

# Life-Saving Model

Jersey City reports success in United Rescue volunteer-based emergency response program

By Steven Fulop, Mayor, Jersey City

It's been a little over a year since Jersey City launched United Rescue, the first-in-the-nation volunteer-based emergency response program designed to save lives and leverage our strongest assets—our residents—to augment and enhance city services at no cost to taxpayers.

In that time, trained volunteers have responded to more than 600 medical emergencies, from minor accidents to life-threatening conditions and have saved lives in many ways, from administering Narcan to victims suffering from an overdose to supplementing existing emergency services during the blizzard last January. We've cut our best response time literally in half. This program, a partnership with RWJBarnabas-Jersey City Medical Center, can and should serve as a model for forward-thinking municipalities to proactively adapt technology to change the way they deliver services to their citizens.

## Emergency "Uber"

United Rescue essentially does for emergency responders what Uber does for public transit—by using mobile technology to activate private citizens and supplement existing infrastructure. The linchpin of the United Rescue program is a smartphone application that alerts trained and equipped volunteers of nearby medical emergencies. When an ambulance is dispatched, this alert system notifies and activates any nearby community-based emergency responders, volunteers who have gone through the United Rescue first responder training, to provide care while professional EMS personnel are en route. Minutes can mean the difference in some situations between life and death, so the ability to get care immediately to a potential victim literally saves lives.

For example, an office worker could be suffering from a heart attack while someone who could save his or her life might be in a meeting, unaware of the emergency, a floor below. If that person was properly trained, equipped, and notified, he or she



could respond to the emergency more quickly than the ambulance would arrive, potentially saving a life. The value of the United Rescue program lies in ensuring that there is always a cadre of trained and equipped volunteers who can be instantly located and dispatched via the mobile app and the 911 system to any scene in the city.

As a result, we've managed to drop our emergency response times from just under six minutes, already among the best in the country, to only two and a half minutes if an active United Rescue participant is nearby. Moreover, because the program is completely volunteer-based and supported by charitable donations, we've managed to accomplish this at no cost to the taxpayers of Jersey City. And the relationship between the Jersey City Medical Center professionals and the United Rescue volunteers could not be stronger.

Importantly, the program's more than 100 volunteers on the street or in training come from all areas of the city and many different ethnic backgrounds, ensuring a wide diversity. Not only does this translate into a more effective program with broader coverage across the city, but it also brings together citizens from every group and geographical area in our uniquely diverse city, fostering great and abiding friendships and a lasting, deep sense of community that strengthens Jersey City's civic fiber. Currently over 600 more volunteers have signed up and are awaiting training. 🦋