

Lebanon crew tops in state

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It's an award that should make just about everyone in Lebanon County happy - or at least sleep easier.

First Aid and Safety Patrol, the ambulance company that provides emergency medical service to 85 percent of the county's population, has been selected as Pennsylvania's large-service ambulance company of the year by the Pennsylvania Emergency Health Services Council.

The award was presented to FASP executive director Bryan Smith at the council's annual conference, held last week at the Holiday Inn in Grantville.

"I think this is validation for us that we are on the right mission," Smith said. "We always say that FASP is one of the best-kept secrets in Lebanon."

FASP's award comes as it embarks on its second half-century of



A First Aid and Safety Patrol ambulance looms large after a bicyclist was struck by a car at Sixth and Spring streets in Lebanon on Thursday afternoon. In the background, members of the newly honored crew work out the details. (LEBANON DAILY NEWS JOHN LATIMER)

service to the community.

Founded in 1938 by Lebanon's volunteer firefighters, FASP has grown throughout the decades, incorporating other ambulance companies, including most recently in 2004 the Good Samaritan Hospital ambulance service. It is a nonprofit company, which receives no government funding and is sustained by insurance-company reimbursements and private donations, Smith said.

Today, FASP employs a staff of 130, who are overseen by an 11-member volunteer board of directors. The company is headquartered at 254 S. 11th St. in Lebanon and operates 29 medical vehicles out of five stations serving more than 100,000 people, Smith said. This year it is on a pace to make 19,000 incident responses.

"Everybody gets a piece of

this award," he said. "This is a total team effort."

FASP was recommended for the award by the council's advisory board, which reviewed a large number of nominated ambulance companies, said Butch Potter, EMS System's Specialist for the Pennsylvania Emergency Health Services Council.

The recommendation was then submitted to Joseph Schmider, the director of the Department of Health's Bureau of Emergency Medical Services, who approved the final selection, Potter said.

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FASP was an appropriate selection because it has been an innovative ambulance service, Potter said. It

was one of the first to train its paramedics for Advance Life Support and start a bike medic team that is deployed during parades and other special events.

FASP paramedics also are trained for mass-casualty missions and have visited Louisiana twice to aid in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and Hurricane Gustav in 2008, Potter said.

"FASP has a long history of dedicated service to Lebanon and the Lebanon Valley," he said. "It is a progressive service that is well respected in the EMS community. ... It is the type of service we like to hold up for recognition not only for its achievements, but also because it serves as a positive role model for other EMS companies."

John Sirriannia, chairman of FASP's board of directors, said he thinks the community served by FASP will be impressed by the award.

"I think people will look and say, 'Wow! Little Lebanon has the number-one ambulance company in Pennsylvania.'"

Sirriannia said he hopes the community will recognize the service FASP provides, which goes beyond just giving ambulance rides. Among its other contributions are CPR training, blood-pressure screening and public-relations activities like National Night Out.

"There are a lot of little things people don't know we do, and I think that is why we were recognized," he said.

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Chris Noll, left, a paramedic with FASP, speaks with emergency medical technician Dan Plumby, center, and battalion chief Justin Kittering at the accident scene. (LEBANON DAILY NEWS JOHN LATIMER)

