



NORTHERN CALIFORNIA EMS, INC.

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EMS Authority
2015 Awards Nomination Committee

Subject: Steve Tolen – Distinguished Service Award

Steve Tolen first visited Quincy in Plumas County when he was in his late teens. He immediately knew this was where they wanted to live. Steve's interest in EMS was just blooming and he quickly affiliated with the local fire department as a volunteer. This was in the late 1960's and a giant departure from his years growing up in Hillsborough on the San Francisco Peninsula.

One of the first projects I worked on when coming to Nor-Cal EMS (at that time Northern California Emergency Medical Care Council) was the development of an inventory and capability summary of the ambulances and hospitals in the region. That was in 1976. Not surprisingly, both the hospital and ambulance contact person for Plumas District Hospital in Quincy was Steve. Looking back, Steve was eager to step forward in a quiet leadership role to further the efforts to improve emergency care and lead by example. If something needed to be done, Steve always was the first in line to role up his sleeves and make sure it was completed in a way that would make people proud and benefit the most.

From those positions of leadership it wasn't long before Steve was appointed to the Medical Care Council Board of Directors, and as you might expect, later elected as the Board Chairman. His participation with the agency also included membership on one of the sub-committees, the Emergency Vehicles Advisory Committee. The committee was responsible for placing many ambulances and patient care equipment into rural service areas through federal and state funding programs. He was a very active participant on this committee.

These were times before the "convenience" of phone conference calls, so attendance at distant meetings was required. Steve has traveled thousands of miles and put in hundreds of hours representing the interests of Plumas District Hospital, its ambulance service and the needs of patients throughout the north state. Never were his positions proprietary, they were always for the benefit of the region and the state.

Steve has always been a student of his profession, always seeking ways to do a better job and dedicating himself to making things better. This is obvious in his dedication to his work responsibilities and doing what it takes to continue to improve emergency medical care in Plumas County. This is also obvious in his eagerness to teach others. His reputation as an instructor goes back many years and continues to be exemplary both teaching on behalf of Plumas District Hospital and Feather River College. There now are children of his first students and even grandchildren of his first students who have enrolled in his first aid, CPR, First Responder and EMT classes.

Although his health has caused him to “retire” his dedication is reflected in his continued participation with the Plumas County Emergency Medical Care Committee and as the current Chairman of the Nor-Cal EMS Board of Directors. He also continues as the institutional knowledge “go to person” for the hospital and as an energetic cheerleader for disaster planning.

While Steve’s dedication to improving emergency medical care is unfailing, it is his attitude in working with others that is most impressive. I can’t think of a time when Steve hasn’t been willing to volunteer his time and make the extra effort, all with a congenial attitude, to continue to improve emergency care in his community, the Northstate and statewide. Every community needs someone like Steve.



Dan Spiess
Chief Executive Officer

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