In this issue of the KEMSA Chronicle, we are spotlighting Lawrence-Douglas County Fire Medical (LDCFM). LDCFM serves the communities of Lawrence, Eudora, Lecompton, and Baldwin City. LDCFM was founded in 1997 after the merger of the City of Lawrence Fire Department and Douglas County Ambulance Service. The service is fire-based and covers EMS for all 375 square miles of Douglas County. LDCFM is led by Fire Chief Shaun Coffey who was named to the position in 2019.

Providing countywide EMS coverage poses logistical challenges that LDCFM has mitigated by utilizing seven stations. Five are within the city limits of Lawrence, one station is in Eudora, and one station is in Baldwin City. LDCFM utilizes seven front line Medic Units with 150 sworn personnel in their department. Sworn personnel are all Kansas certified as either an AEMT or paramedic. This allows for ALS level response to approximately 123,000 residents of Douglas County. In 2019, personnel responded to just over 13,000 calls for service, for which 68% were EMS related.

LDCFM is accredited by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International and has achieved an ISO rating 1. In addition to the required continuing education requirements set forth by the Board of EMS, members of the department also receive, at a minimum, 228 hours of training related to fire suppression, HAZMAT, search and rescue, and vehicle extrication.

LDCFM is under the medical direction of Dr. Caleb Trent, who is an emergency room physician and also serves on the Medical Advisory Committee for the Kansas Board of EMS. Protocols have been written with the intent to provide exceptional advanced pre-hospital care. Some of the authorized advanced procedures allowed include IO insertion, use of supraglottic airways, endotracheal intubation, 12-lead EKG capability, intrathoracic pressure regulation (IPR) therapy, and mechanical CPR.

In early 2018, LDCFM took an “out of the box” approach to out of hospital cardiac
arrest and developed the Cardiac Arrest Protocol for Excellence (CAPE). LDCFM found an opportunity to increase not only return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC), but also cardiac arrest survivability in their community. This protocol emphasizes high-quality CPR, and the use of both an IPR and an impedance threshold device (ITD). Additionally, the protocol directs crews to remain on scene for the arrest while monitoring the patient’s vital signs, specifically EtCO2 and the strategic timing of procedures and treatments.

After the implementation of this innovative approach, field ROSC increased from 36% to 62%, and survivability rose to nearly 19% from 4% in previous years. The passion that members of LDCFM and the first responders of Douglas County have shown during the changes to enhance cardiac arrest survivability have been a true inspiration to many agencies not only across the United States, but around the globe.

This passion and pride for the community carry over into other activities the department is involved in. The department has provided hands-only CPR events, as well as “Stop the Bleed” courses. The department also dedicates a considerable amount of time providing stand by coverage for events for the University of Kansas, Baker University, and Haskell Indian Nations University.

Douglas County, founded in 1854, is a diverse community that is rich in history. This history shows through the members of LDCFM who spend countless hours giving back to their community in various ways. Crews strive to provide quality service, while at the same time making sure all patients are treated like they were a member of their own family.
MEET SOME OF THEIR PERSONNEL

Dave Bova, AEMT

How Long have you been in EMS? I have been in EMS since 2003.
How did you get involved in EMS? When I was about 10 years old, my younger 2-year-old brother was drowning in a pool. During the chaos, I just jumped in and pulled him out. I think that was the moment I believed that helping others was my calling.

How did you get involved in EMS? I really got involved in EMS during high school my sophomore year in 1999. I took a class called health careers, and I got to shadow health workers. I got to ride on the ambulance for a couple months, and I loved it. Getting to go help others on their worst day was intriguing and gratifying to make it better than it was 10 minutes before we got there.

What has kept you in EMS? What has kept me in EMS is really the people I work with. They can lift you up and help you during the times where you see terrible things and bring you back to life.

What type of rewards do you get from the job? Challenges? I believe the most rewarding thing about the job is absolutely the people you get to meet. Getting to see people on their worst day is still the best part of the job. Every once in a while you get to see them again out in public and know that you had some part in helping them continue their daily lives. The job becomes challenging when you see those (family and friends) effected by the ones we lose. Seeing their faces and sadness truly is the most challenging part of the job for me.

What does the future look like to you? The future of EMS gets more intriguing by the day. New medical procedures such as C.A.P.E are brought in and to see the improvement in cardiac arrest outcomes is extremely promising. Getting to work with new and upcoming medics and EMTs and help them learn is without a doubt something that I take pride in. The future is bright.

What is something someone might not know about you? One thing that someone may not know about me is my love for the national parks. I love taking my family on three week trips and getting lost in the beauty and the vastness of the parks. Being in nature brings you down to earth and shows you what is really important in life.

Vincent Davis, Paramedic

How long have you been in EMS? Since 2011.
How did you get involved in EMS? I was a police officer and decided to switch and become a fire fighter. I was told if I was serious about the career, I would need to attend paramedic school, so I did. My motivation, which most people don’t know, is that my oldest daughter was born with a congenital heart condition (Hypoplastic Left heart Syndrome). She nearly didn’t make it, but at this point she is a healthy 23-year-old young woman. I felt helpless when she was diagnosed and decided I will never have that feeling again.

What has kept you in EMS? I enjoy the work. Helping people is a great feeling. The people I work with are amazing and make coming to work a joy daily. I also like not having a set routine daily, as you never know what you’re going to encounter with each call.

What type of rewards do you get from the job? Challenges? Hearing someone say thank you for helping them is a great feeling. To be honest, I don’t do this for the rewards. I truly enjoy helping people and the challenge of what comes next. A big challenge would be staying current on what’s new in the field, which deters complacent work ethic. On a daily basis, I review and table talk scenarios.

What does the future look like to you? My future in EMS is twofold. I would enjoy teaching at some point, but not right now. I have an aspiration of becoming an EMS Chief as I think effecting policy and scope of practice would challenge me in the future.
MEET SOME OF THEIR PERSONNEL

What is something someone might not know about you? I’m a home body. I enjoy sitting at home reading. This does not happen too often though since my children have several extracurricular activities that I support wholeheartedly.

Dustin Deathe, Paramedic

How long have you been in EMS? I have been in EMS since 2009 and became a paramedic in 2010.

How did you get involved in EMS? I grew up in a family with a strong history in public service. My grandfather and my father were both in law enforcement. Growing up in that environment opened my eyes for a career that was more than just a paycheck. I wanted something that made me feel that I was giving back to my community. Out of high school, however, I wanted to be a teacher. My brother-in-law at the time had recently been hired as a fireman and influenced me to join the fire department. At that time, I didn’t know if I wanted to do EMS. I decided to take a first responder class, which was the first class that intrigued me and made me want to learn more.

What has kept you in EMS? I love the idea that every day is different. There are the difficult days and good days, but it’s something that’s always made me push myself to be better each day.

What type of rewards do you get from the job? Probably most would say it’s when someone who truly needs help calls, and you’re there for them during their worst times. But my biggest reward is that people respect what the job is, kids love seeing you, and look up to your profession due to the guys before us who have made this reputation for this job. Challenges? I think everyone who does this job knows that you are going to see things and experience things that you won’t get to forget or unsee. These experiences can be truly challenging because some of them will relate close to home.

What does the future look like to you? It’s crazy thinking how much has changed in just the 10 years I’ve been doing this. To think what the next 10-20 years are going to create is exciting. Equipment and protocols are ever changing, and that’s what is fun about this field.

What is something someone might not know about you? One thing that some people may not know about is my love of nature. This includes spending time at MOAB and other scenic parks, four-wheeling, mountain biking, and relaxing with my friends and family. I’m also a tactical medic in conjunction with the Lawrence Police Department.

Jen Persons, AEMT

How long have you been in EMS? 10 years

How did you get involved in EMS? In 1996, I was involved in a bad car accident when local fire, EMS, and police responded. Three of the first responders were female. Back then I was unaware that females could work for fire-medical. Ever since my accident, I wanted to pursue a career in fire and EMS.

What has kept you in EMS? Having a career in public service has been one of the most rewarding jobs I have ever experienced. Every day I am faced with new challenges and experiences. I honestly feel that working in the fire and medical field is the best job in the world.

What type of rewards do you get from the job? I feel as though serving our community in itself is very rewarding. I love working with people and helping when I can. There is no better feeling than when someone approaches you off duty and tells you, you helped or even saved their life.

What does the future look like to you? Training and continually bettering myself so that when the time to promote is right, I will be ready. Eventually I would love to be an officer in our training division.

What is something someone might not know about you? I currently serve on the Lawrence Police Department as a tactical medic.