) where he completed pre-mortuary science classes. In 1996, Sherm moved to Minneapolis and attended the University of Minnesota where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Mortuary Science. He was able to work every other weekend at LifeFlight and go back and forth to the U of M in-between.



“ I always tell young people, if you want to continuously learn, if you want to meet unique people, if you want to learn skills that will help you in every other career field, or if you want to help others and not be bored at work, you should work in EMS. ”

— Sherm Syverson, Executive Director



After graduation, Sherm began working at Korsmo Funeral Service, Moorhead, MN, as a mortician. He also went back to working for F-M Ambulance part-time. In 2001, Sherm began teaching EMS-related courses for the Emergency Medical Education Center at F-M Ambulance. He enjoyed teaching all levels of courses and was eventually selected as the Director of EMS Education. He obtained his master's degree in Instructional Design and Technology from the University of North Dakota in 2011 and became the Senior Director of F-M Ambulance (now Sanford Ambulance) in 2012. In 2017, Sherm became an Executive Director at Sanford Health, where he still has oversight responsibilities for Sanford AirMed and Sanford Ambulance.

When looking back at specific jobs and his career within EMS, Sherm says that it was truly a ladder of opportunities. He says that working at F-M Ambulance/Sanford Ambulance was a wonderful experience because he was surrounded by great mentors who taught him how to be calm and focused under pressure, he learned excellent assessment and clinical skills, he became "street smart", and he learned how to apply these experiences towards leadership jobs. Sherm's proudest accomplishments were things that he accomplished as part of a team. When Sherm was Director of Education, the department achieved the first accreditation of their paramedic training program. While Senior Director at F-M Ambulance, his leadership team was able to navigate several difficult political challenges, including a culture-shift following the Sanford-MeritCare merger. Also during Sherm's tenure as Senior Director of Sanford Ambulance, the service maintained their national accreditation, which continues to this day. He is also proud of his team's effort to establish the community paramedic program. Over the course of five years, Sherm testified before multiple legislative committees, met with nursing leaders internally and externally across the state to get pilot projects approved and to change statutory rules and regulations that now allow community paramedics to operate in North Dakota.

Now that Sherm has more than 30 years of EMS-related experience, he is amazed at the progress Sanford Ambulance has made. When Sherm joined F-M Ambulance, one of the original owners, PC Davidson, was in the process of selling the ambulance service to three local hospitals. Ambulance crews were assigned to 24-hour shifts and the annual call volume was approximately 9,000 calls. Sanford Ambulance now responds to more than 30,000 calls each year. Sherm says that he routinely encourages young people he meets on the street, while in line for coffee, or when speaking to classrooms that EMS is a wonderful option, even if you don't exactly know what you want to do once out of high school. EMS can be a lifetime career, or it can help expose you to a wide range of healthcare careers.

Sherm considers himself fortunate to still be involved with Sanford Ambulance. The core mission of helping sick and injured people hasn't changed since 1959. It has grown to become one of only 250 accredited ambulance services in the United States with dedicated tactical paramedics who serve on the local SWAT team, community paramedics who visit patients in their homes, an honor guard, MCI team, emergency medical dispatchers, a Ready Wheels specialized transportation division, and a premiere EMS training institution. Sherm says that he is proud that his career started at F-M Ambulance Service, and he's proud of all of the people that work at Sanford Ambulance today.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

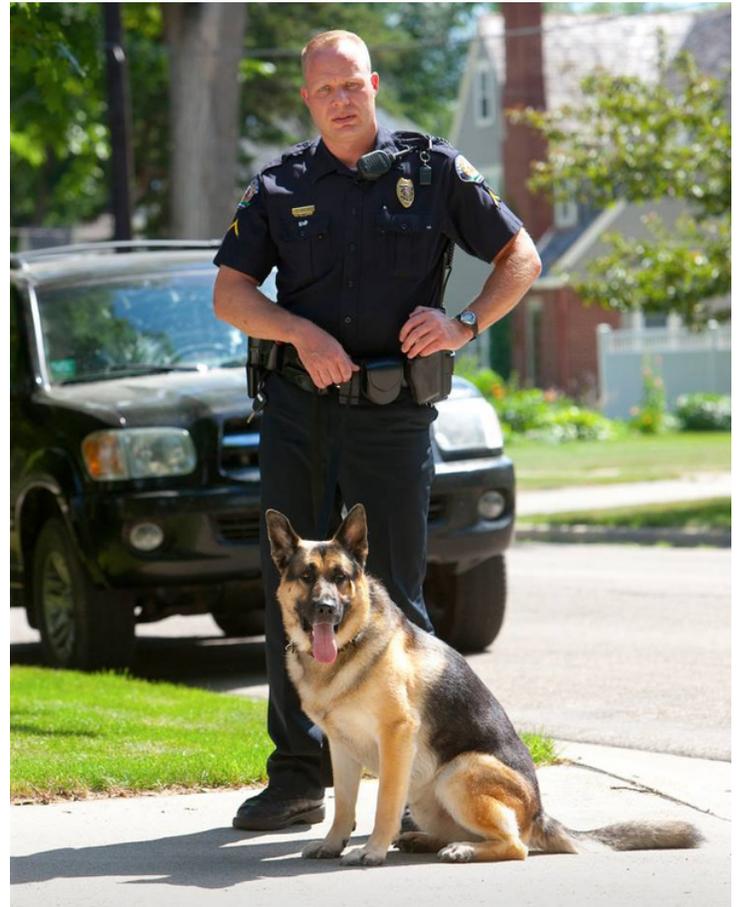
JIM VANLITH

The path to a successful career isn't always clear-cut. Some people know exactly what they want to do in their future from the time they are young. For others, the path to finding their passion has some twists and turns.

When Jim VanLith was a freshman at MSUM-Moorhead in 1987, he wasn't sure what his major would be, but to gain experience, Jim signed up for a work-study job in the training room. When one of the athletes that Jim was caring for was injured badly, he called an ambulance for transport to the hospital. When the ambulance arrived, a student wearing an F-M Ambulance paramedic school jacket led the call, with two paramedics watching over her closely. Seeing that jacket, and that interaction between the student and the ambulance crew, sparked something – Jim had always been interested in emergency medicine, and the unpredictability and excitement of EMS intrigued him. In 1988, Jim decided to register for the EMT course to learn more about emergency medicine.

After completing the EMT course, Jim started working for F-M Ambulance and continued on to paramedic school. Once Jim obtained his paramedic certifications, he was offered a job at Gold Cross Ambulance in Duluth, MN, but he really enjoyed his co-workers at F-M Ambulance, so he decided to stay in Fargo. He also enrolled as a part-time student at NDSU to work on completing his bachelor's degree.

In 1994, instead of using F-M Ambulance paramedics for their flight service, Meritcare began hiring their own full-time, in-house flight medics, and Jim moved from F-M Ambulance to Meritcare's LifeFlight program. While working at LifeFlight, Jim continued taking courses at NDSU. As a paramedic, Jim worked to save patients, but he also saw what happened after they died, and that intrigued him. After three years working as a flight medic, he moved to Ohio to complete his bachelor's degree in mortuary science.



“ Even if it's just a job to get you through college or other training, I encourage everyone to work in EMS. What you learn as an emergency responder is easily transferrable to any field of study. When a future employer asks about working under stress, problem solving, or working as part of a team, you will be able to provide many examples. ”

— Jim VanLith, Sanford Security Investigator

In 1998, Jim moved back to Fargo and began working as a funeral director. After a few years in the funeral business, he realized that he was ready for a different challenge. Although he had never really thought about a career in law enforcement, he took the test for the Fargo Police Department and was hired in 2000.

Jim worked for the Fargo Police Department for more than 20 years, specializing in several areas including criminal investigations, canine, police training officer, peer support, and SWAT. In 2021, Jim retired from the Fargo Police Department, but still wanted to do something that was challenging, with a better schedule and less stress than the police department. He found his fit as an Investigator with the Sanford Health Security team. He coordinates with many different areas, including legal, law enforcement, risk, employee relations, security, and case management. He also conducts threat assessments when a patient, visitor, or family member makes a threat toward staff or toward a Sanford facility.

Jim says that working in EMS helped him throughout all of his careers. “My EMS career helped me with many aspects of law enforcement – from the small things, like knowing your way around town, to more important things like medical terminology when dealing with crime victims – the skills I learned while working in EMS were invaluable throughout my whole career. EMS also taught me to work through the chaos to figure out what was truly going on. The knowledge that I gained from working as an EMT and a paramedic helped me with mortuary science, law enforcement, and even now as a Security Investigator.” Jim says that detours will happen before you find a career that you’re passionate about, but those detours help equip you with the skills you need to be successful in any workplace.



READY WHEELS

For over 30 years, Sanford Ambulance has been the home to Ready Wheels, a professional, non-emergency wheelchair transportation service. Ready Wheels is designed to provide local and long distance wheelchair transportation to anyone whose needs are not met by other services in our community.

*Total number of
Ready Wheels calls
in 2023:*

2,462

Ready Wheels drivers are trained in first aid, CPR, passenger assistance, customer safety, prevention of abuse and customer service. Ready Wheels drivers follow Minnesota DOT Special Transportation guidelines, which helps ensure that drivers meet state and federal safety requirements, with the goal of making sure all passengers reach their destination safely.

FIREFIGHTER

JUSTIN ROSENFELDT

In the fall of 2001, Justin Rosenfeldt was a college student in Moorhead, trying to figure out what he was going to do in life. Justin needed to declare a major, but as he flipped through the course catalog several times, nothing really seemed to fit. Justin knew that he didn't want to sit at a desk all day; he also knew that he wanted to do something that made a difference. He remembered that a friend from Oklahoma had recently told him about all of the things he got to do in the fire academy. Justin thought that being a firefighter might be interesting, so he enrolled in the Firefighter I and II certificate program. Part of the program included obtaining his EMT certification at F-M Ambulance Service, which he completed in the spring of 2002. After receiving both his firefighter and EMT certifications, Justin found a temporary job until 2004, when he saw an ad for a part-time EMT opening at F-M Ambulance.

Shortly after Justin was hired as an EMT, a full-time opportunity opened up as a night dispatcher at F-M Ambulance. While he was dispatching, Justin decided to enroll in the paramedic program. He worked full-time as a night dispatcher until he graduated from paramedic school in 2006.

Justin enjoyed working as a paramedic, but he ultimately wanted to be a firefighter. Because area fire departments respond to fires as well as most medical calls, Justin started to get to know the local firefighters due to seeing them so often while working as a paramedic. He credits his time working as a paramedic to helping him obtain a job as a firefighter with the Moorhead Fire Department in 2008. He says, "I really think that being a familiar face on calls helped me to get hired with the Moorhead Fire Department." Since 2008, Justin has worked as a full-time firefighter at the Moorhead Fire Department as well as a part-time paramedic at Sanford Ambulance. Justin was recently promoted to a Battalion Chief position at the Moorhead Fire Department.

Justin says that working as a paramedic helped him in many ways, including teaching him how to interact and talk to patients in any circumstance. Although Justin has never enjoyed public speaking or being the center of attention, he says that learning how to communicate with patients and establish a relationship based on trust and integrity even during a crisis has helped him provide better patient care as both a paramedic and a firefighter.



“ I enjoy the challenge of being a paramedic, and I like being able to make a difference in someone’s life. It’s a very rewarding career. The training and experience you get through working in EMS will last a lifetime. Although the work can be challenging, it is very satisfying. ”

— Justin Rosenfeldt, Firefighter

One of Justin's favorite parts of working at Sanford Ambulance is being part of the Honor Guard. Each year, Honor Guard members participate in a camp where they practice their techniques. Justin says that the most memorable Honor Guard events have been taking part in funerals for those who have passed away after serving in EMS or as a first responder. As difficult as those events are, Justin says that he believes that the families have truly appreciated what the Honor Guard provided for their family.

Justin is thankful that he found not only one, but two careers that he truly loves. "Being a paramedic is a big part of who I am, and how I got to where I am today. I have two jobs that make me feel fulfilled and proud that I give back to my community."



SHEMSE

Sanford Health EMS Education (SHEMSE) is a nationally recognized leader in Emergency Medical Services education. The SHEMSE department provides training in emergency medical courses to all levels of providers, including childcare, industry, emergency medical responders, nurses and doctors. The nine full-time educators are all paramedics who have diverse backgrounds and years of experience and are committed to educating our community as well as our future healthcare providers.

2023
Paramedic Students

20

2023
EMT Students

111

2023
Public Courses

797

2023
Public Students

3,066



COMMUNITY PARAMEDIC

For many years, paramedics Dawn Mertz and Chris Neu spent their days and nights taking patients to the emergency room. In their current role as Community Paramedics at Sanford Ambulance, they now focus on keeping patients out of the emergency room instead of taking them there.

The Community Paramedic model is almost a complete reversal of what a typical paramedic does; it is a very different approach to emergency medical services. Instead of responding to 911 calls, Community Paramedics help reduce 911 calls from residents with non-emergency related issues. Community Paramedics help fill gaps in the healthcare system for patients who don't qualify to receive care from home healthcare programs and/or social services; this also helps deal with overcrowding in emergency rooms and unnecessary ambulance trips.



Studies suggest that at least one-fifth of the estimated 240 million annual calls to 911 don't qualify as medical emergencies, but instead involve patients with chronic diseases or with mental health or social issues who need help managing their conditions. Community Paramedics help deal with these patients by delivering care to them at their location. During home visits, Community Paramedics educate patients about their illness or condition, help patients navigate the health system, and manage chronic diseases. One of the primary goals of Community Paramedics is to follow up after patients have been discharged from the hospital and help avoid readmission. This model allows for better management of chronic diseases through increased education and navigation toward appropriate services. Community Paramedics are also able to quickly recognize if patients are critically ill and initiate ambulance transport if necessary.

Sanford Ambulance Community Paramedics work directly with Sanford Health case managers, social workers, physicians, and RNs who oversee high-risk and complex patients. Anyone on a patient's healthcare team can request services from a Community Paramedic through a referral system. Once accepted into the program, the healthcare team and the Community Paramedic work together to deliver the best possible care to the patient.

Because Community Paramedics are experienced paramedics who receive advanced training in comprehensive health assessments, chronic disease monitoring and education, medication compliance, immunizations and vaccinations, and hospital discharge follow-up care, they are a valuable resource for both the hospital and EMS. Not only does the Community Paramedic benefit the patient by bringing healthcare to them, their services benefit the ambulance and the hospital system by reducing the number of 911 calls, visits to an already taxed emergency department, and readmissions to near-capacity hospitals.



Sanford Ambulance started its Community Paramedic program in 2014, but it wasn't an overnight success. Creating a strong program required buy-in from hospital leaders, legislative officials, and financial resources. It also required paramedics who were willing to advance their skill-set to deliver care to the community's most high-risk patients. Many paramedics thrive from the adrenaline rush they get when helping critically ill or injured patients. Community Paramedics get a sense of accomplishment by helping their patients lower their blood pressure, decrease their A1C levels, and increase their heart function.

While Community Paramedics may be less visible to the public than typical emergency service providers, they are a very important part of the healthcare system. The program plays a vital role in reducing unnecessary emergency room visits and hospital admissions. Community Paramedics go beyond basic healthcare services to care for a high-risk group of patients in a community who may otherwise have difficulty receiving the care that they need. Although Chris and Dawn aren't responding with lights and sirens on an ambulance every day, they still show an unwavering passion to help patients and a deep dedication to drive change in our community.

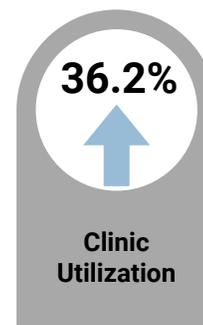
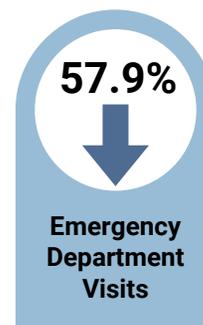
SANFORD COMMUNITY PARAMEDIC 2023 DATA

 BLOOD PRESSURES **55.6% IMPROVED**

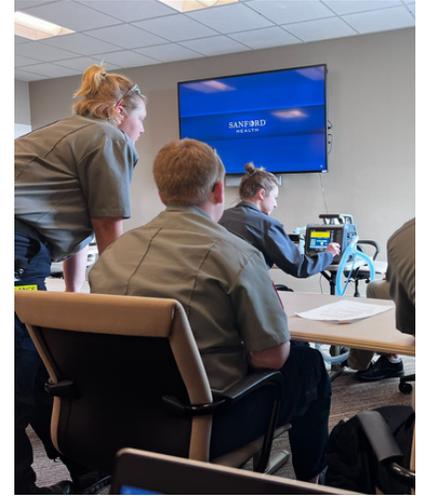
 BODY MASS INDEX **66.7% IMPROVED**

 DEPRESSION **60.0% IMPROVED**

 A1C LEVELS **50.0% IMPROVED**



SANFORD PARAMEDIC APPRENTICESHIP



What is it?

In 2023, Sanford Ambulance began the Sanford Paramedic Apprenticeship (SPA) program. SPA participants are considered full-time employees, receiving an hourly wage and benefits with Sanford Ambulance while completing the EMT and paramedic programs.

What is the cost?

There is no cost to SPA participants. Tuition, books, and uniform expenses are paid for by Sanford Ambulance.

How long is the program?

The SPA program takes approximately 15 months. After successfully completing all classes and certification exams, SPA graduates are guaranteed a job with Sanford Ambulance!

How do I apply?

Scan the QR code  go to sanfordhealthmiseducation.org/spa or call 605-312-9155 for more information!



A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

REQUESTS FOR SERVICE **31,944**

22,859 PATIENTS TRANSPORTED

OVERALL MILES DRIVEN
BY OUR CREWS **452,879**

62,085 GALLONS OF FUEL USED

TOTAL COST OF FUEL **\$207,090**

\$171,311 TOTAL COST OF VEHICLE
REPAIRS

A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

How often did Sanford Ambulance respond to urban emergency calls in less than nine minutes?

92.30%

When an emergency happens, it may seem like it takes forever for help to arrive. Although there is no universally accepted response time goal, most urban ambulance services in the U.S. use the goal of responding to at least 90% of their calls in under nine minutes.

What was the average chute time?

0:23

Chute time measures the time from when dispatch tells the crew about the call to the time that their wheels start turning to respond to the call. Sanford Ambulance's chute time goal is 0:30.

What was the average response time for an ambulance in 2023?

7:26

What was the average transport time (from scene to emergency room) in 2023?

12:41

What was the average time spent on an emergency call (time dispatched to time available at the hospital)?

50:30

How many calls did an average Sanford Ambulance paramedic respond to in 2023?

848

How many miles was the longest patient transport in 2023?

**432
miles**



A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

Patient Dispositions

22,147 Transported, non-emergent

The decision whether to transport with lights & sirens is based on the patient's needs. The majority of the patients that we transport are not emergent transports.

4,752 Cancelled

Sometimes we are cancelled prior to arriving at a call if care is not needed.

1,904 Assessed, no transport

Some patients may be injured or sick, but they don't need ambulance transport.

1,468 Refusal

Unless a patient is unconscious or in an altered state of mind, everyone has the right to refuse ambulance transport.

663 Transported, emergent

Lights & sirens are used to transport patients who are critically ill or injured in order to get them to definitive care quickly.

247 Treated & released

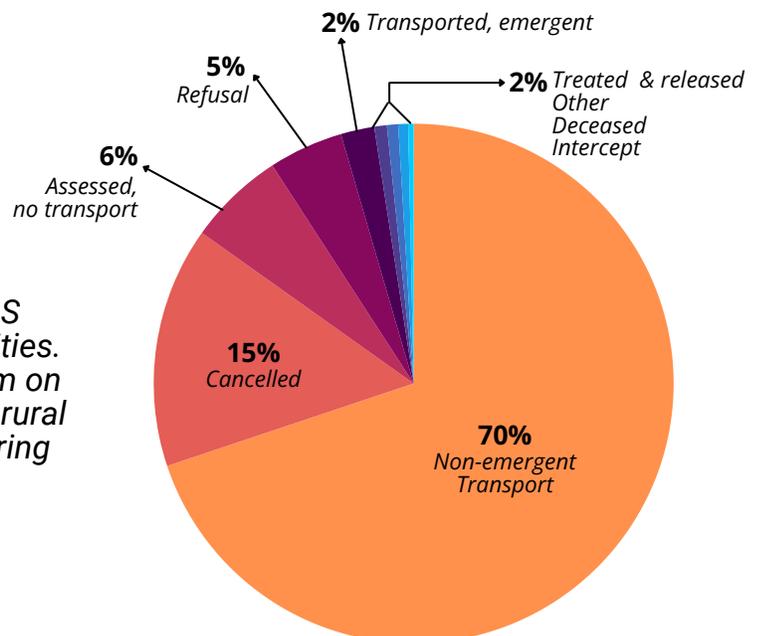
In some cases, we can treat a patient on-scene so they don't need to be seen in the emergency department.

221 Other

195 Deceased

107 Intercept

Sanford Ambulance provides ALS services to some rural communities. Our ALS providers will meet them on the way to the hospital after the rural first responders have started caring for the patient.



A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

2,704

Number of students that learned about seatbelt safety from a Buckle Up with Bucky presentation



2,189

Number of hours dedicated to community benefits in 2023 by Sanford Ambulance employees



92

Number of kids in Fargo, Moorhead and West Fargo that received a free ice cream voucher for wearing a helmet



45

Number of public relations events Sanford Ambulance attended in 2023

11

Number of community members that completed our Citizens Academy in 2023

A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

NUMBER OF IV'S
PLACED



NUMBER OF INTRAOSSEOUS
INFUSIONS



MEDICATIONS
ADMINISTERED



PATIENTS WHO
RECEIVED AN ADVANCED
AIRWAY



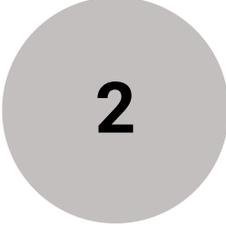
PATIENTS PLACED
ON OXYGEN



STROKE ALERTS



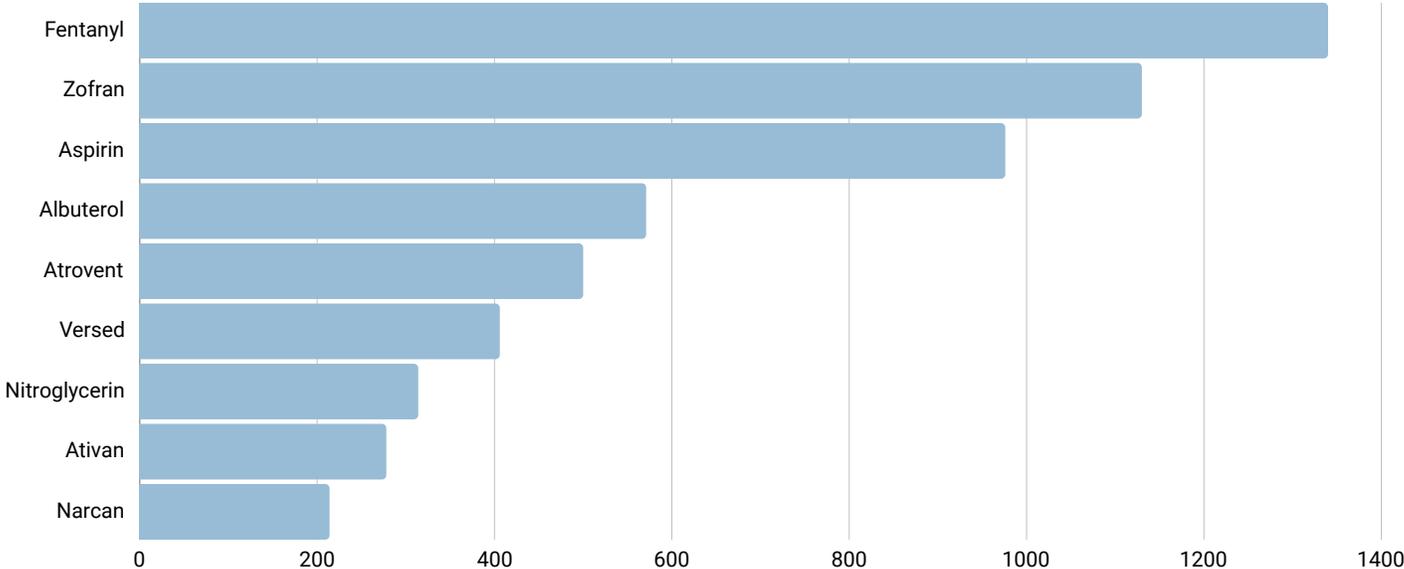
BABIES DELIVERED



TRAUMA ALERTS



Top Medications Administered



A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS



Number of cardiac arrests

186

Cardiac arrest happens when the heart stops beating. Without immediate intervention, a patient in cardiac arrest will die.



Patients with cath lab activation (STEMI)

42

A **ST-Elevation Myocardial Infarction**, or STEMI, is a very serious type of heart attack in which one of the heart's major arteries is blocked.



Number of patients that received a 12-lead EKG

3,979

A 12-lead EKG can record the electrical activity of a patient's heart and show paramedics if a patient has an irregular and/or dangerous heart rhythm. 12-lead EKGs are also used to help determine the right course of treatment for a patient.



Number of times the LUCAS was used

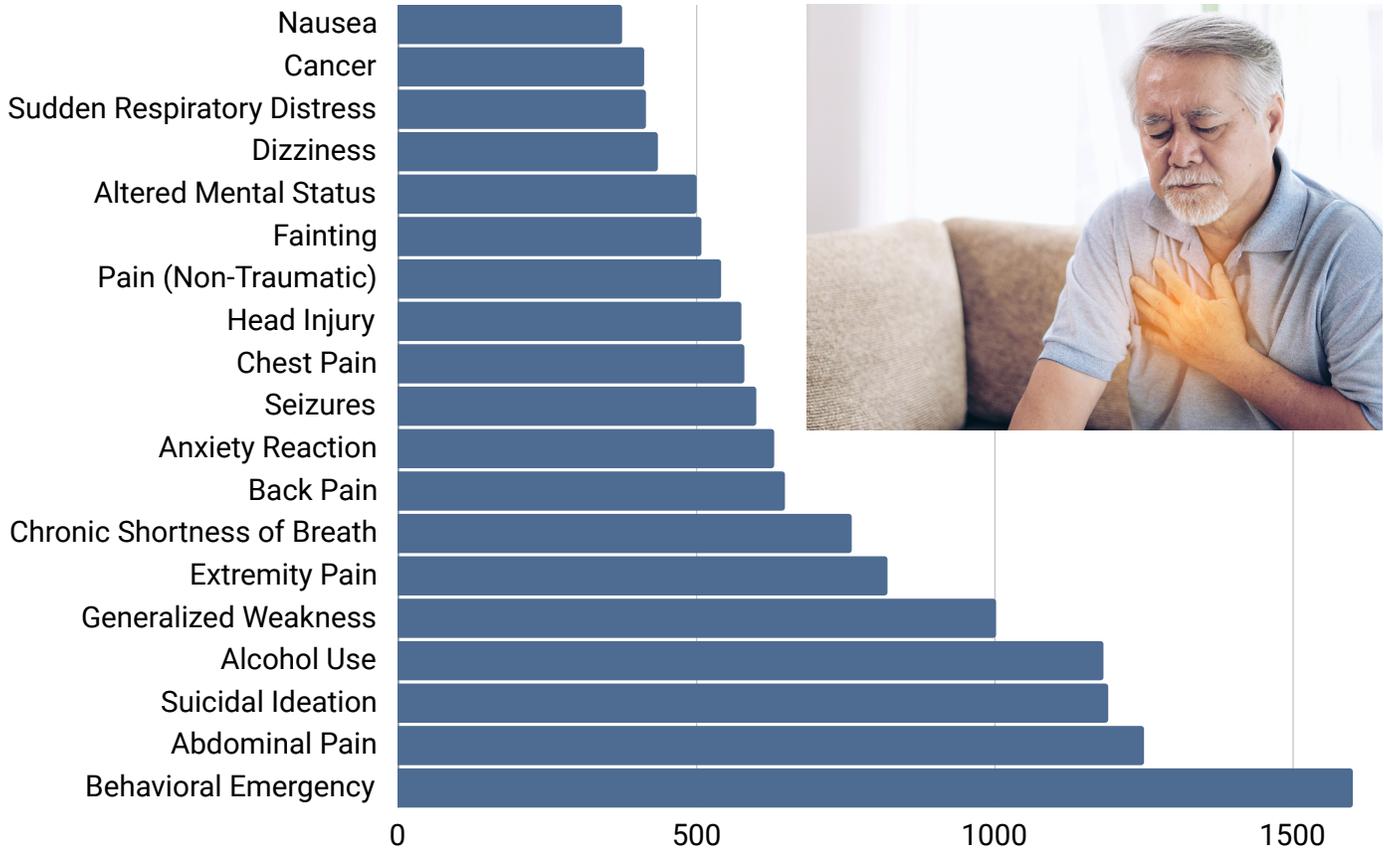
172

The LUCAS is a machine that provides high-quality, consistent mechanical chest compressions to patients in cardiac arrest.



A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

Most Common Calls



Busiest Day of the Week:

Friday

Slowest Day of the Week:

Wednesday

Busiest Time of Day:

4:00 PM

Busiest Day of 2023:

131 calls in 24 hours
Thursday, February 9, 2023

Least Busy Day of 2023:

44 calls in 24 hours
Sunday, January 29, 2023

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Like last year, workforce is still the biggest challenge for our agency. The strategies we employed in 2023 will have an impact in 2024 when we graduate the nine students in the first year of the Sanford Paramedic Apprenticeship. Over time, we hope to turn the trend and fill all of our open positions. Having a fully staff ambulance service will allow us to change our ambulance deployment plan to allow for static posting of crews at specific stations throughout the city instead of our current system status management guidelines. This will lead to greater employee job satisfaction and greater localized knowledge, as crews will spend most of their time in a specific neighborhood.

This year, Sanford will begin remodeling of the former PRACS building on 23rd Avenue near the Sanford Medical Center Fargo. Sanford Health EMS Education (SHEMSE) will move into this building in its first phase of development in late 2024 or early 2025. Moving SHEMSE will offer improved classroom space and educational facilities for our students and free up much needed office space at our headquarters station. We continue to work on plans for a new ambulance post in south Moorhead as that city grows southward as well. In subsequent years we look to build a new headquarters station near the 64th Avenue South intersection with I-94 in Fargo and to have a dedicated post in Hawley, MN. Our communities are growing, and we intend to keep up with that pace.

I want to thank the many dedicated professionals that work at Sanford Ambulance Fargo. They have touched many lives over the past year. Often times it goes unnoticed, but I know they provide great care, show empathy, and make a difference every time. I'm humbled with how they accept that great responsibility.

Thank you,



Tim Meyer, Senior Director
Sanford Ambulance Fargo

