

## Issue 11

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# NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES

*County Government with a Unified Voice!*

## Business Associates Monthly



**EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

### The Next Great Shared Service: Emergency Medical Services

*By: Scott Matin, Vice President*

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are as essential as police and fire services. Like police and fire, EMS is facing its own hurdles in today's struggling economy. This article addresses the challenges facing New Jersey towns and counties and offers several solutions to fix the problem before reaching crisis.

EMS in New Jersey is designed as a two tiered system. The first tier is the basic life support (BLS) ambulances staffed in many cases by Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). More than half of the BLS ambulances in New Jersey are staffed by volunteers, with the remainder mainly staffed by municipal or private services. While the volunteer system has been the mainstay of BLS in New Jersey for years, the economy unfortunately has caused a major decrease in the amount

of available volunteers to staff BLS ambulances. This decrease in volunteers is leading to longer response times and in many cases local squads to be entirely unavailable to respond to calls during parts of or entire days. The second tier is the advanced life support (ALS), otherwise known as the Mobile Intensive Care Unit Paramedics. By law, ALS in New Jersey is hospital based and limited by certificate of need. All paramedics in New Jersey are paid providers.

As a result of the diminishing number of volunteer responders, communities are being forced to either start their own municipal services or contract with private ambulance providers to provide the service. While starting your own municipal service is initially attractive due to the perceived ability to control every facet and

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## NJAC Welcomes New Business Associate

Health Dimensions  
Group

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## IMPORTANT DATES

NJAC  
Annual Conference  
June 5th- 8th, 2012

NJAC Seminar  
Proposal Deadline  
March 30, 2012

National County  
Government Month  
April 1-30, 2012



## Government Technologies Group, LLC

*By: Bill Josko, President and CEO*

GTSC is pleased to welcome its newest member – William (Bill) Josko, President and CEO of Government Technologies Group, LLC, based in Mount Laurel, New Jersey, with Bill a life-long New Jersey resident.

For over 30 years, William (Bill) Josko, has had the honor and pleasure of serving the Public Safety, Emergency Management, and Mass Notification and Alerting industries at all levels of Government. Many of these years were spent helping Federal, State, County, and especially Local Public Safety officials in New Jersey implement complex, integrated Dispatch, Records Management, Mobile Computing, Corrections, and Civil Process systems. In helping these departments, it became very clear that smaller agencies had many of the same technol-

ogy needs as their larger brethren, yet often lacked the financial capacity to implement and maintain this much needed technology. "The continual cost and difficulty in acquiring new technology has become even more acute during the last few years, as local government, and indeed, our nation, continue to face huge economic hardships" said Josko. He went on to say, "even if a system is acquired through a grant, the agency still has the financial burden of high ongoing maintenance costs to sustain their system".

Josko and two of his friends, Bernard Bialt and Adam Montella joined New Jersey-based Government Technologies Group, LLC (GTG) to do something about this situation by developing its own set of products, utilizing advanced technology tools,

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## MONOC

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bill for the service, the problem always boils down to overall operational cost. Nearly every municipal BLS EMS service loses money, even the largest ones. On the expense side, the most costly aspects include startup costs, salaries (staff and management), pensions, employee benefits, workers' compensation insurance, 911 dispatch services, housing for crews and vehicles, initial and replacement vehicle costs, vehicle insurance, licensing fees, mandatory back up ambulances, vehicle and equipment maintenance, and fuel. One issue raised by EMS consultants reviewing municipal EMS systems is that in most cases, the profit and loss statement for the service isn't "fully loaded." Meaning that it does not show ALL expenses since many of the support services are provided by the town itself or are bundled into group plans. Examples of expenses often left out of P & L statements for EMS services include vehicle insurance, vehicle maintenance, fuel, office space, and utility expenses.

On the revenue side, what attracts most township administrators or managers to beginning their own services is the misconception that the revenue captured by billing patients' insurance companies will cover their costs. This may work if enough patients have higher paying commercial insurance and pay

their share. However, the majority of patients that EMS responds to, particularly in New Jersey due to its very high retiree population, have Medicare as their insurer. Unfortunately Medicare pays very little for ambulance transport. For those towns with a large Medicaid population, Medicaid reimbursement is about one third of Medicare and is far below the cost of an ambulance transport. An additional factor that degrades reimbursement from Medicare patients that also require paramedic services is the need to enter into "interface agreements" with the paramedic provider. Since Medicare will only allow one entity to bill for services on a particular call, the BLS and ALS must enter into in an agreement to share the payment received from Medicare. If an agreement isn't reached, the patient could receive a separate bill from the paramedics which would require the patient to pay an even higher bill completely out of pocket.

One alternative to municipalities starting up their own expensive EMS service is to share the services with neighboring towns. When successful, this is often one of the best solutions. Unfortunately the idea of sharing EMS services is as popular as sharing police or fire services. Another alternative is to establish a county wide BLS system. If all of the towns agree and the system is properly man-

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## GTG

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and delivering these products and services in cost effective and innovative ways.

Bialt, GTG's Chief Information Officer, has over 25 years of software development and business process automation expertise. After starting his career in engineering, he quickly became involved in his company's IBM business computing implementation, and realized the potential of using computer automation to assist in cost reductions, productivity gains, and better decision making. Montella, GTG's Chief Operating Officer, was the first General Manager for Emergency Management at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and is the disaster and Homeland Security expert on the Discovery Channel series, THE COLONY. With 26 years in the industry, Montella has served both the private sector as a provider, and the public sector as a recipient of technology. His growing dissatisfaction with the high cost of technology that does not deliver as promised, prompted him to join Josko and Bialt in their mission.

GTG's mission is to help smaller agencies (of which roughly 80% represent the majority of U.S. agencies) implement much needed state-of-the-art technology at affordable and sustainable price points. Montella said, "There is great need for these capabilities, yet due to numerous disparate systems (which often do not fully meet an organization's needs), they present the unfortunate side-effects of higher integration and sustainability costs".

"By harnessing the power of major companies such as Microsoft, Dell, etc., GTG leverages cutting edge development and integration technologies that deliver our solutions in an on-site client server-based, or Cloud Computing model at greatly reduced initial, and sustainment costs", says Bialt. Through this commitment, GTG has provided the end-user the ability to tailor their solution around their unique operating environment, not have them conform to an out of-the-box solution. The best part is that GTG has offered their products and services at a fraction of the cost agencies have come to expect.

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## New Jersey County Homes

By: Erin Shvetzoff Hennessey, Director of Business Development

**Changing economic landscapes, evolving health care policies and increasing financial pressure on local governments are resulting in the widespread assessment of the benefits of county owned and operated health care facilities. These assessments often highlight the fact that county health care centers require the use of more governmental, operational and financial resources than are desired or financially feasible for a county government.**

During the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, governments across the country opened health centers, then called “poor farms,” making a commitment to care for the older and more vulnerable residents of their counties. This long-standing commitment to caring for seniors in high-quality local centers continues today across the state of New Jersey, with more than half of New Jersey

counties still owning skilled nursing centers. Since these centers opened, the landscape of senior care has changed drastically, most significantly with the advent of Medicare and Medicaid, and with the entry of many privately owned and operated skilled nursing centers and senior living locations in the marketplace.

Both publicly and privately owned and operated senior health care facilities face a variety of financial challenges, including reductions in state Medicaid funding, Medicare cuts of more than 11 percent in October of 2011, and the mounting expenses of operating a skilled nursing center, often in aged physical plants. In states such as New Jersey, changes to bed-hold policies and property tax caps imposed on counties have also drastically changed the financial landscape. In more financially stable times, some county centers were not operating at significant— or any— cost to taxpayers and, if they were operating at a loss, the

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## MONOC

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aged, more can be handled with fewer ambulances, often keeping costs down and minimizing the redundancy of services and equipment. The only county in New Jersey currently running a county wide system is Gloucester. Salem County is scheduled to begin their EMS system shortly. Aiding these two counties in establishing their systems is their relatively rural make up and the cooperation of most towns on a political level.

Yet another alternative becoming more and more popular with cash strapped towns is to contract with a private provider of EMS that have lower costs through economies of scale and much lower salary lines. The advantage to the town or county is removing all costs and liabilities while maintaining control of the BLS service in their community. Other benefits include reducing the work load on other municipal or county services otherwise used to supplement a weak EMS system such as the police, fire and public works departments. When utilizing a private provider, a town can establish a performance based approach requiring certain response times, additional ambulance coverage during peak hours, or

training and education offered to the community at large.

If considering using a private EMS provider, perform your due diligence by comparing providers and the added benefits each may have for your town or county. Some private providers are nationally accredited. The gold standard in EMS is accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS). Agencies that are CAAS accredited are held to a much higher standard than other agencies, both volunteer and paid. These standards exceed those of New Jersey law. Other things to look for before selecting a private provider is experience, performance, fleet size, ability to dispatch using system status management (SSM) to maximize resources, and 24/7 supervisory support.

While towns and counties are suffering as a result of the economic down turn, the good news is that there is the ability to improve the response citizens receive throughout the state without increasing burdens on governments or their tax payers.

For further information contact: *Scott Matin, Vice President of MONOC Mobile Health Services at 732-919-3045 ext. 1168 or [scott.matin@monoc.org](mailto:scott.matin@monoc.org).*



## Somerset County Will Save \$70K A Year In Natural Gas Costs

By: Linda Van Zandt, PIO, Somerset County

Somerset County is looking at substantial savings on its natural gas costs this year, thanks to its participation in the Mid Jersey Energy Cooperative Pricing System (MJECPS).

"We are estimating savings of \$70,000 a year, or 16 percent, on our natural gas bill," said Freeholder Robert Zaborowski, county finance chairman. "This will apply to the approximately 21 county-owned buildings that use natural gas for heat and hot water."

The Board of Freeholders authorized a one-year contract for the natural gas pricing on Feb. 14. The savings are the result of an online reverse auction conducted by the MJECPS in January. The five other members of the co-op are Union, Ocean, Middlesex, Morris and Warren counties. Together, they expect to realize first-year savings of approximately \$500,000 on natural gas transportation and supply costs.

The 36-month, fixed-price basis contract for \$1.3043 per dekatherm went to the Hess Corp. of Woodbridge. It covers the utility territories of Elizabethtown Gas, New Jersey Natural Gas and PSE&G.

The MJECPS will hold a similar auction for electricity in March or April in the utility territories of PSE&G, JCP&L and Atlantic Electric. Birdsall Services Group of Cranford is providing energy consulting services to MJECPS and assisting in the procurement of energy for its members.

"Somerset County is proud to be part of this cooperative purchasing initiative," said Freeholder Zaborowski. "Participating in the Mid Jersey Energy Co-op fits perfectly with our established goal of reducing energy costs through other programs as well, such as our countywide solar panel project, county facilities energy upgrades, hybrid-vehicle purchases and other conservation measures."

The goal of the MJECPS is to pool the resources of its government entities to purchase natural gas and electricity competitively. The objectives are price stability at competitive levels and budgetary certainty for all members, secured through a competitive-bid process with the opportunity to realize savings that might not be available to customers who solicit on their own. Through these efforts, the various New Jersey counties and municipalities who are members of MJECPS, many of whom have multiple small-volume accounts, are positioned on equal footing with large commercial and industrial users.

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## GTSC

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The biggest way in which GTG reduces costs is based on one of its cornerstone principles – to always develop and deliver their suite of products to be compliant with universally accepted standards such the National Response Plan, embracing the tenants of NIMS/ICS, UICDS (NIEM, OGC, CAP), etc. and allow multi-stakeholder collaboration through the use of their products and services. They also embrace technology-related initiatives whenever possible, such as DOJ's Suspicious Activity Reporting System (SARS).

For larger projects, clients may engage the expertise of GTG's internationally recognized subject matter experts (SMEs). Josko said, "Where necessary, our SMEs and developers will engage our strategic partners to deliver the most appropriate solution to fit our client's needs and budget...our other strategic relationships are geared to provide the client with the full spectrum of products and services to meet their public safety software and hardware needs, all with the goal of providing them at reduced costs to government".

Many of GTG's principals and SMEs come from the very audiences they now serve, employing lessons-learned from their combined century of experience, and best-practices from agencies and end-users across the United States. It is this level of commitment that has recently gotten GTG accepted into the Burlington County College, NJ Technology Business Center, further enhancing their capability to serve government in new and innovative ways.

GTG has recently added My iCE Plan™ to its portfolio of products. My iCE Plan™ is a complete family and pet disaster planning and home inventory software designed to help citizens prepare for and recover from disasters. GTSC members can download a free version of by following the link. GTG's other products include iRMS™ (Public Safety Information Records Management System), i-Assess™ (online capabilities self-assessment), and My iForms™ (true forms-based computing).

For further information contact: *Bill Josko, President & CEO of GTG at 609-760-2884 or [bill.josko@govtechgrp.com](mailto:bill.josko@govtechgrp.com)*.

## Health Dimensions Group

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counties were in stronger positions to fund the losses.

Today, counties are faced with difficult decisions regarding the future of their role in the senior health care business. They are facing significant financial losses and are unable to make the capital improvements needed to the physical plants to stay competitive in the new marketplace. Some counties have made the difficult decision to exit the business completely, selling these assets to other organizations. Others have changed overall strategy and direction. Some are struggling to survive and are fighting to continue providing the care they committed to providing.

While each of the above options has proven successful for certain counties, it is important to evaluate all options available to counties looking to maintain this county service, while at the same time balancing the financial limitations of the municipality.

Divestiture of health care assets has been a strategy used by county governments to exit the business of senior health care quickly, while recognizing significant, one-time financial recovery or gain from the transaction. This strategy is often faced with community opposition and hesitation due to the uncertain future of the centers, as the center is no longer affiliated directly with the county. In some states, there are serious concerns around the transferring of the purchased licenses to other areas of the state, discontinuing the community service completely.

Counties have partnered with private operators for expertise in the operations and manage-

ment of health care centers and have engaged these organizations to manage the day-to-day operations of the county home. These arrangements have allowed the counties to retain overall control of the services while preserving valuable assets to the community, both real estate assets and the services they provide. These engagements have resulted in significant improvements in operations, both financially and clinically, due to the expertise of the operators. A private management strategy creates increased financial stability for the center and can provide improved access to capital for physical plant improvements, as well as improving the financial stability and value of a center prior to divestiture.

Another strategy used by counties has been a lease arrangement of the county center and operations to a private operator. This lease arrangement allows the county to retain ownership of the assets while minimizing the use of government resources to manage the operations, as well as minimizing liability for the county. This strategy has turned county centers into profit centers for the county, as well as created financial partnerships for significant improvements of county centers.

While each county is similar in its commitment to care for the seniors of the community, counties have drastically different financial situations, long-term strategies and levels of public support. It is important for county leaders to evaluate all options available to save the county centers, and to ensure the decisions made are in the best interests of county government, constituents and, most importantly, the seniors being served.

For further information contact: *Erin Shvetzoff Hennessey, Director of Business Development of Health Dimensions Group (HDG) at 763-225-8625 or [erinh@hdg1.com](mailto:erinh@hdg1.com) or via the website at [www.healthdimensionsgroup.com](http://www.healthdimensionsgroup.com).*



House, Senate moving on surface transportation bill

[http://www.naco.org/newsroom/countynews/Current%20Issue/2-13-12/Pages/House\\_Senatemovingonsurfacetransportationbill.aspx](http://www.naco.org/newsroom/countynews/Current%20Issue/2-13-12/Pages/House_Senatemovingonsurfacetransportationbill.aspx)

There has been a flurry of activity and controversy on the reauthorization of the surface transportation bill.

FHFA breathes new life into PACE energy program

<http://www.naco.org/newsroom/countynews/Current%20Issue/2-13-12/Pages/FHFAbreathesnewlifeintoPACEenergyprogram.aspx>

After more than a year of stalling, the Federal Housing Finance Agency opened a 60-day public comment period on the future of Property Assessed Clean Energy programs in response to a court order in a case challenging FHFA rejection of PACE lending.

**Mission Statement**

NJAC is committed to advocating for legislation, regulations, and policy directives that empower county governments to operate more effectively and efficiently. As a non-partisan organization that represents the only true regional form of government in the State with a unified and proactive voice, NJAC is dedicated to advancing innovative programs and initiatives for the sole purpose of saving valuable taxpayer dollars.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
			1 "Tire Amnesty Month", Gloucester Cty.	2
5 Legislative Session NCPW Week	6 Higher Education Session	7 Asm. Budget FAME Workshop, Somerset Cty.	8	9
12	13 Sen. Budget	14 Asm. Budget	15 Legislative Session	16 NJAC Board Meeting
19	20 Asm. Budget	21	22 Sen. Budget	23
26	27 Just a Hike, Mercer Cty.	28	29	30 NJAC Seminar Proposals Due

**From the Executive Director's Desk**

Don't miss the opportunity to join us for our 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference scheduled to take place over two action packed days from June 5<sup>th</sup> through June 7<sup>th</sup> at Bally's Park Place in Atlantic City. We've added some outstanding new segments to this year's annual celebration of county government that include:

- A county vocational-technical school cook-off challenge
- A county executive forum
- A seminar designed especially for our business associates
- A unique opportunity for businesses to introduce themselves to our Board
- A 20% reduction in room rates
- No increase in registration fees

We expect to host a terrific event this year that begins with a Meet and Greet Reception on Tuesday night and ends with the President's Awards Reception and Dancing early Thursday evening. In between, you'll have the opportunity to network with county officials throughout the State at our Legislative Luncheon, Exhibitors' Reception, and educational workshops. Perhaps most importantly, we plan to stagger our workshops and make coffee stations available in the Exhibit Area throughout the Conference.

We also recognize the fact that everyone is struggling to make ends meet, so we decided to keep our registration rates at 2011 levels. Additionally, Bally's has graciously agreed to reduce its room rates for NJAC guests by 20% from last year's prices. I know there's a great deal of information to digest, but please take a moment to review the summary we've provided below, which contains important details on the schedule of events, registration, workshops, and opportunities to host an event or advertise in our Conference Directory.

For additional information regarding the upcoming NJAC Annual Conference please go to [www.njac.org](http://www.njac.org).

NJAC Business Associates are encouraged to submit educational news articles for the monthly e-newsletter. For more information please contact Loren Wizman at 609-394-3467 or [loren@njac.org](mailto:loren@njac.org).