

# OEMSCA NEWSLETTER

## Built from the ground up in 2011, Jackson County EMS keeps improving



*Jackson County EMS Director Chris Johnson (left) poses for a photo with JCEMS personnel*

Through the hard work and dedication of many individuals, Jackson County EMS was established from the ground up in 2011 after the disbandment of Southeast Ohio EMS.

The new organization keeps getting better each year, and its leadership values the importance of working with other agencies across the state to represent the interests of third-service EMS departments through the Ohio EMS Chiefs Association.

Southeast Ohio EMS disbanded at the end of 2010, the department had previously served Lawrence, Athens and Jackson counties.

Chris Johnson, who serves as treasurer of OEMSCA and as the chief of Jackson County EMS, said building an EMS agency from the ground up was very challenging.

“It took many people working together to make this happen in such a short amount of time, but we did it,” he said. “Starting an ambulance service from the ground up in just a few months would not have been possible without the cooperation of government officials, administrative staff, employees and the community.”

Johnson said the county also formed the Jackson County Training Center, where Basic and Intermediate EMT courses are taught alongside other continuing education classes.

“We are coming up on our 10th anniversary for JCEMS and I could not be prouder of the dedicated and hard-working individuals that work so hard every day to make sure the citizens of Jackson County are safe,” he said.

Johnson said he believes being a member of OEMSCA is very valuable for his organization and all of the member agencies.

“Before OEMSCA, there wasn’t really a brain-storming group of EMS leaders that would get to-

gether and really be able to talk face-to-face about issues facing the different types of EMS agencies,” he said. “I would not be the leader I am today without OEMSCA. The networking that OEMSCA allows each member to have access to is just incredible. Being able to reach as many EMS leaders with an e-mail and to get different points of view is such a valuable tool.”

Johnson said his department had about 4,300 runs last year, including about 3,600 transports. The department has 47 employees on staff, including 23 basic EMTs, 6 intermediate EMTs and 18 paramedics. Of those employees, 18 are full-time and 29 are

paperwork or crunch the numbers. You might be doing the schedule one minute and going to help for a car accident the next minute. I would not enjoy a job where I had to do the same thing over and over.”

Johnson said the biggest challenge of his job is balancing the political aspects while still making sure nothing interferes with providing great patient care.

“Everything else can be talked about and handled in a timely fashion, but patient care must always remain the number one priority,” he said.

Johnson said the biggest issue his agency is facing is finding and keeping employees.

“As a county service, we are still struggling to pay what the private EMS agencies are paying,” he said. “Half of our budget goes to salaries and it still isn’t enough to match what they are paying at private services. Yes, we offer benefits and insurance and sick time and vacation, but I find that the dollar-per-hour is usually the decision-maker in looking for employment.”

Johnson said improvements in technology have made it easier to provide great patient care.

“The new power load system is



*A Jackson County EMS ambulance is shown*

part-time. The agency runs four paramedics squads 24/7 across three stations. One squad is stationed in Wellston, with one stationed in Oak Hill and two more are stationed in the city of Jackson.

Johnson has personally been involved in EMS since 1989, and he said he has seen many changes in the field. He said his favorite part of the job is its unpredictability.

“Every day is different,” he said. “You’re not just going to do

one of the best inventions,” he said. “It has not only helped employees but has improved patient safety also.”

The power load system helps take the strain off the backs of EMTs and also keeps patients safely strapped in during an ambulance ride.

Johnson also remarked on the importance of being able to directly transmit EKGs to the ER. “It has saved so many lives and changed the way that we treat our patients,” he said.

# OEMSCA NEWSLETTER

## A letter from OEMSA Secretary Lori Morris

Hi, my name is Lori Morris and I am the Executive Director of Finance for Lawrence County EMS and Secretary of the Ohio EMS Chiefs Association. I am a charter member of the Ohio EMS Chiefs Association and



Lori Morris

served as a regional rep before becoming Secretary. Lawrence County EMS began on January 1, 2011, and has grown to employee approximately 75 full and part-time employees. We began with a budget of approximately \$600,000 and it has grown to \$5,000,000 which includes the passage of an EMS Levy in 2017. I am responsible for and oversee all financial aspects

of our agency which include budget, payroll, accounts payable, billing, Workers Compensation along with many other tasks.

Lawrence County EMS currently operates five full-time stations with the sixth full-time station to open in 2020. We cover 457 square miles and have 63,000 residents. Lawrence County EMS was named the 2013 Paid EMS Agency of the Year by the ODPS, Division of EMS. LCEMS run volume has increased from 10,000 runs in 2011, to being on pace for more than 12,500 runs in 2019. In May 2019, we had a record-breaking month with 1,144 runs still while operating 6 full-time trucks. We have also received the American Heart Association Mission Lifeline Gold Plus award for the third year in a row.

Our mission is to provide competent, innovative, efficient and expedient pre-hospital care to the residents and guests of Lawrence County by delivering high quality, comprehensive emergency medical service with excellence, compassion and professionalism.

The Lawrence County Commissioners purchased a facility that will join

five Lawrence County Agencies. This includes EMS, Coroner, 911, EMA/LEPC and part of the Sheriff's office. This complex will be called the Lawrence County Joint Response Operation Center (JROC). The complex should be up and running within the next few months.

Before being appointed by the Lawrence County Commissioners to become a part of the LCEMS team in 2011, I worked 20 years in the banking industry. During my tenure in banking, I held the positions of Bank Secrecy Act Officer, Community Reinvestment Act Officer and Compliance Officer along with being a Commercial, Real Estate and Installation Lender and earned the position of Assistant Vice President.

I was also elected and am currently serving as Lawrence Township Fiscal Officer and serve as Secretary of the Lawrence County Trustee and Fiscal Officers Association. I have been married to Eric for 26 years and we have two children Brenna and Chad.

I feel it takes collaboration and teamwork to make any agency a success!

## Delaware County EMS has a new structure and a new director



Delaware County EMS Director Jeff Fishel is shown

In May, the Delaware County Board of Commissioners announced its next step toward a reorganization of Delaware County EMS.

In a Delaware Gazette article, Delaware County Commissioner Barb Lewis said the reorganization is an enhancement in the county's EMS leadership structure.

"It's necessary to meet the needs of our fast-growing community and to improve collaboration of EMS resources through Delaware County," she said. "The current model of chief and assistant chiefs was not able to meet those demands."

The new model allows for a leader to establish a vision through strategic planning, following by implementa-

tion. This reorganization led to the creation of a new position titled Director of Emergency Medical Services. There were 51 applicants for the position. On May 24, Jeff Fishel accepted the offered position.

Fishel was most recently the executive director of LeFlore County EMS in Oklahoma. He wanted to introduce himself to the members of OEMSCA and did so in the following letter.

*Colleagues,  
Please allow for me to introduce myself. My name is Jeff Fishel, and I am the new Director of EMS for Delaware County. Recently my family and I moved to the City of Dela-*

*ware and I began work July 1st. My wife Erin and I have two young children... Conner age 4, and Mabry who is almost 2.*

*I have worked in the field of EMS in 3 different states (California, Texas, and Oklahoma) before coming to Ohio, most recently I was the Director of EMS for a service in Southeast Oklahoma. My EMS experience began in 2005 and ranges from urban to super rural areas and has allowed for me to meet and interact with individuals of all walks of life and backgrounds.*

*I earned my bachelor's degree in business management from WGU, my master's in healthcare administration from Texas Tech, and my Paramedic certification from EM-STA college.*

*I am extremely excited and honored to be here, and I look forward to our future together as Delaware County EMS grows and expands our delivery of pre-hospital healthcare to meet the ever-growing and evolving needs of our community. I look forward to partnering and working with the OEMSCA and moving EMS forward in Ohio... together.*

*The future is very bright for Delaware County EMS, and together we will achieve excellence in service to one another and the public we serve!*

*Sincerely,  
Jeff Fishel  
Delaware County Director of EMS*