



A Life Saved : LifeTeam celebrates 5 years in Emporia's health-care system

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Emporian Lane Ryno didn't know that the symptoms he was having on Dec. 4, 2008, were symptoms of a heart attack - but they were, and thanks to the swift actions of a series of people at Newman Regional Health and Emporia's LifeTeam helicopter program, Ryno was flown to Stormont-Vail in Topeka and his **life** was **saved**.

On Wednesday afternoon, Ryno was reunited at Newman with the people who helped save his **life** to help honor LifeTeam's five-year anniversary in Emporia, which was marked last month.

"LifeTeam is a well-established critical care and ground ambulance service," a press release stated. "Pairing with Newman Regional Health, LifeTeam offers a superior service and is dedicated to providing the highest possible care to Midwestern communities."

Emporia's LifeTeam flies in a Bell 206 helicopter, which has been based in Emporia for the past five years. As Ryno peered into the helicopter Wednesday afternoon, he had the chance to reconnect with people who took swift action the day he had his heart attack.

Ryno recalled the events that unfolded that day. He said he hadn't been feeling well and had called in sick to work. He didn't have the classic symptoms of a heart attack, which, according to the American Heart Association, include chest discomfort, discomfort in other areas of the body including the arms, neck, back, jaw or stomach, and shortness of breath (with or without chest discomfort).

Other signs of heart attack include cold sweat, nausea and lightheadedness - some of which Ryno did have. Ryno said he had gotten sick that day and had some clamminess. But he still didn't think he was having a heart attack. Ryno said he felt like he had breathed in smoke from a burning building.

After the symptoms didn't improve, Ryno drove himself to the office of his primary care physician, Dr. James Seberger. He was quickly taken over to the emergency department at Newman Regional Health, where he was attended to by ER nurse Beth Sheely.

Sheely conducted tests that revealed that Ryno was having a heart attack. He had an MI, also known as myocardial infarction, which means the blood was not flowing through the vessels to the heart, so it was lacking oxygen. Within minutes, LifeTeam was dispatched, something that is done using a blue phone in the hospital that has direct access to dispatch.

Ryno was then flown to Stormont-Vail HealthCare in Topeka, where he was treated. During the flight, he was attended to by flight nurse Katie Sparks, pilot Ed Lambert and medic Jerry Griffith.

At Topeka, it was discovered that Ryno had two 100-percent blockages and one 98-percent blockage in his heart. Stents were put into his heart to relieve the blockages.

There are some lessons that Ryno learned in his experience - one of those being to call 911 next time he has symptoms and to go directly to the emergency room - lessons he won't soon forget.

Ryno's flight to Topeka is one of thousands of flights by LifeTeam crews that have been made for Emporia residents.

"The unbeatable combination of LifeTeam's unique approach to the critical care transport industry and Newman Regional's commitment to high quality care has provided a seamless transition for superior patient care," a press release provided by the hospital stated.

LifeTeam has five bases in Kansas: Emporia, Liberal, Hutchinson, Great Bend and Dodge City. At any given time LifeTeam staffs a "Ready Alert" crew that includes one pilot, a registered nurse and a paramedic. Pilots work 12-hour shifts and RNs and paramedics work one 24-hour shift. There are six nurses and seven medics who work for the Emporia LifeTeam.

LifeTeam has become an integral part of Newman Regional Health, said Pam Kvas, RN and emergency department director. Not only does LifeTeam provide air services, but crews also are willing to help out at the hospital when needed. They can provide critical care to patients who need it.

"The staff has been great," Kvas said.

LifeTeam also participates in the community by landing at each Teddy Bear clinic, helping with mock DUI scenes and participating in other community events.

"They've become a part of the community," Kvas said.

Not all patients can fly, Kvas said. Weight and girth has to be taken into account when flying a patient. Kvas said LifeTeam does all the work when it comes to which patients can fly so the hospital doesn't have to worry about that aspect.

"They know the weight of each crew member," she said.

Weather also is a factor when flying. There are times when the helicopter is grounded in weather conditions.

"Their primary focus is always the safety of the patient," Kvas said.

LifeTeam isn't the only helicopter company that comes to Emporia. If LifeTeam is on a call and can't transport a patient from Emporia, the company's dispatch will arrange for another company to help with the transport, Kvas said.

Although LifeTeam has been in Emporia for five years, its time here got off to a rocky start. Protests from the community included concerns about noise and other complications. As time went by and lives were touched by the helicopter program, however, these views began to change, officials say.

"You never think you're going to need it," said Beth Hammond, marketing and business development specialist at Newman. "But thank God it's here."