



AMBULANCE SERVICE Journal

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You take care of
our community.

We take care
of you.

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AAA members enjoyed a night out at Yankee Stadium during the AMBUPAC fund-raiser at the AAA Summer Health Care Reimbursement Conference in New York City.

GAO REPORT - Use It To Raise Your Medicaid Rates -

By Brian Werfel, Esq. & David Werfel, Esq.

On May 23, 2007, the Government Accountability Office released its long-awaited report on Medicare reimbursement for ground ambulance services: *Ambulance Providers, Costs and Expected Medicare Margins Vary Greatly*.
<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07383.pdf>

As part of this study, the GAO compared the average costs of providing ground ambulance services to the average Medicare reimbursement per transport. The GAO estimated that in 2010, following expiration of the temporary payment provisions of the

Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA) only 39 – 56% of providers/suppliers will have Medicare payments that exceed their average costs per transport. The GAO further determined that, on average, Medicare payment per transport will be **6% below** a provider's costs per transport. The GAO calculated average cost per transport for providers without shared costs at \$415 (\$370 – Urban, \$409 – Rural, \$538 – Super Rural).

Partnering with Our Communities

Written By: Elizabeth A. Gannon, Life Line Ambulance

Life Line Ambulance, the largest private ambulance service in rural northern Arizona, has been balancing providing altruistic services and growing a financially stable and secure business since 1956. A large part of the company's knack for keeping these two seemingly opposing philosophies in balance is the partnership between the company and the small, rural geographically and climatologically disparate communities in which it provides services.

The company's service area covers more than 8,500 square miles, an area roughly the size and shape of New Jersey. Life Line has three regions: Williams, Prescott and Wickenburg. Williams, the northern-most zone, is in the Ponderosa pines and jagged mountains. The small town, located on Route 66, is about 60 miles south of the Grand Canyon. The area gets snow every winter, which can last until May.

The Prescott zone, where Life Line has its base station and headquarters facility,

encompasses four small towns in what is called the "quad-cities area." Even with four towns clumped together, its combined populations do not even total 100,000 (90,700 in 2005, according to the Arizona Department of Commerce's Community Profiles). The area is small now, but it is growing rapidly. The weather is moderate with light snowfall in the winter and temperatures in the summer topping out about 90 degrees, but the landscape is rugged and primarily undeveloped.

The Wickenburg zone is the southern most area Life Line serves. It is a far northern suburb of the Phoenix metropolitan area. The terrain in this area is typical of what people think of when they picture Arizona: majestic saguaros and short, scrubby trees dot the high desert landscape. It gets very hot in the summer—upwards of 105 degrees. These three cities are about 100 miles apart as the crow flies, but as the ambulance drives, they are about three or four hours apart. What keeps all these zones together is Life Line's ongoing commitment to the partnerships with the individual communities.

"We take our role as community partners very seriously," said Glenn Kasprzyk, Life Line's chief operating officer. "Life Line is involved with many of the same activities in all three areas, such



Life Line Ambulance team members (in red shirts) (in foreground) Paramedic Brand Stewart and Paramedic Denisse Waite work closely with Wickenburg fire and police departments to help high school students learn what happens when drinking and driving mix during a drill at the town's public high school.

as providing stand-by services at high school sporting events and conducting CPR classes, but we also tailor our community activities in each of the three zones to best serve that area's specific needs. In Wickenburg, for example, there are a lot of rodeos and horse-riding events. We provide stand-by ambulances at these events, and, for two years now, we have been the emergency services provider at the National High School Rodeo in Wickenburg. In Prescott, Life Line focuses more on elementary schools and child care centers, so we are often out in the community providing Ted E. Bear clinics."

Ted E. Bear is a large stuffed teddy bear and longtime Life Line team member who visits children and helps them understand the 9-1-1 system, what it looks like inside an ambulance, what happens when the ambulance comes and what they can do to help. The children also get their own stuffed critters bandaged and taken care of.

"We try very hard to participate in those activities and events that are important to



Life Line Ambulance Paramedic Donna Hazelwood maintains in-line stabilization on Ted E. Bear, while Field Supervisor Josh Harding (in white shirt) explains to some of Prescott's "kindercritters" the importance of Ted remaining still and quiet while the emergency personnel do their work. EMT-B Joshua "JT" Thornbury was also on hand to help.

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our community partners in that area,” said Kasprzyk. “We work in small towns, so our team members become known throughout the community very quickly. Our team members who live and work in that particular area are the people the public sees; it’s not management or foreign faces from other regions in our service area.”

In addition to interacting with the residents, Life Line as a company develops and nurtures strong working partnerships with fire and police departments. Again, the opposition of the for-profit vs. tax-payer-funded organizations comes into play, but Life Line has struck a balance and maintains excellent relations with the 26 fire chiefs and six law enforcement officials in its expansive service area.

“When we are looking at an area for expansion, we do a lot of homework,” said Cheryl Smith, president and chief executive

officer. “We lay a foundation, we join the chambers, we get to know the city leaders, we find out what’s important to the residents, to the law enforcement and fire departments and to the hospitals in the area. We make it very clear we’re there to work with them—not in competition with them—to improve emergency services in the area. We’re all in this together; it does no one any good to work in an atmosphere of animosity and ‘us vs. them.’

“Once we establish these relationships, we build and nurture them,” she continued. “We become integral citizens in these communities.”

One of the many activities in which Life Line partners with law enforcement and fire departments is the anti-drunken-driving campaign, “Every 15 Minutes,” at local high schools during prom season, typically April through June.

Life Line also partners with police and fire when critical incidents occur in the company’s CON. Life Line donates ambulance/emergency services to fire and law enforcement working in potentially high-risk situations. Recently, there was a large fire in Prescott. Life Line dedicated a crew on scene for eight hours for firefighter safety. Fortunately, no one needed the company’s service, but the crews were there, just in case.

“It can’t be any other way,” Smith said. “It doesn’t work any other way. We’re here in this community as citizens. We have responsibilities that we cannot fulfill unless we act as partners with other citizens, and police, fire and hospitals are those citizens we are *honored* and *privileged* to work with on a daily basis. Ultimately, all our customers—our fellow citizens—benefit. And *that’s* what it’s all about.”

Spring into Safety

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McGruff the Crime Dog was on hand to teach kids how to be safe and healthy.

Three local police departments presented identity theft, traffic safety, seatbelt checks, the buddy system, stranger danger, and gun safety. Shenango Township, Northwest Regional, and the Lawrence County Sheriffs Department were the participating Law Enforcement Agencies. A park ranger from McConnell’s Mills and Moraine State Parks presented camping and outdoor safety information while K-9 SOS brought four search dogs and presented information to the kids about staying safe in the wilderness.

The Crisis Shelter of Lawrence County presented information on preventative abuse and neglect. Jameson Memorial Hospital and the American Cancer Society handed out information on sun safety and other cancer awareness material. Zambelli Fireworks also present firework safety information to the kids, and the Humane Society brought an array of different animals that are up for adoption.

The main attraction of the event was the bike safety course and bike giveaway. The course materials were provided by the Neshannock Township Police Department. The course was outlined with sidewalk chalk and soft obstacles were placed throughout the course. Riders were required to navigate through the course and had to obey all road signs like pedestrian crossing, railroad crossing, one-way, and stop. Each child then received a certificate verifying successful completion of the course.

The bike giveaway required the children to visit each safety station. Upon receiving information on each safety program, each child received a raffle ticket. The children had a choice of 14 bicycles ranging in various sizes from toddler level, to adolescent level. The child then chose which corresponding bag he or she wanted their tickets to be drawn from. There were 14 bicycles given away along with as many helmets and a few sets of pads and gloves.

Another highlight was a visit from a STATMedEvac helicopter where the kids were permitted to go inside the patient compartment. This was a real treat for the kids, as many of them had never seen a helicopter close up.

“It took a lot of time and planning, but the look on the kids’ faces was priceless and made it all worth it”, said Ellen Martino, co-chair of the event. “We wanted to give our community some education on how to stay safe this summer and I think all that attended got a lot of great information to keep them safe and healthy”.

Along with the safety programs, Noga Ambulance Service also provided two inflatable playgrounds for the kids, as well as clowns for face painting and music throughout the day. Children that stayed for the drawing also received a free bag of cotton candy or a candy apple, with the permission from their parents of course.

“We were very pleased with the turnout and really enjoyed teaching the children all the safety programs”, said co-chair David DiDesiderio. “This was a great opportunity to combine fun and education for the children of Lawrence County. It was great to be able to give to the community and we thank everyone for coming and hope you and your children had a great time”.