

## **Honorary Doctor of Science degree conferred on Acadian Ambulance Chairman & CEO**

Contact: W. Keith Simon, VP, PR & Marketing, 1.800.259.3333

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**LAUREL, MARYLAND** -- Richard E. Zuschlag, chairman and CEO of Acadian Ambulance Service, has been granted an honorary Doctor of Science degree by his alma mater, Capitol College, the only independent college in Maryland dedicated to engineering, computer science, information technology and business. The college's 52-acre campus is located in Laurel, Maryland.

Zuschlag graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering from the school in 1970. The following year, he and his former partners founded Acadian, which is now the largest privately owned provider of emergency and non-emergency transportation in the nation.

The honorary doctorate was conferred May 30 at the Inaugural President's Forum luncheon of the college's new Innovation and Leadership Institute. Michael T. Wood, Ph.D., president of the college, said the institute is being established to equip more people "to follow in Zuschlag's footsteps" by combining technical knowledge with entrepreneurial skills.

The honor was conferred in part to recognize Zuschlag's leadership in rescue efforts after the onslaught of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. "After co-founding Acadian Ambulance Service in 1971," Dr. Wood said, "Zuschlag paid attention to the company's communications system, building in reliability and redundancy. The company's communications towers and many satellite phones formed the backbone of the only reliable radio system in the New Orleans area after Hurricane Katrina destroyed most of the region's infrastructure. Acadian employees evacuated thousands of patients from New Orleans hospitals by air and land."

Wood noted that Zuschlag and Acadian Ambulance Service were recognized by Inc. magazine for extraordinary performance in rescuing hurricane victims. Zuschlag, he said, was one of only two runners-up for the Inc. Magazine Entrepreneur of the Year Award, while he and all the employee-owners of the ambulance service were honored with the first annual Bernard A. Goldhirsch Courage Award, named for the late founder of Inc. magazine.

In accepting the honorary degree, Zuschlag directed his comments primarily to students in attendance. He told them that the college is giving them the resources "that will prepare you for a rewarding and successful journey."

"Many good things have happened to me since I received my bachelor's degree," he said. "Looking back, it is amazing how many of those good things are attributable to the fact that I pursued and earned that degree here at Capitol College. This is a wonderful school, and this is one of the proudest moments of my life."

The degree in electronics engineering technology, Zuschlag said, has been an integral part of the success of Acadian Ambulance Service, giving the company an edge over competing organizations that failed to develop and utilize modern technology to its full extent.

"When Acadian Ambulance Service was launched," he said, "the Information Highway wasn't even in the planning stages. Emergency communications were still in the dirt road era. The state-of-the-art in ambulance service communications was the two-way radio, with its limited range, aggravating static and constant interference.

“We began by sharing a radio frequency with a lumber company. Trucks delivering beer had better communications than ambulances.

“With my background in electronics engineering technology, this was very painful for me. I wanted something better, and fortunately I had received -- at Capitol College -- the skill and knowledge to guide a young team of professionals in achieving it.

“Principles I learned at this institution have helped save lives,” he said. “Acadian Ambulance service has been recognized by high-tech Guru Bill Gates and by the Smithsonian Institution for its national leadership in life-saving EMS technology.”

Zuschlag said the hurricanes of 2005 were the greatest challenges his company had ever faced. “Effective communications is critical in dealing with catastrophes,” he said. “Lack of it in New Orleans contributed to the agonizingly slow pace of rescue efforts. Thankfully, our advanced system, with some strong outside help, stood the test. Our towers compliment each other. If one fails, another takes over. That allowed us to keep 16 towers functioning with built-in emergency generators, while other agencies had only six or seven.”

He expressed deep gratitude to the Capitol College faculty for giving him a foundation in electronics engineering technology that stressed the overpowering importance of back up systems. “I can honestly say that some survivors of the hurricane are alive today because a basic element of our technological advances has always been redundancy – a resource to turn to when another fails,” he commented.

As for becoming a “doctor,” Zuschlag said company medics are giving him a hard time because his principal medical experience was working toward a Boy Scout First Aid merit badge

Zuschlag and his former partners launched Acadian Ambulance Service with two ambulances and eight medics. Today, Acadian, headquartered in Lafayette, Louisiana, employs a team of nearly 2,400 people, who are employee-owners under the ESOP program. The company serves a population of more than two million with a service area of more than 51 percent of Louisiana, one county in Mississippi and four in Texas.

The company employs over 1500 medics and operates a fleet of 271 ground ambulances, 7 Air Med helicopter ambulances and 5 fixed wing aircraft for long-distance medical transfer. The Contract Services Division provides medics for offshore oil and gas installations in the Gulf of Mexico and internationally.

The Community Services Committee of the American Ambulance Association has twice voted Acadian the best ambulance service in the nation.

In concluding his acceptance speech, Zuschlag praised the employee-owners of Acadian Ambulance Service. “They all played a role in bringing me to this, one of the most memorable days of my life,” he said. “To those of you graduating tonight, I can only say that the diploma you carry away with you will be symbolic of the ability to create opportunities, overcome obstacles and achieve success.”

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Cutline: Richard E. Zuschlag, chairman and CEO of Acadian Ambulance Service, has been granted an honorary Doctor of Science degree by his alma mater, Capitol College, in Maryland. Pictured are Zuschlag and Capitol College President Michael T. Wood, Ph.D.