

Vermillion EMS Seeing Rise In Calls

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865 – Without context, it is hard to know if that is a small, large or a huge number. In this case, what it is, is the number of calls the Vermillion Emergency Medical Services Division (EMS) answered in 2014 – a larger volume of calls than ever before.

According to Matthew Callahan, EMS Chief, that is a direct response to public education and awareness – but more importantly a credit to the crew who serve the Vermillion community, and answer the call, literally, whenever the phone rings.

The Vermillion EMS division has three fully stocked ambulances, with two staffed at all times, to assure and maintain response times to emergent and non-emergent ambulance calls, Callahan said.

“We run two-12 hour shifts in a day,” he said. “We have what is called ‘Paid On Call’ where if we get a call, the team members on call have to be leaving the station within seven minutes of the call. Most of our staff stay in the area – their homes, jobs – but for some of

them that live out of the seven-minute window, that means they utilize the station facilities.”

Callahan said the commitment of the staff is unquestionable.

“The great majority of the crew are either employed full-time or are students at the University (USD),” he explained. “All of them are giving up one of their days off each week to take a shift. They are required to be on call 24 hours per week.”

He said that the variety of backgrounds of the employees include medical students, nursing students, music majors, policemen, dispatch personnel, nurses and real estate agents, to name a few.

“It is honestly made up of a group of people who are truly interested and dedicated to making sure the community of Vermillion and the surrounding areas have access to emergency care,” Callahan said. “While it is not a volunteer position, because they are paid for their time, it truly takes a giving attitude to



Callahan



PHOTO: JACKIE WILLIAMS/ FOR THE PLAIN TALK

be willing to be involved with this. They enjoy helping people and that is what drives them.”

Beyond even the hours required to be on duty, Callahan noted that the people involved with EMS are required to do many hours of training per year to maintain their certification.

“To even become an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), which is our most basic level of certified employee, requires 160 hours of training,” Callahan said. “That is

“We try to have at least one Advanced EMT or higher on every team,” he said. “Currently we have about 10 advanced EMTs, 12 EMTs and for paramedics on staff.”

Callahan noted that last year the staff each completed about 720 hours of training to maintain their certifications.

While the number of calls handled by the staff was a record year, Callahan said he doesn’t see the demand going down, rather he expects to see it grow each year, and he is glad for the reason.

“What we are seeing is better public awareness that if they are having an issue, they know they need to call right away, rather than wait,” he said. “We are also transporting patients from the hospital here in town to either Sioux Falls or Sioux City every day.”

He added that the public education done by the department is something that he is proud of.

“Every month through the fire department we offer CPR classes,” he said. “In addition, we are doing public education and community outreach programs warning of the dangers of slips, trips and falls.”

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COURTESY PHOTO

Public Domain Tune Band Lifting Spirits For More Than 12 Years In Vermillion

BY JAMES COOPER
For The Plain Talk

Friday nights are a time for hard working folks to shrug off the stress of the week and to reconnect with their friends, who they might only get to see at a local watering hole.

For many Vermillion residents, spending their Fridays from 5 to 7 p.m. at Carey’s bar means cold drinks, good friends, and live music.

Music is one of the few things that can speak to all people. Communities like Vermillion feel a great sense of pride to have such talent among their own friends and neighbors.

For twelve years, The Public Domain Tune Band has refreshed the spirits of a consistently mixed group of patrons at Carey’s bar. There are always couples dancing, new friends meeting, and old friends enjoying each other’s company while listening to some Midwestern favorites.

Since 2003, the Public Domain Tune Band, a local group started in 1978 by Nick Schwebach and Owen DeJong, has had a consistent gig at Carey’s. Every Friday night the band sets up and plays their music, which can most simply be described as a hybrid of early folk and jazz.

Along with Schwebach (guitar and vocals) and DeJong (fiddle) there are two other regular members, CJ Kocher (saxophone) and Larry Rohrer (string bass and vocals). The Public Domain Tune Band plays all around the area, in town such as Sioux City, Yankton, Gayville, and our own Vermillion.

When asked what their favorite thing

about playing to the Vermillion community was, DeJong simply said, “I love this town.” Schwebach, with some added nostalgia said, “Playing with these guys is like playing with a group of friends. This is a community that is more like a family.”

With such deep love for, and a long history in the Vermillion area, it is no doubt that the crowd that The Public Domain Tune Band draws gladly comes to hear them play familiar favorites every Friday night.

Dave Moen and his wife, Vermillion residents, have only been attending the Friday night shows at Carey’s for about two years, “but (they’ve) known Nick and Owen for several, several years.”

When asked if he thought it fair to consider The Public Domain Tune Band a cornerstone of Vermillion community life, he said, “I’d say it’s a big part of it. There are some people who’ve been following these guys for 20 years or more.”

The Public Domain Tune Band has some added members on occasion, like Laurie Brown, Vermillion resident and Senior Secretary for the Music Department at The University of South Dakota. She often comes and sings a few tunes, such as, *A Wayfaring Stranger* and *Dream a Little Dream of Me*. Brown began singing with the group when, “(She) started dating Owen five years ago.”

Showing no signs of slowing down, The Public Domain Tune Band will continue to play in and around the Vermillion community as long as there are people to listen.

If you’re 21 or older, Carey’s bar welcomes you to come hear Vermillion’s own Public Domain Tune Band. The drinks may not be free, but the free live music is well worth the going.

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