Throggs Neck Ambulance Corps may close for good without immediate infusion of cash

Donations have dried up for 34-year-old company. Locals hail the service as a lifesaver in the remote neighborhood.

BY JENNIFER H. CUNNINGHAM / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
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Bill Heaney (right) and Dave Hochhauser, both volunteers with the Throggs Neck ambulance corps, say the company will close down without $50,000.

The last volunteer ambulance in the Bronx — which dates back to the presidency of Jimmy Carter — will close within months if residents don’t pitch in with cash.

The Throggs Neck Volunteer Ambulance Corps, which has served northeast Bronx since 1979, needs at least $50,000 to stay afloat for another year.
“If we don’t get some funding very soon, we’re going to shut down,” said David Hochhauser, a director of the 50-person company.

“There is a possibility that by Labor Day we may not be here.”

Community donations and local politicians’ discretionary funding have dried up in recent years, leaving the corps to foot the bill for insurance, utilities and fuel.

If the corps closes, it would follow other high-profile departures, including the River Bay Ambulance Corps in Co-op City and the City Island Volunteer Ambulance Corps.

“This was founded to help the community,” said William Heaney, the chairman of the board. “We’re in the community, and we want to stay.”

The corps dates back to 1979 — and can often get to calls faster than city ambulances.

Community Board 10 is working with the corps to find other funding sources, said District Manager Kenneth Kearns.
“We’re acting as a clearing house for information for them, so they can apply,” Kearns said.

Residents of the neighborhood, which has a different spelling than the corps, said they hoped the corps would remain open.

“They saved my life,” said housewife Amalia Soto, who has diabetes.

“They’ve come before the regular ambulance, and they’ve gotten me out of there before the regular ambulance.”

Maria Calisi, 59, said the corps saved her son when he was hit by a car.

“They’ve been here for years, and they’re better than some of the other ambulances around here,” Calisi said.

“There are a lot of old people around. We need them.”