

'This will save lives'



Keowee Fire Department officially opens helipad

Above: Keowee Fire Department Chief Brandon Shirley speaks at an event marking the official opening of the fire station's new helipad last week in Salem. **Right:** Shirley stands in front of a Prisma Health helicopter with Karen Iacovelli, whose Good Shepherd Foundation provided a gift to help build the helipad.

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SALEM — In life-threatening emergencies such as a car crash or a fire, the time it takes to get someone to the hospital may be the difference between life and death.

The Keowee Fire Department now has a new asset to help get victims to the hospital more quickly.

Fire Chief Brandon Shirley, firefighters, local officials and residents were at the fire station last week for the official opening of a helipad at the department.

Shirley told those at the opening the helipad will provide a dedicated place for medical helicopters to land and pick up patients, with an

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HELIPAD: Flight to Greenville Memorial about 14-15 minutes

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estimated 14-to-15-minute flight to Greenville Memorial Hospital, where many of the area's most seriously injured patients are sent for treatment.

"No. 1, it provides a very safe and dedicated place for not only the helicopter crews to land, but it also makes it safer for us. It gets us out of the road directing traffic," he said. "It allows EMS to be in our parking lot and spend time with the patient and allows the flight crews to fly over. We fed them lunch twice (recently) and used our training room to do training with them. We came out here and did patient care (training) and moving patients in and out of the helicopter and improving some of those things."

He added the fire department has responded to incidents where the new helipad could have saved lives if it had been ready.

Karen Iacovelli said her Good Shepherd Foundation provided a gift to the effort after learning

the difference the helipad could make in response time. She saw the fire department response to an incident in which her daughter died.

"I had a tragedy in my family," Iacovelli said. "The crew was just phenomenal. I lost my daughter, but they simply would not give up. And I got to know some of them. Their response, their compassion was just extraordinary, and it's still with me. You don't get over that."

"I just literally one day popped in to see Brandon and I said, 'What do you need?' And he told me his vision. Fortunately enough, I have a private foundation. So I just said, 'Tell me what you need,' and that was pretty much the end of the conversation. This will save lives. I think that that's worth it."

Shirley credited the support of Iacovelli's foundation, the Keowee Key Board of Directors, the Keowee Fire Commission and others in the audience for helping the vision become a reality.