HEATHER CASPI
Editor, EMSResponder.Com

The National EMS Museum Foundation's Virtual Museum has officially launched this week in conjunction with EMS Week, preserving the personalities and relics of early EMS through online exhibits and interviews.

"The museum's goal is not just to save a bunch of stuff," said Museum Director Kat Rickey. "It's meant to be informative, educational and entertaining."

Rickey also emphasized that the museum's purpose is not to replace other collections, but to connect them, and to help share those collections with the world. "We want to be an umbrella," Rickey said.

It's clear that many contributors are taking this concept to heart.

"One man bought a scanner so that he could tear his memory book apart and share it with us; he is one of so many doing things like that," said Julie Scadden, NEMSMF secretary. Others have contributed by traveling throughout their regions to get histories of all the local services.

"It's fabulous," Rickey said. "There's no way this museum can happen without that."

Other contributions, among Rickey's personal favorites, include a set of 500 photos of EMS toys collected by one man in Pennsylvania throughout his life. Another is an exhibit on the history of the stethoscope. "It's really a scholarly work," she said.

Rickey also wants visitors to know that the site includes interviews with EMS "giants," as well as those who have been influential on the local level. People often assume that the museum doesn't want to hear about their local EMS heroes, but, "Yes, we do want to hear about them!" Scadden said. It's common for people to be so humble that they don't realize they have anything to offer, she said.

Scadden said the museum foundation has been excited to see people beginning to utilize and learn from this preserved history. In one recent case, they corresponded with a college student researching the history of triage, and were able to direct her toward resources explaining its origins in France during the Napoleonic wars. It was a quintessential example of their mission, Scadden said.

This museum may be especially relevant to the many "legacy" people in EMS -- those who are second or more generation EMS providers, yet actually know very little about what their parents or grandparents did, Rickey noted.

In regard to EMS week, the pair said they were in the process of posting an exhibit that includes the first EMS Week proclamation.

http://emsresponder.com/article/article.jsp?siteSection=1&id=5407

5/29/2007
The online museum effort began less than one year ago and has been carried out entirely by volunteers. "It's a labor of love," Scadden said. Aside from the many contributors, "It's 12 to 15 people that just love EMS and want to see it preserved."

The museum's online launch completes Phase 1 of the project, and the foundation is excitedly working toward Phase 2, in which they will help organize traveling displays at shows and conferences. Their goal is not to make the museum the show, but to facilitate the local EMS community in creating their own exhibit.

"We want to keep people involved," Scadden says. "This is everybody's museum." The museum is open to everyone who wants to participate, and just as importantly, the fact that it's online makes it available to the world, Rickey said.

The first traveling show is planned for EMS Expo in Orlando, Florida this coming October.

The museum foundation doesn't physically house most of the items in the virtual museum; collectors are asked to hold on to their items, and if they wish to donate the items, a transaction is documented. However, for anyone who can no longer store their collections, perhaps because their spouse is threatening to clean out the basement, the museum foundation will accept it and store it.

Eventually the foundation will move on to Phase 3 of the project, in which they will create a permanent location for the museum and its collections. This was originally a 10-year goal, but may come significantly sooner.

The museum was initially funded by a $5,000 grant from NAEMT, and the foundation is currently in the process of becoming a 501c3 non-profit organization.

The foundation is thrilled and proud of the fact that the project has come so far, so soon. "We could not have done this without all of the people who stepped up," Rickey said.

- RSS Feeds for EMSResponder.com: Top EMS News Section

Related:
- The National EMS Museum Foundation's Virtual Museum