



A Salute to Rescue Workers



WORKING TOGETHER ON the Starksboro and Bristol rescue squads has been a joy for Graham Huntington and his mother, Sprague. It looked like so much fun that Graham's younger brother, Leo, joined Bristol Rescue.
Independent photo/Sophia Afsar-Keshmiri



MEGAN FRANKOVIC, LEFT, comes from a family of first responders and people involved in medicine so it seemed natural for her to join Cornwall First Response. Her daughter, Aven, caught the first responder bug and she joined the Cornwall Fire Department with her dad, Tommy, and when she turns 18 hopes to train as an EMT, too.
Independent photo/Sophia Afsar-Keshmiri

Being a volunteer first responder is in their blood

By SOPHIA AFSAR-KESHMIRI

STARKSBORO/CORNWALL — In Sprague Huntington's family of four, there's a 75% chance you'll come across an Emergency Medical Technician. Huntington herself is a member of the Starksboro and Bristol rescue squads. And she has worked cases alongside her sons, Graham, 21, and Leo, 19, who are also both EMT's.

Graham is a member of the Starksboro, Bristol and Lincoln first response squads, and Leo is on the Bristol Rescue Squad.

"We got everyone except my husband," Sprague quipped.

But even without their fourth family member, Thomas, it's been a joy for the other three Huntingtons.

"I honestly love it," Graham said. "You can imagine working with a family member might be difficult sometimes. But

for us (my mom and I) ... We work very well together. I think I'm very lucky."

"I forget that Graham's my son, in a good way, when we're on scene," Sprague said. "He's a colleague, and he's a peer. And, in fact, he's a far better provider than I am. And so I love working with him.

"Sometimes, he'll call me mom. And it'll kind of surprise me, it'll surprise the patient. And it'll surprise me because we are working so intensely," she added.

Leo, who spoke to the *Independent* during the first few days of his freshman year at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., was only recently certified and began with

"There was a distinct need (for EMTs). I knew I was going to be capable of doing it. And I thought it was important."

— Sprague Huntington

Bristol this past spring.

Because of his short tenure, Sprague hasn't had the opportunity to work with Leo as much as with her older son, but is looking forward to the future.

"I'm hoping when he comes back from college we'll get to run together more," she said.

Like his mother and brother, Leo has enjoyed working with family.

"It's cool because they can give me tips ... I like hearing them give advice afterwards," Leo said.

He made a special note of Graham in this regard:

"I think my brother especially has been

really helpful in training me."

"I pretty much got involved because of my family," Leo added.

Graham, a junior at Brown University in Rhode Island, described working with his younger brother as "awesome."

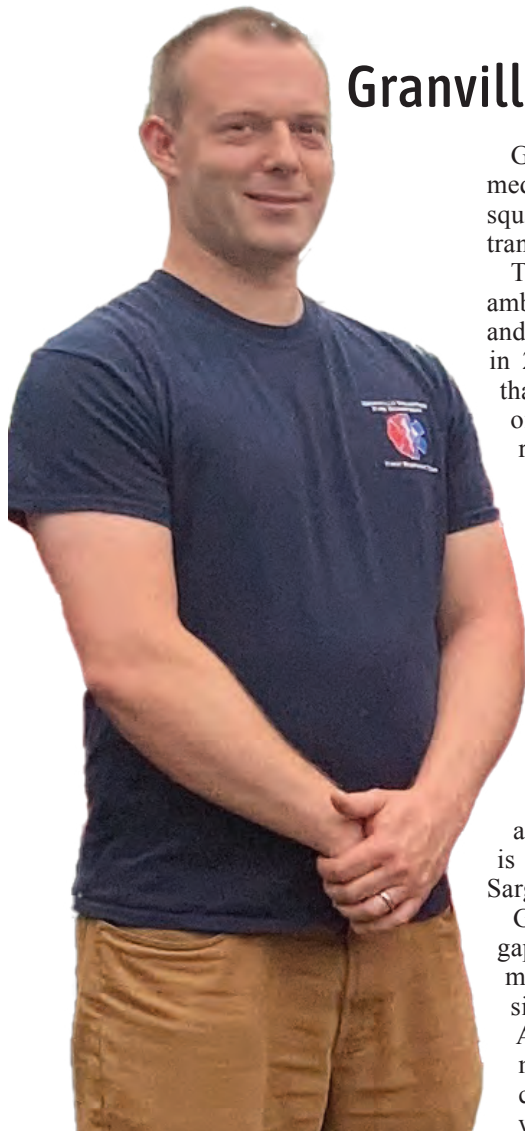
Graham and Leo make for a third generation of family members on their mother's side that have pursued emergency medical services in Vermont.

"My parents were both EMTs in the '70s, and '80s. So I grew up with it. And then I just have always wanted to do it," Sprague said.

She started out in the early 2000s.

"I had my license 20 years ago, but my kids were little and that didn't work out very well," Sprague said. "Now I have a lot more flexibility in my work schedule."

(See Family, Page 4)



DAN SARGEANT

Granville emergency medical service becomes the Valley Rescue Squad

GRANVILLE — Emergency medical response and the rescue squad in Granville have undergone a transformation.

The Valley Rescue Squad provided ambulance service to Granville, Hancock and Rochester for 42 years until it closed in 2013 due to financial pressures. At that time, Dan Sargeant of Granville conducted research into how the rescue squad was formed and was very surprised when he discovered the signature of his grandmother Jean Sargeant on the articles of association that formed Valley Rescue Squad in 1971.

“The valley lost an incredible local asset in 2013, which the community is still reeling from 10 years later,” Sargeant said.

Granville Fire Response filled that gap by responding to emergency medical incidents and stabilizing the situation until White River Valley Ambulance arrived from Bethel. Like many organizations, the Granville crew was made up of local volunteers who want to help out their neighbors. The department responded to 165

emergencies between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, in the towns of Granville, Hancock and Rochester.

In March of this year the folks in Granville and surrounding towns made the decision to start down the path of becoming a transport ambulance service to act as a back-up ambulance crew for White River Valley Ambulance, Sargeant said.

“We chose to don the Valley Rescue Squad name to honor those who came before us in providing emergency medicine to our community,” Sargeant said.

This past May, they purchased a 2008 Ford F-450 ambulance that previously served Mount Horeb Area Joint Fire Department in Mount Horeb, Wisc. Sargeant and his wife, Kira, made the journey to Sterling, Ill., where the truck was located and drove it to Vermont over Memorial Day weekend.

Valley Rescue Squad is operating under the umbrella of the Granville Volunteer Fire Department. This will help delineate the differing missions of the two services, Sargeant explained. Granville Volunteer Fire Department primarily providing fire and rescue services to the

town of Granville, while Valley Rescue Squad provides emergency medical first response service to the valley towns of Granville, Hancock, and Rochester. The members of the Granville Volunteer Fire Department are both proud and honored to host this service within the organization.

Valley Rescue Squad will still be working closely with the White River Valley Ambulance, which will remain the primary ambulance service for our valley towns.

Granville EMS currently has 21 people on its roster.

“For us to adequately staff and provide this service to the community we need an active roster of 28 volunteers,” Sargeant said. “We are actively recruiting in our area to bring on seven more people to serve their community in this unique way.”

The group is accepting applicants from Granville, Hancock and Rochester. If anyone is interested in learning more they may contact Dan Sargeant, Fire/EMS chief, by email at daniel.sargeant@granvillevolunteerfire.org or by phone at 802-349-5774.

“It is time for us to take a more active role in the emergency medical system by providing transport service for our patients as the situation dictates,” Sargeant said.

“The valley lost an incredible local asset in 2013, which the community is still reeling from 10 years later.”

— Dan Sargeant of Granville

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Reminder that our annual Membership renewal date was July 1st 2023, a form can be downloaded from our website, middlebury911.org. Interested in the benefits of our annual membership? Call (802) 388-3286 for more information or email krothwell@middleburyems.com

We have initial certification classes starting this fall!

A Hybrid Emergency Medical Technichian (EMT) class will start in October and will be held Monday and Thursday evenings at MREMS from 6 pm to 9 pm and ending in February. Tuition vouchers available for affiliated members.

We will be hosting two Vermont Emergency First Responder classes (VEFR) which comprise of 16 hours, including CPR and First Aid. Currently scheduling these weekend classes and anticipate one in September and one in December.

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Firefighting tech teams rescue flood victims

By ANDY KIRKALDY

ADDISON COUNTY — The floods that struck Vermont this summer show why the Middlebury and Vergennes fire departments have Technical Rescue Teams capable of acting in fast-moving water.

Those tech teams are also trained to rescue hikers off trails and cliffs.

The Addison and Ferrisburgh departments also have teams that have made critical rescues, but their units focus on lake rescues.

The Middlebury and Vergennes tech teams have a history of cooperation, and this year's floods tested their abilities. In early July Middlebury and Vergennes first responders traveled together to Central Vermont with Middlebury's two rescue boats to help in Berlin and Montpelier. On Aug. 3 members of the Vergennes and Stowe tech teams helped when a thunderstorm dumped up to six inches of rain that flooded Middlebury.

Vergennes Captain Liam Casey and Middlebury Chief David Shaw described what happened in Berlin and Montpelier.

Casey, a 12-year veteran, said the county first responders traveled together with Middlebury's boats to the Berlin fire station early on the evening of July 9. Their first task was to check a trailer park with a local guide.

"The water was all in the trailer park ... It was probably just below the trailer



VERGENNES FIREFIGHTERS AND Technical Rescue Team members — shown here, from left, are Steve Sickles, Liam Casey and Ben LaFlam — worked with Middlebury's tech rescue team to make two rescues during flooding in Berlin on July 9. The two teams have a history of cooperation, and the city team also helped in Middlebury on Aug. 3.

Independent file photo/Andy Kirkaldy

doors," Casey recalled. "It was moving at a fairly decent pace."

They had heard everyone was out, but found an elderly woman and her cat. Casey said she didn't want to leave, but first responders convinced her to do so, using one of Middlebury's boats.

"We work very closely with them," Casey said. "They're great partners."

Next the team helped a man stranded in a car. Casey said they "had to cross

some water, and ... walk almost a mile and a quarter (along the roadway) to get to him."

The team used a boat to ferry him across two waterways to bring him back to safety, and then along with the woman to the fire station.

Then the team set off to try to evacuate victims in a home on State Street in downtown Montpelier. Things did not go as smoothly, according to Casey and Shaw.

The rescuers from Addison County reached State Street not far from the Statehouse, and water was already up "almost to the windows of a car," Casey said.

They geared up, put both boats into the flood, and set off, and before long ran into problems in water now covering the top of parking meters. But when they reached the end of State Street they hit dry ground, and Casey said "the house was still a ways down the road."

The team could see the house, but were blocked off from it by more floodwaters, Casey said.

It was time for a retreat.

"We weren't going to carry the boat a mile up the road to cross that water," he

said. "We had to abort."

Casey said other teams ran into similar issues and, and first responders were lucky to get back to higher ground.

"The water had risen quite a bit, and we had a very hard time getting back up State Street to where we began the mission," he said. "It was quite a task."

Shaw had the same take. He said the return was "dicey," and he didn't want the team to become part of the problem rather than the solution.

"You still have to think safety for your crew," he said.

In Middlebury on Aug. 3 Shaw said a Middlebury-Vergennes team waded through water on the road and the Pulp Mill Bridge to evacuate an elderly homeowner stranded on Seminary Street, carrying her out through the flood.

And the Stowe tech team rescued two people stranded on top of a car

after an ill-advised venture onto Three Mile Bridge Road — warning cones were washed away, a common occurrence that evening.

Casey summed up the teamwork among the agencies:

"It's pretty cool how everybody can come together and get something done working together."

"The water had risen quite a bit, and we had a very hard time getting back up State Street to where we began the mission."

— Vergennes Captain Liam Casey



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Thank you all for your service to our community.**

Mike Hendrickson: Restaurateur turned paramedic

By AMELIA SEEPERSAUD

MIDDLEBURY — For the past decade, Mike Hendrickson has worked as a paramedic at Middlebury Regional Emergency Medical Services, coming from Colchester Rescue, where he started as a volunteer EMT in 2010.

But before that Hendrickson had spent most of his professional career in the restaurant and bar industry.

He was the owner of a handful of restaurants and bars in Burlington, but one day in 2009 he realized he wanted to challenge himself in new ways.

“I think it was 2009,” Hendrickson, 50, recalled. “I was like, ‘Man, I need some new challenges.’ And I had years ago put ‘Become an EMT’ on my bucket list, and so in 2010 I applied to a bunch of squads and got hired as a volunteer.”

After spending six months taking EMT classes, he was able to work as a volunteer EMT in Colchester for a few years. He became invested in the work he was doing with the rescue squad, working many volunteer hours, especially in the winter. He started to consider the possibility of becoming an EMS as a paid gig.

That’s when Hendrickson found his way to Middlebury Regional EMS, known as MREMS, where he got hired as a paid EMT in 2013. After leaving the restaurant industry in 2015 he made the decision to go to paramedic school. Becoming a paramedic broadened the scope of medical administrations and interventions he could perform.

What Hendrickson appreciates the most about his new field of work is how rooted in the community it is. He finds great value in being able to serve and know the community in a deeper way. He reflected on what inspired his desire to get into emergency medical services.

“In 1997 there was an ice storm in the state of Vermont and almost every single town was without power and electricity, some places for weeks at a time,” he said. “I was in Burlington at the time and the power was out, everything was closed, you couldn’t go anywhere. ... One day I walked down to the police station and I said, ‘Hey, can I help anywhere, ’cause there’s nothing to do and there’s a big mess out there.’ So whoever the officer was at



MIKE HENDRICKSON

the police department said, ‘Well unless you have EMS, fire or police training right now, or some special skill for cleanup, we really can’t use you. And I didn’t have any experience in anything along those lines. So I kind of just hung out at home and I just sort of thought to myself it would be cool to join EMS someday and become an EMT.’”

Especially as someone who didn’t have any prior background in this kind of work, who “just sort of jumped into the industry,” as he described it, Hendrickson really enjoyed getting to see how all of the public service agencies — fire departments, police departments, EMS, hospitals, etc. — work together and help the community.

For Hendrickson, the highlights of the EMS job are getting to serve the community and building friendships and camaraderie with the people he works with.

Working in EMS has given him something that is interesting and sometimes difficult — just what he was looking for all those years ago.

“It’s very challenging, and the challenges always change, so if you’re the kind of person that enjoys the camaraderie and the challenge and the fast pace of this kind of work then you’re well suited for the industry,” he said.

“Every single day is unique.”

Family

(Continued from Page 1)

She decided to become re-involved around the same time Graham was getting certified in 2020.

“Just after I finished my (EMT) class, I think she started doing hers,” Graham said.

He said EMT work has “always been something that she talks about.”

For both, EMT training coincided with COVID, one of the factors that inspired Sprague to pursue certification.

“There was a distinct need,” she said. “I knew I was going to be capable of doing it. And I thought it was important.”

Sprague said Graham’s path to earning his certifications started at a young age:

“He (Graham) was 1 when I got my license initially. And so I talked about stuff. He saw me help evacuate someone in the woods in New Hampshire. And he saw these things. I think he’s always been thinking about it. He just needed time.”

Once he got a sense for the work, one certification led to another.

“For a while I wanted to do a wilderness first responder course. And so I’d been planning on doing that for a while,” Graham said.

“October 2020, I joined Lincoln fire because I liked the whole backcountry rescue side of things. About a month after that I did my wilderness first responder. I was like, wow, I really liked this. And then I stayed for a couple extra weeks and got my EMT,” he explained.

“So then I guess I kept working on Lincoln. I joined Bristol rescue, started volunteering there, then I eventually ended up joining Starksboro as well.”

CORNWALL FAMILY

Like Sprague and her sons, the Frankovic family of three is also entrenched in the Vermont volunteer first responder scene.

In fact, the family is 100% Cornwall first responders. Aven Frankovic and her father, Tommy, both serve on the fire department. Her mom, Megan, is an EMT with Cornwall First Response.

“I’m ecstatic because it’s a family thing. I love family. And she’s our only kid. So I love it,” Megan said.

She became inspired to join the Cornwall

EMTs three years ago for two reasons: Her husband’s time on the fire side, and her family’s history in medicine.

“I’ve got two sisters who are nurses,” Megan Frankovic said. “My grandfather was an ambulance driver ... He was also on Orwell First Response 45, 50 years ago. One of my uncles on my mom’s side was a fire chief or a fire firefighter in Lexington, Ky. His wife was the fire chief. I have a cousin who’s a paramedic down in Kentucky.”

“It sort of runs in the family. I figured I can’t be the only girl without any medical training, then I can’t live up to my name,” Megan added.

Just like her mother, Aven was also inspired by her family to join.

“My dad has been on the department for 10 years now. He’s a firefighter and my mom’s medical. And I kind of got inspired by that, to be able to help out my community that way,” the younger Frankovic said.

Her age restricts her from some duties.

“I couldn’t go into an actual burning building for legal purposes.”

“But if I go to one (fire), I can get things from trucks and bring them to people,” she noted.

Plus, she trains with the squad.

And one day Aven may be training as an EMT too. Although currently pursuing fire, she has EMT aspirations in this position as well.

“I’m thinking about doing medical when I turn 18,” Aven said.

“It’s just like another way to help people. It’s another way to be more with my mom. And also, even if I don’t go on to use any of the stuff I learned, just knowing it could help later.”

Her daughter’s sentiments made Megan feel “warm and fuzzy,” she said.

“We have a great relationship,” she noted.

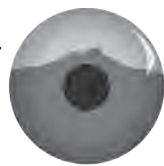
Aven might even go further in her first response career: She could achieve a first responder hat trick.

“I would like to pursue a career in ... forensic psychology,” she said.

“I grew up watching a lot of true crime, and reading a lot of mystery books, and like, thriller books.”

“It sort of runs in the family. I figured I can’t be the only girl without any medical training, then I can’t live up to my name.”

— Megan Frankovic



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BRS also creates E911 signs for driveway identification; application forms are available at the station or online. In addition, we are available if you need an ambulance to stand-by for community events.

Any individuals interested in volunteer or paid positions should contact BRS at our membership email address. If you would like to become a certified care provider, we can help with training and certification. Donations to BRS are tax deductible and always welcome.



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Charlene Phelps

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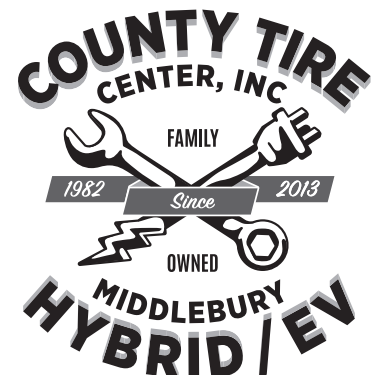
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