

Before JCUEMS

For years, members of the John Carroll University student body who had EMS training, on occasion, volunteered at special events (i.e. Spring Concert, Dance Marathon). Despite numerous attempts to establish an organized group of campus EMS providers, such an effort never came to fruition.

September 2001

Joshua Beck, a member of the JCU class of 2001, died during a pick-up game of basketball in the gym of the D.J. Lombardo Student Center. Bystanders, Campus Safety Services, University Heights Fire Department, and the South Pointe Hospital Emergency Department staff attempted resuscitation to no avail. It was this event that catalyzed the formation of John Carroll University's Department of Emergency Medical Services.

Mark Lucia, '04 and Eric Beck, '04 (no relation to above) were then two sophomores who had contemplated the potential for a campus based EMS operation for several months. Beck who was a Firefighter/Paramedic for Russell Township Fire Department and Willoughby Hills Fire Department had successfully led Lucia to obtain EMT-Basic certification as a supplemental component of his pre-medical studies. Others at JCU also had prior EMS training at that time: Nikki Kropiwnikki, EMT-P '03, Mathieu Miner, EMT-B '05 and Prasad Thottam, EMT-B, '04, Antoinette Hilt, EMT-B, '04' to name just a few.

The night that Joshua Beck went in to sudden cardiac arrest, Eric Beck, and Nikki Kropiwnikki passed through the student center and by the basketball court where Joshua Beck was being packaged by medics for transport. Several of the UHFD personnel who handled the call were concerned that Joshua Beck might have been related to Eric Beck (as Eric Beck and certain members of UHFD were previously known to each other). After Joshua Beck death, Eric Beck learned the details of the events. Eric Beck became determined to enlist Lucia and others in a renewed effort to establish campus EMS at JCU.

Research into prior campus EMS attempts, numerous meetings with the Dean of Students, the Director of Student Health, and the Director of Student Activities were all preliminary for the meeting that would prove to be decisive. Then Vice President for Student Affairs, Reverend Richard P. Salmi, SJ needed to approve of the program in order for it to begin. A meeting on September 10, 2001 with Salmi, Beck, and Lucia offered little hope for the campus EMS aspiration. Beck and Lucia setup a meeting for September 11, 2001 with then University President, Reverend Glenn, SJ. The tragic 9-11 attacks occurred the night between these two meetings. Beck and Lucia became impassioned to pursue their hope. The meeting with Glenn offered little additional prospect. In fact, Glenn echoed what others had already established: “Salmi needs to approve.”

In several meetings that followed, Beck met with Salmi, and representatives from South Pointe Hospital, Patricia Bryan, RN, EMT-P, EMS Director, and Dr. Arnold Feltoon, MD, FACEP, EMS Medical Director. Feltoon and Bryan knew of Beck from previous Fire/EMS settings and were willing help launch a campus EMS at JCU. Salmi seemed more enthusiastic after hearing the pledge of support and the logistical details from Beck, Feltoon, and Bryan.

An interesting political climate was in place the time of the JCUEMS inception. The then Campus Safety Services Director was leaving. The Student Health Center, Residence Life Staff, Campus Safety Services, and UHFD were working together to handle campus emergencies. The proposal involved adding an additional component to an already crowded team; support and enthusiasm was not overwhelming. Beck, Feltoon, and Bryan made their case and slowly what was an idea, became a promise.

In November, Beck received approval to begin recruitment and training for the department which would report directly to the V.P. for Student Affairs. While recruitment and training efforts began, Beck and Lucia researched a variety of other existing campus EMS operations. The National Collegiate EMS Foundation (NCEMSF) also provided tremendous support in the early months. Mr. Mark E. Milliron, EMT-B, MA, MPA, Director-at-Large for the NCEMSF also wrote to Salmi helping attenuate concerns and highlight the potential service learning benefits of

JCUEMS. Milliron also facilitated Beck visiting and riding along with Penn State's EMS, one of the oldest and most successful collegiate EMS programs in the country.

Recruitment consisted of flyers in all residence halls, class buildings, and an advertisement in the Carroll News. The initial meeting of skeptical students had attendance of nearly 50 students. Some decided to proceed while others did not. An evening and weekend First Responder class was setup by Mr. James Cole, EMT-P, EMS-Instructor and Beck. Due to last minute incompatibilities, Cole was replaced by Beck as the First Responder Instructor. South Pointe Hospital EMS and Bryan provided class space, oversight, and logistical support while Beck did the teaching. Meanwhile 5 other recruits attended an EMT-Basic class held at the Orange Village Fire Department also sponsored by South Pointe EMS.

Students underwent their training while Beck worked to secure a space on campus from which EMS could operate. Lucia continued to research other campus EMS operations and offered assistance as a First Responder Lab Instructor. Beck also sought out funding from Student Affairs for two BLS response back-packs, funds for a drug license, and an alumni donation of an AED. Slowly but surely things fell into place.

The most contentious issues during the conception of JCUEMS were the legal and insurance aspects of this new program. Beck was charged by Salmi with the task of preparing a comprehensive set of standard operating procedures as well as a medical protocol. These documents would be scrutinized before final approval for operation was granted. Sister Joann Gross, the then General Counsel for JCU and Diane Ward, Finance Director were two of the many university administrators and outside parties who reviewed the SOPs and protocol prior to approval. JCUEMS was to be covered under the university's general umbrella as well as a special student service learning category. Interesting, there was some fiasco surrounding the required State Board of Pharmacy License to Distribute Dangerous Drugs. As a BLS agency, oxygen, oral glucose, and normal saline eye wash were all categorized as dangerous drugs. The university administration found the mere wording 'dangerous drugs' disconcerting. Eventually,

after Feltoon, Beck, and Bryan educated the administration on the actual reality of the drug license the application was submitted during the university's winter vacation.

While Beck researched and devised a BLS medical protocol for First Responders and EMT-Basics, Lucia coordinated the final revisions of the SOPs. About this time, leaders were beginning to emerge in the First Responder and EMT-Basic classes. Tina Choudhri '04', Matthew Myszkowski '05' and Sarah Kaczmarek '04 elected to take additional responsibility and worked with Lucia and Beck to complete the SOPs. The initial officer core for the department was also selected via a rudimentary promotional appointment process. Ryan Daly, a temporary Assistant the Vice President for Student Affairs was tasked with assisting and supporting Beck and Lucia on a day to day basis with the EMS program. Daly, and Chief John Frazier of the Russell Fire Department interview all interested candidates and arrived at a ranking for officer selection. Joseph Lowry, '04, Andrew Gedeon, '05', Steven Zohn '04, and Kimberly Cahill, '04, in addition to those mentioned previously, were to be the first supervisors when the department began operation.

In early spring, the First Responder class had finished and the certification cards began to arrive. The EMT-Basic class continued into late spring. Navy and grey polo shirts were selected as the initial uniforms; EMT-Basics in grey, First Responders in navy and supervisors had that title embroidered as well. The BLS equipment packs and AED arrived and inventory paperwork was created. A room that had recently vacated in the LSC Suite was secured and supplied thanks to money from Student Affairs. Radio communications were another challenge. Campus Safety Services had recently upgraded their radios to the UHF band leaving their old VHF radios unused. These portable radios were commonly referred to as "bricks" as they closely resembled a construction brick both by dimension and weight.

Relations with UHFD began slowly. Many of the firefighters were concerned about JCUEMS providing suboptimal care, decreasing the call volume for their department, and potentially damaging their funding for staffing. Efforts were made from the day one of planning to the First Responder and EMT-Basic classes to the day of first service to involve UHFD.

On April 4, 2002, JCUEMS was to begin service the following day in preparation for the annual spring concert, the MTV Campus Invasion. A brief snafu that involved a debate over the status of insurance coverage for JCUEMS was resolved despite Salmi's travel outside the country. Finally, JCUEMS initiated service on April 5, 2002 with staffing from 3PM to 3AM seven days a week when classes were in session.

Business was slow at first. Calls for epistaxis and splinters were two of the first received. At the MTV Campus Invasion, syncopal episodes, drug and alcohol intoxication, musculoskeletal trauma, and many minor first aid patients were seen, treated, and dispositioned. Each call was a test for JCUEMS – a test of medical competence, professionalism, authority, and logistical benefit. Overall JCUEMS scored high marks with each patient contact. There were, however, bumps along the way. Issues of patient confidentiality, off duty personnel responding to calls, scheduling, documentation, radio traffic, scene control, and UHFD transfer of care were all frequent in the first weeks and months of service. The school year ended and JCUEMS was operational.

Over the following summer of 2002 Beck, with the support and dedication of Choudhri, Kaczmarek, Zohn, Lucia, Lowry, and Myszkowski, was able to make significant advances for the department. He was able to obtain \$9,000 in funding for a new, dedicated EMS UHF repeater radio system as well as a cellular telephone for on-line medical direction. Medical equipment including a treatment bed and spare oxygen tanks were donated by two of Beck's mentors from Six Flags Theme Park's EMS, Shawn Lutz and Mike Gelardi. By the end of summer Salmi had announced his departure from JCU and the appointment of a new director of CSS, Dan Clark.

Clark and Beck worked through late August to finalize improvements for the department's operational return. Choudhri, Kaczmarek, and others coordinated with Beck in developing a Summer EMS orientation that would allow early move-in for EMS Department personnel and continuing medical education training. Through the tireless work of Choudhri and Beck, the Office of Residence Life agreed to provide additional space including sleeping quarters for on-duty personnel in the basement of Dolan Hall. This additional space also came with the condition of expanded hours of service through the night until the Student Health Center

re-opened in the morning. Choudhri and Beck also negotiated the issuance of residence hall keys for the on-duty supervisor. Previously the EMS Department personnel required CSS or Residence Life to admit them to the residence halls during response. Upon completion of the summer orientation program and equipped with new radios, additional space, keys to residence halls, and newly patched uniforms, JCUEMS was prepared for an impressive year of service.

Additional supervisors were appointed and new recruits were solicited for training to begin in October. First Responder training was team taught by Beck and Marlea Miano '04. Julie Shina '04' astutely recognized that with a low call volume for truly critical emergencies (i.e. cardiac arrest) the department was less prepared then could be. Partnering with Miano and working with Beck and Choudhri, audits were created to provide an opportunity for the department to simulate and practice responding to and caring for emergency call in an effort to improve performance.

During the 2002 – 2003 academic and operational year call volume dramatically increased. This was due in great part to the Residence Life Staff requesting the department's services for residents. New EMS backpacks were purchased and South Pointe supplied the department with a glucometer. Student Affairs, now headed by Vice President Rombalski generously found a second office in the LSC Suite for EMS use. It was not by chance that this new office had been previously occupied by Ryan Daly. The family of Joshua Beck heard of the EMS Department in the Fall of 2002 and scheduled a donation for a pulse oximeter in 2003.

Later in the Fall of 2002, JCUEMS again responded to the community's request for service when some 30 students became suddenly ill with a food borne illness all within a three hour time period. The EMS Department mobilized off duty responders, established a triage center in the Student Health Service and moved ill patients from residence hall to the Health Center. UHFD and the Student Health Nurses became involved after EMS and Residence Life initiated management of this multiple patient incident. This incident clearly demonstrated the benefit of the EMS Department and it impressive capabilities.

Spring of 2003 brought additional laud to the EMS Department. A group of approximately 12 students planned attendance and travel at the NCEMS annual conference. Aside from a high

attendance at the conference, JCUEMS left with recognition. The Striving for Excellence Campus EMS accreditation was awarded after Beck worked to submit the application the night prior to the deadline. Such accreditation was unprecedented for a campus EMS organization that had only been operational for one year; other recipients of this same prestigious accreditation had been in service for 10, 15 and even 20 years. The founding members of JCUEMS strived to achieve excellence from day one having researched and designed the department's structure and operations based on other successful EMS agencies. Choudhri and Beck were also nominated for NCEMSF EMS Provider of the year, awarded to a single individual nationally. Beck had nominated Choudhri and Choudhri had nominated Beck; both had secured letters of recommendation and testimonials of the other's service in support of the nominations. Beck was presented with the 2003 Campus EMS Provider of the Year award. Additionally, one of the two JCU NCEMSF Skills Competition teams took second place in the nation. It was a truly an impressive showing for the department.

Other aspects of the EMS Department's growth are also worth noting. Co-op intern credit was established for EMS Department Supervisors through the office of Career Services. Alphanumeric pagers were utilized on an experimental basis for officers. Key rings for all duty personnel were obtained. (Previously, the single supervisor ring required the crew on scene prior to the supervisor wait for an RA or the supervisor's arrival for admittance to residence halls for calls.) A Courtesy Transport Vehicle and Program were setup. Students with stable minor illness or injury were able to obtain transportation to local emergency departments without utilization of a taxicab or ambulance.

Several members of the department, Choudhri, Zohn, Kaczmarek, Lowry and Cummings all of '04 pursued EMT-Basic training at UHHS-Geauga Regional Hospital. Beck facilitated a teaching for tuition program that helped to sustain EMT-Basic staff levels. UHHS-Geauga Regional Hospital also served as the American Heart Association Training Center for JCUEMS for the first several years.

Late in the Spring of 2003, Choudhri, Myszkowski, Kaczmarek, Beck, and Lowry formalized a previously informal tradition – the end-of-year EMS Appreciation and Awards dinner. The

program was modest but symbolized the humble beginnings and the meaningful contributions of the department. During the following Summer, JCUEMS staffed functions including graduation, orientations, and the Alumni Reunion weekend. This formalized a program in which EMS staffing would be available during the Summer vacation; EMS Department personnel working in the summer received free room accommodations for their service.

First Responder training for new recruits began again in September of 2004 with Beck and Miano team teaching with the support of Choudhri, Lowry, Cummings, Gedeon, Myszkowski and Kaczmarek. Also in the Fall, Beck worked with university administration in Student Affairs, Campus Safety, Student Health Services, Residence Life, South Pointe Hospital, and UHFD to develop and execute an Chief of EMS / EMS Department Manager Promotional Appointment Process. This process included written, oral, and practical evaluations of each candidate by university administration and independent public safety parties. Promotional recommendations were forward to the Vice President Rombalski for the actual appointment. Matthew Myszkowski was chosen to lead the department as Chief/Manager. Julie Kearney was appointed Deputy Chief / Assistant Manager. Beck and Myszkowski began a precedent in which the retiring Chief/Manager would continue in the role of EMS Department Safety Officer to advise new departmental leadership and affect a smooth transition.