

Explorer Post 800 Junior EMT Program

Empowering Kids to Help Others at a Young Age



The Explorer Post 800 (junior EMT) program has been up and running for more than two years, inviting students to get a head start on learning the skills needed to become emergency medical professionals. After exposure to the career opportunities in the field, many graduates are eager to continue training and completing their certifications with local squads as soon as they turn 18.

Already, six members have put their skills to use in the community after completing the Explorer Post program. Five of them have joined the Virginia Beach rescue squads as volunteers, and two are now studying to become paramedics. One Suffolk graduate has become a volunteer EMT with Suffolk Fire and Rescue and continues to help with Explorer Post 800 training as a junior advisor.

The program welcomes boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 21 from middle and high schools throughout Hampton Roads. Once they turn 18, they're eligible to sign up for an EMT program.

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Altogether, forty students have participated in the program, which is facilitated by Debbie Joyner, Fred Needham and Denny Stewart, all of whom are volunteers with Virginia Beach EMS.

"These young people are excited to practice their newly-learned skills and to help others," says Debbie Joyner, a volunteer with Ocean Park Volunteer Rescue Squad. "As advisors, we are there to support them every step of the way and are so happy to see our efforts pay off."

The class meets every second and fourth Sunday of the month from 5:30 – 8 p.m. at Ocean Park Volunteer Rescue Squad (Station 1 –3769 Shore Dr.) in Virginia Beach. Participation is free, and students are taught CPR, advanced first aid, bleeding control, back-boarding, trauma assessment, scene protocols and medical reporting. At each meeting, they review the skills taught previously and then add new ones.

"All it takes is practice, and these skills quickly become second-nature," says Joyner. "Once it's 'clicked,' the knowledge is theirs for a lifetime. You just never know when you might need it."

The students participate in EMT competitions and volunteer for major events, like the Rock 'n Roll Half Marathon at the Virginia Beach Oceanfront. They also learn squad operations by electing a captain and

other officers to administer the group as a real team would.

"We are empowering kids to help others at a young age," says Joyner. "My daughter is a member and was able to help one of her classmates who had a seizure at school. She didn't have to think twice about it; she knew exactly what to do."

One of the major advantages of the Explorer Post 800 program is that it's free. The group relies on grants, support from sponsors and its partnerships with the Learning for Life scouting program and the Council of Virginia Beach Rescue Squads to fund the classes and purchase of needed equipment.

"These young people become like members of your family," says Joyner. "It's never too early to start learning these skills, and it's an advantage to list this type of experience on college applications and resumes. Not only that, our students log their volunteer hours with the City of Virginia Beach, which is often recognized and awarded by their schools."

Explorer Post 800 is growing and accepts new students on an ongoing basis. The first meeting of the season was held in September, but new members are welcome to join at any time. For more information about how to become involved in Explorer Post 800, contact Debbie Joyner at 757-576-2999 or search "Explorer Post 800 Jr. EMT" on Facebook.

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