



## North Fork Sun

# Every Spring, A Delicious Thank-You Lunch Reminds North Fork EMTs How Much Their Work Matters

Chris Francescani | 5/20/26



On a picture-perfect spring afternoon overlooking the water at Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital, the smell of wood-fired pizza drifted through the air as doctors, nurses, administrators and emergency responders gathered for what has become a meaningful annual tradition.

Held each spring during National EMS Week, the lunch is designed to honor the volunteer and professional emergency medical workers who respond every day to medical emergencies across the North Fork. But for one of the event's organizers, the gathering is also something more personal: an expression of gratitude.



*(From left: SBELIH chief administrative officer Paul Connor, Sheri Winter Parker, chief of emergency services Dr. Lawrence Schiff and Linda S. Sweeney, vice president, foundation/external affairs)*

The event is sponsored jointly by Stony Brook ELIH and foundation board member Sheri Winter Parker, who spearheaded the annual event, first held in 2021, and whose involvement grew directly out of her own experience as a patient.

“What inspired me to do it was when I got so sick with Covid,” Parker said. “I said, ‘I will do anything I can to thank these people.’”

Parker, who now serves on the hospital’s foundation board, said she has made it part of her mission to help raise awareness about the hospital’s role in serving the East End and to support the people who work there.



“This is about getting the word out,” she said. “You never want to think this way, but when you need it, you have it,” she said of the top-notch emergency care provided by EMTs across the North Fork, “and it’s really important that everybody knows that this is the case.”

### **‘Really positive relationship’**

The lunch itself has become a recurring fixture of EMS Week, with Parker providing top-shelf pizza in the form of 1943 Pizza’s Rolling in Dough pizza truck for responders and hospital staff as a gesture of appreciation.



Hospital officials said the event has been held for several years and has become a meaningful reminder of the close relationship between emergency responders and the hospital.

Paul Connor, chief administrative officer at Stony Brook ELIH, said the event recognizes a group whose work is often unseen but essential.



Connor called the North Fork’s EMTs “a vital group in our community that saves lives. “They were really instrumental in cheering us on to become a primary stroke center. We’ve always had an excellent partnership with all the EMS squads,” he said. “Our chief of emergency services happens to be their medical director, Dr. Larry Schiff. So through him and with him we’ve had a long and really positive relationship.”

**‘Attuned’**

Ed Boyd, president of the North Fork Volunteer Rescue Squad Association, said the work EMTs do requires more than technical training.

“We are called upon to meet folks when they’re having probably the worst day of their lives,” Boyd said. “It’s the same as when we’re called to go to a fire call. It may seem like a routine call, possibly because we’ve handled many of the same things. We may look at the person, check their vital signs and realize that it’s not that serious in terms of the spectrum of medical or trauma problems. But still, to them, it is the most important thing that’s happening.

“So you have to be very attuned to that. You have to make sure that you put their needs and desires at the forefront of what you’re doing.”

For Parker, a top-performing Corcoran real estate agent, that commitment is exactly why the lunch matters so much.