

# NCEMSF NEWS

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## Special points of interest:

- *This year, Collegiate EMS Week was celebrated on campuses nationwide November 11-17.*
- *Are you on the NCEMSF e-discussion list? Find out what you are missing at:*  
[www.ncemsf.org/list](http://www.ncemsf.org/list)

## Message from the President

George J. Koenig, NCEMSF President

I would like to dedicate this edition of the newsletter to those rescuers and civilians that were taken from us on Sept 11<sup>th</sup>. I ask that you take a moment to remember the people that are important in your life and to let them know.

On Sept 11<sup>th</sup>, I was seeing patients in a hospital located in rural Pennsylvania when I heard the news that a plane had struck the World Trade Center. I went to the nearest TV to find out what was going on, only to see the second tower get hit by a second plane. We all stood there in shock, horror, and disbelief. In the following days, I was amazed with the outpouring of public support and unity that our nation showed. There were so many people that were willing to do anything to help. People, who never gave blood, gave blood. People, who never volunteered, volunteered. People, who never donated money, pledged their support. As I heard about the heroic efforts of the civilian volunteers, I wondered, why the same people that were willing to turn their heads in the past

were willing to help now? What was the difference between this tragedy and tragedies that occur every day on a lesser scale?

For several years, I have listened to people tell me that volunteerism is a thing of the past. There have been several articles in JEMS written about struggling volunteer organizations. Many of you have voiced concern about not having enough members to fill shifts or the difficulty that you have faced recruiting new members. Most people cite that the reason for the lack of volunteerism is an overall change in society's attitude. However, the events that followed the World Trade Center disaster have showed us that as human beings we have an innate desire to help those in need. I urge each of you to look for ways to harness this desire in your organization. Ask yourself, why did you get involved? How can you improve the experience of your fellow members? What can you do to make you members feel more connected to your organization?

In the coming months, I hope that we can create discussion on how to strengthen volunteerism. I believe that through our collective thoughts we will all emerge stronger. Together we can make a difference.



Register for the  
2002 NCEMSF  
Conference  
online today @  
[www.NCEMSF.org](http://www.NCEMSF.org)

## Building a Legacy

David I. Bacall, NCEMSF Alumni Coordinator

I often get asked why some schools have it and some don't. Then the second question is what is "it"?

I'll answer the second question first because everyone knows the answer, but no one knows how to put it into words. "It" is that campus EMS organization that has people banging down their door to ride. "It" is the group that brings 40 members to the annual NCEMSF conference. "It" is the school that beats them by bringing 41 members. That "it" comes

and goes at times, but when you have it, the system just seems to run on autopilot.

So, how does that answer the first question? It's academic, my friend. The schools that have the pride, the glory, the "it" have legacy and tradition.

So it goes to say that the campus EMS organization with "it" has developed a plan to keep pride at its height. One way of doing this is to create a legacy within your organization.

Your school does that by tracking its alumni. It is not difficult to start on a basic level. Begin by keeping a database of past members. Next invite them to a function during homecoming week. And, most importantly don't lose touch. They are the most valuable resource you have.

We'll talk more about "it" in a future column. Until then, if you have more questions, ask me! I'll be at this year's NCEMSF Conference.



## A Tribute to Rick Vomacka

Dr. Scott C. Savett, Vice President, NCEMSF

NCEMSF lost a dear friend in early October when Rick Vomacka passed away. While his name probably doesn't spring to mind when you think of the "great names in the history of EMS," Rick's impact on emergency medical services was significant.

As general manager of Emergency Products and Research (EP&R) in Akron, OH, his company developed some of the most innovative products on the market including the BAK-PAK backboard and the "Responder" inflatable child restraint seats. EP&R also manufactured the popular "Spider Strap" backboard restraint. Also among Rick's many accomplishments were a stint as the president of NAEMT and launch of the

Pre-Hospital Trauma Life Support (PHTLS) program.

While Rick's involvement in EMS dates back more than twenty-five years, his relationship with NCEMSF started in 1997 when he first contacted us inquiring about his company being a vendor at our fifth annual conference in Hartford, CT. Rick joined us for that conference, and quickly became a valuable source of knowledge upon which NCEMSF relied. More than just a tradeshow vendor, he was the closest thing NCEMSF has ever had to an advisor.

I've heard others say it, and I couldn't agree more: Rick frequently worked his magic by planting a seed and then backing away. Working quietly in the

background, he tended to lead people on a journey of self-discovery rather than force-feed knowledge. As such, much of Rick's work for NCEMSF was behind the scenes. For example, Ramapo College EMS (NJ) can thank Rick for assisting in the purchase of their ambulance in 1998. His publicly viewable work, such as his lecture at the 1998 NCEMSF conference on the Sioux City crash of United Flight 232, was also top notch.

For his selfless dedication to NCEMSF, Rick was presented with one of NCEMSF's highest honors: the George J. Koenig Service Award at our conference

*(Continued on page 3)*



Rick Vomacka

*"...The Idea that your group is 'just a something' is dangerous"*

### **About This Publication**

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## **Just a "Something..."**

Dr. Scott C. Savett, Vice President, NCEMSF

It goes without saying that you should be proud of your organization no matter what level of emergency medical services it provides to the members of your campus community. There aren't many things deadlier to an organization's morale than having the attitude that your campus EMS organization is unimportant due to its certification level or inability to transport patients.

At NCEMSF conferences I sometimes hear a groups refer to themselves as "just a quick response BLS service" or that they "just do EMS at campus sporting events." While most groups aspire to have ALS transport capabilities in a \$100,000 ambulance, that scenario is not realistic on most campuses. In fact, of the 165 organizations in the NCEMSF database, only about 5% of them fall into the "ALS ambulance transport" category. Compare that to the 30% of the groups that are in the "BLS quick response" category.

Why is the idea of "Just a [something]" so dangerous? Many times it can

give you a false sense of security. This complacency isn't just true in the collegiate EMS setting. Having lived in five states since 1994 and having been involved in an EMS organization in each of them, I was appalled at the attitude that runs rampant in northern New Jersey. The cause of the problem in New Jersey is two-fold. The community hospital is usually within a few miles of the call's location, making transport times less than ten minutes. Coupled with that is a heavy reliance on ALS. Since the hospital-based medics are frequently on scene before the volunteer BLS transport unit arrives, the BLS crew feels like a glorified taxi service. Due to these factors, there isn't much opportunity (and consequently little motivation) to maintain good EMT skills. With the mindset that ALS will always be there to take care of the patient, many crew members are at a loss when paramedics are unavailable and the patient's condition is truly serious.

While the example situation I described above was a BLS ambulance in

a non-campus environment, the same could be said for a campus BLS/QRS group that relies on a city or town ambulance for transport or for a BLS campus ambulance that uses an ALS intercept service.

Being a campus responder, you are most likely the first EMS personnel that a student or faculty member sees when they are sick or injured. You are there for a specific reason – somebody called for you. You should not trivialize the importance of your presence, nor should you diminish the care you provide to your patient.

What should you remember in order to maintain a healthy attitude about your EMS skills no matter what type of campus EMS organization you are with?

Dance like no one is watching, Love like you'll never be hurt, Sing like no one is listening, Live like it's heaven on earth, Use your EMT skills like your patient's life really depends on it.

*(Vomacka, Continued from page 2)*

in 2000. But perhaps the highest personal honor for Rick was the knowledge of the large number of people he touched and inspired during his career as an EMS educator, paramedic, firefighter, author, editor, businessman, and advocate.

For those of you who didn't know him personally, I will tell you that Rick was a warm, friendly, down-to-earth guy. It is certain that Rick will be missed in the EMS community, and assuredly missed by the leadership of NCEMSF.

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**Did you know?**

*NCEMSF has a sister organization to the north. The Association of Campus Emergency Response Teams of Canada (ACERT). Their annual conference is called NCCER. In 2002, Lakehead University Emergency First Response Team (LUEFRT) will host NCCER February 18-23 in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada.*

*For more information about NCCER, call (807) 343-8209. And if you plan on attending, don't forget to pack your thermal underwear!*

**Conference 2002 Anticipated to be Larger than Ever!**

NCEMSF is pleased to announce our 9th Annual Conference to be hosted by the State University of New York at Stony Brook (SUNY Stony Brook) February 8-10, 2002.

The particular focus of the event will be "Professionalism Within Collegiate EMS," dedicated to improving Corps policies, developing relations within a Corps and with outside agencies, training of members, and other essentials that harness the true potential of your organization. Focused medical and trauma sessions will also be offered. Some

scheduled presentations include:

- **EMS Leadership / Leaders**
- **Bringing Out the Leader in You**
- **Terrorism on Campus**
- **Head and Facial Trauma Environmental Emergencies**
- **Care of Injured Athletes**
- **New Advances in Resuscitation**

Mark your calendars and don't miss out! For more information and to reserve your spot, head to: [www.ncemsf.org/conf2002](http://www.ncemsf.org/conf2002)

Please send requests for further information to

[conf2002@ncemsf.org](mailto:conf2002@ncemsf.org) or

Stony Brook Volunteer Ambulance Corps  
Attn: Conference Committee  
4780 SUNY  
Stony Brook,  
NY 11794-4780

Or call (631) 632-6737  
(Ask for a member of the Conference Committee.)

Over three hundred collegiate EMS responders are expected to attend this year's conference, making it the largest NCEMSF conference ever! Timely registration is advised to guarantee your spot!