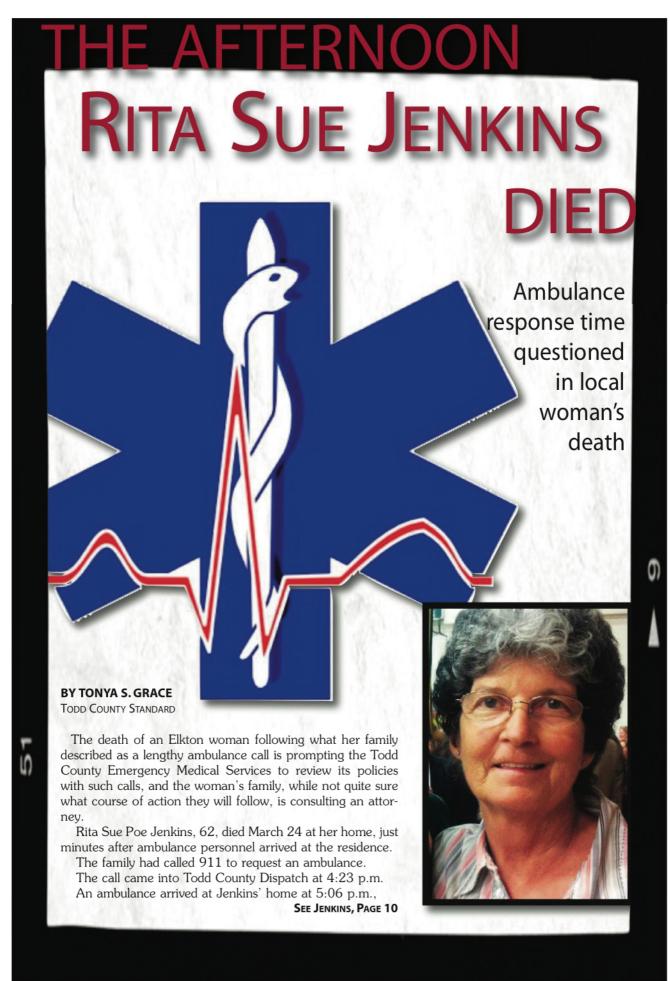
Todd Count

FISH &

Check out the game club's annual winners. Page 9.





Want better service? Prepare to pay for it

In the tragic story of the last minutes of Rita Sue Jenkins' life, it seems that there were several mis-

- The call for service to a backup ambulance that was somehow delayed 10 minutes.
- The time it took for Jenkins to get medical service.
- · What we, as in all of Todd County, find acceptable or, almost as sad as Jenkins' death, what we are willing to pay for.

In reporter Tonya Grace's story in this week's Standard it seems that an



RYAN Craig

Home Cookin'

imperfect storm of events transpired in keeping Jenkins from receiving the care she needed. Now, would that missing service have saved her

That is for those who are smarter

than I to decide (if it can even be determined), and the shame of it all is that, by all accounts, a wonderful person known for her kindness and generosity may have died because Todd County and its taxpayers have long before the current fiscal court — had a policy of shortchanging services in a rural county without a hospital or even a triage center.

In 2007, the Standard ran several articles based on suggestions from experts and ideas generated by the newspaper's readers.

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Jenkins

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but Jenkins' family is questioning that response time, given that Jenkins lived just lance service.

"We sat there, and we sat Mary Ann Hogan. "My mom see where they were at."

her the ambulance was en someone else. route to the home; Hogan's lance.

time and was told an ambu- the time of her fall. lance was coming from Logan County.

The family continued to wait, and Jenkins' grandson began looking again. Seeing an ambulance, he chased it two that came in within two down in his car and brought it minutes of each other. A call back to the house, which is involving a cardiac event was on Old Railroad Lane.

Call took 43 minutes

Hogan said it took 45 minutes for the ambulance to reach her mother, and came in at 4:23 p.m. records provided by Jim arrival.

at 4:36 p.m. and 4:59 p.m.

personnel Ambulance worked on Jenkins about five daughter said.

talking to the EMTs when County were busy, leaving service. they got there, and they sat Todd County to respond to her up on the side of the bed the fire. and it wasn't fine," Hogan said.

attack, Jenkins' doctors at Vanderbilt call was received, Duke said. University Medical Center spoke with the coroner and sequently called 911, Logan determined that complica- County personnel were sent tions from cirrhosis of the bile to respond. duct — something Jenkins

her mother's house, and she noted that had they gotten there earlier Jenkins would have either been en route to four miles from the ambu- the hospital or already there when she had her attack.

there," said Jenkins' daughter brother, Elkton resident Jesse another crew out for the Jenkins, said at issue now is remaining call as quickly as got to hurting worse so she not the 45-minute wait time possible. wanted me to call again to but the need to ensure that what happened to their ambulance arrived at Jenkins' Dispatch personnel told mother doesn't happen to

"It's about us not wanting son, Justin Hogan, got in the other people's families to go car to look for the ambu- through (this) like we did," said Jesse, who lived with his Hogan called 911 a third mother but was working at

Call one of two close together

Duke said the call from Jenkins' family was one of

ice, indicate that 43 minutes the cardiac event, Duke said, ner." passed from the time of the while the second Todd initial call to the ambulance's County crew was already on death, the local ambulance with questions about an Other calls were received Logan County by the time during Friday's meeting of old Elkton resident Joye Jenkins' family.

Duke said the call about EMS minutes before she died, her the wild land fire had been Johnson received an hour or two earli- court's questions about the

call about the cardiac event, a couple of options with the pital himself at least twice. She said the EMTs told they called Logan County to new ambulance service manthem Jenkins succumbed to a send another crew to Todd although County, even before Jenkins'

When Jenkins' family sub-

"It's been presented that we didn't even have an ambulance in the county that day. That's not a true statement."

But both Hogan and her ments are then made to get said.

Duke said the Logan County home at 5:06 p.m., meaning that more than 40 minutes had elapsed from the time of the initial 911 call and leaving the Todd County woman's family wondering how it could take so much time to get to Jenkins' home when she lived only minutes away.

Call captures community's attention

Hogan drove the distance

In the wake of Jenkins' Director answered

agement contract, including having one truck on duty all the time to be manned by a paramedic and an emergency medical technician.

lance worse, and arrange- Executive Daryl Greenfield unfamiliar with the area.

Ambulance contract up for bid

The judge-executive noted that the ambulance service contract is up for bid, with bids to be opened at 8 a.m. on April 11; they will then be considered at the court's 9 a.m. meeting that same day.

The Ohio County-based Com-Care Inc. has managed company.

The local ambulance servlater and clocked it at four ice previously was operated when he'd get two or three minutes from her mother's under the oversight of Todd complaints a week, but those driveway to the ambulance County EMS Director Locky complaints have been fewer received by Todd County service, she said. Her moth- Beasley, who came under fire since Com-Care's taken over Dispatch at 4:21 p.m. on that er's death and the time it after adding a truck to the management of the local Monday, while the call from took for the ambulance to schedule without consulting service. Jenkins' family, reporting a arrive ultimately created a the court. The director told weakness and someone sick, furor on Facebook, where an the court that his department posts on Facebook and noted "open letter of concern" was receiving double and that a lot of the things One of the two ambulance queried whether Jenkins triple the 911 calls it once weren't true. Duke, owner of the Com- crews that would normally be might have lived if ambulance received, but officials ultiates the local ambulance serv- day was sent to respond to the hospital in a "timely man- lance service to its previous schedule.

> Beasley also had to deal statement." standby at a wild land fire in service was also discussed ambulance call when 82-yearofficials received the call from the Todd County Fiscal Koths had trouble getting Court, where Todd County transportation to the hospital Shane after her family called 911 in the March 2013.

An investigation eventually "She was coherent and er, and other crews in Logan operation of the ambulance determined that the ambulance crew didn't refuse that No one mentioned Rita 911 call, although Koths' Jenkins directly, although son, Terry Brown, ended up When officials received the officials talked about offering taking his mother to the hos-

Local people know the community

The ambulance service has also been criticized in more The second option would local people who would be on-call for emergencies. have two trucks on duty, a familiar with the local com-

It would cost a lot of

Daryl Greenfield

Judge-Executive

Some also noted that the problems are nothing new, that the community has been experiencing problems with its ambulance service for a long time. But Greenfield said the current service is better than what the county had in the past, and he said officials continue to look at ways to improve it.

"I don't get near the complaints (I did) when we was the service for the past year running the old service," the after magistrates voted in judge-executive said. "But favor of placing the service in there's times when things the care of a management don't go the way we want them to."

He said there was a time

He considered the recent

"It's been presented that Care Inc. agency that oper- in Todd County during the crews were able to get her to mately returned the ambu- we didn't even have an ambulance in the county that day," he said. "That's not a true

Two ambulances during the day

Greenfield said the county has always budgeted for one full-time ambulance in the over. local community but couldn't sustain long-term the two fulltime ambulances that Beasley tried to staff.

Duke said Todd County now has two ambulances during the day, one a Com-Care truck that "floats" between Todd and Logan counties and the other a Todd County ambulance that is staffed in Elkton 24 hours a day. At night one ambulance is on recent months for not hiring duty full-time and one crew is

Calls are shared on week-Duke noted that anytime 24-hour truck and a floater munity, its roads and neigh-ends, with Todd County covwas born with — contributed two calls are received distruck on duty for 12 hours borhoods, and comments ering calls in Todd and Logan to her death. Hogan said it patch personnel aided by the during the day, with an on- included in the Facebook post counties on Saturdays and shouldn't have taken 45 min- ambulance crew determines call crew for 12 hours at following Jenkins' death Logan County responding to utes for the EMTs to arrive at which call needs the ambu- night, Todd County Judge- referred to outside services calls in the two communities the office earlier this week.)

on Sundays.

Duke said all the ambulances have a Todd County map book and Garmin GPS system.

He also noted that his company has hired several people who are from Todd County, and he said his ultimate goal in the community is to have everyone who works in the county live in the county as well, a situation he described as a win/win for everybody.

But Duke said employees have to be able to make ambulance runs the entire time they're on the clock, i.e., if a call comes in a few minutes before the end of a shift, the employee needs to go on that call.

Duke said he thinks there was a little bit of a delay on March 24, maybe as much as 10 minutes, in getting word to the Logan County ambulance crew to respond to the Jenkins family's 911 call, but he said he doesn't think the crew had any trouble finding the Jenkins home.

Family doesn't want others to have same experience

Rita Jenkins' daughter said she doesn't know what the family will do now. They do plan on speaking with an attorney and hope that no one else has to go through what their family is experiencing.

Hogan said her mother laid on the floor the whole time the family was waiting for the ambulance. They were afraid to move her. The older woman was hurting all

"We thought she'd broken her shoulder," Hogan said. "I was thinking we were going to put her in the ambulance, take her to the hospital, stay a day or two and come

Instead, Jenkins' family had a funeral service for the older woman on Sunday at Latham Funeral Home.

Todd County (The Standard also spoke with current EMS Director Shane Johnson in researching this story but was unable to speak with Todd County Dispatch Director Karen Stratton, who was in meetings and out of



Service

Continued from Page 1

One idea was very simple. Take the ambulance service and make it a taxing district. That would mean more people on duty to man an ambulance. Also, there would be a professional fire-fighting force that would be only a small crew but they would respond to all fires, assisting volunteer crews, and be lifesaving trained first-responders to every call — especially calls where there might be a delay of an ambulance.

The reason this didn't hap-

pen was also very simple.

money. In 2007 it would have required at least \$200,000 in extra income to fund. Today, with the rise in the cost of almost everything, the taxing district would need at least \$350,000 to \$500,000 on top of the \$600,000 the ambulance service earns in billing each year.

To put that in perspective, what the fiscal court gets from the county real property tax bill is just above \$400,000. So to a have a service with more life-saving personnel on duty will cost as much or more each year than the county takes in from the entire property tax collection.

If you are bad with math, think of it this way: If you own property worth \$100,000 your bill could increase by as much as \$15 to \$17 each year. Now that is per \$100,000. If you own a lot of real estate you get an idea of what that could mean to your tax bill.

The fiscal court, in meeting last week, gave some

options on how to upgrade the service - such as a truck on duty that is to be manned by a paramedic and an EMT. They also defended the run times of Com-Care, Inc., the private company that handles the ambulance service, by saying there was some false information in complaints on social media, such as that there wasn't an ambulance truck in Todd County at all on the day of Jenkins' death.

Also, as Grace reminds us in her story this week, there were several problems with the way the ambulance service was being run last year. There was a serious, budgetbreaking move by the former director, which accelerated overtime hours. The fiscal court also complained of employees who would claim "on duty" hours while on the way to their full-time jobs in other counties.

Then, the straw that broke the camel's back was an elderly woman whose family had to take her to the hospital when an ambulance crew refused to come to her home.

In a move that still baffles, the fiscal court allowed the EMS service to investigate itself, and, no surprise, they determined they did nothing wrong.

Still, the fiscal court reacted to the totality of the negative events and that is how the service ended up being run by a private service.

As a promise to the readers, we will look into the call times of the current service and public service, but we would be surprised if the average time is much differ-

What we see as the real issue is the funding of, not only this service, but other services in the county. For too long we have kept our funding levels about the same while other counties around us have upped their level of services through

smart funding. It is time we no longer condem and threaten to run off our local officials at even the mention of higher taxes, especially if it is to improve our lives. As, the old sayings go, we are at the nub and all the blood is out of the

turnip. The family of Rita Jenkins told the Standard that they don't want something like

this to happen again. I couldn't agree more. It is time we become seri-

ous about our services. We owe that to Rita Jenkins and her family.

Let's Move! Youth



