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Regional Paramedical Services celebrates 20 years in business

On Friday, **Regional** Paramedical Services, Inc. (RPS) celebrated its 20th year of providing Walker and surrounding counties with reliable advanced life support ambulance services.

"That in itself is pretty amazing," said John Wills, president of RPS. "We've never been down for any amount of time. We've always been available. We can thank a lot of good people that have dedicated their lives to serving the citizens of this county."

Wills founded the company along with two of his partners, Martha White, former RPS treasurer, and Kerry Brown, former vice-president.

"Twenty years ago, we had a severe need for an advanced life support ambulance," Wills said. "The needs weren't being met at that time. I worked for another company in this area, and decided that we really needed to upgrade paramedic skills in the county."

Over the years, the company has expanded from operating out of a trailer with five employees and two ambulances to serving seven counties in 14 different locations with a total of 600 employees and about 85 ambulances.

"It has grown, I think, way beyond anybody's expectations," said RPS General Manager David Waid, who has been with the company since its inception.

White and Wills said it was not their intention to offer services outside Walker County, but they were asked to provide their services by counties that include Winston, Marion, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, Talladega and Chilton counties.

"We really wanted to keep it as small as possible," Wills said.

He also said he feels RPS's quality of service exceeds that offered by most other paramedic services.

"We try to be innovative and on the cutting edge with our equipment and training," he said. "We feel we have the highest quality personnel and highest quality equipment to work with."

Wills said he has been to other cities and states to compare RPS with other companies throughout the country.

"I think we are world class," he said. "I've been in other countries and evaluated there. We are far exceeding that in other countries. We have one of the best hospitals in Birmingham and in Walker County. That's one thing we can really be proud of in Alabama; we have high quality medical care."

Eric Pendley, north district manager for RPS, said he is proud of the advanced equipment that is used by the company.

"One thing I like about RPS is, when you work, you always have the equipment needed to take care of the patients," he said.

One paramedic, Chana Laye, who has worked for other paramedic services, said she feels the same.

"As far as compared to other companies they have better equipment than everybody else," she said. "Their equipment is more up-to-date."

"I think one thing that people really don't realize is that we're recognized all the time for outstanding achievements in the paramedic field," Wills said. "We're constantly receiving awards for our outstanding service. We're very proud of that."

Phillip Windham, RPS's vice president, said he is happy that he has had the opportunity to work for a company that has been so successful.

"We've had our struggles like all companies have," he said. "We've worked through those. It's just really amazing."

Most of RPS's employees are pleased with its family-like atmosphere.

"It's not like most companies you work for," said Lorn Harbin, who has been a paramedic with RPS for 14 years. "They really have an investment in their employees and try to look out for them. They're really interested in keeping people happy."

"They're good people to work for," EMT Tracy Pilkington said. "They're flexible, and they work with you."

Wills said he thinks this is one of the things that sets RPS apart from the rest.

"I feel that we're a family and that we treat all of our patients the same as we would our family," he said. "They're just as ready to come get you as they are me."

Wills said he feels that the best part of being a paramedic is when a patient or a patient's family is appreciative of the care received.

"A lot of times we're all busy and we just don't have the time to tell people that we really appreciate the special care that each of us gives," he said. "So, we really appreciate it when we help people and they tell us. That's what we're trying to do today is say that we appreciate the paramedics and all the support people for what they do."

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