

## In memoriam: James Mataraza

James Mataraza, a 13-year firefighter/paramedic for the City of Euclid Fire Department's Station 2, recently passed away at the age of 41, after suffering an apparent heart attack. He is survived by his wife, Kimberly (nee Kovalcheck), and stepchildren Danny, Sean and Colleen Langham.

"He was a good firefighter," says Chief Tom Cosgriff. "Those seem like simple words, but guys who are firefighters know what that means. A lot of us consider the actual firefighting to be the easy part of the job. The more challenging aspect is the tragedies of dealing with people, who are not having a good day.

"Living with a group of men for 24-hour periods can also be challenging," he adds. "So, when you make the comment, 'He's a good firefighter,' it means a lot to someone who does it."

A Euclid native, Mataraza earned his paramedic certification from the Meridia paramedic program (now the Cleveland Clinic Health System School of EMS) in 1994. Before going into firefighting and EMS work, he served as a sergeant and crew chief in the U.S. Air Force. He was also a member of the Euclid police auxiliary. In his free time, he enjoyed golf, flight simulators and crossword puzzles.

"Jim was a great guy who was well liked by everyone," says Cosgriff. "He always had a smile on his face and loved to come to work." ■

## President Bush presents award to local EMT

When President George W. Bush visited Cleveland recently, he made a special stop to present an award to T.J. Powell, EMT, an active volunteer with the Northeast Ohio Medical Reserve Corps (NOMRC), which provides medical support services for public events and emergency situations.

Called the President's Volunteer Service Award, the honor is offered by USA Freedom Corps, which was created by Bush to foster volunteerism among Americans. Since March 2002, the President has met with about 400 individuals around the country who, like Powell, are answering the call to volunteer service.

As chief of the NOMRC, Powell logs in 800 to 1,000 volunteer hours a year, as he helps with logistics, planning, amateur radio operation and first aid for charitable fundraising events throughout Northeast Ohio. He also assists local fire departments and EMS agencies during disasters or incidents that impact public health.

In addition, Powell served as a volunteer with the American Red Cross for five years and spent eight years as a volunteer firefighter/EMT with the Northfield Center Fire Department. ■

## The feminine side of EMS: Women make inroads in fire service

*Twenty years ago, the fire department was the last place you'd think of if you wanted to get in touch with your feminine side. But times are changing, and more and more women work in the firefighting and EMS professions. What attracts women to this male-dominated field and what keeps them in it? We spoke with four local departments to get answers. Some of the responses, below, may surprise you.*

### Chesterland Fire Department

"EMS is my fun job," says Lt. Susie Vigh, a firefighter/paramedic who has been with Chesterland for six years. "I don't do it for the money; I do it for the community. Thanks to my 19-year background in respiratory therapy and 22 years as an EMT, I feel I have much to offer medically."

Before joining Chesterland, Vigh volunteered with Northampton Township Fire Department for seven years. In addition to her paramedic certification,

*"EMS is my fun job. I don't do it for the money; I do it for the community."*

— Lt. Susie Vigh, RRT,  
firefighter/paramedic

she holds a bachelor's degree in education and is a registered respiratory therapist and certified EMS instructor.

"I'm new to the fire side and am still learning," she admits. "At the department, I feel I fit in and am one of the guys. Being female probably makes me show more compassion for patients and families. I'm very dedicated to EMS and want to keep doing it. I'm also proud of the outreach we've done in the community; we trained about 400 people in CPR and basic first aid.

"Since it's a very physically challeng-



Susie Vigh, RRT, firefighter/paramedic, is always ready for action with the Chesterland Fire Department.

ing job, I do power walking to stay in shape," Vigh adds. "Our patients don't seem to get any lighter. I also enjoy boating and fishing on Lake Erie with my husband and two sons."

### Cleveland Heights Fire Department

According to Lisa Moose, firefighter/paramedic, working as a female in a mostly male department is not the easiest thing in the world. "The challenge is handling different personalities and

*"It's satisfying and rewarding to be able to use your skills to help someone and make a difference."*

— Lisa Moose,  
firefighter/paramedic

balancing everything," she says. "It can be exhausting work.

"I was drawn to EMS first," adds Moose, who is a Cleveland Heights native. "It's satisfying and rewarding to be able to use your skills to help someone and make a difference. Working at the fire department is much more interesting than the private ambulance work I used to do."

As a student at Lakeland Community College, Moose played basketball. "Our coach was approached by someone from the fire service who wanted to see if women could pass the firefighter physical," she says. "We all passed, and this experience got me thinking about firefighting and EMS as a career."

Soon thereafter, Moose earned her paramedic diploma at Brentwood Hospital (now South Pointe Hospital), and started working for a private ambulance company. She joined Cleveland Heights Fire 16 years ago.

### City of Euclid Fire Department

The first female at Euclid, firefighter/paramedic Amy Lanning earns the respect of her large department, which

*"She does her job and does it well. The last thing she wants is to be treated differently."*

— Chief Tom Cosgriff, commenting on Amy Lanning, firefighter/paramedic

currently numbers approximately 76 employees. According to Chief Tom Cosgriff, she stepped right into the job with confidence.

"She just wants to do her job," he says. "The last thing she wants is to be



Standing outside a Garfield Heights Fire Department vehicle, Jennifer Williams is ready to serve her community.

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treated differently. She does her job and does it well. She excels on the rescue squads and can move stretchers as well as the rest of them. As a rookie, she knew she was expected to do what rookies do, which are the jobs no one else wants, and she pulled her own weight."

#### Garfield Heights Fire Department

They usually say, "Like father, like son," but in Jennifer Williams's case, it's "Like father, like daughter." She followed in the footsteps of her father, a former Sheffield Lake and Sheffield Village firefighter.

"It took me a while to figure out that this is what I want to do," says Jennifer Williams, who has served as a firefighter/paramedic at Garfield Heights for two years. "I started out majoring in

*"I soon discovered that as long as you pull your weight, the others are accepting of you."*

— Jennifer Williams,  
firefighter/paramedic

sonography at Lorain Community College, but then I realized that might get boring. Firefighting is definitely not routine.

"I like firefighting best because I enjoy the excitement and adrenalin rush it gives you," she adds. "But I also like EMS work. Every call is different, and I like being at the scene. My favorite part of the job is helping people. It's easy to become jaded, but it only takes one call to change you and get you thinking positively again."

The department employs one other female firefighter/paramedic, but she works a different shift from Williams. "The department has been very good to me," says Williams. "In fact, I couldn't ask for a better group of guys. As long as I do my job, they're very accepting of me."

"When I first joined, it was intimidating," adds Williams, who enjoys water sports in her spare time. "But I soon discovered that as long as I pull my weight, the others are accepting of you. I'm very grateful for the guys who I'm with."

*The women profiled above can be proud of their careers. They also have mentors they can look up to. Joanne Hayes-White, for example, is fire chief of the San Francisco Fire Department, the largest municipal fire department headed by a woman. And Fire Chief Mary Beth Michos serves as chairman of the board of the National Registry of EMTs. ■*

## Medication update How to administer nerve agent antidotes

With the global threat of terrorism, it is increasingly possible that nerve agents may be used in a terrorist attack in the U.S. A nerve agent is a very potent pesticide for human use that was first developed in Germany during World War I. When ingested, inhaled or contracted via the skin, this extremely toxic poison attacks the nervous system and interferes with chemicals that control nerves, muscles and glands.

To prepare for this threat, nerve agent antidote kits (NAAKs) are being distributed to all Cuyahoga County first responders. The auto-injectible, pre-measured antidote includes:

- atropine, which alleviates SLUDGE symptoms
- pralidoxime, which reactivates an enzyme inhibited by the nerve agent
- diazepam, which prevents or stops potential seizures

According to current Ohio law and Cuyahoga County protocol, only paramedics trained in recognition and treatment of nerve agent intoxication are permitted to use the kits. In the near future, however, EMT-B and EMT-I providers may be allowed to use them. The auto-injectors' dosage is formulated for healthy adult patients. When administering the antidote to others, EMS must take age, sex, weight and health into consideration.

Nerve agents may enter the body via inhalation, ingestion or skin contact. Exposure results in the following symptoms:

#### Mild symptoms:

- excessive sweating
- tight chest (smooth muscle constrictions)
- muscle twitching

#### Moderate symptoms:

- severe chest tightness
- diarrhea (rare)
- blurred vision from pinpoint pupils (miosis)
- tearing (lacrimation)
- salivation
- unexplained runny nose

#### Very severe symptoms:

- bluish discoloration of skin (cyanosis)
- respiratory failure
- coma or unconsciousness
- convulsions

Signs and symptoms are affected by a patient's reaction time, which depends on the type of agent involved, dose, duration and route of exposure, and sensitivity of the patient's system.

#### Administration

Depending on the severity of symptoms, immediately administer one atropine auto-injector, followed by one 2-PAM Cl auto-injector. The injections may be given through clothing. If nerve agent signs and symptoms are still present after six to ten minutes, repeat the injections.

If signs and symptoms still exist after an additional ten minutes, repeat

the injections for a third time. If signs and symptoms remain after a third set of injections, do not give any more antidotes. Instead, seek immediate expert care. In case of very severe exposure, all three auto-injector kits may be administered in rapid succession; then the patient should receive medical help.

Paramedics exposed to nerve agents need not experience severe symptoms and should administer the antidote to themselves and team members before leaving the area to seek help in getting decontaminated. Since antidotes will not protect people if given before exposure, only use NAAKs when signs and symptoms of exposure are present.

Two common problems associated with the NAAKs are:

- underdosage, due to administering too little or no antidote
- administering antidotes to patients not exposed to nerve agents

When involved in a situation that may involve nerve agents, make sure to:

- avoid exposure to the agents
- use your PPE and respiratory protection
- avoid contact with patients' clothing
- get decontaminated if you are exposed

Note that any patient receiving atropine for nerve agent exposure requires medical observation for at least 24 hours. ■

## Meet Jeff Wilson South Pointe's new EMS manager

A 17-year veteran of the EMS field, Jeff Wilson, EMT-P, is happy to be back on Cleveland's East Side, where he is renewing past friendships and associations. Wilson, who is the new EMS manager at South Pointe Hospital, was

previously EMS program manager for Fairview, Lakewood and Lutheran hospitals, part of the Cleveland Clinic Health System.

A native of Garfield Heights, Wilson began his EMS career in 1987 as

an EMT for a private ambulance company. From 1989 to 1993, he worked for Cleveland EMS, which awarded him his paramedic certification. A year after receiving his firefighter certification in 1992, he joined the North Olmsted Fire Department as a full-time firefighter/paramedic.

Wilson is a member of the American Heart Association affiliate faculty for BLS, ACLS and PEDS, is a state-certified EMS instructor, and has taken various management courses relating to the field.

"My favorite part of EMS work is the self-satisfaction I get after helping someone in need," he says. "The people at South Pointe are great. I'm glad to be here."

Wilson resides in Bay Village with his wife, Maureen, an office manager for an orthopedic group, and daughter, Kayleen, 13, who is a champion Irish dancer. The couple's older daughter, Kathleen, 21, is earning a college degree in psychology. ■



Jeff Wilson, EMT-P, EMS manager at South Pointe Hospital, says he is happy to be working on Cleveland's East Side again.

## EMS pro up close Rob Lewis, RN, EMT-P, former pro skier, balances dual career



As a professional water skier, Rob Lewis used to entertain people, but now as an RN and paramedic, he saves their lives.

“I always wanted to be a flight nurse and fly on the big yellow chopper,” says Rob Lewis, RN, EMT-P, “but once I experienced the pre-hospital setting, I realized the field has my name written all over it. EMS work is definitely my calling.”

Lewis is now a full-time firefighter/paramedic with the Macedonia Fire Department and a part-time emergency department nurse at Sagamore Hills Medical Center. A 1990 graduate of Nordonia High School, where he was a football player and wrestler, he earned his RN degree from the Huron School of Nursing in 1998.

By the time he entered nursing school, Lewis had already enjoyed a 10-year career as a professional water skier with SeaWorld, a job he started in 1989 at the end of his junior year in high school, at the age of 17.

“My wife and I had been dating for two months when I got a call from SeaWorld asking me if I could be in Orlando in two weeks,” he explains. “I told her that I was going to Florida for the summer, and she was excited for me. The following summer, I started skiing for SeaWorld in Ohio while attending Kent State University in the off season.”

“Then they offered me a full-time position, and for three years, I skied in Ohio all summer and in Florida during the winter,” Lewis adds. “I miss entertaining the crowds, but I still work out on a regular basis because I need to be in shape for my job – especially for the dive and rescue work I do.”

Lewis’s water skiing fun is now a family affair. Residing with him at his Macedonia home are his wife, Cheryl, who works as a CT scan technician at South Pointe Hospital on weekends, and his sons Justin, 3, and Tyler, who is under a year old. “I’ve already had Justin in my arms on skis,” Lewis says.

In addition to being a rescue diver and swift water specialist, Lewis is certified in PALS and PEPP and is an ACLS instructor. He is a member of the Summit County Technical Rescue Team.

“My favorite thing about working at the fire department is the flexibility and freedom of the job,” he says. “You don’t have a doctor looking over your shoulder, and you have the freedom to make quick decisions on your own. It’s always different and never boring. At Sagamore’s emergency department, the best part of my job is the people. We have a great group of nurses who work as a team.” ■

## Four hospitals reduce diversions

Euclid, Hillcrest, Huron and South Pointe hospitals all achieved substantial decreases in diversion hours for 2004, as compared to 2003. Total reductions in diversion hours are as follows:

Euclid Hospital .....60% reduction – from 277 hours in ‘03 to 92 hours in ‘04  
Hillcrest Hospital.....37% reduction – from 2,200 hours in ‘03 to 1,380 in ‘04  
Huron Hospital.....48% reduction – from 873 hours in ‘03 to 454 in ‘04  
South Pointe Hospital .....63% reduction – from 1,371 hours in ‘03 to 501 in ‘04

“While we’re proud of these dramatic achievements, we’re still working on making improvements so that we can better serve our communities,” says Robert Barberio, regional vice president, operational improvement. “We’ll remain focused on this goal.”

Euclid’s achievement is especially noteworthy because the hospital already had one of the lowest diversion rates in Cuyahoga County. ■

## Trauma levels I to IV: What do they mean?

EMS providers are mandated by law to transport trauma patients to verified trauma centers. Hillcrest and Huron hospitals are Level II trauma centers. What does this mean?

The four different levels of trauma centers were established by the Committee on Trauma of the American College of Surgeons. Verified trauma centers must meet the following criteria:

### Levels IV and III:

Level IV is the designation for freestanding emergency centers in remote areas. Level III is the next step up.

### Level II:

To be verified as a Level II trauma center, an emergency department (ED) must have the following services in place.

- The ED must be staffed by board-certified physicians 24 hours a day.
- A trauma team must be available within minutes to respond to the ED’s notification of incoming trauma patients. This team must include a trauma surgeon, respiratory therapists, operating room personnel, anesthesia, ED physician, and radiology.
- The operating room must be open and staffed 24 hours a day or have the ability to be up and running within 30 minutes.
- A trauma surgeon or surgical resident must be in house 24 hours a day.
- There must be physicians for specialties (orthopedic surgeons, neurosurgeons, cardiologist, etc.) readily available and on call 24 hours a day.
- The trauma surgeons and ED physicians who care for trauma patients must be certified in Advanced Trauma Life Support.

### Level I:

The only differences between Level I and Level II trauma centers are as follows:

- Level I facilities must be able to perform open heart surgery and must publish trauma research.
- To be verified as a Level I trauma center, a facility must treat 1,200 trauma cases a year or 35 major trauma cases per surgeon per year. ■

## Butman named EMS School manager

Alex Butman, EMT-P, EMSI, is the new manager for the Cleveland Clinic Health System’s School of EMS, located in Euclid. A 30-year veteran of EMS practice, administration and education, Butman was previously lead EMS instructor for the school’s paramedic program. He replaces James Cole, who took a new position in the State of Washington.

Butman holds a bachelor’s degree in history and an honorary doctorate from Central Connecticut State University. He sits on several national EMS committees, is a certified Ohio EMS instructor, authored the first textbook in pre-hospital mass casualty care, and wrote or coauthored more than 26 other EMS texts and instructional video programs.

Recently, Butman received the Rocco V. Morando Lifetime Achievement Award in EMS from the National Registry of EMTs, national Association of EMTs and the American Ambulance Association. He adds this to his already extensive collection of local, regional and national awards, including the National EMS Educator of the Year award, which he received in 1993.

Butman lives in Fairlawn with his wife, Jeannie, a well known Ohio crafter, and their daughter, Alexandra, 13. ■



Alex Butman, REMT-P, manager, School of EMS

## Star of Life: Symbol for EMS

Although we see this symbol all the time, not many people know the meaning behind its design. Each of the star's six points stand for an aspect of EMS, including detection, reporting, response, on-scene care, care in transit, and transfer to definitive care. The staff on the star represents medicine and healing. ■



## Got something to say?

**We want to hear from you.** As an EMS professional, you're this newsletter's best source of information. Story ideas include interesting squad runs, job tips and unusual hobbies or second jobs.

We're also interested in receiving letters to the editor. This is your chance to make suggestions, compliment coworkers or get something off your chest. So... contact Anne Gallagher, at 330.656.3068 or gallcomms@aol.com. ■

## EMS Calendar

**April 20**  
7 p.m.

"Triage for Multi-Casualty Incidents" presented by Alex Butman, REMT-P, manager, School of EMS. Location: Waltz Auditorium at Euclid Hospital.

**May 18**  
7 p.m.

"Pre-Hospital Diabetes Considerations" presented by Eva Bradley, diabetes educator at Huron Hospital. Location: Waltz Auditorium at Euclid Hospital.

**June 1**  
7 p.m.

Trauma topic and speaker TBA. Location: Ross Auditorium at Hillcrest Hospital.

**June 15**  
7 p.m.

"Post-Traumatic Stress and the Behavioral Medicine Patient" presented by Carol Johlin, director of behavioral medicine at Huron Hospital. Location: Waltz Auditorium at Euclid Hospital.

**July 20**  
7 p.m.

"Special Considerations for Pediatrics" presented by Alex Butman, REMT-P, manager, School of EMS. Location: Waltz Auditorium at Euclid Hospital.

**August 3**  
7 p.m.

Trauma topic and speaker TBA. Location: Ross Auditorium at Hillcrest Hospital.

## New 40-slice CT scanner helps Hillcrest quickly evaluate, treat trauma patients



*It may look like a machine from "Star Wars," but Hillcrest Hospital's new 40-slice CT scanner is already benefiting emergency department patients.*

Emergency department patients at Hillcrest Hospital who require CT scans are benefiting from faster, more definitive exams – thanks to a new state-of-the-art, 40-slice Computed Tomography (CT) scanner. The new Brilliance CT scanner features advanced technology that produces split-second, high-quality images, so that physicians can view more anatomical detail in a fraction of the time needed for other tests.

"With this scanner, our physicians can assess the condition of trauma cases rapidly and precisely, so that they can make important decisions during the critical first few minutes after a patient arrives in the emergency department," says Peggy McDonald, Hillcrest's emergency department director.

"We can use the extensive image information we get from this scanner to generate very detailed 3D images," explains Dennise Bowser, Hillcrest's administrative director, radiology. "This can be used for diagnosis and also

shared very quickly with the appropriate physicians and surgeons, where needed, for pre-surgical planning and for treatment evaluation and follow-up."

"Older patients and those with breathing difficulties or some other distress will really appreciate the shorter exams," says McDonald. "We'll have them in and out much faster, and their doctors will be able to access detailed, definitive results within minutes. Another benefit of this equipment is that it exposes patients to significantly lower doses of X-rays, and it has specific built-in pediatric protocols that further minimize the dose to children."

Another advantage to the new equipment is its ability to provide CT scans for larger patients. The scanner has a table weight capacity of up to 440 pounds. "In the past, being able to handle some larger patients was sometimes a challenge, but with this scanner, we can handle the additional body weight," says McDonald. ■

*Siren* is produced by the marketing department in cooperation with its four EMS departments. If you have a newsworthy story to share or would like to comment on the newsletter, please call Anne Gallagher at 330/656-3068 or the marketing department at 440/312-8751.