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City of Washington EMS



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This issue of the KEMSA Chronicle takes us to the north central part of Kansas in Washington County. The Oregon-California Trail as well as the Pony Express once crossed through this rural land. Many pioneers and travelers traversed the trails where the county seat, the city of Washington, is now found. The city was founded in 1860 when a log cabin was built to be the town's headquarters. The building's logs were laid perpendicularly to resemble a stockade. Not only did the log cabin serve as the headquarters, but it also provided a place of refuge when problems arose on the plains. Areas near the city of Washington were abandoned by settlers who took refuge outside of the county. However, the tenacity of the Washington city residents was demonstrated during disturbances. Despite requesting aid from the military, no troops were sent. The citizens were determined to stand their ground. These buildings protected the city until the end of the Civil War. The same spirit of steadfastness can be witnessed today in the City of Washington.

Washington is home to the Mark Nutsch, Horse

Soldier Team and 9/11 monument in the courthouse square. The beautiful memorial was created and dedicated to honor Washington County native Mark Nutsch and his team, who were featured in the movie 12 Strong. Captain Nutsch helped raise an army of 5,000 militia fighters in Afghanistan while mounted on horseback. Due to his leadership, the armed resistance fought the Taliban and Al Qaeda, liberating the five Northern Afghanistan Provinces within weeks. Captain Nutsch was recognized as the catalyst for the collapse of the Taliban Regime and expanded pursuit of Al Qaeda terrorists. The monument also features a piece of the World Trade Center.

The rural city of Washington has a population of just over 1,100 people. The farming community is an hour northwest of Manhattan and 12 miles south of the Nebraska border. The city is located at the junction of US 36 and K-15 highways.

The EMS department has a unique history. Prior to the city establishing the service, ambulance services in the area were provided by many different options

including the local funeral home, the wrecker service, and even the hospital at one point. In 1976, the city established an EMS department covering 600 square miles to provide services to 3,200 citizens. The city owned and operated department responds to 175-200 calls each year, which includes 911 calls, hospital transfers, and standby at events.

The BLS ground service has two stations and two ambulances. The department has 24 volunteers and one full-time employee who serve the community to provide EMS services. The staff is comprised of EMRs, EMTs, RNs, and a paramedic. Washington EMS is very proud of the volunteers who have served over the years and the length of service provided to the community. Some of the volunteers have been in EMS over 40 years and have provided thousands of hours of call time. At the Washington station, there is a combined 265 years of EMS experience among 15 volunteers. The Hanover station has a combined 203 years of EMS experience among the volunteers who staff the station. The dedication and professionalism of the staff, and the ability to work as a team is greatly appreciated.

The staff believe in being integrated into the community beyond answering emergency calls. They participate in the local parades, assist and participate in community health fairs, provide blood pressure checks, provide community CPR demonstrations and CPR educational events, and provide car seat check lanes. Citizens can count on the EMS personnel to provide many educational opportunities throughout the year.

When asked what readers should know about Washington EMS, EMT Caroline



Scoville said, “What makes our service so special to us is the consideration we have for one another. We all understand the concept of being on call and when someone needs coverage to attend a kid’s sporting event or an out-of-town activity, someone is always willing to step up and cover.” She goes on to say, “It’s not easy being stuck in town to cover calls all of the time but when you know others have your back, it is much

easier. We consider ourselves one big family, and we are all so proud to be a part of it.”

The city of Washington EMS was the winner of the KEMSA 2023 Volunteer Service of the Year. Their dedication to serving the community was recognized at the awards banquet in August.

Scoville has found being of member of KEMSA beneficial for the department. She said the legislative updates are helpful and keep them informed. Online continuing education opportunities have been useful for personnel for their recertification. Caroline also advised the many learning opportunities through the conference, educational events, societies, and networking have been important. When asked why others should join KEMSA, Caroline said, “It’s important to stay involved in the topics that impact our ability to provide services. The educational opportunities, networking, and peer support are invaluable resources.”

Congratulations to the city of Washington EMS for being named the KEMSA 2023 Volunteer Service of the Year. 🍀



MEET SOME OF THEIR PERSONNEL

Caroline Scoville, EMT, I/C

How long have you been in EMS? 22 years

How did you get involved in EMS? Shortly after I moved to Washington in 2000, there was an ad in the paper that the service needed more personnel. The City was offering to pay for the class, so I signed up to take it. I worked as a volunteer for just over a year before I accepted the full-time position.

What has kept you in EMS? I enjoy it immensely. It is such an honor to be able to be able to be a comfort to those who may be having a bad day. It is such a rewarding job, even though it can often be stressful. I have had amazing mentors and made some pretty great friends over the years. I am thankful for all their support.

What type of rewards do you get from the job? I enjoy that every day is different, and every call is different. One of my favorite things is to be able to share my passion for the job with others by teaching initial EMR, EMT, and CPR courses. I love that many of them have gone on to pursue higher levels of EMS education, and some chose to pursue EMS as a full-time career. The friends I have made are such a blessing, and I have gotten to share my love for the job with my youngest son, who has gone on to become a full-time paramedic and is working toward becoming an educator as well.

Challenges? Scheduling, staffing, and billing are the biggest challenges.

What does the future look like to you? I look forward to remaining in EMS until retirement, and then I would enjoy doing some traveling and spending time with family.

What is something someone might not know about you? I am the neighborhood Nana, and my wildest dream is to purchase an old ambulance or a small RV, label it Granny 911, stock it with lots of treats and toys, and travel to the kids' houses whenever they need a Nana! Somewhere, someone could always use a Nana!

Eireson Pralle, EMT

How long have you been in EMS? Since July 2017

How did you get involved in EMS? Caroline convinced me to take the class, but deep down I wanted to follow in my dad's footsteps of being a volunteer EMT.

What type of rewards do you get from the job?

There are many rewards of being a volunteer, but let me just share one instance with you. Back in January 2020, I was on call one weekend. Where I lived at the time, I did not get the best radio reception and all I heard was a wreck involving a tractor when my pager went off. I called the hospital to let them know that I was on my way and that if there was someone else available to go, I would meet them on scene. As we were pulling up to the scene, I had no idea that the wreck involved a car and a tractor as the car was essentially nonexistent. I got out of my vehicle and my instincts kicked right in. I ran to the passenger side of the car where it seemed to have the most damage, I stated my first name and that I was with EMS like they teach you in school. What they don't prepare you for is a patient who happens to know you. The patient in the car repeated my first name with my last name back to me, and I'm sure that if there was a camera on my face, they could have seen all the color drain and my eyes widen. I looked over to the person in the driver seat and realized almost my worst fear. I knew the man driving...I knew the woman in the passenger seat. Never in my life have I wanted to help someone so much. We took her to the hospital and then transferred her to Lincoln...expecting the worst. I am pleased to tell you now that she is alive and doing well. There has never been a more rewarding moment in my EMS career.

Challenges? There are plenty of challenges too. Where we are located, radio/telephone service is a huge issue. Trying to get bigger hospitals to accept our patients is a challenge sometimes. We have some challenges with finding shift coverage. We have had challenges with patients not cooperating, which is probably the scariest though. When you go on a call and the person refuses to go to the hospital with you, you never know what the outcome for them is.

What does the future look like to you? For the future, I plan to stay with the current service I am helping, though it is sometimes hard to find coverage for shifts. I hope that in the future we can get some new volunteers and I hope that we don't end up losing our service due to lack of staff. I feel like little towns like ours need the volunteer services to help keep the communities growing.

MEET SOME OF THEIR PERSONNEL

What is something someone might not know about you? One of my biggest fears as an EMT is driving the ambulance and making a life altering mistake.

Iola J. Wolfe, EMT

How long have you been in EMS? 14 years

How did you get involved in EMS? My husband was in a bad wreck, and I really appreciated everything they did for him. I wanted to help people like they helped him.

What has kept you in EMS? When you know that if you hadn't been there for someone, they wouldn't be here today, and you see them in the park with their kids or pass them on the street having a good day out with their family. Nothing can beat that feeling you get seeing people with a second chance at life.

What type of rewards do you get from the job? A real sense of purpose and joy at being able to give something back to my friends, neighbors, and community that is truly important and needed.

Challenges? Dealing with the calls that don't end well and coming to terms with the fact that sometimes no matter how much training you have, there really is nothing you can do, but you have to keep going.

What does the future look like for you? I plan to continue along this path as long as my community needs me, and I can still do the job.

What is something someone might not know about you? People see me respond to calls and I appear calm and unaffected by what I'm dealing with. The truth is that after a bad call I go home and fall apart, because everything I've held in to help the public have confidence in me needs to come out. I've learned over the years that bottling up all of that pain and trauma is not good. After a good meltdown, I usually cook a big meal for my family and enjoy the love they always bring to me.

Ranai Meier, EMT

How long have you been in EMS? 20 years

How did you get involved in EMS? I began as a 911 dispatcher and wanted to learn the other side of the radio and continue to help those in my

community. I grew up watching the show Rescue 911 and really enjoyed it.

What has kept you in EMS? I have stayed in EMS for 20 years to continue to give back to my community. This is the community in which I grew up and I am choosing to raise my kids. The friendships I have made will last me a lifetime. You cannot do this job with just anyone. It does take a special type of person.

What type of rewards do you get from the job? I love being an EMT in a small town and being able to help people in my community. It does make my job both rewarding and challenging at the same time. Showing up on any scene knowing the subjects involved makes it rewarding being able to help people I know but challenging because it makes the call more personal.

Challenges? I have two kids ages 16 and 13. I have been in EMS their whole life, so they are used to mom leaving randomly in the middle of the night or during a meal and really having no set time back home. I used to tell them I was "helping someone." Now when the pager goes off they know I have to go. At times it can be challenging, never knowing when the pager will go off and when I will have to go. As the kids get older, I pray to never respond to an accident scene where they are involved.

What does the future look like to you? I hope to work in EMS for many more years. As a 911 dispatcher I am a better EMT because of my work in 911 and vice versa. I am able to understand things a little more from both sides. I understand taking a call and being the actual first responder on scene and knowing the challenges dispatchers are facing. I don't see myself giving up EMS anytime soon. I hope to grow my skills and continue to get better every call.

What is something someone might not know about you? My life is centered around my kids, my nephews, and numerous bonus kids I have gained through my kids. I attend as many activities and events as I can to support all of them. Kids always notice who shows up to support them, and I wouldn't choose to be anywhere else! 🌟

