Since 1967, these volunteer medics have been saving lives all across town. Last year they answered more than 5,000 calls from the station at 2 Railroad St. with their crew of 6 ambulances and close to 280 volunteers.

It’s been almost 10 years since the Huntington Community First Aid Squad opened for business in its current building, not far from the Huntington railroad station and situated for easy access to different parts of town.

The facility’s first floor has a dispatch room, lounge area where the crews relax while they await calls, a bunk room for those who work overnight shifts and the truck room for the ambulances and support vehicles. Upstairs there are offices and a large meeting room where they hold the general membership meeting and holiday party. That large room also can be divided into up to 5 classrooms for EMT and CPR training.

The Huntington squad offers in-house, 24-hour ambulance service and is staffed with volunteers. To start, members must have their responding to emergencies (RTE) and CPR cards, says Andrea Golinsky, a board member who handles public information. Levels of training then increase, depending on whether the volunteers work as a driver, dispatcher, crew leader or first aider. There’s a background check and a physical, and after a volunteer is accepted they train as dispatcher and test on that position, then train for ambulance orientation if they’re going out on calls. “We make sure you’re comfortable in the job and that we’re comfortable with you as well,” Golinsky said. “The idea is to hold you by the hand until you can walk on your own.”

Volunteers make a minimum commitment to work a four-hour shift each week, except for the overnight crew, which works 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. Many, though, work more hours, Golinsky said, and they frequently stick around a long time -- Golinsky has been there 38 years, and Jim Barkocy, a past president of the board, will have been there 31 years in April. Crews often work together for years as well, she explained.

When crew members first report, they check the on-duty ambulance and one other ambulance so the vehicles are always stocked and ready to go, Golinsky said. Each shift has a minimum of five people, a dispatcher and four people in the ambulance. Calls come into the station through the county offices in Yaphank on Enhanced-911, so the streets show on the screen for the dispatcher. If the driver isn’t familiar with the area, they can punch up the location on the street locator system and make a print out to take with them. A bonus to the E-911 system is that a police officer responds as well, Golinsky said.

There are 12 fire departments in the town, and two independent ambulance departments. Nine town fire departments have their own ambulances, so the Huntington squad works with Huntington Manor and Huntington (http://huntington.patch.com/listings/huntington-fire-department) fire departments while the Commack department works with the Commack Volunteer Ambulance Corps.

The squad contracts coverage with the town and is funded through a tax district, with the budget around $1.6 million. It also holds a fund drive to cover the cost of things it can’t pay for with tax money, such as insurance for volunteers, Golinsky said. Members enjoy participating in parades and other community activities, she said, and there’s always a crew on standby at Heckscher Park (http://huntington.patch.com/listings/heckscher-museum-and-park) for the annual Celebrate Huntington Festival.

The squad offers tours to community and Scout groups. To arrange one, call the business line at 631-421-1263 and leave a message and a volunteer will get back to you to schedule a date and time.

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