

EMS classes prepare Explorers for an emergency

By Tealeda Nesbitt
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VIRGINIA BEACH

This week: learn how to check vital signs. Next week: hands-on trauma assessment.

The EMS Explorer Post 800 program exposes high school students to career opportunities available in emergency medicine.

Dan Gray is a senior at Landstown High who plans to become a certified EMT after graduation.

"One of the coolest things about the program is you get to go out into the field and check vitals, see if the patient is hurt and decide if they need to go to the hospital," he said.

The group, open to boys and girls, is a Boy Scouts program. In addition to EMS, there are police and firefighter Explorer Post programs nationwide.

A group of Hampton Roads residents started Explorer Post 800 in June 2008.

Fred Needham is the program leader, helped by Debbie Joyner, John Best, Nick Askew and Denny Stewart.

The Council of Virginia Beach Volunteer Rescue Squads Inc. sponsors the program, which trains students

ages 14-18 in emergency medical procedures to prepare them to become EMTs.

Through guided practice, students are taught the basics of trauma assessment, medical reporting and advanced first aid. The first phase of learning for the 24 Virginia Beach Explorer Post participants was earning their CPR certification.

The students are already putting their new skills to good use.

Explorer Post student Mandy Butler used some of the skills she learned to help her grandfather deliver two baby sheep at First Landing State Park.

Classmate Ashley Disrud says having a CPR certification not only gives her an edge over the competition in finding babysitting jobs but will also help when she continues her studies after high school in an EMT certification program.

The students are preparing for a statewide high school EMT competition in June in Virginia Beach. They have been asked to work as emergency volunteers for the annual Polar Plunge and the Rock 'n' Roll Half Marathon.

One 13-year-old is so excited that he comes to the sessions,



TEALEDA NESBITT PHOTOS

Above: Jenni McFarland, center, and Nick Askew, right, teach the basics of trauma assessment to Trey Livers, left, and Taylor Gitlitz. Below: Daniel Gray Sr. instructs as Chris Wynne, left, checks the blood pressure of fellow EMS Explorer student Jessica Joyner.

held twice a month at Ocean Park Station on Shore Drive, just to observe, because he's not old enough to participate.

Participants have learned the value of helping those in need. The 10 volunteer rescue squads that make up the Virginia Beach EMS system save the city more than \$8 million a year by providing free emergency medical help.

Jenni McFarland, a Virginia Beach Rescue Squad volunteer and an Explorer Post advisor, said it was her life-long goal to become an EMT.

"I'm happy to share my experience with the students," she said.



want to try?

For more information about EMS Explorer Post 800, contact Debbie Joyner at 576-2999.