EMS workers rally around injured comrade
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NYACK - In an emergency, Rockland Paramedic Services is quick to provide assistance. Now Ray Coffey, an employee of Rockland Paramedic since 1992, needs the community's help in return.

Coffey, 45, was severely injured in an accident in May while in the back of an ambulance working his per-diem job for Diaz Ambulance, based in Saugerties, N.Y. His injuries include fractures to all the thoracic vertebrae of his spine, rib fractures, a broken sternum and pelvis, and contusions to his heart and lungs. His prognosis remains unclear, and rehabilitation will be long.

Mark Donovan and April Tantillo, Coffey's fellow employees, have organized a fundraising event with all proceeds going to Coffey to help cover his medical expenses. They are raffling prizes including a 37-inch LCD flat-screen HDTV, Sony Cybershot digital camera, an iPod Nano, and four Yankees tickets.

The raffle will be drawn this month at the RPS 10-13 Party - named for the New York City emergency services distress code. The party will feature free refreshments, discounted drinks, a DJ and a 50/50 raffle.

Coffey, a father of three and a Gulf War veteran who lives in the Albany area, has earned the nickname "Go-To Ray" from those he works with.

"The reason we're doing this fundraiser is a testament to the kind of guy Ray is," Donovan said. "If you need a favor, you can always go to Ray."

Donovan said Coffey would provide coverage if someone were sick or out from work, even after completing his own 12-hour tour.

"We've received a number of letters from the public commending Ray's medical knowledge and treatment of patients," said Ray Florida, chief executive officer of Rockland Paramedic Services. "He's a great employee."