

## In the news...ambulance service in La Crosse

Recently in the news, the La Crosse Fire Department's ongoing plans to begin ambulance service for the city of La Crosse have resurfaced. Over the past two-and-a-half years, Tri-State Ambulance, Inc., the current emergency services provider for La Crosse, and representatives from the La Crosse Fire Department have held several meetings, including site visits, to discuss the potential effects of establishing an additional ambulance service within the La Crosse city limits.

Tri-State Ambulance is a non-profit organization and wholly owned subsidiary of Gundersen Lutheran. The organization currently provides emergency medical services for 2,200 square miles in Wisconsin and Minnesota, including the city of La Crosse. For more than two years, representatives from the city have expressed interest in starting a city-run ambulance service; they believe it will generate revenue for the municipality.

Representatives from Tri-State are concerned about a decrease in quality of care if a provider change occurs. Each Tri-State ambulance is staffed with two paramedics who average more than 10 years of experience and more than 6,000 patients treated in their paramedic careers. "Our paramedics have 'seen it all' and bring a high level of expertise to any medical emergency," says Tri-State director Matt Zavadsky.

Conversely, La Crosse's Fire Department leadership has stated that they cannot afford to hire additional staff, so they will train

existing firefighters to the paramedic level. The reduction in calls from within the city limits would likely result in a decrease in revenue for Tri-State, which could lead to the potential need for additional non-patient service revenue to maintain existing service levels.

Tri-State is funded entirely by user fees associated with ambulance transport and does not receive taxpayer subsidies of any kind. All earned income is reinvested into the company and the region's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system. "In the past, we have funded a significant portion of the costs for emergency medical dispatch, provided updates to more than 50 public access automated defibrillators, funded the Bike Response Team and donated thousands of ambulance hours to charitable events," Zavadsky continues. "We also replenish supplies for first responders throughout the region when we respond to calls with them."

To provide the best response times to calls, Tri-State has employed a program called "System Status Management," which positions ambulances in high call volume areas and moves vehicles throughout the system as needed. "We place ambulances in pre-staged locations away from ambulance stations," Zavadsky notes. "So, you might see Tri-State units 'staged' at areas such as Woodman's, Bridgeview Plaza, Mormon Coulee Road at South Avenue and other locations throughout the day. By placing units

### Community Health Program in La Crosse?

Tri-State Ambulance recently proposed implementation of an innovative initiative called a Community Health Program. "Because of incidences of falls and serious health issues like diabetes, asthma and seizure disorders, many of the people who require emergent care are repeat customers," explains Tri-State director Matt Zavadsky. "A Community Health Program would identify frequent users of 911 services and determine ways to help keep them healthier through regular in-home visits." Community Health Services are also billable, as insurance companies routinely provide payment for in-home medical care. A decision has not yet been made as to who will provide this service and if/when it would begin. ●

on the street, we've reduced our response times by more than 24 percent."

It is unclear right now if or when the city of La Crosse will move forward with an actual proposal for ambulance service. Discussions are continuing and representatives from Tri-State are willing to attend mediation, but they feel it is most appropriate to participate in talks once an actual proposal is developed. For additional information about this topic, contact Zavadsky at 782-2282 or [mzavadsky@tristateambulance.org](mailto:mzavadsky@tristateambulance.org), or call La Crosse Fire Chief Gregg Cleveland at 789-7262.

## Scowcrofts saying goodbye to Gundersen Lutheran after decades of service

For Bill and Pat Scowcroft, Gundersen Lutheran is more than the place where they've each worked for nearly two decades. It's also the place where their romance began.

"I'd be on my way into the Hospital lobby in the morning and Bill would usually be on his way out to work in the Inpatient Psych Unit. We'd see each other, but never talked until the anniversary party of a mutual friend from Gundersen Lutheran, Pat Connelly," remembers Pat, who is an RN care coordinator. "If we hadn't been there and remembered seeing each other in the lobby, we may not have met."

Soon, Bill and Pat will say goodbye to the place that holds many memories for them when they retire on June 28.

"We knew we wanted to retire together and we started easing into it three years ago when we bought our retirement home in the northwoods of Wisconsin," shares Bill, a drug and alcohol counselor in Behavioral Health.

While they're looking forward to relocating to the northwoods and enjoying the beauty and solitude it offers, they'll miss many things about Gundersen Lutheran.

"The nurses I've worked with are a terrific group. There's a real commitment to professional nursing and I think that's wonderful," Pat says. "I'll truly miss my co-workers and the patients."

Bill agrees saying, "I've met a lot of really nice people and made some good friends at



Bill Scowcroft, CADC, III



Pat Scowcroft, RN

Gundersen Lutheran. I'm appreciative and grateful for having the opportunity to work with my colleagues in Behavioral Health."

With a combined 40 years of service to Gundersen Lutheran between them, Pat and Bill have seen their roles and departments change and evolve. When Bill first came to Gundersen Lutheran from his private counseling practice in Maine, Behavioral Medicine and Counseling Services were separate units. Since then, the two departments merged to become Behavioral Health, and the staff in the department has grown by "leaps and bounds."

"We have a lot more counselors, therapists, psychiatrists and psychologists now. They've made it a pleasure to work here," he says.

Pat has seen even more changes in her role at Gundersen Lutheran. When she first arrived from Stevens Point, she was a staff nurse on 6 West. She also spent time as a

patient educator in Cardiology and as a care manager before she took on her current role as a care coordinator for Gundersen Lutheran. During her time here, she also discovered a new interest as a yoga instructor.

"When I started my career, I never would have imagined becoming a yoga instructor. I first took on the role when I was working with Dr. Vane Songsrirdej in the Stress Reduction and Relaxation Clinic and eventually I began teaching yoga to employees," Pat shares. "It's something really fun that came out of my job and I've enjoyed introducing other people to it, too."

As far as their plans for retirement, the Scowcrofts say they are going to travel to see their children and grandchildren, enjoy the outdoor activities the northwoods have to offer and get involved in their new community. But, they say they'll be back to visit and look forward to seeing their friends here. "I know we'll miss the people at Gundersen Lutheran," Pat says. "It's been a fun ride. Thanks for the memories."

### Retirement tea on June 27

Employees who would like to wish the Scowcrofts well on their retirement are invited to a tea in the dining room on Wednesday, June 27. The joint retirement tea will be held from 2 to 3:30 p.m. All are welcome to attend. ●

