

# FASNY 2011 EMS PROVIDER OF THE YEAR



EMS Chief

**Karen L. Rathke**  
Southside Fire Company

On the evening of December 11th, 2010, the Southside Fire Company and First Responder Unit were dispatched to a motor vehicle crash described as a car into a tree. The dispatch was then updated with the vehicle being on fire with possible entrapment. EMS Chief Karen L. Rathke and her husband responded directly to the scene as the crash was between their home and the fire station. Upon their arrival, the cab of the vehicle was found to be fully engulfed in flames with the occupant visibly trying to escape the vehicle. She called in an initial on-scene report to dispatch to update other responders of the situation.

David Rathke, Karen's husband and Captain of Southside, knocked down the flames with a fire extinguisher enough so that the victim could free himself of the wreckage and be pulled away from the vehicle. Karen extinguished the man's burning clothing with her hands. She began treating the victim and provided an update of the situation to dispatch, acting as both the initial provider and incident commander, and requesting the helicopter. The victim was conscious with an initial assessment of severe burns and Karen was able to speak with the victim and keep him calm on the scene. Care of the victim was turned over to Owego ALS providers on their arrival, and Karen then supervised the extinguishment of the fire. The victim was stabilized by the Owego ambulance crew and transported to a Syracuse hospital via helicopter.

It is truly amazing that she was able to keep her head about her and to be an effective incident commander when faced with this type of emergency. She does not see herself as heroic, but rather as part of a well disciplined team of people who have devoted their lives to the service of others. Volunteerism is important to her, and she feels fortunate to live in a place where neighbors still help neighbors in times of crisis. She gives credit to the civilians who stopped to help and risked injury to themselves while doing so, to the neighbors who took the bedding off their own bed to cover the victim until the ambulance arrived, and to all the people who rallied in support of the family after this tragedy.

She would like to accept this award for the Southside Fire Company and the team that she represents, a shining example of community spirit. She also received the firefighter of the year award at Southside's annual awards banquet for her efforts. Witnesses to the events are her husband David Rathke, David Radigan and everyone in the county who had a scanner and was listening in.

Karen L. Rathke has been EMS Chief for the past three years and has been a member of the company since 1994 when she joined at the age of sixteen.

*The above content was extracted from a letter of recommendation submitted by Southside Fire Company Assistant Chief Doreen Holbrook.*

## Past EMS Provider of the Year Award Recipients

Year:	Name:	Fire Department:
2006	Chief Leonard Martin Firefighter George Bassler Firefighter Ronald Ouimette AEMT-CC Patrick Barriere	Keeseville Fire Department
2007	FF James Rosse, II	South Schodack Fire Department and Castleton Ambulance
2008	FF/EMT Mark W. Gilson	Olcott Fire Company
2009	No Award Given	
2010	Valerie White	Community Ambulance