



Happy customer: Andrew Curtindale, 5, of Farmington Hills returned to the fire station with his mom, Kristi Curtindale, to visit and thank the team that helped him after his seizure a few days after the city began its ALS system.

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woman. "I'm not a doctor. Let's get her to the hospital."

Community EMS personnel places the older woman on a stretcher as two school-aged children walk through the door puzzled as to why two emergency vehicles are in the driveway.

As the Community EMS vehicle pulls away, the backdoor window frames two worried people looking on.

The scenario has continued daily since Farmington Hills Fire Department started providing Advanced Life Support in March.

All ALS runs are answered out of Station 5 at present. By July, all five fire stations will be able to handle the calls.

"It's been pretty wild," said John Wells, Farmington Hills fire paramedic. "Sleep has been pretty seldom around here."

Working together

Before, firefighters could only give Basic Life Support - known as "bravo" in emergency dispatch talk - until paramedics from Community Emergency Medical Service arrived.

Under the new arrangement, Community EMS and the fire department continues to work in tandem.

Often, a Farmington Hills fire emergency vehicle is followed to the scene by CEMS, which transports people to the hospital while fire department paramedics continue to provide critical care along the way.

A woman on Treadwell is taken back when three vehicles arrive with sirens screaming to treat a neighbor who is having difficulty breathing. The 49-year-old man went to the woman's house and asked to call for help.

"It looks like an ambulance convention," said Lt. Mike Garr, who is observing the paramedics.

The man is immediately hooked up to a heart monitor as paramedics try to start an IV.

"I got bad, bad veins," the man says. "Make sure you get it right the first time."

They take his blood pressure and ask him a battery of questions before turning him over to CEMS. The man wants to go to

'What we're seeing is everyone is getting more confident.'

Lt. Mike Garr
-Farmington Hills Fire Department

Beaumont Hospital, which means the Farmington Hills paramedic will ride along with CEMS and will have to be picked up later in Royal Oak.

A paramedic for CEMS commends the Farmington Hills department for starting to provide advanced life support.

"That's the only bad thing," said Robert Miljan, a CEMS emergency technician and paramedic. "Because of managed care, they have to go to the hospitals that they (the patients) request."

In the case of the 69-year-old woman, there is no choice. She has to go to Botsford, which is the closest emergency room.

Vital signs

Paramedic Rob Smith is trying to communicate with the woman while trying to get her vital signs en route to the emergency room.

"It's all right, sweetheart. Lay back," Smith tells the woman who is trying to move her arms. "Blink your eyes if you can hear me."

The woman closes her eyes and opens them but continues to struggle. A family member riding in the front seat tries to calm the woman in her native language.

"She was seizing," Smith tells a CEMS technician who also riding in the rear of the vehicle.

Within 20 minutes after arriving at the scene - which included establishing an airway, starting an IV and getting a medical history - the woman is at Botsford Hospital.

Steve Diebel will stay behind to finish the voluminous paperwork. Slowly, what was a new way to handle emergencies is becoming a reflex reaction.

"What we're seeing is everyone is getting more confident," Garr said.

Students at Gill help rescued horses

Gill Elementary School fifth-graders are doing their share to help take care of 35 horses that were rescued from cruel, inhumane conditions in December.

Students in the classes of Gill teachers Nancy Newman and Gloria Pochman will hold the bake sale before school Wednesday. All proceeds from the sale, which is not open to the general public, will go to Horse Haven in Pontiac, said Gill parent Carol Lucas.

That money, Lucas said, will help Horse Haven feed and provide continuing care for the animals - who were rescued from a Davison, Mich., farm. Lucas said 50 horses were originally saved, but 15 were in such poor condition that they had to be put to death.

According to Lucas, whose son, Matt, is in Newman's class, the idea for the

spring community service project began in December, shortly after the horses were rescued.

An employee at Horse Haven, a friend of Lucas' mother, arranged for someone from the organization to visit Gill to talk to students about how poorly the horses had been treated at the farm.

That visit made enough of an impact for the students to take to help.

"We really didn't expect them to take this to heart," Lucas said. "They really wanted to do this after the Horse Haven came out."

Following that visit, students wrote letters to Genesee County Assistant Prosecutor Arthur Busch, who promptly wrote them back.

Lucas said the owners of the farm were each convicted of one count of animal cruelty and are awaiting sentencing in Genesee County Circuit Court.

District in state suit

It took about 17 years for Walled Lake Schools to get a \$5.1 million state funding repayment expected to arrive April 15 - and they don't want to wait that long again.

The board of education, at Superintendent James Geisler's direction, unanimously approved a resolution to join other districts throughout the state in filing a second lawsuit against the state for failing to fund state-mandated special education programming.

The first suit, known as the Durant case, was filed in the early 1980s when school districts were required to supply special education programs, but were not provided with state funding to do so. After nearly two decades of legal wrangling and \$27,000 worth of legal fees for Walled Lake schools, the districts won a settlement.

In Walled Lake's case, Geisler said, the settlement is a little over a third of what the district paid for special education. "I think our losses were calculated somewhere (around) \$14 million," Geisler said.

While those settlement checks for past underfunding will be written soon, Bloomfield Hills attorneys Dennis Pollard and Richard Kroopnick, of Pollard and Albertson law

WALLED LAKE SCHOOLS

firm, are planning to file a new suit in 30 to 60 days to challenge the 1997-98 State Aid Act.

Pollard, who represented 84 school districts in the Durant case, and district officials who support the new lawsuit - are claiming that act is unconstitutional.

Under the act, Kroopnick said, state per pupil allowance for children with disabilities is being counted as enrollment funding and as special education funding.

"They're counting the same money twice," Kroopnick said. "The court, in the Durant case . . . said they can't do that."

"They're already taking general operating money," Geisler said. "Instead of adding the special education money, they're just renaming all of the money you're already getting. And calling it to their attention hasn't corrected it."

Since the 1997-98 Act was filed in November 1997, the two attorneys and school officials have discussed the matter with state officials to no avail.

"We've done everything we can to head this thing off," Kroopnick said.

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Crucial time: Farmington Hills paramedic Rob Smith monitors a heart rhythm as he talks to a 48-year-old patient who was having trouble breathing Thursday.