



Fall 2011

# Health Matters

## at Aspen Valley Hospital



*"Your facility is  
the benchmark  
of excellence all  
others should  
strive for."*

AVH patient

### Inside

- Your mobile ER
- New life-saving CPR procedure
- Pride + quality = value

# Aspen Ambulance District — Like a 'mobile emergency room' providing immediate care



Paramedics Jim Richardson (left) and Gabe Muething oversee all aspects of the Aspen Ambulance District.

While Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) provides our community with state-of-the-art healthcare facilities, life-saving technology, and highly trained medical professionals, the care you receive before you arrive at the hospital is vital, too. Aspen Ambulance District, a community-wide ambulance service administered and managed by the hospital, brings that same level of excellence in emergency medical care and transport to all Pitkin County residents.

Responding to approximately 1,100 calls a year, Aspen Ambulance District employs 35 full-time and part-time professionals who have Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), EMT-Intermediate (EMT-I), and paramedic (EMT-P) certifications.

"In addition, many full-time personnel are critical care paramedics (CCEMT-P) who have the highest level of EMT training in advanced care for serious

medical conditions," says Gabriel Muething, Aspen Ambulance District Operations Manager. "It's highly unusual for an ambulance service in a community of our size to have this many critical care paramedics."

## Your mobile ER

Aspen Ambulance District response units are equipped for both basic and advanced life support. "With critical care paramedics and advanced life support equipment, our ambulances are like a mobile emergency room, providing immediate treatment on site that can potentially save a patient's life or prevent disability," says Jim Richardson, Aspen Ambulance District Director.

The advanced life support units and critical care paramedics also transport patients from AVH to other facilities through our Inter-Facility Transfer (ITF) program, which is funded by the hospital. "Ground transport with advanced life support ambulances and critical care paramedics is vital because our unpredictable weather often makes an airlift impossible," says Jim.

## Emergency care at community events

For special events in the community, Aspen Ambulance District units and personnel are there in case of an emergency. "We contract with sponsoring organizations to have ambulances on site at events from local bike races and marathons to international events, such as the Winter X Games in January," says Gabriel. "Taxpayer resources are not used to cover special events, and we ensure that response units are available for the community, even during events."

## When should you call an ambulance?

If you or a family member suffers illness or injury, you may wonder whether you need an ambulance. According to Jim, there's no easy answer to that question. "But if you are concerned, it's best to call 911," he adds. "Some residents in our service area are as much as an hour from the hospital. When you call an ambulance, we bring the care of an emergency room to you and use the transport time to provide treatment before you get to the hospital."

Aspen Ambulance District professionals are trained to assess a patient's condition when they arrive. "Sometimes we determine that a patient doesn't need an ambulance, and that there's time to drive to the hospital or wait to see a doctor," says Jim. "If you're unsure, call anyway. If you don't need us, calling the ambulance and having an assessment will cost you nothing. And, if you do need us, not calling could cost you your life."

# When a life is in your hands, know how to help

## New simplified resuscitation and easy-to-use AEDs save more lives

When an adult collapses in sudden cardiac arrest, immediate intervention with resuscitation and an AED (automated external defibrillator) can save a life. Yet, less than one-third of cardiac arrest victims receive any help, often because bystanders aren't sure what to do or are afraid they will cause more harm.

Now an easy, single-step procedure using only chest compressions has been shown to be more effective in saving lives than the traditional three-step CPR procedure that stresses clearing the airways and performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation in addition to chest compressions.

According to Aspen Valley Hospital's Chris Martinez, MD, emergency medicine specialist, "Continuous compressions are more effective for adults because, before cardiac arrest, the victim is breathing normally so the blood has plenty of oxygen. Chest compressions circulate that oxygenated blood to the heart muscle and the brain to reduce damage to the heart and preserve neurological functions."

Until emergency medical professionals arrive, deep chest compressions should be given continuously at a rate of about 100 per minute — the same rhythm as the Bee Gee's song "Stayin' Alive." Traditional CPR with assisted breathing is still recommended for infants and children up to age 8.

### AEDs help restore heart rhythm

Another vital lifesaver is the AED, a small, portable device that delivers a brief but powerful shock to the heart to help restore natural heart rhythm. Currently, there are more than 180 AEDs located throughout Pitkin County.

No one should be afraid to use this lifesaving device. "AEDs provide easy-to-follow voice instructions and pictures so anyone can use it without training," says Jim Richardson, EMT-P, Aspen Ambulance District Director. "It even determines when to administer a shock."

To learn more about AEDs, CPR, and how you can help a cardiac arrest victim, please visit [www.savealifepitkincounty.com](http://www.savealifepitkincounty.com). And remember: Don't be afraid to try. Anything you do can only help.



AEDs are lightweight and easy to carry. Instructions are specific and easy to follow for bystanders assisting a cardiac arrest victim. Most importantly, they can literally mean the difference between life and death.



The "Flight for Life" helicopter is an extension of AVH's emergency services. Its crew works closely with Aspen Ambulance staff when transport to a tertiary hospital is needed.

### Five steps to help

1. Recognize potential cardiac arrest. The victim may have trouble breathing and collapse into unconsciousness.
2. Try to arouse the victim.
3. Call 911 or have someone else call.
4. Begin continuous chest compressions.
5. Have someone locate an AED and use it. Then, continue chest compressions until help arrives.

# Mountain Family Health Center — Welcome to Basalt!

Mountain Family Health Center (MFHC) has served the Roaring Fork Valley for many years at its Glenwood Springs office. Now, through an affiliation with Aspen Valley Hospital, this primary care clinic is open for business in Basalt. Sharing space with After-Hours Medical Care (open evenings and weekends), MFHC is open four days a week during daytime hours, and there is always someone on staff who speaks Spanish.

The primary provider at MFHC is Family Nurse Practitioner Rachel Menke. Rachel is originally from New Mexico, and she and her husband were delighted to move to the Roaring Fork Valley. Prior to coming here, Rachel was with the University of New Mexico's Department of Internal Medicine.

The two facilities — Mountain Family and After-Hours Medical Care — have both similarities and differences. Both are located at 234 Cody Lane in Basalt.

## Mountain Family Health Center

### Hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday  
7:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Appointments recommended

### Services:

- Full range of primary healthcare (routine physical exams, immunizations, urgent care, acute illnesses such as flu, chronic illnesses such as diabetes or depression)
- Laboratory tests

### Staff:

- Family nurse practitioner
- Registered and licensed practical nurses
- Medical assistants

### Insurance:

- Private, Medicaid, Medicare, and Colorado Indigent Care Program (CICP)
- Sliding scale and other assistance programs for the uninsured

**Telephone:** 945.2840

## After-Hours Medical Care

### Hours:

Monday - Friday                      Saturday and Sunday  
5 - 10:30 p.m.                      8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Walk-ins welcome

### Services:

- Does not take the place of your primary care provider
- Diagnosis and treatment for medical conditions that require immediate attention but do not warrant a visit to the hospital emergency room (examples include flu, ear infections, urinary tract infections, lacerations, sprains, and strains)
- X-rays and limited laboratory tests

### Staff:

- Physicians (emergency and family medicine)
- Registered nurses
- X-ray technologists

### Insurance:

- Private, Medicare, and Colorado Indigent Care Program (CICP)
- Other assistance programs for the uninsured

**Telephone:** 544.1250



Mountain Family staff takes a quick photo break between patients. From left: Jackie Gladu, MA; Nicole VanGinkel, MA; Charla Gallegos, RN; Veronica Palomera, MA; and Rachel Menke, FNP.



The After-Hours team is ready for a busy evening shift. From left: Diana Keyser, RT; Cynda Larson, RN; and Jon Gibans, MD.

# Price + quality = value at Aspen Valley Hospital

When hospital services are needed, most consumers think first about quality. They want knowledgeable and compassionate clinicians, timely service, accurate diagnosis, aggressive pain management, and appropriate treatment. Later, it is only natural that concerns turn toward economics. How much will it cost? How much will my insurance pay? How much will I be expected to pay?

In some instances, consumers receive information about the cost of their test or procedure in advance. But often, they don't have the luxury of planning ahead, and it is very difficult to predict exact costs on many services because each patient is different.

Because we understand your concerns, Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) regularly commissions a third-party pricing study. "It's the best way for us to ensure that our charges are in line with other hospitals," says Terry Collins, Chief Financial Officer at AVH. "We're pleased to report that our most recent study demonstrates our charges are **less than or comparable to other hospitals in the nation, state, and area.**"

The study — performed by Cleverly and Associates — examines every hospital charge ranging from emergency room visits to inpatient stays, X-rays and other imaging, lab tests, pharmaceuticals, and overall charges for a variety of procedures and diagnoses. "We have kept price increases at about 5 percent per year for the past several years," says



*Nursing care at AVH is personalized, compassionate, and provided by an all-RN staff. Here, Heather Mine, RN, prepares a patient for discharge.*

Terry. "In addition, we instituted a number of cost-saving measures to help balance our budget."

## National award-winning service

But price is just one part of the value equation. The other is quality, and that is foremost on our minds at AVH on a daily basis. And, it is undoubtedly the reason why we were honored with three national awards earlier this summer.

Avatar International, a healthcare research and consulting firm, presented AVH with their "Overall Best Performer" award. This award is presented to the top facilities in Avatar's database with the highest combined scores for inpatient, outpatient, emergency department, and ambulatory surgery patients. Only 11 hospitals in the nation were recognized, and this is the third year in a row that AVH has been honored.

In addition, AVH received awards for innovation in service excellence and for exceeding patient expectations. Approximately 25 percent of Avatar's hospital clients are able to exceed their patients' expectations.

"For us, it's not about satisfaction scores or awards, it's about the patients," says Dave Ressler, CEO at Aspen Valley Hospital. "But it's great to have outside agencies recognize our efforts!"

## Hospital construction update

With as many as 70 workers on the job on any given day, Phase II of Aspen Valley Hospital's Master Facilities Plan is progressing on schedule. By year's end, Facilities Director John Schied expects to have structural steel in place and the expansion — which will house the new cafeteria, private inpatient rooms, physical therapy,

cardiopulmonary rehabilitation, and medical office space — fully enclosed. In addition, the parking structure will be in its final phases of construction.

There continues to be significant activity and disruption to the lower part of the campus, even though this area will remain open space. A lot of soil is currently being stored there for re-use

when needed. By late fall, topsoil will be replaced, erosion control will occur, and landscapers will install irrigation pipes so landscaping and re-vegetation can begin next summer. Frank Goldsmith is the community liaison for the project. If you have any questions or comments, contact Frank directly at [FGoldsmith@aspenhospital.org](mailto:FGoldsmith@aspenhospital.org).

## Become a fan

Join our Facebook page to stay current on events and news at Aspen Valley Hospital.

*This publication in no way seeks to diagnose or treat illness or serve as a substitute for professional medical care. Please see your physician if you have a health problem.*

# Trauma Certification — A sure sign of preparedness

When you live in a small town, it's a fact that all the services available to big-city dwellers aren't available to you. But one necessity is assurance that your local emergency services are proficient in caring for traumatic injuries. That means effective pre-hospital care by ambulance personnel, a well-equipped and properly staffed emergency department, the right combination of medical specialists, 24/7 availability of diagnostic teams and surgical crews, and transfer capabilities if needed.

While our emergency physicians, trauma surgeons, trauma coordinator, emergency department and ambulance directors are all involved in the day-to-day operations of our trauma services, having an outside review by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment provides us with an objective perspective. In June, a survey team spent a full day at Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH), meeting with physicians and staff, reviewing charts, and examining our policies and practices.



*Amy Carter, RN, at the Ducky Derby with a supply of bicycle helmets. Amy takes advantage of every opportunity to talk to community members about safety and injury prevention.*

We were delighted to learn that our trauma review was successful, and AVH received continued accreditation as a level III trauma center. Thanks to Bill Rodman, MD; Amy Carter, RN; Kathryn Chamberlin, RN; and the entire trauma services team for providing the best in trauma care.

## Calendar of Events

### CPR Saturday

Learn the new CPR protocols  
Saturday, October 1  
10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Aspen Valley Hospital

Free sessions offered on the hour and half-hour. Registration is not necessary.

### Community Blood Drive

Tuesday, October 4  
11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Aspen Valley Hospital

### Midvalley Health Day

Saturday, October 22  
8:30 - 11:30 a.m.

El Jebel Community Center

Schedule an appointment for blood draw at [www.aspenhospital.org](http://www.aspenhospital.org).

### Senior Health Fair

(for those 60 and older)  
Friday, November 4  
8:30 - 10:30 a.m.

Aspen Valley Hospital

Call **544.1296**  
for more information.