

# First-Responder Team formed here to help injured, ill

A Bird Island resident suffers a massive heart attack! A family member telephones 523-1161--the number of the Renville County Sheriff's Department, which dispatches ambulances to emergency situations in the Bird Island area. After notification by the Sheriff's Department, the ambulance crew take a few minutes to travel from its base at Olivia to the location of the heart attack victim--very crucial minutes that could mean life or death for the emergency victim, if he or she does not receive proper care during that critical period. Thanks to the recently-organized First-Responder Team in Bird Island, emergency victims such as the hypothetical one cited above now have a better chance of survival and/or recovery without serious complications.

Special, stabilizing care administered to an emergency victim within the first few minutes after a trauma occurs not only could save that person's life, but might also prevent paralysis, brain damage, or permanent disability of limbs. First-Responder Team members are trained to provide that vital care, before the arrival of the ambulance crew. After the ambulance arrives, the ambulance crew takes over care of the emergency victim. The emergency patient, having received early, stabilizing treatment, has a much better chance of responding favorably to application of treatment with sophisticated life-support equipment carried by the ambulance crew.

First-Responder Team members are usually able to arrive at an emergency scene before the ambulance, because they are notified about the emergency at the same time as the ambulance crew. "First-Responders" are notified by the Sheriff's

Department via electronic pagers--electronic radio receivers about the size of a pack of cigarettes.

First-Responder Teams are the brainchild of the Redwood-Renville Community Health Services--RRCHS. Some time ago RRCHS recognized the problem of the lack of immediate medical attention for emergency victims in communities where there is no home-based ambulance service.

Over a year ago the groundwork was laid to bring First-Responder Teams to cities lacking community-based ambulances. The first step was a meeting of health care providers, including representatives of hospitals, Fire, Police and Sheriff's Department, to determine needs and coordinate plans; and to ascertain the number of persons needed and willing to undergo the required training to become First-Responder Team members.

Training volunteers for the group was the next step. The minimum training required is a 40-hour course called Crash-Injury Management--CIM; or members may opt for the more advanced, 81-hour course to become an Emergency Medical Technician--EMT. Training for most members of the Bird Island unit was provided by personnel from Willmar Vocational Technical Institute. Fortunately the three newest members of the Bird Island First-Responder Team who joined at the group's meeting on Wednesday, March 11, had previously received the required training. Dave Woelfel had been trained in Duluth, and Daniel Marks and Dick Woelfel had been trained in Olivia.

About a year ago, before it was fully organized, the Bird Island unit obtained through a \$1000 federal grant a Recording Annie device. This

is a manikin used for practice in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation--CPR. The recording device on the manikin tells the person practicing CPR whether it is being done properly.

The Bird Island unit received a budget of \$2334 from RRCHS, to be

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used to purchase equipment. Items acquired include eight pagers, an oxygen and suction device, blood pressure cup and stethoscope, blankets, a short-back board and first aid kit.

Barbara Krogstad, who is also a Licensed Practical Nurse, is the Director of the Bird Island First-Responder Team. Memberships include six firemen and Police Chief Chico Beckler. Prior to the March 11 meeting the local unit had been appealing for additional members. However, the team now has enough members, Mrs. Krogstad said Monday.

There are 16 members in the group, but only eight pagers are available. However, members include three husband-and-wife teams, each of which shares a pager. Other members swap pagers back and forth, so that all eight pagers are active over every 24-hour period.

Team members use their own cars to get to emergency scenes. The newly formed organization has yet to be called to an emergency scene by the Sheriff's Department, but they are trained, ready and willing to go on a possible life-saving mission at a moment's notice.



MEMBERS of the Bird Island First-Responder Team who were present at a meeting on March 11 at the Fire Hall are shown above. Seated, left to right, are Mary Kopel, Patty Sanger and Barb Krogstad, who is Director of the group. Second row, Police Chief Clarence Beckler, Ken Kopel, Dick Woelfel, Bill Olson and Loren Koll. Back row, at right, Dave Woelfel and Daniel Marks. Members not present for the picture include Bob and Mary Ryan, Steve Takle, Eric Minkel, Sheldon Johnson and Wesley Olson.