Ambulance service calls drive a success

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LAFAYETTE — This year’s membership drive for Acadian Ambulance Service has been termed a success, even though the final figures in the newly added Baton Rouge and Kenner areas were below expectations.

The annual drive is the only time the company signs up new members.

A total of 121,476 signed up for the service during the 18-parish membership drive, which ended Oct. 4. The goal was 138,460. The parishes of St. Landry, Terrebonne, Assumption, Pointe Coupee, Tangipahoa and St. Helena met or exceeded their goals.

Richard Zuschlag, Acadian’s secretary-treasurer, said the 1985 campaign was an overwhelming success.

"With the economy at a low ebb, we were prepared for a possible decline in memberships," he said. "However, the overall total for the Acadiana parishes, our traditional service area, show that support remains firm."

Results from East Baton Rouge Parish and the East Bank of Jefferson Parish were below projections, he said, but that wasn’t a surprise.

He believes that Acadian’s quality of service eventually will “result in the same kind of support in Baton Rouge and the Kenner area that we receive in the parishes we have served over the years.”

The company’s goal in East Baton Rouge Parish was 10,000, but only 5,083 signed up.

Zuschlag said the low turnout in Baton Rouge will not affect plans for service there.

"Our base of operations is established now, and utilization of the service is steadily increasing," he said.

He said some confusion concerning the roles of Acadian Ambulance Service and Emergency Medical Services in East Baton Rouge Parish affected the drive, but he expects that problem to be resolved in time for next year’s membership drive. Acadian should double its membership total in East Baton Rouge next year, he said.

“We are very pleased with the broad acceptance of ground and air ambulance service in the state capital, and we are formulating plans for expansion into some adjoining parishes,” Zuschlag said.

Service in the Kenner area will not be affected by the low turnout either, he said, even though only 1,535 signed up out of a goal of 5,000.

"We are positioned to provide the highest possible level of service to the area through a contractual arrangement with St. Jude Medical Center," he said. "Also, we are negotiating with other hospitals."

The expansion of service has placed a larger burden on the company’s resources, with about 360 calls a day for service, Zuschlag said.

He said more paramedics are being added to the staff, and a computerized communications center in Lafayette is being constructed to coordinate ambulance dispatching throughout southern Louisiana.