

Trevor's a cert at saving lives

BY NEELIMA CHOAHAN

POSTAL worker by day and hero at weekends . . . Blackwood resident Trevor Hill has been in the business of saving lives for eight years.

A part-time post office clerk, Mr Hill was a founding member of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in 2002.

The 65-year-old got involved after a friend who was also a paramedic suggested starting the volunteer group.

"At that stage there was no ambulance in Ballan, so there was a long wait for the ambulance to arrive.

"A lot of the older residents were having to leave town because they were concerned about the lack of facilities."

The group has eight members aged 30-75. Volunteers are given 92 hours of training by Ambulance Victoria and it's updated each year.

"We are dispatched by the AV control centre and we treat the patient until the ambulance arrives," Mr Hill says.

"Sometimes the ambulance can take 40 minutes; just depends where they are.

Ambulance Victoria emergency management response co-ordinator Andy Watson says CERT teams play an important role in the pre-hospital care of patients.

"CERT teams are staffed by everyday members of the community trained as ambulance first-responders," he says. "They hold skills beyond an ordinary first-aider and routinely apply those skills, providing comfort and clinical intervention to people in need."

Helpers needed

BLACKWOOD CERT team leader Bruce Henry says volunteers will be given full training. The volunteers have to be physically capable of performing CPR, must be able to get down on their hands and knees and get up without assistance, and be of reasonable fitness. Volunteers need to live in the Blackwood, Trentham, Dales Creek or Barrys Reef areas. To become a volunteer, phone 53686608.

Mr Hill, a RAAF warrant officer for 25 years, says he gets a lot of satisfaction out of helping people.

"It's a strange experience to be able to reassure someone that help is on the way, then to keep them alive until the ambulance gets there."

However, Mr Hill says he's not a hero.

"I am just a part of the community, there to give a hand. It's all about community spirit."

But with volunteers hard to come by the group is rapidly running out of steam.

"We cover a large area, from Trentham through to Greendale, and occasionally beyond that.

"We attempt to recruit at least twice a year, but with very little success. So now it's down to the base few who do all the work."

Mr Hill says that when the group started it was available around the clock, but it's now limited to the weekends due to the shortage of volunteers.



Welcome helper: Jinny Coyle is grateful to Wendy Bridgman for looking after her when she broke her hip.

Picture: Shawn Smiths

Frozen and helpless

IT was minus-3 degrees the morning Blackwood resident Jinny Coyle fell and broke her hip.

"It was one of the coldest mornings this year," she said. "I had a really big schedule and was running late for an appointment."

Ms Coyle, 50, who has lived in the area for 21 years, slipped on a patch of black ice and fell in the hamlet's main street.

She said she was unable to get up.

Passersby called an ambulance but were told it might take 45 minutes, depending on whether it was coming from Ballan or Daylesford.

A friend arrived to hold Ms Doyle's hand and somebody fetched a rug from their car.

"Everybody was just trying to keep me warm because I was frozen," Ms Doyle said.

"I remember someone saying the ambulance was half an hour away and at that point I lost it; the pain was just too bad. I couldn't deal with it."

Then CERT members arrived.

"All of a sudden in front of me was a blurry, familiar, smiling face asking me what I had done," Ms Doyle said.

"It was Trevor [Hill] from the post office, who is also a volunteer with the CERT.

"He told me to hang on while he prepared painkillers."

Ms Doyle, who was later told she had broken her hip in half, said she couldn't express how welcome Mr Hill and team member Wendy Bridgman were.

"Between them, Trevor and Wendy made me as comfortable as possible on the minus-3-degree road until the ambulance came and took me off to Ballarat Hospital."

— Neelima Choahan