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Rescue 101

Emergency personnel training wins state accreditation

By Michael E. Kelley CORRESPONDENT



Dave Welliver, left, and John Shays, center, place a back brace on accident victim Terry Lane during EMT training by the Massachusetts Emergency Care Training Academy at the Berlin Police Station Saturday. (ELLEN HAROSIMOWICZ PHOTOS)



Above, faculty of the Massachusetts Emergency Care Training Academy hold an extrication demonstration. At left, EMT student Ethan Upper

Gosselin observes their technique.

MILLBURY— They had trained everyone from medical professionals to soldiers, from doctors to nature-loving kindergarteners, for more than 20 years. The Massachusetts Emergency Care Training Academy had become a part of the community, providing courses and training for more than 1,000 local and out-of-state residents. With such a booming business, few would have thought to question the academy's credibility.

But back in 2003, the state passed a law requiring anyone training medical professionals to be accredited by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Linda Frissora-Gosselin, president of Massachusetts Emergency Care Training Academy, organized her staff and began a long process of self-evaluation to ensure the academy's chance of success when the auditors from the Department of Public Health came to inspect the Millbury-based academy.

"We had to come up with a manual, which was about 150 pages long," said Ms. Frissora-Gosselin.

The hard work paid off, as the academy was granted accreditation earlier this year. This move grants official credibility to a training center that has been working with the community since its doors opened in 1984.

The academy typically draws 1,500 students each year, half of whom are medical professionals. However, the benefits of being an accredited institution aren't limited to doctors, nurses and EMTs.

"Let's say you were in the military and you wanted the military to pay for the course. It would have to be given by an accredited institution," said Ms. Frissora-Gosselin, whose academy has 58 instructors. Accreditation is no stranger to the staff, all of whom must be state-registered and licensed, as well as CPR instructors.

Ms. Frissora-Gosselin said that with accreditation, the academy now plans to add more regional training sites to serve the wide geographic appeal of the academy. The academy has local sites in Millbury and Shrewsbury and another in Maine.

"We draw students from all over. Some come from the Cape, the Boston area, Fitchburg, towns near New Hampshire, even a few from Rhode Island," said Ms. Frissora-Gosselin, whose academy often brings the class to the students.

"Sometimes we'll have a large manufacturing company that wants to train a large number of its employees, and we'll ask if we can just come to them, which is easier," Ms. Frissora-Gosselin said.

"We work extensively with students from nearby towns. Over the past eight years we've given lifesaving training to high school students, which I think helps build their



Above, faculty of the Massachusetts Emergency Care Training Academy hold an extrication demonstration. At left, EMT student Ethan Upper is removed from a car by Jennifer Desautels and Steve Petruska as MECTA President/CEO Linda Gosselin observes their technique.

self-esteem,” said Ms. Frissora-Gosselin, whose academy teaches youngsters of nearly all ages.

“We even have a Wilderness Technician class, for children from age 5 to 8 or 9,” Ms. Frissora-Gosselin added.

The relationship between the Massachusetts Emergency Care Training Academy and neighboring town governments has grown, with Hopkinton and Northboro sending their fire departments to the academy for training. One town in particular, has essentially entrusted the academy with nearly all of its employees.

“We basically work with the entire town of Shrewsbury. Fire, police, town workers, senior center, the schools,” said Ms. Frissora-Gosselin.

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