

Suburban Life

Lorraine McClellan editor/477-5450



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An added measure of safety

Medics to the rescue for emergencies in large crowds

By Lorraine McClellan
staff writer

While the fireworks were going off during Detroit's Freedom Festival this summer a viewer in the crowd who suffered cardiac arrest was reached with medical support within one minute. He was in an ambulance within seven minutes and reached the hospital within 12 minutes.

"That's an amazing response time," said Sandy Altschul, of Emergency Medical Support Services (EMSS). "It is one thing to deal with an emergency in someone's bedroom and a totally different thing to deal with when you are working within a crowd of 1 million people."

The 25 member EMSS team that was spread out through the 1 million fireworks watchers that night, each with portable medical and communications equipment in hand, had been trained specifically to provide emergency medical care for the sick and injured at mass public gatherings.

All of them are licensed emergency medical technicians and/or paramedics, and have been working in the specialized field of dealing with emergencies within crowds for about four years.

"We are a pioneer in this area," Altschul said of the Farmington-based operation. "If this is done anywhere else in the country I'm not aware of it."

EMSS WAS created to give an alternative to the traditional ambulance and equipment, ambulance crews and stationary first aid stations set up during special events by Altschul, Dan Hunter, Dr. Dave Richards and Dan Cohen.

'EMSS is geared for festivals, concerts, football games, trade shows, any situation where the larger the number, the larger the likelihood that a medical emergency will occur.'

— Sandy Altschul

"These can be cumbersome, inefficient and expensive, just because any delivery of emergency medical care is going to be complicated when large numbers of people are involved," Altschul said. "EMSS is geared for festivals, concerts, football games, trade shows, any situation where the larger the number, the larger the likelihood that a medical emergency will occur."

The most unusual thing the EMSS team has done to date is suppress a fire that broke out in a festival food booth before the firefighters arrived, while at the same time treating 15 persons for smoke inhalation.

The most common emergency is scrapes, scratches, burns, "and many of these liquor drunk-related where someone has fallen down or been pushed down," Altschul said.

"We don't interfere with the police. We don't break up fights. We wait until they fall down and then come to the rescue. All of those rules are well spelled out with police or security guards well in advance," he said.

Altschul said the EMSS team is always inconspicuous in the crowd.

"We wear uniforms for identification, but they are designed so we fit in

anywhere. They fit in at (Mayor Coleman) Young's birthday party; they've fit in for black-tie affairs, the Thanksgiving Day parade and the Michigan Superbowl. You'd never know we were there unless you had an emergency."

A FEW MONTHS ago Altschul, who got into the emergency service business as a volunteer paramedic while working a full time job, quit that job to devote all of his time to EMSS.

In addition to providing on-site event medical services, EMSS is now offering specialized educational programs designed to prepare the public to better care for themselves and others around them in the case of medical emergency.

"These are all tailored for special interest groups: baby sitters, day care centers, office workers, restaurant employees, whatever is pertinent to them based on the likelihood of the type of emergency they might meet. CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) is given differently to infants and adults. It is unlikely that a hard hat on a construction site would be called upon to deliver a baby," he said, giving an example

of the specialized programs offered.

Still another offshoot for EMSS is making surveys of sites from a safety point of view. EMSS is currently doing an evaluation of Bobo Island's medical and fire protection services available on the boats, the docks and the island for AAA.

"If there are any hazards we are equipped to remedy them," Altschul said.

For the future, "EMSS will probably work toward some kind of legislation to protect the festival goers and the conventioners and the football fans with more than the distribution of band aids," Altschul said. "Hart Plaza never had an evacuation plan before we gave them one. There is a lot to be done in this area."

EMSS NOW HAS a cadre of about 50 who can be called on for any sized event, some who work as full time medical personnel, others who work in off hours as para-medics, but all who "appreciate and understand the need for our concept of emergency care in crowds," Altschul said.

"The agenda is running now about 50 percent with paid jobs and about 50 percent volunteer jobs. If we find an agency that is giving a huge event and we think they might need us we're glad to contribute. Many of these are the marathons, such as the bike tour for Muscular Sclerosis Foundation. They toured from Detroit to Jackson, and we were stretched all along the route," Altschul said.

"We all trained together in this and we all have a good time doing what we're doing knowing we're doing a job worth doing and doing it well."



Ed Nahhat suffered stomach cramps during Montreux Jazz Festival and was treated by technician Lea Strickfaden in the portable quarters Emergency Medical Support Services set up on the site.



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer



\$8,000 down, \$32,000 to go

The sale of crafts and rummage in Cloverdale Training Center last weekend brought in a little more than \$4,000, which makes a total of \$8,000 toward the \$40,000 goal that will be used to build a specially designed playground for the school grounds. The event was the second in a string of benefits that will be staged through the year by members of Cloverdale Parent Group and the center's staff. Lucile Hatcher (far left) of Clarkson buys curtains from Lucanne Gabler (standing) in the rummage room. Carole Lucas (above) of Wixom shops for Christmas trim at the craft booths.

What's the matter with kids today?

Why they can't be like we were

By Susan Thygeson-Aktary
special writer

SO MANY parents are in flux; they're like adolescents themselves — overwhelmed with too many values.

"They're stressed, and scattered," said John C. Flatter, senior psychologist in the Department of Psychiatry of

Sinai Hospital and its recently organized Mental Health Center in West Bloomfield.

"The key problem in raising teenagers today is unclear expectations. We're flooded with information," said Flatter, referring to Alvin Toffler's "Future Shock," and we're faced to death — computerized, televised, — exposed to a plurality of values, so we

don't know what we should believe.

"Ask parents to list five values they'd like their kids to hold, and they have trouble with that."

IN HIS OWN adolescence, Flatter's father, Howard, related clear values to his children, with high expectations he backed up with sensitivity and support, Flatter said. The older Flatter was an educator and public speaker and a dedicated family man in a suburb of Dayton, Ohio.

"Athletics gave me a real sense of identity — and that's so crucial for a child growing up," said Flatter, recalling his mother's constancy and encouraging support.

After attending Bowling Green University on an athletic scholarship in track and field, Flatter taught high school biology and coached gymnastics for three years. Following a year at the University of Dayton, he earned a doctorate in 1975 in educational psychology and counseling at Wayne State University. While studying for his doctorate, Flatter counseled and taught part-time at WSU.

He also spent a year and a half at

Oakland University's Continuum Center, as its "first token male," Flatter joked. In 1976 he became associated with Sinai Hospital.

FLATTER — whose bright blue eyes, ready smile and easy-going manner give him a Pat Boone-like demeanor — lives in Birmingham with his wife, Mary Lou, and sons Sean, 14, Brian, 10, and Jamie, 4. "My kids know what I value — like I don't allow name-calling, because I value respecting the dignity of other people."

"Young people don't have the stability because things are changing so fast, and young people are raised in unstable environments. Young people are often faced with losses — like the loss of the traditional family structure and the loss of innocence."

"We ask, 'Is there anything I can really count on in this world?' If there's nothing, what difference does it make what you do? Nothing matters. That's what some young people conclude."

"They don't see the consequences. They see the activity — drugs or sex — but not the consequences. And some parents don't talk with them about it

because of their own ambivalence. There are just too many choices, and too few guidelines."

To help parents who have concerns about their teen in regard to sex, Flatter suggested discussing, "What does the act mean? What are the possible consequences to me and to the other person?"

In his view, "There's a sense that anything goes," because parents and educators tend to "get into the mechanics without the values. We don't instill strong feelings of responsibility."

FOR PARENTS who wonder why their teen can't or won't change a particular behavior, Flatter mentioned some possible obstacles.

"I believe people are dynamic and have the potential for change. However, we have got a basic personality that forms early in life. But often people don't change because they don't know what the problem is; they're ambivalent and haven't made the commitment to change; they have no goals; their would-be goals need to be broken down into small, manageable steps."

"Sometimes we (parents) tend to per-

petuate a teen's particular self-concept," said Flatter, suggesting that to help teens change, parents may need to make a change in expectations.

"In a family situation, actions speak louder than words. There's an escalation of anger and, sometimes, parents aren't appropriately assertive."

Flatter added, "I don't think everybody should go into therapy, but nearly everyone could use some good, objective feedback."

Young people aren't just teen-agers anymore. They're premature adults. Even fifth-graders are into having parties; they're premature adolescents and then they become premature adults. The permissiveness — the do-what-you-want policy — does this.

"ONE THING my mom taught me was how to be comfortable alone; those days there's a constant demand to be entertained."

"Short-range pain for long-range gain — typically, we behave the opposite way! In our culture we have this notion we want to invest little and get a million-dollar return."

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