

# THE BUFFALO NEWS

## My View: Living and lifesaving in Small Town, USA

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**By Rosemary Tomani**

Everybody should love a hometown. Each of us is born in the place our mother happens to be, and we begin searching with a steady gaze as soon as we can walk. It was nice when families stayed in their hometown, even if only so the kids had a place to come back to if the “searching” became too intense.

Eighteen years ago, searching brought my husband and me to a semi-agricultural community in the hills. Here, the kids could grow up climbing trees, riding bikes and horses, and shooting their friends with air soft guns in the woods. They built forts, raised rabbits and chickens, and in the long winters, they went sledding, skating and skiing. The sun came up as the school bus approached, and at night we noted the phase of the moon before dreaming.

When people ask, I tell them I live in Boston, not to be confused with that little Bean Town in Massachusetts where the Brahmin monopolize prime real estate. There are seven “Bostons” in the United States, but Boston, N.Y., is the real one. At last count, there were 8,023 people living here, and less than 50 of them successfully run an ambulance corps that serves the other 7,973 residents. Recently, I made an effort to be one of them, and after six months, I continue to be amazed at the miracles that happen almost daily.

With small crews of dedicated and compassionate volunteers, the Boston Emergency Squad is an outstanding example of neighbors helping neighbors. The squad comprises young and old members who work tirelessly and in harmony, for the most part, to serve residents and visitors in the event of accident, injury or medical problems that require transport to a hospital. This year the squad will respond to over 500 dispatches. Its importance is immeasurable.

I am new. I just garnered an EMS hat, but I take it off to my neighbors on the squad. I have witnessed and even assisted with actual lifesaving alongside some amazing people. There is not enough space in this column to fully describe the value of the youngest members, including Melissa and Emily Laskowski who, at age 19, have already performed lifesaving CPR, administered Narcan, raised blood glucose levels to restore consciousness and assisted countless seniors – perhaps unable to drive or walk, some who have fallen – with their medications, breathing equipment or with comfortable transportation to the right medical facilities. They clean up blood and stabilize bones. They do this with extraordinary maturity and understatement.

Lorinda Koczur is the director of operations, and she runs a “tight ship” with a “loose grip.” She is an effective, generous leader shouldering an enormous responsibility. Don’t cross her.

Mike Norton is an EMT with over 20 years of unsparing dedication and spends countless hours training the earnest neophytes. His personal sacrifice and commitment to both fire protection and emergency medical services is nothing short of heroic.

And there is Joe Wells. His is a household name in the town. He takes 90 percent of the calls, knows every address on every street and road; he administers lifesaving relief, often within seconds. He keeps the ambulances in repair and stocks the supplies. He also teaches emergency med tech in surrounding communities.

For the first 17 years that I lived here, I was focused on the house and the gardens, my books and my papers while the volunteer ambulance crews did their work. I’ve been grateful to raise my children in this country haven, however besieged it is by rain and snow, and if I ever have to leave it, I will go with my eyes closed, to keep the tears in.

I want to suggest that if you don’t think your hometown is the best place on Earth, try giving to it.

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