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- Initial MRT Training
- MRT Refresher
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- EMT Intermediate Refresher
- AHA Heartsaver CPR
- AHA Heartsaver CPR and AED
- AHA Heartsaver for Schools
- AHA Friends and Family CPR
- AHA CPR for the Professional Rescuer

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SIMSBURY VOLUNTEER
AMBULANCE
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SVAA

The first 50 years

The Simsbury Volunteer Ambulance Association was founded in **1957** and the first ambulance was purchased that same year with funds provided by the Kiwanis Club whose members went door to door to solicit contributions. The first ambulance was housed in a barn on property adjacent to the Holly Hill Convalescent Home, presently known as Governor's House, and members held only an American Red Cross first aid certification. In **1965** a facility on Old Mill Lane was built as a one bay structure on land owned by the VNA. By **1967**, as the Association celebrated its tenth anniversary, members had responded to a *total* of 1600 calls. By comparison, we currently respond to approximately 1600 calls per year.

New State Regulations in **1974** required our members to take an eighty hour course to become certified as Emergency Medical Technicians. That entry level course is now approximately 150 hours. Over the years we have augmented that training. A number of our volunteers are trained at the EMT-Intermediate level, which includes intravenous therapy and advanced airway adjuncts.

SVAA is a private non-profit organization. While the contributions of caring citizens and concerned organizations sustained us for some thirty-seven years, the nineties found us dipping into capital funds to meet our operating costs. We needed to find an additional source of revenue. Since the vast majority of people in town have medical insurance, either Medicare or commercial, billing for our service seemed the least *taxing* method of raising additional revenue. This method also followed a state-wide trend with the majority of volunteer emergency medical providers now billing for service. This includes our neighboring communities of Canton, Granby, and Bloomfield. SVAA began billing for service in July **1995**.

At that time, the full-time paid position of Executive Director was created to provide consistent oversight of the day to day operations of the association, administer the billing operation, and assist in long-term planning. This was a response to ever-increasing administrative and regulatory compliance responsibilities which had become a greater burden than could reasonably be handled by our volunteer officers and members.

In the mid nineties, we began analyzing two major issues of concern to SVAA. The first was the method by which paramedic service was provided to the town, and the second was the increasingly inadequate physical facility from which we operated.

Advanced life support (ALS), or paramedic level response is required based on protocol and patient condition. Historically, this service had been provided through intercepts with the University of Connecticut Fire Department paramedics who also serve several other communities. Although the UCONN paramedics provided a fine service, evolving standards of care led us to proceed in a manner which provided this time critical service by Simsbury -based paramedics.

It was important to us to retain the volunteer character of SVAA. We felt this not only had a positive impact on our patients, but provided other services to the town such as staffing of emergency shelters, stand-bys at public events, and community training. Having looked at various methods of providing Simsbury based ALS, we decided that as the employers of the paramedics, we could most closely oversee the working relationship between our volunteers and the paid paramedic staff. An additional benefit of this method was our ability to assign administrative responsibilities to paramedics.

During the first half of **1997**, we successfully completed two application processes with the Office of Emergency Medical Services. The first was a change in our level of authorization to allow SVAA to operate at the paramedic level. The second application provided us with the *Primary Service Area - Paramedic* assignment making SVAA the designated provider of emergency paramedic service within the boundaries of the town of Simsbury. Beginning June 2, 1997, SVAA began providing paramedic response 24 hours per day, augmenting our totally volunteer EMT membership.

With the combined revenue from donations and billing, we are able to fund our operating expenses and meet the costs of being the employers of a full-time staff of paramedics.

The second major issue we needed to address was our facility. We had been based in a building on property leased from the VNA composed of two vehicle bays and one 20'x30' room. This single room was used for meetings, training, day room, and crew quarters. With the number of personnel and overlapping activities, this facility had become woefully inadequate. Therefore, we engaged the services of Robert Lamson, architect, to analyze our needs and prepare plans for the best utilization of this land and its facilities. His plans were interesting and innovative, and we believed well suited to the neighborhood and the site.

Implementing these plans provided the Simsbury Volunteer Ambulance Association with approximately 2,000 sf. in the existing American Legion building for sleeping quarters, shower facilities, and a day room for the crews, as well as office space. The four-bay garage and associated storage areas are approximately 2,220 sf. and the meeting and new classroom space are approximately 1,055 sf. The existing facility including the two bay garage is 1,735 sf. and continues to be used for training. Our new facility was dedicated on June 12, **2000**.

SVAA is comprised of approximately forty active volunteer members whose dedication to our community is demonstrated by an aggregate of more than 30,000 hours per year which they spend on scheduled duty, training, recertification, stand-bys and meetings. In addition to these active volunteer EMT's, we now have a staff of seven full-time and part-time paramedics.

2007 was the 50th Anniversary of the incorporation of the Simsbury Volunteer Ambulance Association! Over the years, our history demonstrates a continuum of increasing the level of services provided to our community. The volunteers of SVAA proudly continue the tradition of service to the community begun a half century ago by our founding members.