

2021 Annual Report

Your Community Ambulance Service



Aarron Reinert, MA, NRP
Executive Director

Executive Director's Report

FOUR PILLARS

+ State-of-the-Art Patient Care
+ Outstanding Customer Service
+ Dedication to the Communities We Serve
+ Financial Health and Responsibility

As I reflect on 2021, a story springs to mind. It's about two armies waged in a two-year-long battle. One army is grossly outnumbered, almost 10 to one. One day, the general of the smaller army decides to launch an attack. He's confident that the situation is right to allow for a victory, despite being outnumbered. The general calls his lieutenants and tells them to get the soldiers ready for the battle.

The lieutenants then call all of the soldiers and inform them about the plan of attack for the upcoming battle. The soldiers are ready for the battle — they have their equipment and supplies, and while they know the battle plan, they have doubts and fears. They are afraid. They know they are outnumbered, and they know the odds are against them.

The day of the battle comes, and the general senses the concerns, doubts, and fears of his soldiers. In fact, he feels many of them himself. So, on the way to the battle, the general asks his army to stop and take a few moments to pause and reflect.

After this time of pause and reflection, the general stands in front of his soldiers, takes a coin out of his pocket, and says, "With faith in destiny, I will now toss this coin. If it's heads, we will win, but if it's tails, we will lose." With great interest and much anxiety, the soldiers await the result. The general tosses the coin into the air. It lands on heads. The soldiers are happy and filled with confidence going into the battle.

As the smaller army marches into battle, they execute their plan perfectly and prevail.

After the battle, the lieutenants say to the general, "As destiny showed us through the toss of the coin, we won the battle. As we all know, no one can change destiny." The general smiles and shows the lieutenants the coin. It has heads on both sides.

So what was the point of the "rigged" coin toss? Hope. Hope is like a light at the end of a dark tunnel. If we believe in ourselves, in each other, in this organization, and in our purpose, we can and will travel the dark tunnel with confidence and success.

2021 was a difficult year for our organization, for the EMS industry, for our state, for our nation, and for our world. COVID-19 continued to define and redefine our personal and professional lives. As we saw the COVID-19 waves of infection and positivity come and go, our organization and its employees felt the impact in each and every request for out-of-hospital treatment and transportation.

As the story above teaches us, destiny is something we, at Lakes Region EMS, believe we create — it's not something we leave to chance. Despite the worldwide pandemic, we have provided exceptional critical care out-of-hospital treatment and transportation of

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critically ill patients. We have maintained full staffing and full deployment of all of our ambulances, even when many other organizations have been unable to do the same. We have served our employees, our patients, and our communities during a once-in-a-generation worldwide pandemic.

We continue to be honored to be your community ambulance service, a responsibility we do not take lightly. As we look to 2022, we hope for a resolution to the pandemic and a time when we can return to our normal close interactions with each employee, with our patients, and with our communities.

Aarron Reinert
Executive Director





Chris Ward, M.D.
Medical Director

Medical Director Report

2021 was a year of challenge and transition. COVID continues to overshadow the work we do every day, and we continue to bring the highest level of care to those in need, despite the challenges. Many had hoped and expected we would be over this pandemic by now (myself included).

It has been relentless and exhausting. As case numbers have risen this fall and hospital staffing has been stretched, hospitals diverting us away has become an ever-present reality. This has led to increased transport distances and increased time on calls. We have had to take patients further away on interfacility transports due to a frequent lack of local beds for admissions. Even with this adversity, I still hear about the positive and professional demeanor of our LREMS team from hospital staff after they meet with our crews in the hospitals.

This year's education was focused on one of the fundamentals of emergency care: airway management. Over the course of the year, we reviewed and updated our skills for this critical area of knowledge. Finally back in person for education in 2021, we were able to practice with hands-on skill stations and a lot of simulation training. This training helped build on our strong foundation of knowledge to keep our clinicians performing at the highest levels of care.

One of the biggest challenges of emergency medical care is working with the unknown and being flexible to adapt as circumstances change. This can also be one of the most rewarding parts of the job when we succeed. Science and medicine are, by their nature, dynamic and evolving, and this is something that has been in the spotlight as we continue to evolve our understanding, prevention, and treatment of COVID.

This past year has shown again why we must always challenge ourselves to keep an open mind and continue to learn, grow, and challenge ourselves to be better tomorrow than we are today.

Thank you,

Chris Ward, M.D.
Medical Director

State-of-the-Art Patient Care

During 2021, as the pandemic continued to challenge EMS operations, state-of-the-art patient care continued to be a primary focus at Lakes Region EMS (LREMS).

Clinical Department Changing Faces

The LREMS Clinical Department had a lot of staffing changes in 2021. After 20 dedicated years with LREMS, Ken Larson retired as the Director of Clinical Services. With his departure, we welcomed Darin Wendel into the role. We also welcomed Allison Stout as the new Quality Assurance Coordinator along with Nick Eastman as the new Education Development Coordinator. The new team is excited to continue the dedication to supporting the four pillars through elite-level education, training, and quality improvement.

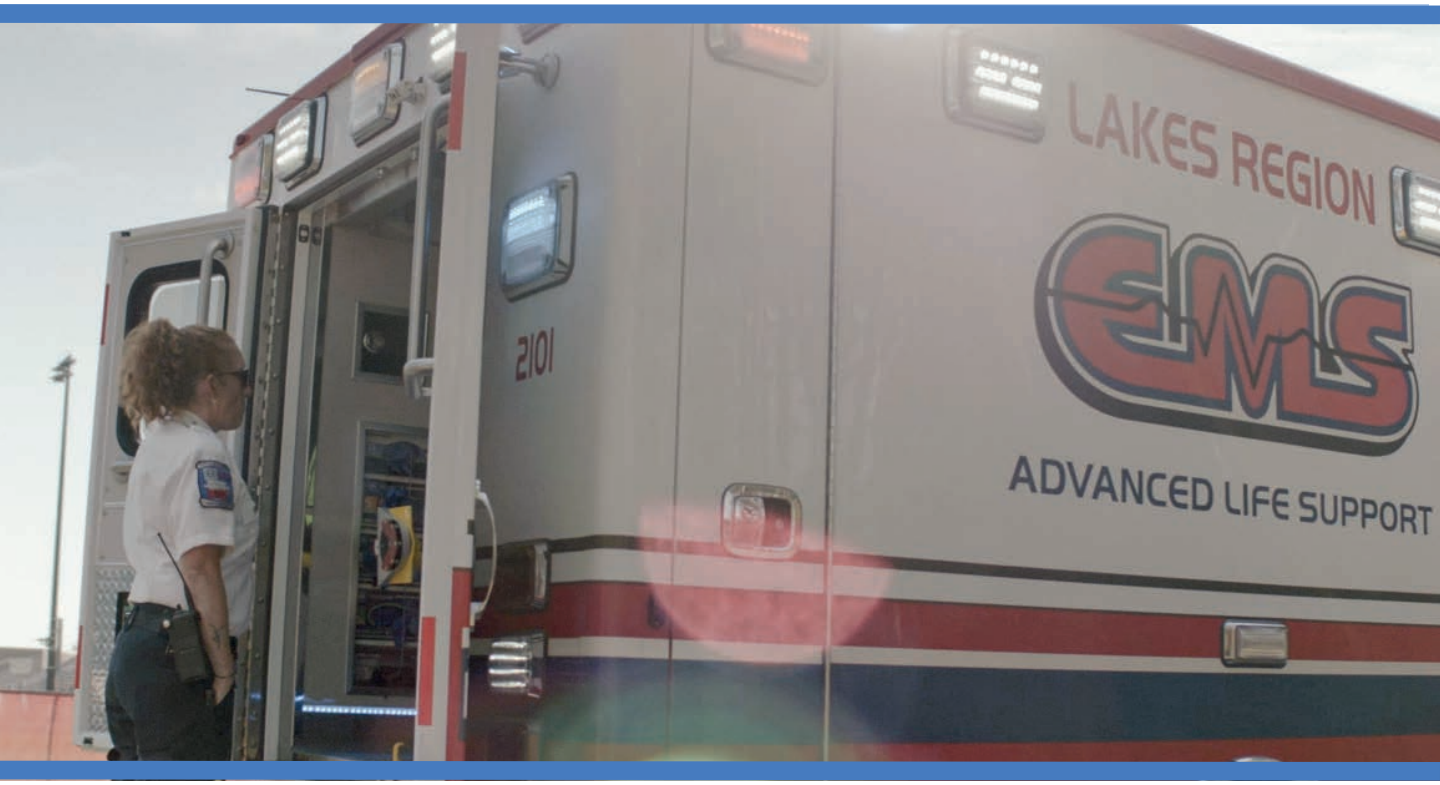
Clinician Development

During 2021, LREMS worked on moving some clinical development classes back to a safe in-person setting. With smaller class sizes, we were able to run in-person new-hire orientation; our Skills Academy, which includes two days of instruction for new hires; quarterly education, which focused on airway skills in 2021, including simulation exercises; and our Essentials of Critical Care course, which includes about 40 hours of lecture and simulation for new hires on subject matters such as cardiac arrest, airways, and what's expected for LREMS' EMTs and paramedics. Training was well received, and many expressed how nice it was to be back to some in-person format.

We also continued to do our monthly case review sessions, which we rolled out in 2020. In 2021, we moved them to an online format. While our Medical Director, Dr. Ward, and the clinical team provide insight during the sessions, the cases are presented by the providers on the call. We found that the online format provides greater convenience for everyone's busy lifestyle. Attendance remained strong, and the feedback was positive.

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Examples of the subject matters covered during our 2021 case review sessions included cardiology, crew and patient dynamics, critical patient transfers, and compassion for patients.

Simulation

Because field calls demand critical thinking, well-organized processes, and the ability to deal with stressful conditions quickly and effectively, we prepare our clinicians using simulation exercises. Simulating real-life EMS experiences enables our crews to better respond to different types of critical life-threatening situations. It also better prepares them for process development and real-time decision making.. Our simulation training is accomplished both online and in-person to effectively prepare crews for real-life EMS incidents.

Like our other educational efforts in 2021, we returned to more in-person simulation in 2021. We found that smaller classes sizes have allowed for more SIM time per person. In 2021, LREMS is using simulation more than ever before in almost all our clinical development education.

Clinical Training for COVID-19 Treatment

We entered 2021 with a better understanding of COVID-19, and it continues to influence our training. We have seen the use of high-flow nasal cannula increase, and it has proven to be a valuable clinical addition at LREMS. During our COVID-19 treatment training, we also were able to include other topics, including airway, hemodynamics, movement technics, pharmacology, and medication administration.

Clinical Equipment

During 2021, LREMS was able to purchase five 7-SIGMA adult airway manikins, which will be placed at each of our ambulance crew stations to enhance peer-to-peer and self-guided training opportunities.

Equipment Standardization

Two additional Zoll X Series monitors and two additional Hamilton ventilators were purchased to ensure fleet standardization.

Critical Care Provider Course

After putting the Critical Care Provider (CCP) course on hold in 2020 as a result of the pandemic, we were able to complete a hybrid CCP course in 2021. The course underscores our efforts to train paramedics and EMTs in providing high-quality critical care. The CCP course is the result of a collaboration between LREMS, Hennepin Healthcare, and Life Link III and is open to paramedics, nurses, and mid-level providers from all area EMS services and hospitals.

Six LREMS employees completed the course along with nine other EMS providers throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin. Some attendees watched course lectures on a streaming platform, while others attended in person. All participants attended in-person simulation training.

Ken Larson Retires After 20 Years on the Job

After 20 dedicated years with LREMS, Ken Larson, director of clinical services, has retired. In fact, he retired on the exact day of his 20-year anniversary in 2021. Ken's two decades of service was a bit unexpected. After being hired as an EMT, he often joked that if he was still around in 10 years his boss should fire him. But his passion for his work and desire to do great things propelled him to keep going, according to Director of Operations Ben Wasmund, who worked alongside Ken as an EMT through paramedic school, as supervisors, and eventually as directors.

"What was amazing about Ken was his ability to imagine things differently. Good enough was never good enough — in a positive way," Ben said. "He always knew there was more we could do with our patients. He had an extreme level of passion to make sure we were able to offer any possible pre-hospital treatment to patients to make them more comfortable or improve their outcome."

At the start of Ken's journey in community service, former LREMS EMT and board member Jonathan Dodge helped recruit him to join Center City Fire. Ken was working out of his furniture design shop at the time, but he decided to join the organization as a firefighter. He soon passed his first responder training, initiating Ken's long and successful path in the EMS field.

"The EMS education department he developed at LREMS made an indescribable impact on our EMTs, paramedics, and in the end the direct care our community members receive," Jonathan said. As Ken reshaped and re-imagined clinical care at LREMS, as well as the industry, he created a clinical culture that was deemed the best of the best by his LREMS peers and many in the community. Ken's innovative mindset helped employees transition from a simple "training and certification" culture to one of becoming "true clinicians."

In fact, Ken's efforts put LREMS paramedics and EMTs on the same academic preparedness level as many doctors and nurses.

Ken's primary goal focused on continually improving and innovating LREMS' clinical services and EMS education, and he achieved his mission with kindness and sincerity.

"Ken was a mentor and offered counsel and advice with warmness and love, especially with our clinical staff," Aarron said. "He was there when they had doubts, when they were critical of themselves, and he provided them with advice and counsel as they developed, strengthened, and grew more confident in being a clinician."



"Ken had a kind heart and a kind voice. Everyone seemed to feel so comfortable with Ken and could talk to him about work, a call they went on, or even something more personal," Ben said. "He had a personality that drew people to him and included a high level of respect and appreciation." Executive Director Aarron Reinert also remembers Ken's "kindness and grace" in his interactions with others, whether he was working with fellow employees or with others outside of LREMS.

Ken's vision of EMS care extended far outside the box. In fact, he often described his vision as "community care," and he recognized that responding to ambulance calls is only one way LREMS cares for our community. In fact, he has began a plan to lead a community garden project to provide a resource for those in need of healthy food and a way to mitigate a sedentary lifestyle. After his retirement, Ken set out to again enjoy furniture building and woodworking, according to Ben, where he will most certainly apply the hardworking and innovative principles he demonstrated at LREMS.



LREMS Director of Finance Todd Fisk Retires After More Than Four Decades in the EMS field

Emergency medical technicians spend long hours on the road, are expected to jump into action at a moment's notice, and must deal with stressful situations every day on the job. So, what exactly motivates a person to dedicate themselves to a lifetime of service in the EMS community? For Todd Fisk, a 43-year EMT veteran, it was multiple factors.

An Unexpected Job Offer

After graduating high school in 1978, Todd began working at a gas station as a way to generate income. He was really interested in accounting, something he discovered in high school. But when a volunteer from a local ambulance service told Todd that his company needed more EMTs, he decided to look into it. "It just kind of fell into my lap, so I jumped at the opportunity," Todd said.

Working at the volunteer ambulance service gave Todd some much-needed work experience in the EMT field. In the beginning, Todd split his time between the ambulance service and a regular job he had at General Mills — where he held roles in the mail department, shipping/receiving, and security. "I was able to work a variety of jobs as an EMT, including doing billing work," Todd said. "I really enjoyed that aspect of the work, so I got into the financial side of the business."

Eventually, Todd's work in the EMT field led him to a role as the executive director of finance, where he handled budgeting, bills, and other finance-related tasks. And after he was offered a full-time position at Lakes Region EMS in 1998, he happily accepted the job and never looked back. Todd was a valued member of the ambulance service, so when three EMS operations merged in 2002, he stayed on as the director of finance for the newly expanded organization.

While working at LREMS for 33 years, Todd has seen the EMS profession evolve over time. In fact, back when he first started, the company was dealing with a population of around 1,000 people. Today, that number is over 10,000.

Bitten by the 'EMS Bug'

Even after moving into the financial side of the business, Todd never forgot his roots as an EMT. Up until five years ago, he would pull one 12-hour shift as an EMT every two weeks. "There's something called the EMS bug," Todd said. "If you're in EMS, you know exactly what I mean. You get bit by the bug and can't get out. I did it to begin with to help people out."

Part of Todd's inspiration to join the EMS field was to work with the community and help neighbors. He especially loved the close connection he developed with those he served.

"I was able to share their happiness when things went right, prayed with them when things took a turn for the worse, and cried with them whenever things turned really bad, such as when a life went out of the world," he said. And because LREMS was located about 40 miles north of the Twin Cities, he had more time to bond with patients. Instead of a drive time of just minutes, he would usually have 15 to 20 minutes to get to know the patients he cared for.

As for Todd's job as finance director, he spent most of his time making sure the bills and employees got paid, as well as handling customer billing. "I needed to make sure that our organization was able to continue financially with its daily operations," Todd said. One of the highlights of Todd's career was getting to deliver a baby while on a call at 4 a.m. In fact, he is still in contact with the mother and child today. He also remembers fondly the times early on in his career in EMS financing when he would help senior citizens sort through their Medicare bills.

Another special memory Todd shared of his career in EMS included time spent with team members. "Over the years, I've gotten to know a lot of my coworkers at LREMS. They would stop in the office and talk, and I'm going to miss them," he said.

'It Was Time to Retire'

After 43 years in the field, Todd decided to retire in March 2021. COVID did play a part in the decision: Todd's brother passed away from COVID in 2020. "With the hustle and bustle of EMS work, combined with COVID, I felt it was time to retire from EMS," Todd said.

While Todd is retiring from EMS, he still expects to work in some form. "I'm too young to 'retire,'" Todd said. "There's not too many people who can say they will apply for only their third job at 61 years old." During his semi-retirement, Todd plans to spend time traveling with his wife, who was also in healthcare; go golfing with his oldest son; and work on the 1929 Model A his dad gave him.

"I don't know what my next chapter is going to be, but I'm excited to find out," Todd said.





Outstanding Customer Service

Over LREMS' 20-year history, our organization has survived and thrived in difficult times, thanks in large part to one of our operational core pillars: providing Outstanding Customer Service. The success of our day-to-day operations depend on our ability to provide top-tier service. Ensuring outstanding customer service underscores our values and mission to care for our community at the highest level, strengthen our relationship with community members, and ensure confidence in our organization.

By focusing on providing the best patient customer service every day, our organization's brand reputation in the community and throughout the region is unsurpassed. Our mission of providing outstanding customer service also boosts community confidence in our staff and services. This directly leads to our ability to build and grow our organization's presence.



LREMS Annual Survey

Each year, LREMS mails out survey cards to measure customer satisfaction in four main areas: arrival time, professionalism, courteousness, and overall quality. While in 2020 our annual patient survey was put on hold as a result of the pandemic, we resumed the survey in 2021.

Ninety-eight percent of the time, all marks are excellent on our survey cards. By surpassing our community's expectations for high-quality EMS care through personalized, fast, and caring service, our organization consistently receives high patient satisfaction ratings.

Our scores from the 2021 patient survey remained extremely high, averaging the following scores for each of our four core measurements (on a 5-point scale that ranged from "very poor" to "excellent"):

- Ambulance arrival time: **4.57**
- Professionalism of our Ambulance EMTs/Paramedics: **4.91**
- EMT/Paramedics courteous and kind: **4.94**
- Overall quality of care by Ambulance crew: **4.89**

We also receive calls from patients who want to say thank you to the paramedics and EMTs who saved their lives. In addition, we receive many thank-you cards and gifts throughout the year as a thanks to our staff for their excellent service.

Working to provide outstanding customer service to our community also has a positive impact on our own staff, because higher customer satisfaction actually creates more engaged employees in the work they do. This is why LREMS believes Outstanding Customer Service leads to a better EMS operation for both patients and our own team members.

TOP COMMENTS WE RECEIVED FROM OUR MOST RECENT SURVEY:

"Made me think I was their #1 priority."

"I am a nurse and was impressed with everything."

"Can't thank you enough for your care for my husband. I thank God you were here in this very scary situation!"

"They were very concerned, professional, and kind. Also very reassuring."

"Alissa and Cody are very good at their job. I'm very thankful they were there so fast to help Miss Roxy."

"Josh was great!"

"Crew was very kind and thoughtful!"

"Thank you for helping us feel secure during a difficult time!"



Dedication to the Communities We Serve

As a community organization, LREMS continues to dedicate time to providing top-level 911 and transfer services care, as well as offering additional outreach services to community members. This core mission is reflected in one of our core pillars: "Dedication to the Communities We Serve." We value our long-standing community efforts, such as our involvement in the SWAT, Anonymous Santa, and Adopt-A-Highway programs, and each year we look for new opportunities to engage with local community members, including through our Charitable Missions Committee.

LREMS' mission to serve our community at the highest level goes beyond providing excellent patient care. We also help our community members, partners, and organizations by offering ongoing health education and training initiatives. We share our education space, participate in community events and activities, and volunteer. While some of these events continued to be hampered by the pandemic, we were able to provide a high level of community service in 2021.



2021 Community Event Participation:

Good Neighbor Project

We helped out three families this year: the Lopez Family, the Cole Family, and the Kurpiel Family. The main recipient this year was the Kurpiel Family. Derick, the father of the home, was suffering from a rare type of cancer called Multiple Myeloma. Derick underwent surgery, as well as ongoing follow-up treatment. We created a gift basket full of some of the family's favorite things — a variety of board games, snacks, drinks, and a Barnes & Noble gift card — and included a nice donation check to help them with expenses. Due to COVID and having to be extremely cautious, we dropped the gift off on their front step, rang the doorbell, and stepped back while they received their basket of goodies. The Lopez and Cole Families each received a $500 Visa gift card.

Family Pathway's Chisago County Backpack Program

We presented our annual $3,000 donation to Family Pathways for the Chisago County schools' Backpack Program. Between all of the schools in Chisago County that offer this program, they are helping hundreds of children gain food security, with measurable positive changes in behaviors and attention.

School Drives/Donations

We donated over 2,000 food items to both Taylors Falls Elementary and Lakeside Elementary to help them each reach their goal of having a pajama day. We also donated to the Chisago Lakes and Rush City High School senior parties.

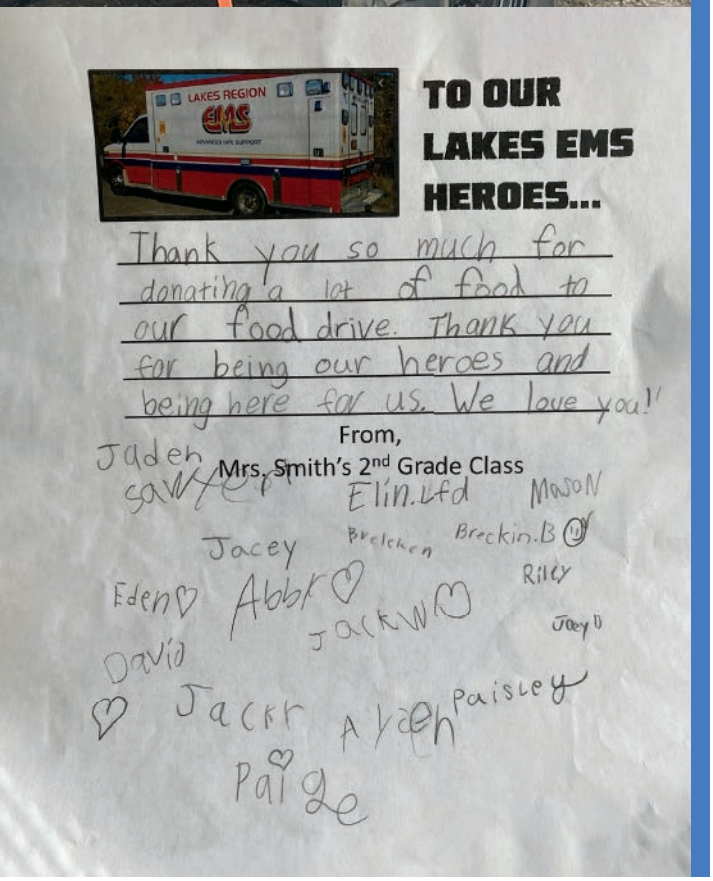
Food Shelf Challenge

While the event was canceled for a second year in a row as a result of COVID, we donated $1,500.

Patient/Crew Reunions

While we continued to check in on patients and connect them to needed resources, we weren't able to have as many patient/crew reunions this year as a result of COVID. We did have one special reunion, however, in 2021. We reunited the Gerold family with the ambulance crew that delivered their baby boy. Our crew was in route to the hospital when they had to pull off of the freeway to deliver baby Hendrick. The crew was John, Dakota, and Conner. The delivery happened in the back of the ambulance in the Harris Bait Store parking lot!





Anonymous Santa Program

The Anonymous Santa nonprofit organization was created more than three decades ago. LREMS was proudly able to participate again in 2021 for the seventh consecutive year. Qualifying children receive $20 in gifts, including clothes, toys, games, and sports equipment. Plus they received stocking stuffers, a book, and winter wear, such as hats and mittens. Once again, our team collected donations in Chisago County and filled up an 18-foot trailer with gift donations, helping about 200 children during the holidays. We'd like to thank our local businesses and families who donated this year.

Chisago County Safety Camp

We were thrilled to have three staff members helping at the camp this year. This special event is a free, one-day camp for children who have completed third, fourth, or fifth grade. The event is made possible by the Chisago County Sheriff's Office, Lakes Area Police Department, Chisago City and Lindstrom Fire Departments, Lakes Region EMS, M Health Fairview Lakes Medical Center, Xcel Energy, and Peterson Companies. This camp is specifically designed to teach children how to be safe in various situations and features all types of camp sessions, including bike safety, fire safety, 911 procedures, first aid, personal safety, and more.

SWAT

LREMS works alongside the Chisago County SWAT Unit to save lives in high-risk situations, and 2021 marked the 15th year that our team of tactical paramedics partnered with law enforcement to provide critical EMS. The tactical LREMS EMS team responded to six call-outs in 2021, and we look forward to working alongside SWAT in 2022 to help protect our community members, as well as our officers. This year the team, alongside CCSO deputies, taught a Tactical Retrograde and Downed Officer Extraction class at the 2021 SOTA Conference in Duluth. The course was attended by roughly 50 SWAT operators and medics from all over the Midwest.

Charitable Missions Committee

The LREMS Charitable Missions Committee, which began in 2016, provides our community members with important resources, including charitable giving. This allows us to extend our community reach through both individual support and community-wide programs, including our Good Neighbor Project, food-security programs, and other critical community initiatives.

Each year, the committee meets to evaluate charitable requests and distribute financial aid. During 2021, we approved 12 charitable requests, as well as our annual line items, which include a $3,000 donation to the Backpack Programs at participating Chisago County schools and a $1,000 scholarship to a graduating senior from each high school in Chisago County, including North Branch, Chisago Lakes, and Rush City, for a total of $3,000.

Community Education Space

Our dedication to the communities we serve doesn't stop at financial giving programs and top-notch EMS services. We also provide educational opportunities through our community education space. Originally created as part of our "Use of Facilities" program in 2014, we allow nonprofit organizations and governmental agencies to use our high-tech meeting space at no cost. Our primary goal with this initiative includes providing technology for in-person training and presentations.

The Community Conference room has room for 16 people, and the Community Meeting room seats about 80. These rooms include presentation equipment and internet access. The Community Meeting room features a state-of-the-art video wall that runs up to five programs simultaneously; improved video and audio-conferencing technology; and updated equipment for presentations. We also use this educational space for our EMT-Basic courses and CPR classes, including our hands-on CPR training. While our meeting space was closed for most of the year due to the pandemic, we hope to open up the space again in 2022.

The Effects of the Pandemic on Our Community Initiatives

We are proud to have participated in most of our 2021 community programs, such as the following activities: highway cleanup for our Adopt-A-Highway section; parades, health fairs, and community festivals; our Ruby's Pantry free blood pressure and blood sugar checks; and personal visits to check in on past patients. We hope to be able to participate again in these initiatives in 2022.



Financial Health and Responsibility

In 2021, LREMS' financial health was as important as ever as the pandemic continued to affect call volume throughout the year, as well as shortages of equipment and vehicles. Lakes Region EMS relies on liquidity, solvency, profitability, and operating efficiency; therefore, we are continually assessing these factors weekly and adjust as necessary.

We received funding through the CARES Act Provider Relief Fund in 2021, which helped fill the gap of payments received for rural areas. Our payor mix changed in 2021, as we saw an increase in commercial payors (24.21% in 2020, 30.1% in 2021), a decrease in Medicare (51.35 in 2020, 44% in 2021), and an increase in Self Pay (2.21% in 2020, 5.4% in 2021). With the increase in commercial payors and a decrease in Medicare, we saw an overall increase in our bottom line.

LREMS ended the year with +13.03% of our projected call volume, and an increase of loaded miles (112,389 in 2020, 150,695 in 2021). During 2021, LREMS were requested 5,252 times and transported 4,395 of those times. We saw an overall increase to our 9-1-1 calls of 19% and a 1.76% decrease in our transfer volume. The increase in our loaded miles helped to boost our receivables overall.

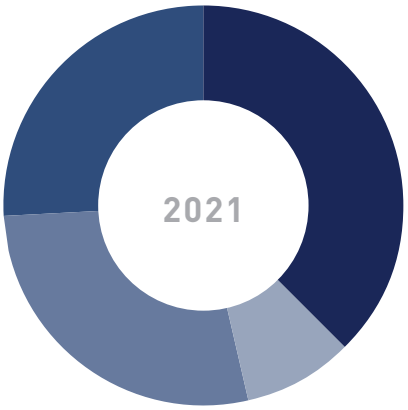
To continue the success of our organization we need to watch all our funding and discounts allowed. Of each dollar in charges for services, LREMS collected approximately 33 cents after discount to government and private payers, charity discounts, COVID-19 write-offs, and bad debts. We use the resulting net patient revenue to pay all expenses.



Project Hope

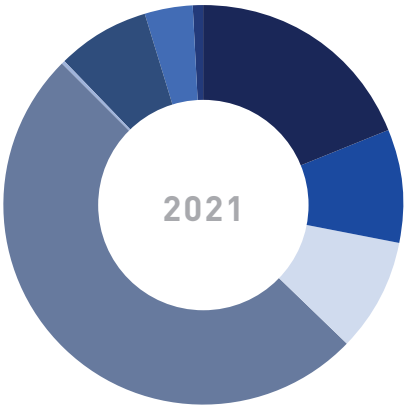
DONATION TOTALS FOR 2021:	
12/20/21	$103,696.71
9/9/21	$104,979.40
4/16/21	$117,063.28
1/18/21	$22,892.29
1/13/21	$31,864.30
TOTAL	**$380,495.98**





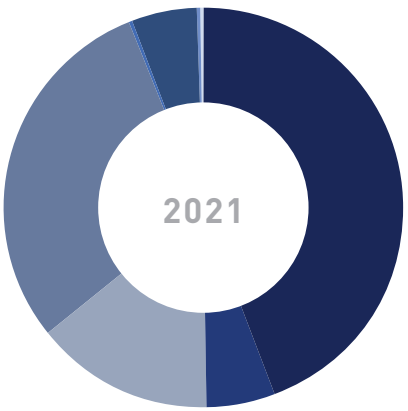
Outgoing Distribution of Funds

50%	Salaries and Wages
12%	Payroll Taxes and Benefits
37%	Vehicles
34%	Other



Payors – Money Received

18.7%	Medicare and Managed Care
9.3%	Cash
8.9%	MA and Managed Care
49.9%	Insurance
0.1%	Other
7.6%	Other Government
3.7%	Auto
0.8%	Work Comp



Payors – Billed Out

44%	Medicare and Managed Care
5.4%	Self Pay
14.4%	MA and Managed Care
29.6%	Insurance – Primary
0.1%	Other
5.2%	Other Government
0.4%	Auto
0.1%	Work Comp

LREMS' 20 Years of Service: Our Story

During 2021, Lakes Region EMS celebrated its 20th birthday. And with any significant milestone, it's important to take a look back at the innovations and achievements made along the way. Not only does this analysis shine a spotlight on organizational achievements and the commitment and dedication of our team over the years, but it highlights where the organization is going into the future.

LREMS History

LREMS was officially created as a community-based, not-for-profit ambulance service in 2001, following a merger of three separate ambulance services: Rush City Ambulance Service, North Branch Area Rescue Squad, and Chisago Lakes Area Rescue Squad. The three services were small, rural volunteer organizations. And as call volume grew, volunteerism decreased, and there became a bigger need to advance the level of care they provided to their communities, talk of a merger began in 2000. The main question was: Will a merger allow the organizations to better meet growing demands while remaining financially and clinically viable?

The answer was a resounding yes: The merger would streamline operations and administration while maximizing the ability to provide the highest levels of clinical care. So the three separate entities were brought into one county-wide organization, and Lakes Region EMS was born.

From the beginning, LREMS based its operational mission on our Four Pillars:

- State-of-the-Art Patient Care
- Outstanding Customer Service
- Dedication to the Communities We Serve
- Financial Health and Responsibility

From this strong foundation, an organization was created that — through both its words and actions — demonstrated its commitment to premier patient care, the best customer experience, being an active part of the community, and being a good steward of financial resources.

Fast forward 20 years from its creation, and today LREMS services Chisago County, parts of Isanti and Pine Counties in Minnesota, and part of Polk County in Wisconsin, with a primary service area that encompasses 450 square miles of rural/suburban Minnesota and roughly 200 square miles of Polk County, Wisconsin. Overall, our organization operates from five bases with 10 ambulances and approximately 80 employees.

Revolutionizing EMS Care

EMT Christine Rudolph, who joined the team in 1996 when LREMS was named Chisago Lakes Rescue, has seen the organization grow and evolve over the past two decades.

"Lakes Region has only gotten better over the years. With our trucks being critical care, we are able to provide the best pre-hospital care, and our interfacility transfers have increased in numbers because we can provide critical care to those patients in need," she said.

Christine's long tenure as an EMT at LREMS stems from both the organization's care for the community and its appreciation of its team members.

"Lakes Region treats their employees very well. That's why I'm still working for the company. I feel like it's the best ambulance service out there. Lakes does so many things for the community as well," she added.

While LREMS now operates with a paid crew, former board member Dr. Peter Overgaard remembers when the organization depended primarily on volunteers.

"There were a lot of dedicated people who were volunteers back then. They performed a lot of free service for the community. That's what made the organization go," he said.

Former EMT and board member Jonathan Dodge first started out as an EMT just out of high school in 1985 for Chisago Lakes Rescue. Jonathan has seen the EMS field and LREMS evolve significantly over the years.

"The community needs to understand how far we have come. In the '50s and '60s, an ambulance 'run' was tossing the patient in the back of family station wagon or funeral home hearse. In the late-'70s, Chisago Lakes Rescue was formed, and we were the best of the best volunteer basic EMS service. Today, under great leadership and fantastic staff, Lakes Region EMS is truly a renowned EMS system."

LREMS' innovation over the years included slow but steady growth, expanding the reach of the organization to help an increasing number of patients. One primary component of this growth included LREMS' embrace of continuing education, according to Jonathan.

"LREMS' EMS Education department has made an indescribable impact on our EMTs, paramedics and, in the end, the direct care our community members receive — not just locally, but regionally. As a retired board member, I'm truly proud of what LREMS has become!"

EMT paramedic Kirk Winkelman started as a volunteer in 1990 prior to the three-organization merger. He transitioned to full-time paramedic once LREMS formed 20 years ago. Being in the field for so many years, Kirk has seen technology evolve significantly.

"As the years went by, the service had to adapt with being busier. We had to grow with the times. And with that, medications, equipment, and training had to grow," he said. "The equipment has changed a lot due to technology. For instance, we once relied on hands-on CPR, and today we use a LUCAS device that works off battery or can be plugged in."

Other treatment and equipment upgrades included moving from paper charts to computer charts; changing medication pumps to those used in most hospitals, which saved time with IV tubing and sped up medical transfers; and using an emergency medical dispatcher service that sends information about the 911 call or transfer directly to a computer in the ambulance.

"We used to look up addresses in a map book, so having the address and directions speeds up the process," Kirk said.

Beyond the exceptional medical service provided by LREMS over the past two decades, Kirk believes the organization's commitment to the community has helped it survive and thrive.

"Lakes Region EMS has always remembered our roots and makes attempts to keep close to the community. That can be seen with With a Cop events, community donations to the schools for backpacks, and opening our North Branch base for community meetings," he explained.

Clinical Education Manager TenaMarie Meyer joined LREMS in 2000 as an EMT Basic. She then became a paramedic in January 2003 before taking on her current role in 2020 overseeing internal and external education — from the EMT level to the critical care level. The organization was small when she joined more than 20 years ago.

"Call volume was much lower, and you could go entire shifts without any calls," TenaMarie said. "Today, LREMS continually assesses whether there is more we can or need to do for our community."

Maintaining a high level of respect from local hospitals nurses, doctors, and techs, as well as current and former employees, is the basis of LREMS' core tenets. And, over the years, the organization's operations have evolved to reflect that commitment.

"LREMS has always been a service that has provided state-of-the-art patient care for our community. Over the years, when giving reports on patient condition and treatments to receiving facilities, we have been continually asked what medical facility we came from, when in fact the call originated in a 911 setting and the treatments were all done by our crews," TenaMarie explained. Lindstrom Fire Chief Scott Sellman was an LREMS board member who saw the organization grow from a small, well-managed company to a larger EMS service that flourished while expanding its size and scope. Its success is generated from both the crew and the office staff, according to Scott.

"The professionalism, the direction of the company, the employees and the family-like atmosphere they maintain makes LREMS special," he said. "The employees are the backbone of this and every other public safety organization."

Thank You!

LREMS would like to thank our dedicated field crews and professional staff, as well as our community members, for making 20 years of successful EMS service possible. While our organization came from humble beginnings, we are proud to have grown into a respected workplace and EMS service our community can depend on.



New Equipment

New Vehicles

In 2021, LREMS saw an increase in the number of vehicles added to our fleet compared to a typical year. We purchased four new Chevrolet ambulances with G4500 chassis to allow our busy crew to effectively service the community. In addition, as a result of the pandemic and hospital requirements, our ambulances had been accruing added mileage as our team had to take patients further away.

While historically LREMS purchases two to three vehicles per year, in 2021, our organization needed to "catch up" so we could put lower-mileage vehicles on the road. This allows us to rotate out our ambulances more efficiently. Our primary ambulance replacement cycle is 150,000 miles, at which point the units become backup vehicles. Once they reach a full 200,000 miles, they are cycled out of our fleet.

We added a fourth supervisor to our team in 2021, marking the first time LREMS has had 24-hour supervisor coverage seven days a week. To accommodate our new supervisor, we purchased a new 2022 Chevy Tahoe. This new supervisor vehicle will help limit the mileage on one of our older vehicles, extending its life cycle. Each supervisor vehicle is outfitted with advanced life support and critical care equipment so our supervisors can act as first responders and provide supplies and troubleshooting when necessary.

Vehicle Design

LREMS has been working on designing a new patient compartment during the past two years. In 2020, we rolled out a new design that completely revolutionized the back of the patient compartment to allow for maximum safety, comfort, and flexibility. As we designed the 2021 patient compartment, we adapted the design even further to allow for both maximum flexibility of crew position, and crew and patient safety.

Two of the new ambulances ordered this year include the most up-to-date design, and two of the new ambulances ordered in 2020 had new design elements integrated as well. The newest design incorporates adjustments to accommodate new federal standards, including a focus on safety protocols in ambulances, such as four-point restraints for all occupants in the patient compartment. While our first-gen design did include a four-point restraint system for each seat around the patient, the configuration of having a seat on all three sides of the patient made it somewhat difficult to reach certain parts of the patient when seat-belted in. The new design incorporates two separate occupant seats and one bench, all with four-point restraints. This new design allows for better flexibility when treating the patient during transport. This combines the best of both the old and new designs.

LREMS will continue to work toward integrating and evolving our ambulance interior design each year. The process is strongly driven by employee feedback with the goal of improving further by making additional adjustments.

New Vehicle Systems and Features

LREMS is continuing to build on the iNTRAXX Integrated Vehicle Component System that was integrated into our vehicle design in 2020. The modular system integrates wall plates so that different compartments can be easily moved, changed, adjusted, and swapped out. The extreme efficiency allows for a crew to restock by simply removing one pouch and replacing it with another. There is no need for individual inventory.

The new vehicles ordered in 2021 also include slight color tweaks to represent more of a modern look to celebrate LREMS' 20th anniversary, including changing the yellow stripe in the LREMS EMS logo to black. In addition, the new vehicles feature black rims.



Reports

Time of Calls

INCIDENT DAY OF WEEK	S	M	T	W	TH	F	S	TOTAL
00:00:00 - 03:59:59	52	45	45	40	37	58	57	334
04:00:00 - 07:59:59	50	35	43	42	48	30	31	279
08:00:00 - 11:59:59	52	73	61	51	54	63	56	410
12:00:00 - 15:59:59	88	109	91	79	79	107	98	651
16:00:00 - 19:59:59	88	90	85	84	93	95	104	639
20:00:00 - 23:59:59	71	74	66	66	50	66	63	456

Incident City | Lakes Region EMS

CITY	COUNT	PERCENT
NORTH BRANCH	1,149	18.45%
WYOMING	846	13.58%
CHISAGO CITY	582	9.34%
RUSH CITY	395	6.34%
LINDSTROM	347	5.57%
SAINT CROIX FALLS	329	5.28%
CAMBRIDGE	316	5.07%
FRANCONIA (TOWNSHIP OF)	241	3.87%
CHISAGO LAKE (TOWNSHIP OF)	222	3.56%
LENT (TOWNSHIP OF)	148	2.38%
HARRIS	143	2.30%
NORTH BRANCH (TOWNSHIP OF)	113	1.81%
STACY	113	1.81%
SUNRISE (TOWNSHIP OF)	108	1.73%
FISH LAKE (TOWNSHIP OF)	100	1.61%
OSCEOLA	94	1.51%
CENTER CITY	92	1.48%
NESSEL (TOWNSHIP OF)	90	1.44%
FOREST LAKE	86	1.38%
SHAFER	84	1.35%
RUSHSEBA (TOWNSHIP OF)	58	0.93%
AMERY	54	0.87%
AMADOR (TOWNSHIP OF)	45	0.72%
ISANTI	36	0.58%
SHAFER (TOWNSHIP OF)	35	0.56%
OXFORD (TOWNSHIP OF)	33	0.53%
CUMBERLAND	28	0.45%
GRANTSBURG	21	0.34%
ATHENS TWP	18	0.29%
CAMBRIDGE TWP	18	0.29%
ISANTI TWP	17	0.27%
SCANDIA	17	0.27%
BRAHAM	16	0.26%
EAST BETHEL	15	0.24%
PINE CITY	15	0.24%
ROSEVILLE	13	0.21%
TAYLORS FALLS	13	0.21%
COON RAPIDS	11	0.18%
FRIDLEY	11	0.18%
COLUMBUS	10	0.16%
ROCK CREEK	10	0.16%
ROYALTON (TOWNSHIP OF)	9	0.14%
SAINT PAUL	9	0.14%
SANDSTONE	8	0.13%
LINWOOD TWP	7	0.11%
POKEGAMA TWP	7	0.11%
SHOREVIEW	7	0.11%

CITY (CONTINUED)	COUNT	PERCENT
BLAINE	6	0.10%
HUGO	6	0.10%
MINNEAPOLIS	5	0.08%
LINO LAKES	4	0.06%
LITTLE CANADA	4	0.06%
SPOONER	4	0.06%
SPRINGVALE TWP	4	0.06%
HAM LAKE	3	0.05%
NORTH OAKS	3	0.05%
PINE CITY TWP	3	0.05%
SAINT LOUIS PARK	3	0.05%
CENTERVILLE	2	0.03%
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS	2	0.03%
LEXINGTON	2	0.03%
MAPLEWOOD	2	0.03%
MORA	2	0.03%
NEW BRIGHTON	2	0.03%
VADNAIS HEIGHTS	2	0.03%
ANDOVER	1	0.02%
ANOKA	1	0.02%
APPLE VALLEY	1	0.02%
BLOOMINGTON	1	0.02%
BOGUS BROOK TWP	1	0.02%
BRADFORD TWP	1	0.02%
BROOK PARK TWP	1	0.02%
CITY OF SAINT PAUL	1	0.02%
CITY OF WYOMING	1	0.02%
CLOVER TWP	1	0.02%
DULUTH	1	0.02%
FARMINGTON	1	0.02%
GRASS LAKE TWP	1	0.02%
HASTINGS	1	0.02%
HILLTOP	1	0.02%
HINCKLEY	1	0.02%
HINCKLEY TWP	1	0.02%
MARINE ON SAINT CROIX	1	0.02%
MILLTOWN	1	0.02%
MISSION CREEK TWP	1	0.02%
MOUNDS VIEW	1	0.02%
NEW RICHMOND	1	0.02%
PRIOR LAKE	1	0.02%
SAINT FRANCIS	1	0.02%
STANCHFIELD TWP	1	0.02%
WHITE BEAR LAKE	1	0.02%
WHITED TWP	1	0.02%
WYANETT TWP	1	0.02%

Transfer Origin of Calls | St. Croix Valley EMS

TRANSFER HOSPITAL	COUNT	AVERAGE OF DISP-ENROUTE	AVERAGE OF DISP-ARRIVE	AVERAGE OF TIME ON SCENE
St Luke's - Duluth	1			
Cumberland Healthcare	2	78.43	238.57	36.18
Hayward Area Memorial Hospital	114	31.05	71.42	23.59
Urgency Room - Vadnais Heights	1	3.88	7.68	16.48
Spooner Health	11	10.59	70.99	17.02
Marshfield Medical Center - Rice Lake	1	12.82		
St. Croix Regional Medical Center	834	25.2	39.2	17.23
Burnett Medical Center - Grantsburg	25	37.52	66.57	20.26
Osceola Medical Center	196	24.19	48.88	18
Amery Hospital	188	25.89	59.69	20.39
United Hospital	5	96.45	122	20.01
Children's Minnesota - St Paul	3	80.07	88.62	25.07
Hudson Hospital	1	27.7		
Mercy Hospital	8	29.35	62.46	20.36
Fairview Lakes Medical Center	725	15.38	31.65	20.13
Westfields - New Richmond	1	20.73	70.42	16.35
Mercy Hospital - Unity Campus	6	37.48	59.54	27.18
Regions Hospital	1	63.4	63.42	23.68
Cambridge Medical Center	162	52.89	84.28	17.62
Essentia Health - Sandstone	8	9.69	44.2	19.6
HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital	1	6.82	117.03	37.43



2021 Employees

	EMPLOYEE NAME	JOB TITLE	YEARS
*	Todd Fisk	Finance	33
	Kirk Winkelman	EMT-Paramedic	27
	Andrew Carlson	EMT-Paramedic	26
	Christine Rudolph	EMT-IV Tech	25
	TenaMarie Meyer	Clinical Education Manager	21
	Aarron Reinert	Executive Director	20
*	Ken Larson	Director of Clinical Services	20
	Benjamin Wasmund	Director of Operations	19
	Gerald Carlson	EMT-IV Tech	17
	Sarah Martens	EMT-Paramedic	15
	Kim Ditsworth	Sr. Patient Account Representative	15
	Michelle Anderson	Director of Administration	13
	Jessica Keeney	Community Outreach Specialist	13
	Terry Kraabel	EMT-IV Tech	12
	Doug Volin	EMT-Paramedic	11
	John Joswiak	EMT-Paramedic	10
	Allison Stout	QA Coordinator	10
	Brian Meyer	Supervisor	10
	Daniel Parker	Supervisor	10
	Kayla Hedlund	EMT-Paramedic	10
	Nathan Van Heel	EMT-Paramedic	9
*	Heidi Rennick	EMT-Paramedic	9
	Nicole Hall	EMT-IV Tech	9
	Lauren Buerkle	EMT-Paramedic	9
	Darrell Rohe	EMT-Paramedic	8
	Lee Huber	Operations Manager	8
	Gabriel Schreiber	EMT-Paramedic	8
	Jessica Anderson	EMT-Paramedic	7
	Christie Traczyk	EMT-Paramedic	7
	Lonna Coddington	EMT-IV Tech	7
	Amanda Odegaard	EMT-Paramedic	7
	Elliot St. Amand	EMT-Paramedic	7
	Jason Anderson	EMT-Paramedic	7
	Graham Struwe	EMT-Paramedic	7
*	Donna Larson	EMT-IV Tech	7
	Linette Erickson	EMT-IV Tech	7
	Luke Hedlund	EMT-IV Tech	7
	Brandon Trauba	Supervisor	7
	Bruce Johnson	EMT-IV Tech	7
*	Casey Banken	EMT-Paramedic	6
	Charles Leary	Supervisor	6
	Matthew Thelander	EMT-IV Tech	6
*	Christopher Carlstrom	EMT-IV Tech	6
	Sara Press	EMT-Paramedic	6
	Christopher Ward	Medical Director	5
	Sandra Williams	EMT-Paramedic	5
	Joshua Brown	EMT-Paramedic	5
	David Hoye	Maintenance Engineer	4
	Carolyn Sundheim-Little	EMT-IV Tech	4
	Dakota Mechelke	EMT-IV Tech	4
*	Morgen Mueller	EMT-Paramedic	4
	Brandon Folsom	EMT-Paramedic	4
*	Elizabeth Soleayst	EMT-Paramedic	4
	John Hagen	EMT-Paramedic	3
	Kao Vang	EMT-IV Tech	3
	Rebekah Nilius	EMT-IV Tech	3
	Royce Hsiung	EMT-IV Tech	3
*	Caryn Koecher	Billing Specialist	3
*	Natalie Barsness	EMT-Paramedic	3
	Benjamin Wilson	EMT-IV Tech	3
	Lisa Gregerson	EMT-IV Tech	3
	Ellie Ehrich	EMT-IV Tech	3
	Matthew Kramer	EMT-Paramedic	3
	Jonathan Aldrich	EMT-IV Tech	3
	Will Wandersee	EMT-IV Tech	2
	Daniel McIntosh	EMT-Paramedic	2
*	Alycia Vander Vegt	EMT-IV Tech	2
	Dakota (Cody) Miller	EMT-IV Tech	2
	David Freerks	EMT-IV Tech	2
	Hunter Struemke	EMT-Paramedic	2
	Jakob Kostecki	EMT-Paramedic	2
	Alissa Behl	EMT-Paramedic	2
	Cassandra Keocher	HR Business Partner	1
*	Percy Eykyn	Accounting Specialist	1
*	Mitchell Rice	EMT-Paramedic	1
*	Gabrielle Wasmund	Vehicle Service Technician	1
*	Colleen Hughes	EMT-IV Tech	1
*	Conor Vaughn	EMT-IV Tech	1
*	James Syvertson	EMT-Paramedic	1
	Caitlin Bjorgan	EMT-IV Tech	1
*	Victoria Nelson-Bolander	Vehicle Service Technician	1
	Cory Rossini	EMT-Paramedic	1
+	Nicole Dodge	EMT-IV Tech	0
+	Daniel Struemke	EMT-IV Tech	0
+	Olivia Hedlund	EMT-IV Tech	0
+	Jonathan Ekenstedt	EMT-IV Tech	0
*+	Luke Gruhlke	EMT-IV Tech	0
+	Erin Bortz	EMT-IV Tech	0
+	Haley Belisle	EMT-Paramedic	0
+	Amanda Dronen	Vehicle Service Technician	0
+	Taylor Gildersleeve	EMT-IV Tech	0
+	Darin Wendel	Director of Clinical Services	0
+	Dawn Splittstoser	Administrative Assistant	0
+	McKenzy Norgard	EMT-Paramedic	0
+	Carissa Zarich	EMT-IV Tech	0
+	Kenton Pust	EMT-IV Tech	0
+	Jaime DeBilzan	EMT-IV Tech	0
+	Whitney Schmidt	EMT-Paramedic	0
+	Marc Kupka	EMT-Paramedic	0
+	Jennifer Hatcher	Vehicle Service Technician	0
+	Danielle Mohlin	Sr. Accountant	0
+	Jeana Strelow	Administrative Support Specialist	0

+ New Employee in 2021
* Employee left in 2021

Board of Directors

Keith Carlson
Board Chairman

Mike Carroll
Board Vice-Chairman

Dan Meyer
Treasurer

Brandon Thyen
Board Member

Bryan Gaffy
Board Member

Julie (Schroeder) Johnson
Board Member

Board/Staff Liaisons

Aarron Reinert
Executive Director

Michelle Anderson
Director of Administration

Dr. Chris Ward, M.D.
Medical Director

Ben Wasmund
Director of Operations

Darin Wendel
Director of Clinical Services

Jessica Keeney
Community Outreach Specialist

Doug Volin
EMT-Paramedic FTO

Lakes Region

EMS

