

First Bank of Greenwich Community Corner *There for the Community*

By RICHARD KAUFMAN

For Tracy Schietinger, Executive Director of Greenwich Emergency Medical Services (GEMS), helping people and positively impacting the community is a passion.

Schietinger has been working in the EMS field for 29 years, and she's been with GEMS for 14, serving as the nonprofit organization's leader since 2017.

"I love being able to work with people and being able to make a difference in someone's life, whether that's a patient or a co-worker. I like to be a part of a team that makes a difference. I can't see myself doing something else. It fulfills me," Schietinger said.

But for GEMS, it's not just all about being there for people when they're most vulnerable, sick and scared. It's about community outreach.

"We support the community and this community supports us more than any other town I've worked in. It's great to have that give and take," Schietinger said.

Over the last few months, that community support for GEMS has been amplified due to the coronavirus pandemic. Schietinger said the support shown to her staff through food donations, cards, and warm wishes has been heartwarming.

"The support means the community knows what we're doing. They appreciate it, and we appreciate them," Schietinger said.

Working during the pandemic has certainly been difficult, as GEMS has had to navigate the complexities of providing adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to staff.

"At the very beginning of March, we were fine. Once we started to run into problems, it became extremely stressful



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FBOG Assistant Vice President and Branch Manager, Amy Huertas; GEMS Executive Director, Tracy Schietinger; Retail Banking Manager, Emily Newcamp.

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Along with emergency medical response, GEMS provides medical standby for town events, and CPR and first aid training for residents, including every single student in sixth, eighth, tenth and twelfth grade.

Through its High School Explorer Program, which is for students between the ages of 14-18 who have a common interest in emergency medicine and their community, GEMS provides services like ambulance tours, education for younger children, and blood pressure screenings.

The explorers also work with the elderly in town to complete a "File of Life" kit.

The free kit consists of a refrigerator magnet with an attached red plastic pocket holding a card on which residents can record vital information about medical conditions, medications, and emergency contact names and phone numbers, so if emergency personnel are called, they can identify details about the patient quickly.

on the staff because they were concerned about potentially getting infected and bringing it home to their family," Schietinger said, noting that GEMS still can't procure N95 masks.

GEMS was able to purchase a different kind of full-face respirator for its staff. Schietinger said GEMS was "unwavering" in their commitment to serving the residents of Greenwich through tough times.

"In EMS, we're trained to adapt and overcome, and that's exactly what Greenwich EMS did," Schietinger said, adding that GEMS will use the pandemic as a lesson going forward.

Prior to the coronavirus, GEMS was already working on building a relationship with the First Bank of Greenwich. The pandemic helped foster that relationship as GEMS looked to enroll in the Payroll Protection Program (PPP).

"We appreciate all their help that they gave to us during

this time. They helped us tremendously when I don't think a bigger bank would. They treated us as if we truly mattered. That meant a lot to myself and the director of finance," Schietinger said.

GEMS is also enrolled in the bank's Charitable Checking Program.

The program is simple and easy. If you're a member of the bank, and a nonprofit organization you support is part of the program, your checking account balances, along with other supporter balances, are used to calculate quarterly bank donations to that organization.

All donations come directly from the FBOG, and no monies are withdrawn from the nonprofit or supporters' accounts. The bank will make quarterly monetary donations to each organization enrolled.

"As a nonprofit in town, all of our capital items -- our ambulances and the equipment inside of them -- 100 percent of that is purchased through donations. So that type of relationship through charitable checking will help us continue to purchase all of our capital items. They're looking to help us, and we're looking to help the

community," Schietinger said.

Amy Huertas, Assistant Vice President & Branch Manager at FBOG, has worked closely with GEMS.

"It's great how their services are free. They're part of a lot of local events that happen here in town," Huertas said. "The Charitable Checking Program is perfect for them. Just by having their operating account with us, they get a percentage of what they have on deposit quarterly. If their supporters bank with us, they also get a portion of their deposits as donations as well. It's great for them."

Schietinger is confident the relationship with FBOG will be a long one.

"It's a small town community bank that's very supportive of the needs, especially of nonprofits in town. It's great to work with them," she said.

It's because of the support from the community and from the FBOG that makes Schietinger proud to work in a town like Greenwich.

"It's so heartwarming to say that I work in a town that cares," she said. "I don't live in town, but I want to work here. I feel that this is my home."