

by Kathy Clayton

## MedStar receives EMS 10 innovation award

MedStar Mobile Healthcare, emergency and non-emergency ambulance service provider to 15 Tarrant County cities, recently received one of the Journal of Emergency Medical Services (JEMS) “EMS 10 Innovators in EMS Award.” Since its inception in 2008, the EMS 10 Award has honored individuals who have led significant innovation in the emergency medical services profession, but for 2013, MedStar is pleased to be the first company to receive the award.

Douglas Hooten, executive director of MedStar, received the award on behalf of MedStar’s 375 employees at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., in March. In presenting the award, A. J. Heightman, editor-in-chief of JEMS, cited MedStar’s numerous innovations designed to change “emergency medical services” to “mobile healthcare.” One of MedStar’s most ambitious projects is a community outreach program intended to reduce unnecessary 9-1-1 calls / trips to the emergency room by providing regularly scheduled at-home assessments to enrolled patients. An advanced practice paramedic performs the assessment, checks medication, follows up with primary care providers and gives the patient the social interactions they often lack on a daily basis. Heightman especially praised the staff-wide commitment to all of MedStar’s community-based programs.

## Galveston Area Ambulance Authority receives HPP grant

The Galveston County Health District’s Galveston Area Ambulance Authority (GAAA), along with Santa Fe Fire and Rescue and La Marque Fire Department, recently announced the installation of an integrated vehicle intelligence system throughout their ambulance fleets. In a collaborative effort between the three EMS services, the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB), Mainland Medical Center and RAC-R, the group was awarded a Hospital Preparedness Program grant to purchase and install the Acetech system, a product of Ferno, Inc., in 26 ambulances within Galveston County.

The web-based system monitors and even corrects an ambulance driver’s behavior, which will reduce risk and liability for the agencies. The system can also send messages to the fleet manager regarding mechanical problems as they occur, including required maintenance and engine error codes. Administrative staff can also

receive text messages from the system when an ambulance has been idling for a long period of time, which may help reduce excessive scene times, fuel costs and the unit’s hour utilization.

The wi-fi modems included with the system will allow faster and more efficient transmission of 12-lead EKGs to hospitals, and they are also being utilized to remotely monitor access to narcotic safes in some of the ambulances.

The system includes an RFID tracking system for items such as monitors, stair chairs, drug kits and airway kits—if an ambulance crew tries to leave an area without the tracked items on the unit, an alarm will sound. If the items remain at a different location, they can later be traced via a web-based program. Other specialty equipment can also be tagged and viewed via the web, which, if used in tandem by multiple providers, can be beneficial in mass casualty and disaster responses.

## Multiple saves at a Plano recreation center

As reported by the Dallas Morning News, a man exercising at Plano’s Tom Muehlenbeck Center, a city-run recreation center, collapsed with a heart attack in January. At the time, Plano’s fire chief Brian Crawford happened to be nearby and joined the parks and recreation staff in responding. They used an onsite AED and performed CPR until paramedics arrived. The patient was transported to the hospital and was released two days later.

Crawford and others were congratulated for their effort at a reception at the center in February. But, while they were being celebrated,

another exerciser collapsed. Again, parks department employees and the same paramedics who were being honored rushed to help the 62-year-old man. CPR was performed and the man was alert and talking by the time he was transported to the hospital.

“These CPR save stories are proof that our outreach efforts and CPR training are coming together and saving lives,” Crawford said in media reports. “Citizens are empowered with the knowledge and skill to do what needs to be done in the minutes after witnessing a cardiac arrest; calling 9-1-1 to get the fire crews on the way and performing CPR.”