

Daily Mountain Eagle (Jasper, AL)

June 11, 2012

Section: topstory_home,news

RPS owners credit growth to community support

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When Regional Paramedical Services was founded in July of 1987, the company had a staff of eight people and a fleet of two ambulances. In the last 25 years, RPS has grown significantly, now boasting more than 500 employees and 100 ambulances. John L. Wills, president and one of the founders of Jasper-based RPS, said he would have never expected that kind of growth in the company's early days. "Most of our success can be directly related to the support we've received from the community over the last 25 years," Wills said. "The people of Walker County have always been there for us, and we appreciate that." Phillip Windham, who along with Wills and David Waid are stakeholders in RPS, also thanked residents of Walker County for the company's success. "Being in business 25 years is a proud accomplishment for us, and we hope this is special to all of Walker County," he said. "Walker County has been good to us. This is where we live. We are a part of this county and will always be a part of this county." After serving only Walker County until 1994, Wills said the company expanded to other areas by adding service to Jefferson County. Since that first expansion, RPS has grown to serve a total of nine counties across central Alabama. Wills said demand for its service has been the driving force behind the company's growth. "All these areas have always approached us," he said. "They know us by our reputation. They know what kind of service we provide." The group's main office and dispatch center remains in Jasper. Last year, the company's dispatch center received 67,658 calls. In Walker County, RPS averages around 27 dispatched calls per day. Lee Wills, RPS manager, said the amount of calls and the quality of service would not be possible without the dedication of the employees at RPS. "We have the best bunch of employees," he said. "Without them, and their hard work, we could not do what we do." John Wills said the company is structured from a paramedic's point of view. "Many ambulance companies are ran as only a business operation," he said. "All three of our owners are paramedics. We provide medical service first, and then we worry about the business side of things." Lee Wills said the RPS main office in Jasper also includes a full service center that keeps the company's fleet of ambulances rolling throughout those nine counties. "We realized as we grew that we needed our own garage," he said. "It wouldn't be cost efficient to send the vehicles out for maintenance. Our vehicles are very important to what we do. This way, we can make sure everything gets done to them, and it gets done in the time that we need it to be done." John Wills said RPS has not been closed since it opened in 1987. "A lot of companies are in business for 25 years, but there aren't many at all that can say they haven't been closed at all in 25 years," he said. "We've been open every second since July 1987." Along with being open for business continuously, the services RPS provides can be needed at any time. "When someone calls on Monday, we can't tell them that we won't be out there until Wednesday — we have to go when the call comes in," John Wills said. "If we don't get to a call right away bad things can happen." While RPS didn't have to close, the operation was slowed by last year's tornadoes. Lee Wills said several employees suffered damage to their homes, but they came in to help others. "Our employees were throughout central Alabama on April 27 and the days that followed," he said. "It took a lot from our employees to do that, but it's something they wanted to do. They knew they could help their neighbors, and that is what they did." John Wills said it has been an honor to be a part of the RPS team for 25 years. "Our role at Regional Paramedical Services has been to provide the highest quality emergency care and transportation," he said. "It's been an honor and a privilege to be a part of this team."