Acadian Ambulance Service
Begins Member Drive Aug. 1

Acadian Ambulance Service’s annual membership campaign will begin August 1, according to company officials, and extend through September 4. This campaign marks Acadian’s 17th year of service.

All banks in the area will begin accepting membership applications on the kickoff date. Present members will receive renewal forms during the coming week.

The service is operated on a membership basis with members paying a one-time fee for emergency care and transportation during the entire year. The fee covers all family members.

Company spokesman Richard Zuschlag says this year’s fee will be $39, an increase of three dollars over last year. Zuschlag attributed the increase to the effects of inflation on the overall cost of doing business.

“We have been strongly affected by the high cost of gasoline and by the steadily increasing cost of recruiting, training and keeping the best available personnel,” he said. However, despite these and other operating costs, our increase this year of only eight percent is the lowest in the history of the company.

“Through strict economies of operation, energy conservation programs and other measures, we will be able to continue our level of service at an increase well below the national average increase for health care of 13 percent.”

Zuschlag said the admitted-controversial trip fee, introduced during the current membership year, helped to keep the rate increase at a minimal level and has caused a reduction in the number of ambulances called. “This was the purpose of the trip fee,” he said. “We began charging the fee for destinations other than hospitals because we felt it was unfair for the overall membership to share the cost of non-emergency trips for a few.

“Prior to institution of the trip fee, there was a steady increase in non-emergency trips by some members. If it had continued, a much greater rate increase would have been necessary this year.”

Zuschlag said that while the company considers the trip fee very reasonable compared to the $40 to $50 fee charged by some earlier services, it has apparently caused a hardship for low and fixed income groups. “When it was instituted,” he said, “we had assurances from the administration of then-Governor Edwin Edwards that Medicaid under Title 19 would reimburse patterns such as ours giving home residents and members of low-income families.

“However, the current state administration has cancelled that Medicaid provision. We are now working actively with area police and fire chiefs to convince Governor Treen that it should be reinstated.”

The company expanded its service into Pointe Coupee Parish July 1st and will conduct a new membership drive in Opelousas August 1st.

Looking back on the company’s first ten years of operation, Zuschlag said support of the communications media, governmental bodies, the medical and financial communities, company employees and the public “has far exceeded our greatest hopes when we first began operations.”

“This support has permitted us to expand from a one-parish operation with two ambulances, to a three-parish operation with 39 ambulances and 266 employees.

“It has been a challenging and rewarding six years.”