

# 2024 Colorado EMS Awards

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Presented by the

Emergency Medical  
Services Association  
of Colorado

and the

Colorado  
Department of Public Health  
and Environment

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## **BLS EMS Professional-of-the-Year**

### ***Levi New***

#### **Pitkin Volunteer Fire Department**

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Levi New lives in Pitkin, a small town within the Quartz Creek Valley of Gunnison County with his wife and 4 children. Pitkin and Ohio City rely on an all-volunteer community member model to respond to medical emergencies and calls for help. As one of the only prehospital trained (EMT) providers within the Pitkin/Ohio City valley, Mr. New has made it a priority to respond to all emergencies within his community. The first response there is very rural, and 100% volunteer based. Needless to say, Levi is "the guy" out there. He is the only EMT-B that lives in Pitkin. This makes him the initial response for 30 min or more before mutual aid arrives. He is the backbone to the Pitkin Volunteer Fire Department. Levi's shift never ends. Due to the nature of the antiquated paging system in Pitkin, when a 911 call goes out Levi or his wife have to run to the station to set an audible alarm off. The only reason he knows there is a call is because he receives active 911 alerts on his phone. The problem with this is that he has to field all of these notifications on his phone with GVH EMS calls. This means even at 2 am he is up, reading these alerts to make sure the 911 call is not in Pitkin or surrounding area.

Levi is also consistently there when GVH EMS has all of its ambulances out. When possible, he leaves his full time job as a general contractor/carpenter and drives the 30 min to Gunnison to cover for GVH EMS. Levi has been a part of Gunnison Valley Health Paramedics, since 2015 as a well-respected and active PRN member of our team. It is, however, his contributions to the volunteer Pitkin and Ohio City Fire/Quick Response Teams that is the impetus for my nomination spotlighting his commendable work of supporting our state and nation's rural and underserved communities.

Gunnison's nearest trauma II center is Grand Junction, about a two-and-a-half-hour drive from the city of Gunnison or 50 minutes by air. In many of these incident's, time has been a crucial factor, and Levi's actions have in my opinion given countless patients the upper hand against that proverbial time window they face.

Levi New is exceptional as not only an EMT however, a leader for the rural community of Pitkin CO. Levi is a dedicated father and skilled carpenter who has provided his community with peace of mind by helping further develop Pitkin QRT and making it the efficient service that it is today. This is no small feat considering the lack of resources and remoteness of the response area. Levi embodies what it means to lead by example and put others first to better his community.

## **Robert Marlin ALS Professional-of-the-Year Courtney Wham**

Denver Health Paramedic Division, Byers Fire and Rescue

Courtney “Coco” Wham has been an integral part of the EMS community in Colorado. You would be hard-pressed to talk to any agency in the state that hasn’t heard of or worked with Coco. Coco’s contribution to EMS is all encompassing; she is involved in street-level medicine, pre-hospital research, tactical EMS, and education. Coco listens to every patient she encounters, without haste or judgment, and provides an exceptional level of care that often goes above and beyond what is required of her. She is a fierce patient advocate,



Courtney defines this award as an ideal EMT dedicated to serving her community and advancing the excellence in delivery of care to the citizens of Colorado, including those beyond her immediate care. Courtney has worked as a paramedic since 2017, and has successfully completed medical school while also serving as a paramedic. To expand her reach beyond the local Denver metro area, she recently began training to become a firefighter and serve as a paramedic with Byers Fire and Rescue. Few people are able to successfully juggle three such rigorous career endeavors, and it is a testament to her commitment to EMS that she continues to develop the breadth of her potential skills.

While completing medical school and operating as a paramedic, she has also carved out time as an educator for the Department of Health and Human Services Tactical Medical Unit, the Denver Health Paramedic Student Program, and the Denver Health Paramedic Division.

Courtney is also a staunch advocate for the needs of her patients from all socioeconomic strata. Emergency medicine is a unique specialty that confronts disparities within the healthcare system, and one whose goal is to provide compassionate, evidence-based and high-quality care for diverse patient populations. Courtney exemplifies that compassion and combines it with an intellectual drive to find and provide high-quality, evidence-based care for all. She has not only continued to work as a paramedic since 2017, but also volunteers in our local DAWN Clinic, providing care to uninsured members of our community. Courtney extends herself further, using her leadership and teaching skill to recruit additional volunteers and provide individualized instruction for first-year students.

Denver Health and the Paramedic Division can sometimes be challenging, to say the least. Coco is routinely sought after by her peers for her ability

to navigate the complexities of our environment with level-headed and innovative approaches. She is able to rise above the difficulties and find ingenious solutions that benefit both colleagues and patients alike. Although not officially appointed or ordained, she is a leader among her peers. She is confident, committed, selfless, humble, authentic and demonstrates integrity with her actions. Her unwavering enthusiasm and esprit de corps fosters a positive and uplifting atmosphere. Coco's relentless pursuit of excellence along with her tireless efforts to improve the skills and knowledge of those under her guidance are truly inspiring

However, what stands out most is Coco's genuine compassion for others. Whether she's providing ethical care to those in vulnerable situations, advocating for unappreciative patients, orchestrating elaborate plans to empower those less fortunate, or caring for our four-legged companions, her compassion, empathy and kindness have a lasting impact on those she encounters.

## **EMS Executive-of-the-Year** ***Kathy Steckel***

North Fork EMS

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Kathy's dedication, vision, and leadership have not only improved emergency medical services but have fundamentally transformed the way our community receives care. Kathy has been with North Fork (Delta County) EMS for more than 20 years, with the last decade serving as the Executive Director. During her tenure, she has overseen the transition of NF EMS from a voluntary subscription service to a Special District—an initiative supported by an innovative tax structure that received overwhelming voter approval. This transition alone speaks volumes about her ability to engage the community, manage complex systems, and ensure long-term sustainability for the agency.

However, it is important to highlight that NF EMS has seen continuous improvement in service delivery ever since Kathy took on a leadership role. Her tireless commitment to excellence has led to more stable staffing, increased service capacity, faster response times, and improved patient outcomes—particularly significant in a community like ours, with one of the oldest populations in the state. Kathy understands the unique needs of our area and has worked diligently to ensure those needs are met, day in and day out.

As a first responder partner in Hotchkiss, I can confidently say that our EMS care has never been stronger. Kathy's leadership and the unwavering dedication of her team have made a remarkable difference in the quality of care we provide for our residents. The improvement in response times and patient outcomes has been noticeable, and Kathy's leadership is at the heart

of this success.

Kathy leads with passion and conviction. She mentored and trained other leaders. She recognized a need for our service to provide advanced life support. She researched and wrote grants for education and to purchase quick-response vehicles. She drew others into her vision and made it happen. NF EMS has provided ALS services for nearly 10 years now. Kathy has mentored other agencies around the state seeking increases in public funding. Kathy has dedicated almost 3 decades to serving her community in EMS. She has demonstrated personal growth and grown the agency to the needs of the people she serves. She understands the need to keep the small town, community feel while exceeding at professionalism and delivery of services.

## **Community Paramedic-of-the-Year** **Annie Dorchak**

Evergreen Fire Rescue

Since joining EFR in 2007, Annie Dorchak has been instrumental in the development and success of the ECARES program. Annie's contributions have significantly benefited not only EFR but also the Evergreen community as a whole. The ECARES program fills community and consumer- related gaps in our local health care system and provides education to our residents on how to age in place, stay healthy, prevent falls, avoid unnecessary 911 phone calls, emergency room visits, hospital stays and re-admissions to the hospital. ECARES has had over 700 patient contacts since 2024.



Annie took a need for Community Paramedics in the community she serves in Evergreen and expand that into a very well run program. There is a high elderly population in the Community she serves and many have benefited from her program and it has benefitted her agency as well. She has put a ton of work into this project over the last several years making it one that is very well run serving many people.

Not only that many of the surrounding EMS/fire agencies have seen the phenomenal work that Annie has done that she has helped them set up their Community Paramedic Programs as well. She has also set up a Committee with all of these agencies, their EMS coordinators and medical directors so that they come up with ideas, share protocols and work together to meet the unique needs of each community with their own Community Paramedic Program. She is also coming up with ways that this can be shared further with very remote communities across the state

that would benefit from the knowledge she has gained from setting up hers and assisting with several others. She has sorta' become known as a "Community Paramedic Program Guru" and the person to go to. Annie had been so successful with her program and helping set up other programs of many other agencies in the area. She has demonstrated her passion to serve her community and the communities around her and is more than deserving of this award.

It takes a certain type of individual to collaborate successfully within a community and make positive changes. She is a mentor to many growing agencies within our community. These agencies rely on her expertise to guide them along the path to success. Annie is also a Masters level Social Worker who is compassionate, resourceful, and a strong advocate for others to live a better life.

## **EMS Dispatcher-of-the-Year** ***Taryn Diritto***

El Paso County Sheriff's Office

Taryn Diritto started with the El Paso County Sheriff's Office in November of 2021, but she began her dispatching career in 2019 with the Woodland Park Police Department. Taryn is the type of dispatcher you want in your 9-1-1 center. She is hardworking, reliable and trustworthy. These are qualities you expect from a first responder so what sets Taryn apart from the rest is that when she says she cares about the citizens she serves- she actually means it! Her heart is in this field for all of the right reasons. And although a harsh truth that we don't want to believe is true, this is a quality that many first responders lose sight of after a while.

Whether it is because of compassion fatigue or trauma, it is easy for first responders to become less empathetic and more complacent. But for Taryn, her compassion is so pure and so genuine. She takes responsibility for every call she answers and is able to set aside her own personal feelings, opinions, and needs to completely focus on the person calling into 9-1-1 for help. Taryn works above and beyond to serve the members of her community and does so selflessly.

On March 13th, 2024, Taryn Diritto received a 9-1-1 call from a terrified woman reporting that her loved one had overdosed on fentanyl. She was



in tears, convinced that it was already too late. She put all of her trust into Taryn that day. With her peaceful tone Taryn was able to effectively calm the caller down enough to give her instructions to save her loved one's life. Taryn walked her caller through CPR instructions, as well as assisted her with administering Narcan. She never lost sight of what was most important – saving this life. And that is exactly what she did. Because of Taryn's quick response and ability to successfully walk her panicked caller through crucial lifesaving instructions, she not only saved a life but gave her caller back years of memories to create with the person that meant the most to her.

This is one of many examples of the incredible work Taryn does. The citizens of El Paso County can feel safe knowing that Dispatchers like Taryn Dirito are there to answer their calls during the worst day of their life.

## **Francis Mildred Roth Women in EMS Award** ***Laura Kent***

### **American Medical Response**

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Laura has been a paramedic in Colorado Springs/El Paso County since 1984. She started at A-1 paramedics when there were only 2 other females working for the company. She excelled at patient care, worked exceptionally hard and was an integral part of the team, even when the team wasn't very accepting of women. Through her hard work, dedication, patient care and advocacy, she has paved the way for myself and other females to excel in the EMS field.

In 40 years of service, she has experienced many things, including faster responses, more procedures, changing protocols, better radio communication, and a field that is much more accepting of females in EMS. She has seen the circle of EMS life as procedures, medications, and protocols come into and fall out of fashion. Laura has seen many changes and has used that knowledge and experience to mentor and teach new EMS providers.

In addition to being a field paramedic, she has worked on many, many special events at AMR. She developed relationships with the various venues and worked to provide exceptional patient care and customer service with everyone she encountered. She is known in the Colorado Springs area as the car seat lady. She coordinated the AMR car seat program from 2004-2024 and ran the Children's Hospital Injury Prevention Safe Kids Program from 2014-2018. She has been instrumental in other safety and injury prevention programs in El Paso County.





Laura retired from AMR in July 2024, but she continues to shape the future of EMS by teaching EMT classes at UCHHealth-Memorial EMS in Colorado Springs. In this role, she is able to inspire and teach future EMS providers by incorporating her love of the field. She encourages future EMTs to work hard, stand up for their patients, and be a patient advocate even when that isn't the easy way. In her way of leading by example, she teaches her students to be compassionate care givers by making a connection with each student. Her students know they can always reach out to her if they are struggling with class or with outside family issues. Laura is always available for her students, her co-workers, her friends and family, or her community.

Looking back at a career that has spanned 40+ years, she is most proud of knowing that she did a good job and always did her best for every patient.

## **C.J. Shanaberger Award for Lifetime Achievement in EMS** ***Dave Marshall*** Canon City Area Fire Protection District

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Battalion Chief Marshall's 46 year career in the fire service began as a member of the Canon City Volunteer Fire Department October 1, 1978.

During his tenure with the fire department, Chief Marshall has served as a leader in many programs for most of his career. Using his words, he was "frocked" as an EMS instructor in 1984, and began instructing the EMT program at Pueblo Community College that year, continuing his instruction for over the next 30 years. He was instrumental in educating the majority of EMS professionals in Fremont County, many of whom have gone on to be leaders in EMS agencies, for nearly three generations. Chief Marshall has been the leader of the EMS division of the fire department since the 1980s. He was one of the early adopters of new rescue techniques and vehicle extrication methods, helping the department grow in their efficiency to get patients to the next level of care in their time of need. Under his leadership, the EMS division has grown from mostly basic EMTs to a vibrant ALS and Paramedic level service provider to the community.



His education and interest didn't stop at EMS. He has also served as a fire instructor, hazmat instructor, wilderness and mountain rescue, and technical rescue instructor. He was a member of the first dive team, high angle rescue and hazmat teams, and integral in their development from infancy to a full department function. His training over the more than four



decades span a diverse spectrum, including dive and ice rescue, mountain and water rescue, hazardous material technician and instructor, auto extrication, Scott Air-Pak maintenance, and numerous fire service tactical and leadership training.

Under his leadership, the EMS division of the fire district has grown from mostly basic EMTs in the beginning, to now mostly ALS and paramedic level providers.

Dave has made a mark on the EMS community that will never go away. His 46 years of service is second to none. The kind of dedication it takes to continue to lead an agency after all of those years truly expresses the love you have for the field.

## **Dr. Valentin E. Wohlaue Award for Physician Excellence in EMS** ***Dr. Colleen Foster***

Louisville Fire Protection District

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The title of medical director barely begins to capture Dr. Colleen Foster's contribution as a fully involved leader, mentor, motivator and advocate who inspires patient-centric transformation in every aspect of our EMS program. She brings energy and passion to every training, every ride-along, and every interaction with EMS providers. She speaks with a clear voice that draws respect and admiration, both locally and regionally.



Dr. Foster joined Louisville Fire Protection District in early 2021, delivering thoughtful guidance to navigate the challenges of prehospital patient care during a pandemic. She stepped forward again to meet crisis in late 2021 during the Marshall Fire, voluntarily responding to the station to support and encourage firefighters on the front line, then driving to Good Samaritan Medical Center to help evacuate the hospital. She shares lessons learned from the evacuation to improve preparedness across the region.

Dr. Foster also serves as associate medical director at North Metro Fire Rescue and treats patients as an emergency physician within the UCHHealth hospital system in Northern Colorado. After completing residency at Denver Health in 2012, she served as assistant EMS director and chair of the emergency department at Good Samaritan. Her in-hospital work benefits the EMS community by bringing prehospital perspective and advocacy to hospital leadership settings.

She actively shapes EMS protocols within two regions, Denver and Boulder County, advocating for evidence-based change to EMS practice. Her tireless leadership, consensus-building and attention to detail led to

meaningful improvements to protocols in the areas of decision-making capacity and consent, multimodal pain management, anaphylaxis, drowning and agitation. She faithfully sets aside time in her busy schedule for protocol meetings, earning her reputation as a reliable, accountable and trustworthy voice on both committees.

She leads regional efforts to improve neurologically intact survival from out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, applying evidence-backed strategies to save lives. At Louisville Fire, she gathered a team to attend national high-performance CPR training, to revise our pit crew CPR approach, to provide metrics and feedback on every cardiac arrest, to maintain skills through quarterly drills, to promote bystander CPR, and to implement a survivor celebration program. Since rolling out the initiative in December 2023, Louisville has seen a significant uptick in cardiac arrest survival.

Dr. Foster promotes just culture in EMS. Her coaching is supportive and non-threatening, which takes EMS providers want to do better for patients -- and make her proud. She hand-writes postcards recognizing EMTs and medics for exceptional patient care. Under her leadership, our providers self-report mistakes and medication errors without fear, which leads to opportunities to improve policy, equipment and training. She builds bridges between EMS providers and healthcare partners based on mutual understanding of roles and goals.

She plays a key role in shaping EMS policy at Louisville Fire. After crafting a policy for handling calls dispatched as lift assists, she presented the crews with data supporting the change, sharing the “why” to bring them on board. She created a leave-behind naloxone program and brought in guest speakers to educate the crews on opiate use disorder. She lent her expertise toward the creation of a progressive maternity policy for our firefighters.

She connects with our EMTs and medics as people, building common ground through authenticity. She shares vegetables from her garden, bread from her kitchen, and stories about the challenges of parenting her two young boys while navigating care for her aging parents. When our people encounter difficulty, professionally or personally, they know she will listen without judgment. She attends our promotional ceremonies and celebrates our achievements.

She brings creativity and depth to our monthly EMS trainings, engaging adult learners through humor, lively discussion, data and evidence, realistic scenarios, guest speakers, games, interdisciplinary education and teamwork. You never know what to expect when you walk into her classroom, but you can count on being challenged and motivated - and sometimes entertained.

## EMS Ambulance Service-of-the-Year *American Medical Response - Pueblo*

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AMR Pueblo is leading the charge on increasing the care available to the citizens of Pueblo County. The CES department of AMR Pueblo continues to pursue higher quality medicine that is delivered to the community. With the help of an aggressive forward thinking Medical Director, AMR Pueblo has received many waivers from the state to perform procedures that are needed in the community to improve the chances of survival prior to getting to the hospital. AMR Pueblo has been instrumental in acquiring the needed equipment to start carrying blood in Pueblo County. AMR Pueblo has a CQI program that involves their community partners that allows them to learn and improve upon medical treatment.



They have also revamped their field STEMI activation program, achieving the remarkable feat of no false activations in 2024. This improvement underscores their commitment to precision and efficiency, ensuring that patients experiencing STEMI receive timely and appropriate care.

In addition to their clinical achievements, AMR Pueblo has been a beacon of support and education for regional agencies. They offer free training, Continuing Medical Education (CMEs), and assistance with waiver applications, reflecting their dedication to elevating the standard of care throughout the community.

AMR Pueblo is often found giving back to the community in the form of free medical standby services. The biggest standby given back to the community and State, is the Colorado State Fair. AMR Pueblo navigates medical services to the State Fair each year. They provide countless hours of free medical standby services to the Fair, Rodeo, concert and other State Fair activities. Other community standby events are the annual chili festival, School event, and many other non-profit organization events. AMR Pueblo founded the annual AMR Safety Jam. They celebrated their 10th year coordinating this event in 2024. AMR Safety Jam serves as a means for community members to get education, and services provided by community partners. AMR now provides Safety Jam events in Pueblo, Fremont and Otero County.

AMR Pueblo shows stellar dedication to the community; they provide ALS, BLS Wheelchair and Mobile health services to Pueblo County. AMR Pueblo provides CPR education to the community, as well as ACLS, PALS and EMS refresher classes each year.

## **The Dr. Robert Campbell Award for Distinguished and Meritorious Service**

### ***Sean Caffrey***

**EMSAC, Crested Butte Fire Protection District**

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Over the past two decades Sean Caffrey has shown his dedication to EMS, EMSAC and the citizens of Colorado through the many hats he has worn. Sean has worked the streets as an EMT, then Paramedic, EMSAC Vice President and President, Program Manager, EMS System Development Coordinator for CDPHE, and now current Commissioner of the Crested Butte Fire Protection District. Sean is still active in EMSAC and the representative for the EMS Sustainability Task Force, and very active on the Advocacy Committee. Sean regularly attends the RETAC forum, providing valuable help with tough funding projects. Sean also finds time to be a part of the NAEMT, and the National EMS Management Association.



Sean has coordinated providing pediatric training to many communities in the State. He was noted for bringing the “Big Trailer” to the communities for provider pediatric training. Sean has a sense of humor that keep us all on our toes and makes stressful times more bearable. Sean gives of himself to any agency that needs help, offering his expertise in the EMS field to assist in their need.

As this award indicates, this person must show dedication to EMSAC and EMS. While Sean no longer holds a BOD or executive position on EMSAC he is a lifetime member. Sean continues to show his willingness to help EMS and EMSAC. Representing EMSAC, he recently offered and attended the American Ambulance Association Conference showing support for the future funding of EMS. Sean just returned from EMS World where he advocated at meetings the betterment of EMS in Colorado.

Sean Caffrey is the definition of the Dr. Robert Campbell Award for Distinguished and Meritorious Service. His decades of service to the Colorado EMS system shows this. His deserving of this award is also shown in the five letters of support attached. I offer my highest recommendation for Sean to receive this award.

Sean influenced the development of the EMS system across the state. His service as President of the National EMS Management Association and of

EMSAC further solidifies his commitment to advancing the profession and supporting his peers through tireless advocacy and leadership.

Sean's extensive volunteer work in numerous EMS positions highlights his passion for the industry and commitment to giving back to the community. His volunteer service has made a lasting impact on the EMS community, both in Colorado and nationally, as he continues to support initiatives that drive innovation and elevate the profession.

Sean has demonstrated unwavering dedication to EMS through his decades of leadership and extensive contributions to the EMS community, from hands-on EMS leadership to educational roles and advocacy at national and local levels. Sean is passionate about EMS. He has served on numerous EMSAC committees over the years. He is a Past President, Past Vice-President and is active on the Advocacy Committee. He has also served on various EMS taskforce efforts.

## **EMS RN of the Year**

### ***Alice Harvey***

#### **Eagle County Paramedic Services**

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Alice's exceptional career in emergency nursing, her innovative leadership in community health and her unwavering dedication to advancing emergency care make her a highly deserving candidate for this prestigious recognition.

Throughout her distinguished career, Alice has consistently demonstrated her passion for improving the health and well-being of her community. As the Community Health Manager at ECPS, Alice oversees the community paramedics, population health and home health programs. Her leadership has been instrumental in expanding access to healthcare services for underserved populations in rural Eagle County, ensuring that patients receive timely, quality care in their homes and communities. Under her supervision, these programs have not only reduced hospital readmissions but have also enhanced patient outcomes and contributed to healthier, more resilient communities.

Under her guidance, the community paramedic program has expanded to not only serve patients in their homes but also provide proactive screenings and care in collaboration with the Mobile Intercultural Resource Alliance



(MIRA) bus. Monthly community paramedic visits have all but doubled, averaging 100 or more visits per month; thanks in large part to Alice's outreach efforts to healthcare providers across the valley ensuring they are aware of ECPS services.

Alice has drawn together a coalition of mobile integrated health providers across the state, building novel data sharing programs designed to improve outcomes for all patients. She has traveled the country speaking on behalf of the power of mobile integrated health and has been one of the state's leading voices for legislative change to enable the future community based healthcare services.

Alice's dedication to emergency care was seen in her roles as an emergency department nurse at Valley View Hospital and Aspen Valley Hospital, where she provided critical, life-saving care to patients during some of their most vulnerable moments. Her expertise in trauma, acute care and emergency response was widely recognized, and her commitment to improving patient care was evident in everything she did.

Alice served as the clinical case manager at Pioneers Medical Center, where she was the director of case management and oversaw the emergency department. Her dual role allowed her to bridge the gap between emergency care and case management, ensuring that patients received seamless, coordinated care from the time they entered the emergency room through their recovery. Alice's holistic approach to patient care has been transformative, and her leadership in this area has set a new standard for integrated healthcare delivery.

Alice embodies the qualities of an outstanding RN in emergency care. Her breadth of experience, from the front lines of emergency departments to leading community health initiatives, has allowed her to make a significant and lasting impact on healthcare delivery in Colorado. Alice's contributions to emergency nursing, her dedication to improving access to care, and her leadership in navigating public health challenges have all advanced the quality of emergency care provided to the citizens of our state.



## Dr. Gerald Gordon EMS Instructor-of-the-Year

### *Mike Archuleta*

CommonSpirit Health

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Mike has been teaching for more than 20 years and has proven to much of the State his dedication to education. He has demonstrated an exceptional level of dedication and expertise in the field of emergency medical services throughout his extensive career.

Mike's contributions to the State of Colorado's trauma and EMS system are remarkable. His career includes being an ER nurse, Department Manager, Trauma Nurse Coordinator, and Educator. Mike help with the coordination and delivery of the Wilz Trauma Symposium. This event provides education for providers of all levels. Mike has worked tirelessly throughout the state to assist our rural trauma centers with becoming the best that they can be. From orienting a new trauma program manager, to providing policy and meeting templates, teaching TNCC/ENPC/AMLS/PHTLS, to attending their trauma meetings and even their state reviews.



One of Mike's most notable achievements this past year was providing Advanced Trauma Life Support education to traumatologists in Ukraine who were impacted by wartime conditions.

In addition to his role with CommonSpirit Health, Mike's involvement with the American Heart Association as a faculty member through Colorado Advanced Life Support further underscores his expertise and dedication. He serves as an instructor and course director for nearly every certification related to emergency care, reflecting his deep knowledge and passion for the field. Mike's ability to impart complex information and best practices to healthcare professionals is a testament to his exceptional teaching skills and commitment to the advancement of emergency care.

Mike is frequently sought after for his insights during trauma program reviews, providing education, knowledge on best practices, and general support to improve trauma care throughout Colorado. His contributions have led to measurable improvements in trauma care, underscoring his effectiveness as an educator and his unwavering dedication to the field.

Mike's commitment to excellence in emergency medical services education is nothing short of extraordinary. Mike's engaging teaching methods have set the standard for Southern Colorado EMS education. He seamlessly integrates technology with practical, hands-on training, ensuring that his



students are not only well-versed in theoretical knowledge but are also adept in real-world scenarios. His approach fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills, empowering his students to perform effectively under pressure.

His mentorship and guidance have inspired many students to pursue careers in EMS, contributing to a new generation of skilled and compassionate professionals.

## **EMS Region of the Year** ***Southeastern Colorado RETAC***

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The SE Colorado Regional Emergency Medical and Trauma Services Advisory Council as we know it today is quite different from the RETAC of old. Its



members have strived to make this very valuable RETAC an organization that the state can be proud of.

Throughout the last year, the Southeast Region has made great improvements to better EMS across the region. Agencies are working well together and collaborating to achieve goals and trouble shoot problems they are having together instead of agencies struggling on their own.

SECRETAC was the second RETAC in the state to realize the importance of having a Regional Medical Director (RMD). Agencies are participating more in the Multi-Regional Quality Management Program. This program allows for a non-biased approach in reviewing tough calls through the RMD coordinator, peers from other agencies and medical directors. This helps share EMS knowledge across the region and can trouble shoot any guideline issues or agency specific issues that arise. This is a robust program that is getting a lot of momentum as we grow the program and many other regions in the state are looking at this program and incorporating it into their processes.

Our Region has vastly improved EMS education with the assistance of the RMD Program, a full time RMD Coordinator, and UC Health contracted EMS instructors to offer a regional approach to EMS CE's based on calls that are being audited and run through our Quality Management Program (QMP). Utilizing the RMD and QRP programs we now see more interagency training being developed, including cooperative training and work sessions with the regional hospital ERs, which improves patient care immensely and simplifies patient transfer. Although not new to the state this RETAC is now incorporating the use of Pulsara to keep definitive information available as the patient moves through the prehospital, ER and hospital care systems.

SECRETAC and the Quality Management Program are starting to recognize providers for exceptional care provided in the region which is helping get agencies more engaged and excited about the work that these programs do. Our region is becoming more involved with injury prevention and community outreach projects than we have been in the past. EMS agencies are engaged and involved in their hometowns and represent the EMS community very well.

SECRETAC is hoping to improve the quality of the initial education being offered in the region and has recently become the first RETAC to be awarded Education Training Center Status by the state. This will help us to grow and develop providers closer to their home agencies in the rural areas. Through the collaboration of the programs that are being developed in the Southeastern Region, any time an agency is short on providers due to injuries/surgery of staff members or needs additional help with coverage during funerals, usually multiple agencies step up and help out the best that they can.

These achievements are a starting point not a stopping point for the SECRETAC, as it continues to grow as an organization leading its individual services in providing ever better pre-hospital emergency medical care to the region.

## **EMSAC Citizen Rescue Award for Valor** **Vincent Wanamaker**

**EMT student at Warren Tech CTE High School**

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Lakewood High school student Vincent Wanamaker jumped out of the stands to help an injured student during the Homecoming Assembly. Vincent's EMS training was evident as he quickly assessed the situation and offered aide until paramedics arrived.

*We arrived at Lakewood High School for a patient who had fallen from an acrobatic stunt in their cheer routine we were met by EMT student Vincent Wanamaker who was very helpful, calm and collected. He was able to give us pertinent information on the patient status after doing a primary trauma assessment of his own, while waiting for EMS services to arrive. He had assured that the cervical spine was secured and was able to give us information on the patient CMS status for all extremities. He was very collected and gave an excellent handoff to us as we arrived and stepped up in a situation that needed prompt EMS response. We were very grateful for*



*his information and believe he will do very well in his future within the EMS field. ~ Bryce Carter, Paramedic/ Firefighter, West Metro Fire Rescue*

As an EMT student, Vincent has already learned to document his patient contact! Here is his "PCR."

"So about 2 weeks ago on Thursday the 19th around 13:00 (1:00 pm), I was there in the LHS gymnasium watching the shenanigans take place at our homecoming assembly. In this assembly there are a lot of "skits" and dances that happen, one of which is the cheerleading team that performs a dance of their own. My soon-to-be patient was the lead in the cheer performance, standing at the top of their pyramid in the routine. At the time it was a fun, rowdy time, but as they brought her down, her spotters caught her, but she slipped through their hands and fell to the ground hitting head-first. I was sitting in our section of the gym, when I noticed her lying motionless with her team members surrounding her. This is where I went down to the floor to render aid to her. She was unconscious when I arrived to her, but she soon started regaining consciousness and could follow simple commands I was giving. I started with checking a rough set of vitals which were slightly elevated, but not to a level of concern, and at the same time checked CSMs (circulatory, Sensory, Motor functions) to see if there were any issues happening in her spine or issues perfusing (getting blood to the extremities), as there was concern for spinal injury. Then I moved down to her feet to continue with CSMs and make sure her spine wasn't badly injured or damaged in any spot. From there I calmly asked her SAMPLE questions to get a brief history. By this point West Metro Fire Engine 3 and Medic 2 arrived to the school and came into the gym to further continue their assessment. On their approach I gave them a brief handoff synopsis of what I had completed and asked if there were any other needs from me. There were not any needs from me, so I stuck around in case there was anything that they needed help with or that the teachers needed around me, and followed them to the gymnasium doors where I then left them and continued as I was doing before the incident."

*I am writing to express my deepest gratitude for your quick actions during the recent school assembly when my daughter was seriously injured. Your response, driven by your EMT training at Warren Tech, made all the difference during a very frightening time. Your calm demeanor, professional instinct to keep her still, and the immediate care you provided until paramedics arrived truly exemplified compassion and courage.*

*Your willingness to help in such a critical situation is commendable, and I want you to know how much your actions meant to our family. You are an incredible young adult, and I have no doubt you will make an exceptional EMT one day. Thank you once again for everything you did. ~Shawna Prince (Mother of the Cheerleader).*

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## EMSAC Award for Valor *Steve Zukerman (posthumously)*

Eagle County Paramedics, Vail Mountain Rescue Group,  
Beaver Creek Ski Resort

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For 25 years, Steve served the residents and visitors of Eagle County as a paramedic, a renowned ski patroller at the Beaver Creek Ski Resort and a dedicated volunteer with the Vail Mountain Rescue Group. Steve epitomized the essence of a hero through his unwavering dedication, exceptional bravery and profound commitment to the community he served.

On February 23, 2024, Steve made the ultimate sacrifice when he died responding to a backcountry search and rescue incident in East Vail. Steve was one of the helpers, never missing an opportunity to contribute to and serve his community.

Steve's career as a paramedic spanned decades, during which he influenced thousands of lives through his compassionate care and expert medical assistance. Known for his remarkable ability to remain calm and composed under pressure, Steve consistently placed the needs of others above his own, demonstrating a level of selflessness and valor that is truly extraordinary.

In an environment rife with uncertainty and danger, Steve fearlessly stepped forward to provide critical care to those in need of it most. His backcountry search and rescue missions were many. He was one of the first volunteers on the Colorado Hoist Rescue Team, extracting people from the backcountry by helicopter.

Known around the world as the leading expert in ski and snowboard emergency medicine, Steve served as the Medical Director for the Birds of Prey Alpine Skiing World Cup every December. He taught volunteer physicians from around the world how to put their medical practice to use at a ski resort.

Steve wrote on social media: "EMS is a team sport and | work on an amazing team. Each day brings new challenges and new opportunities to practice field emergency medicine and to make a small difference." Every



team Steve joined was better because of his leadership and valor. He was just that kind of guy, going out in the middle of the night, in a blizzard, with little to no sleep, when someone was in need because he had been called to serve.

During his decades of service at Vail Mountain Rescue Group Steve influenced, for the better, thousands of lives through his compassion and empathy. Known for his remarkable ability to remain calm under pressure, Steve consistently placed the needs of others above his own, demonstrating extraordinary selflessness and valor.

Lieutenant Colonel Nicholas Tucker of the High-Altitude Army National Guard Aviation Training Site described Steve this way "the military slogan: 'so that others may live' was what Steve was all about."

Steve's legacy is one of profound bravery, compassion and dedication. His actions have left an indelible mark on the community and his memory continues to inspire those who knew him. In recognizing Steve for the EMSAC Award for Valor, we honor a true hero whose exceptional service and unwavering courage have made a lasting difference in the lives of countless individuals.

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## Colorado State EMS Awards

You can make nominations throughout the year for any of our Colorado EMS Awards. It's so much easier to do it when you think about it and do not wait to the last minute! Awards are presented annually at EMSAC's Colorado State EMS Conference in the autumn.

[www.emsac.org/awards](http://www.emsac.org/awards)

