

## **Keepin' Busy**

Support Still Growing for Tennessee Bike Medic Team

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In a little over two years, Williamson Medical Center EMS in Franklin, Tennessee, has built a bike medic program that has become far more than the typical "special events" team it was originally designed to be. With a response area of 475 square miles and a population of about 130,000 people, there's more than enough to keep the team busy. In 2000, the team worked more than 60 events, and this year the schedule will probably be bigger.

The team initially began with two medics, an idea, and funding from the Volunteer Auxiliary at Williamson Medical Center, the community hospital. The volunteers run the hospital's gift shop and several fund-raising events throughout the year, usually to buy equipment for patients' family members to use while their loved ones are hospitalized. The bike medic team was the first project outside the hospital.

On the team's first practice ride, three bike medics happened upon an unreported house fire. After confining the blaze to one room and rescuing a bedridden elderly woman, they summoned the Franklin Fire Department, who extinguished the fire. This first incident was typical of the success the team would enjoy over the next several months, but keeping the team on track is an ongoing process.

"If I could offer three pieces of advice to new bike teams, they would be: join IPMBA, pick a distinctive uniform and don't overlook the small events," says Nick Gatlin, the team's director. "The most valuable thing we've done is get involved with IPMBA. Most of our direction and information was gained by our association with people we met through IPMBA."

The team's yellow and black combination of uniform colors is different than that of any other services in the area. This gives the team an immediate identity and high visibility.

As for the acceptance of the team by the public, Gatlin thinks small events are the key. Small events comprise about 25 percent of the team's activities. "We don't just ride the big festivals. We go to Little League baseball games, soccer tournaments, small community functions and the local parks; places we're not expected. In these small settings, we're not just part of the scenery. We're often the center of attention. That's the root of our public support, and public support is the name of the game."

Being a hospital-based service gives the team an advantage. As a part of the hospital's advertising campaign, the team has enjoyed a professionally produced promotional video, as well as television time secured by the hospital. Several brochures featuring the bike team have also been produced. Promotional items for children are supplied by the hospital's Community Relations Department. Local businesses frequently donate items for giveaways as well.

Local newspapers, television and radio have also brought attention to the team, with several articles and news spots featuring the program. "We try to keep friends in the news media to help us promote the team's activities. We don't pester them, but we let them know that their contributions to the team's success are appreciated."

Of the eleven current active members, nine are IPMBA EMSC certified, and several prospective members are waiting for the next class this spring. All members are required to attend the IPMBA EMSC certification course within one year of joining the team. All members are also expected to maintain current IPMBA membership. The only two IPMBA EMSC instructors in the state of Tennessee are on the Williamson County team, and another member is planning to attend the IPMBA Instructor Course at the Cincinnati conference.

*Editor's Note: the policies of the Williamson Medical Center EMS Bike Medic Program are included in the IPMBA EMS Bike Team Start-Up Information Packet. To request a copy, please call 410-685-2220 or email [ipmba@aol.com](mailto:ipmba@aol.com).*