Letter on 2019 Accomplishments and the Year Ahead

The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad relies on the support of many stakeholders, including its volunteer fire/rescue and administrative personnel, donors and community supporters, County officials and others to meet the Squad’s mission of providing the highest-quality fire/rescue/EMS service to Bethesda, Chevy Chase and surrounding communities. This letter provides an overview of what we accomplished in 2019 with your help – and what we have planned in 2020 and beyond.

2019 Accomplishments

Operations and Staffing

- **Responding to Emergency Calls:** Responded to 7,890 emergency calls in 2019 -- nearly one call every hour of every day of the year. Operated the second busiest ambulance and second busiest heavy rescue squad in Montgomery County.

- **Volunteer Paramedics, Firefighters and EMTs:** 150+ County-certified (IECS) volunteers – more than any other department in the County. For example, four volunteers completed the rigorous paramedic training program and are now "charge medics" at BCCRS.

Recruitment and Retention

- **Eliminated Door-to-Door Solicitation by Active Volunteers:** Finalized the transition to eliminate the requirement that active volunteers – who face increasing demands and requirements to staff emergency apparatus – go door-to-door asking for donations. This has freed-up volunteer fire/rescue personnel to focus on operations and training and should substantially help our recruitment efforts. This already has had a positive impact on active member morale, and we expect to help substantially with recruiting and retention.

- **Live-In Stipend Program:** Launched one of the most ambitious programs in the country to provide modest stipends of $750-$1,000/quarter to volunteers who live at the station and commit to riding a minimum number of hours each week (e.g., 48 hours/week to receive the $1,000 quarterly stipend).

- **New Staffing Software:** Rolled out new operational staffing and scheduling software (Aladtec). This provides a powerful tool to more effectively track staffing metrics and quickly and effectively judge the impact of changes and track trends over time. It also allows
operational personnel to schedule and trade shifts and for command staff to manage short-range and longer-range staffing needs.

**Emergency Fleet and Equipment**

- **New Ambulances:** Procured a new ambulance (~ $350,000), which includes the state-of-the-art power cot/power load systems (now embraced by the County). With the anticipated procurement of an additional ambulance in 2020, we will have completed our EMS fleet upgrade with no unit being older than 2014. This upgrade ensures all of our ambulances have up-to-date technology (including important safety upgrades to protect patients and emergency crews) and lower maintenance costs.

- **New Equipment:** Procurement of additional new thermal imaging cameras to allow BCCRS firefighters to "see through" smoke; expanded the number of ambulances with advanced-technology on EMS units (e.g., additional power cot systems); procured an additional LifePak 15 monitor/defibrillator; and upgraded equipment on our heavy Rescue Squads (e.g., Amkus lifting cylinders and updated rope rescue gear).

**Facilities**

- **Construction of Modern Permanent Sleeper/Live-In Space:** Completed work on a $225,000 renovation to create new live-in space, improve permanent sleeper and bunk room facilities, and upgrade other areas.

**Governance and External Affairs**

- **Board Engagement:** The Board of Directors met more than 20 times in 2019 – a tempo needed to move the organization forward in key areas.

- **Elections Process:** Revised the process for elections to establish two-year terms for Board officers and members and created a staggered election process (with half the Board elected in even-numbered years; the other half in odd-numbered years). This change should provide greater continuity in the Squad’s leadership and facilitate long-range planning. Further changes in governance and oversight are planned for 2020.

- **Transparency and Communications:** Continued our initiative to increase transparency by making available Board and membership agendas, minutes, and other documents on Google drive. We improved communication with the membership by consistently providing advance notice of Board and membership meeting agendas.

**Finances and Fundraising**

- **Year-Round Development Program:** Implemented new fundraising initiatives to better tailor donations to needs throughout the year, including a very successful mid-year fundraising campaign. In 2020, we plan to upgrade our online donor portal and make other changes to make it easier to donate to BCCRS (including an simpler process for donations from mobile devices).
• **Finances:** Implemented a new chart of accounts system that is more straightforward and better aligned with the Squad’s current financial activities. This system should also provide greater financial analysis and oversight.

**Top Projects and Challenges for 2020**

While we accomplished a great deal in 2019, we face a number of challenges in 2020 and beyond. The County’s fire/rescue system is changing rapidly, and we must adapt to these changing dynamics.

The board will continue its **long-range strategic review of operational and administrative models and activities** to ensure we can continue providing the highest quality service to our community. We hope to establish a promising vision for the Squad’s relationship with the County, including what role we play in the delivery of emergency services in Bethesda, Chevy Chase and surrounding areas. This includes further engagement on relations with neighboring departments and staffing issues.

Another high-priority initiative involves identifying new sources of revenue to fund operations, equipment and other needs in lieu of the door-to-door solicitations.

Finally, we will look at new methods and locations for providing basic and advanced training to our volunteer and day staff, particularly given the challenges of member travel to the new public safety training facility near Montgomery County Airpark.

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As an organization – as a collection of committed and professionally trained volunteer EMS, fire/rescue, and administrative personnel – BCCRS accomplished a great deal in 2019, and we are proud of our efforts. But we will not rest on our past accomplishments or history. To continue our tradition of excellence and service, we will work together and with key stakeholders to meet the challenges of 2020 and beyond.

If you have questions, or need more information about BCCRS, please visit us at our station at 5020 Battery Lane or send us an email: feedback@bccrs.org. We wish everyone a safe and happy new year.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors

**Feedback from Those We’ve Served**

Please take a minute to read some of the extraordinary things our community has told us in the past several months.

• Thank you for all of your help throughout the years and for your dedication!
• You do a fantastic job always and we appreciate all that you do for the community.
• Mom had a stroke November 3 at her home in DC. BCCRS came right away, (joined by DC). Thanks for getting her to Sibley fast, she's recovering well now.
• Always grateful knowing you're there and you care.
• Keep up your marvelous work in rescuing those in need in our community.
• Thanks for your work. You're the BEST. Happy and SAFE New Year!
• Thank you so much for the excellent service received in October 2019. Personnel were amazing!
• I am on the CC ListServe and read your very informative response to a query about how you relate to DC. Thank you for a clear and short explanation. So, I decided to donate.
• You represent genuine commitment to our community. We thank you!!
• You folks are beyond wonderful. You helped me out 2x in the past 10 years. You are very supportive and thorough. Thank you! Happy New Year to you all!
• You guys are angels!
• Thank you for your service! I see you driving with lights and sirens and say a prayer for you and those you are rushing to help. Keep up the good job!
• In deep appreciation to Allen Yiu and Ali Ahmadi, who saved my life on June 28th, 2014.
• You saved my child's life. I am forever grateful.
• Thank you. I was sick and you came. My smoke detector was going off and you also came. I appreciated the professionalism and care of the volunteers.
• Thank you for all of your work and for helping people when they are in danger (Leo, Age 6)
• I have appreciated your presence in the community since I arrived in 1977, and have supported you with a small donation each year. Thanks!
• You not only came to investigate a beeping detector, but you installed a new one for us! Much obliged.
• BCCRS answered the call when my terminally ill father was comatose, revived him, and transported him to the hospital back in 1990. I have never forgotten. You must never stop what you do.
• Thank you for all you do. You lead by example!
• Many thanks again for quick response for my wife on 12/7. She was able to receive tPA in time to help minimize her stroke. We are indebted to you.
• I have been donating for many years. You put out a fire in my house in 1986.
• Grateful you took my daddy to the hospital when I called, blessings!
• You guys absolutely ROCK. Thanks for everything you do.
• Thank you so much for being there within minutes this past summer for our son.
• Your team has always responded quickly and calmly whenever we have had a need and were just great with my elderly parents. Thanks for you hard work and dedication.
• You helped me when I needed it in December 2007 and I have not forgotten.
• In 2011 the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad saved me after a huge tree fell on me during a snow storm. Without their support I might well have died. Thank you for all you do.
• You twice took my children to Suburban Hospital when they had febrile seizures. We will never forget.
• You came when we needed you -- always prompt, professional and kind.
• I live in DC; Mom lived in MD; you have helped us both; I have contributed in the past, but did not receive a letter.
• Thank you for taking my husband to Suburban in the middle of the night about ten years ago! He is fine, thanks to you and the great doctors there.
• You folks came when I had a heart attack in 2012, and I am grateful.
• You saved my life in 1987. I give every year in commemoration.
• You've provided me with emergency medical service, twice, at my home in the Village.
• You are super people who provide a VERY, VERY important service— I appreciate you and what you do!
• You saved the life of a friend's five-week-old baby, who had stopped breathing, many years ago.
• My real reason is the support you gave to us when our children were young and we had three emergencies!!! Always grateful.
• Thank You very much for the extremely important service you provide to our community!
• When our kids were little and I was always so impressed with how kind and respectful you were to the residents when you would respond to calls at Knollwood when my mother was living there.
• I want to support the service and sense of safety that BCCRS provides.
• You guys are a community asset for sure.
• We truly value your service and your sacrifice.
• Thank you so much for all that you do! You have helped my older parents several times, and you are always patient, kind, and professional. It really gives us peace of mind knowing that our emergency services are so excellent.