

**Business Spotlight**  
**American Ambulance New England**  
**183 NH Route 108**

March 1<sup>st</sup> marks the three year anniversary of the Somersworth branch of American Ambulance New England (AANE) on Route 108. The first six weeks in operation were not at their current location but were spent at Panera Bread in Dover. That is where Paul Robidas, Chief, and Scott Schuler, Deputy Chief, would meet each morning to map out their day as they went through the paces of setting up the New Hampshire office for the 100 + year old company.

Choosing Somersworth as the location for the growing company was a no-brainer for Paul who was born and raised in the City. Paul began working in the field in 1982 and has watched the industry change over the years. As the complexities of billing increased and the clinical expectations grew smaller companies began to get bought out by their larger rivals. The upside, according to Paul, is the wealth of resources and expertise that can be found with the larger companies. The leadership team at the Somersworth branch appreciates those resources and the amount of input they have about how the business is run.

Scott Schuler, a highly qualified and dedicated professional was the first person to join Paul's team. Scott began his career in Virginia at the age of 16 volunteering for the local rescue squad. His various roles in the medical industry prepared him well for managing the clinical operations of the company.

Growth has been rapid but the focus has not veered from their commitment to excellence. Beginning with a staff of 25 they have grown to around 80 employees (80% are fulltime) and estimate that they will serve around 20,000 patients this year. Continuing to find seasoned, well-trained people is a challenge for AANE and many growing businesses. "It doesn't matter what community you are in-they all want advanced level providers even if it isn't necessary. Sometimes you have a person with a twisted ankle that could be well cared for with a professional trained in basic life support but having all advanced level staff has become an expectation. And, if you can't offer it your competitor will," stated Scott.

Another challenge to rapid growth is maintaining the culture of the company. According to Robidas, "You need to have both top to bottom and bottom to top inspiration. We count on our staff to get the new folks on board with the company culture and how we do things." Weekly meetings help with effective communication of procedure and opportunities for improvement. Their dogged commitment to excellence will no doubt help them achieve their goal of being the best private emergency medical service in New Hampshire and Maine.

Part of their commitment to excellence meant seeking national accreditation. The intense process included having every policy and procedure examined by a third party agency over a course of several days. It was well worth the effort as zero deficiencies were

found (which is quite uncommon) and AANE is now one of only three emergency service companies in the State to have national accreditation. While proud of their accomplishment they don't spend any time resting on their laurels. American Ambulance New England provides EMT and CPR training for the community along with dedicating a full day each year to train every 6<sup>th</sup> grade student in CPR.

The company is constantly examining how they do things seeking opportunities to improve their overall outcomes. Some of those changes mean going against the status quo such as focusing too much on response times. While response times are an important measuring stick in some instances, the team made a conscious decision to not race to non life-threatening calls. "We are working to prevent unnecessary accidents while still taking care of those in need," said Schuler. "Being committed to excellence isn't easy as you have to acknowledge where you are falling short and have some difficult conversations," added Schuler.

When Paul began his contract with the City he made it clear that he would do everything to the best of his ability and would not let down the community that raised him. It was a very satisfying day when he learned his contract with the City would be extended for four years with an additional four year option-and it was offered with a full year left on the current contract. "That felt great," stated Robidas. "I promised the City that I would not let them down and the contract renewal told me that they were happy with what we have provided," concluded Robidas.