Sir,

Four years ago, Violet Township Fire Department (VTFD) began to evaluate how we could improve the services we provide to our community. In conjunction with Mt Carmel Health Systems, we conducted a Healthcare Needs Assessment in an effort to identify healthcare service gaps within the residents of the community. The assessment identified some similar deficiencies. Following the efforts of some other communities from across the country, we determined that the creation of a “Community Paramedic” program could improve the health and wellness of our residents. The Community Paramedic program is designed to bring health care to the patient’s home. After working diligently to create a protocol and scope of care, the VTFD drove forward creating a new full-time Community Paramedic position within the organization. Upon selection and training of the individual, the VTFD purchased the required equipment and a vehicle to set forth on this new endeavor.

The community paramedic brings health care to the patient’s home, working off of referrals from the Mt Carmel Heart Failure Clinic and Fire Department personnel. As the capabilities of the program became better known, referrals quickly started pouring in from physician groups, churches, apartment complex managers, family members, local business, and other area hospitals. The Community Paramedic can assess the patient’s social determinants to health care. We ensure patients can afford their medications, and assist them in understanding when/why they take them. We can assist in the scheduling of doctor’s appointments and transportation to the appointments. We perform a home safety assessment and we make suitable referrals for home modification. We also try to link the patient to the qualifying community resource. We have the ability to perform point of care testing to assess the hydration status of patients and provide diuresis in the home. We also provide stroke follow up through the Mt. Carmel Health System. We can perform a modified NIH, modified Rankin, home safety assessment, and medication review.

The VTFD Community Paramedic program has partnered with other health care and area agencies to develop programs that will continue to aid in filling community health care gaps. The Program allows for assisting in mental health wellness by linking patients to mental health professionals and to the appropriate level of care. We work with Project FORT to provide overdose follow up within 24-72 hours of reported events. The team consists of a community paramedic, peer advocate, and a detective from the major crime unit. We partner with several agencies in the county to link the patient with mental health and addiction services. We also have access to other social service connections. Project FORT teams will follow the patient until they feel stable in their recovery. We offer a safe sleep program. If Fire/EMS/Police personnel identify an infant is sleeping in an unsafe environment, we will provide a crib.
and safe sleep education. We collaborate with several primary care physician groups. If they develop concerns about their patients, they may reach out to us in order to improve or assess issues at the patient’s residence. Following the evaluation of social and safety determinants, the Community Paramedic will communicate any pertinent findings back to the physician(s) and help develop a care plan.

Violet Township continually strives to improve the health of our community. We are enhancing our partnership with Mt Carmel Health Systems by initiating programs that include A-Fib, MI, and Joint Replacement. We currently are developing a senior check-in program with MOW. An elderly patient over the age of 60 can register with MOW to have an automated system call them every morning. If there is no answer after three attempts, a MOW representative will try to call the emergency contacts which includes the community paramedic. If needed, the community paramedic may make a home visit to check on the patient.

Please fill free to contact me with any questions involving our department’s community paramedic program.

Lt. J.D. Postage, CHWC
Community Paramedic
Violet Township Fire Dept.