

JUNE 2023

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Editor's Notebook:

This is something we should never forget

BY BRIAN CARLTON

Nobody hears about first responders in the good times. When everything is calm and peaceful, we don't mention firefighters or police officers. But when things get crazy, that's exactly who we turn to. When your house is burning and there are still family members inside, firefighters are who you put your trust in to save them (and possibly your house). When a family member disappears, when he or she gets into trouble and is robbed, assaulted or, heaven forbid, killed, police investigators are the ones we ask to see justice done.

And in small communities like ours, we know each and every name. We know Chief Andy Ellington, Deputy

Chief Bill Hogan, Detective Chad Hudson and Corp. Rachel Herndon, among others, in the Farmville Police Department. We've heard the name of Chief Daniel Clark, for Farmville Fire, or Chief Brian Bates over at Toga Volunteer Fire Department, along with Benjamin Beiler, Landon Raber and the rest of their squad.

For all of these people that we know and run into, often on a regular basis, do we ever stop and share our appreciation for all that's been done?

Service shouldn't be ignored. I mean that. Some people go to work without any guarantee they'll walk back in the door that evening, doing it all for their community. Firefighters, first responders and police are some of many in our communities across this region who put service to their community before self.

And they deserve our praise. Not just that, they deserve our respect.

How many things have we just taken for granted over the last few years? We must look back in appreciation for those that have kept our clinics and hospitals going, not just during the pandemic but afterwards. They did this despite the fear that they could catch or spread the COVID-19 virus to their own loved ones. They served us before there was a vaccine, in those early months amid news stories all-around them of patients not surviving. They truly are to be admired for their service.

We get the reports each week, the number of calls and the incidents involved that all law enforcement in the region are sent out to. We've seen the sheer number of times they've been asked to do everything from stare down a person pointing a gun at their head to break up a public fight that seems to be heading in a bad direction. Need a crime investigated? We know who to call. And each time they come. No matter what the call, no matter how odd, how problematic or just plain dangerous the call is, you'll see the blue lights arriving minutes later.

And every day, our troopers, deputies and police are coming to work and do-



Farmville Police Chief Andy Ellington speaks at a press conference.

ing their job in an ever-increasing dangerous world. They track down escaped convicts like at Piedmont Regional Jail, they investigate dangerous crimes and put themselves at risk, like the recent situation in Cumberland County that led

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to a deputy-involved shooting.

Picture the situation in your own mind. Deputies were called out just after 9 p.m. Wednesday to a home on Cherokee Trail. A female domestic assault victim had called 911 and then fled the home. When deputies arrived on scene, one of them saw a man inside the home pointing a rifle at them through a window. The deputy fired and struck the man.

The man, later identified as 35-year-old Cartersville resident Steven R. Dillard, then barricaded himself inside the house. After some time, a Virginia State Police sergeant arrived on scene and was able to talk Dillard into surrendering. He was taken into custody without further incident and transported to the nearby hospital for treatment of his minor injuries.

Let's just run through everything I said there. This was a domestic violence situation, a rough incident where deputies were asked to come in and fix things. Then, when they arrive, they're greeted by a man pointing a rifle at them. He then barricades himself

inside. So ok, he's just not coming out, and they have to talk down this armed, now injured man, to prevent any harm from happening to either themselves or anybody else. And for most of the law enforcement officers I know, they would say that's just a normal day.

And again, the question comes up, have we shown enough appreciation for all of that? Have we given all of these people the respect and gratitude they deserve, be they firefighters, first responders or law enforcement? Or do we just almost expect them to handle it?

When one of those black bears comes into Farmville, you know exactly who you're calling. Unless you're one of the special people who try to pet the bears. Please don't try to pet the bears. That ends badly for everyone.

It's a privilege to have someone that picks up on the other end when we call, when we ask for help. The ones who then come out to solve the problem, whatever it is, deserve at least our appreciation (and I'm sure if you wanted a few of them to buy a round at Three Roads to say thanks that way, some



Benjamin Beiler is one of several Amish firefighters who work with Toga Volunteer Fire Department.

wouldn't say no.)

But just overall, we need to be careful not to forget everyone who serves their

community. And when we can, we need to make sure they know how much we appreciate the sacrifices made.



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How can I show support for first responders?

The often unheralded contributions of first responders garnered considerable attention during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the early days of the pandemic, when much about COVID-19 was still a mystery, first responders put their lives on the line and worked long hours to help people in need.

EMS workers were on the front lines in the fight against COVID-19. Even though life has now returned to normal, EMS workers continue to bravely provide an invaluable public service. The contributions of EMS workers are worthy of recognition and celebration. The National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians suggests these community-based efforts can be great ways to

celebrate EMS workers who save lives and help make their towns and cities safe each and every day.

- Host a blood drive. A blood shortage during the pandemic left many hospitals scrambling for potentially life-saving blood. Though the American Red Cross indicated the blood supply had stabilized in the early months of 2023, shortages remain a possibility. Community leaders can work alongside local EMS agencies and help them to organize local blood drives to reduce vulnerability to shortages in the future. Leaders and local business leaders can work together to offer incentives to donors, such as discounted meals, items or services at popular restaurants, stores and service



providers in town.

- Highlight EMS workers on community social media accounts. Many locals now get their community news and

other information from social media accounts linked to township offices and departments. Leaders can use these platforms to shine a light on local EMS workers. Interview a different EMS worker each month, speaking to them about what inspired them to become a first responder and what they like about the job, but also their own interests and hobbies when they are not on duty.

- Highlight life-saving efforts. Communities also can utilize social media platforms and other programs to showcase EMS workers who have gone to extraordinary lengths to help others. Share information about EMS workers who have saved a life and even promote public events when those workers are commended. Encourage

people affected by EMS workers' life-saving efforts, including the person who was saved and their family members, to share their stories and express their appreciation.

- Let residents tour EMS facilities. It's easy to take EMS workers for granted because they do not often seek attention. But that does not mean they're not worthy. Allow locals to tour EMS facilities during certain times each month, which can help locals gain greater recognition of everything EMS workers do to keep communities safe.

EMS workers are worthy of recognition and celebration. There are many ways for community leaders and residents to express their appreciation to these invaluable workers.

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Firehouse renovation is finished

BY RACHEL AUSTIN

Last fall, the small firehouse in Arvonía broke ground for renovations and an expansion. Now, all that work is done and the new fire station is responding to calls.

On Wednesday, June 7, the renovations were finished at the Arvonía Volunteer Fire Department. They started moving everything back in and that weekend the station was up and running and responding to calls.

They started moving in the apparatus and are moving things in as time allows. According to Clint Toney, vice president at Arvonía Volunteer Fire Department, they expect everything moved in within the next week or so.

“There’s a few odds and ends and touch-ups that we still need to do,” said Toney. “Right now we’re mainly moving stuff back in.”



The new renovation has added a 4,800-square-foot apparatus bay. This is

where they keep all the fire trucks and emergency vehicles. Before this addition, the bay only had one door for all vehicles to exit and enter from and it caused a lot of backups and unneeded complications. Now, there are four doors, one for each, so responding to calls can go much smoother.

“It’s been really smooth and nice getting in and out,” said Toney. “It’s much better than what we had.”

The original building was constructed in the 1960s meaning that an upgrade

was much needed. The new renovations have transformed the space to have a kitchen, day room, office space and meeting room. The upstairs is finished but nothing is up there yet. The plan is to keep that space available in case they need a sleeping room down the road.

Toney wanted to extend a thank you to the community for its support in making this project possible. Through multiple fundraisers and generous donations, the department now has the space they need to serve the community.

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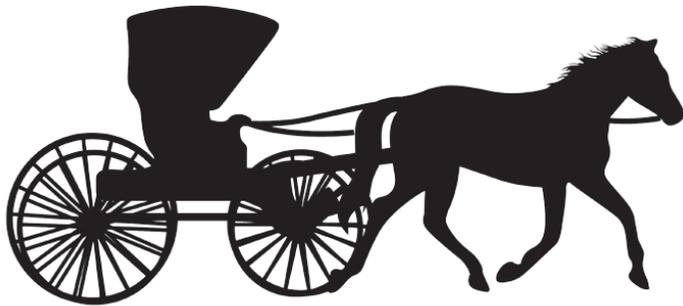
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Holland provides training for others

BY RACHEL AUSTIN

Being a first responder, it is crucial to be fast and effective when responding to a call. Whether it's putting out a fire or getting someone the medical attention they need, Lieutenant Charlie Holland makes sure that those responders have the knowledge and skills they need to get the job done.

Holland is the training officer with the Toga Volunteer Fire Department. For this position, Holland identifies any training the leadership and members of the department may need and then coordinates training sessions to ensure that they are ready for whatever they may encounter during a call.

For these sessions, sometimes this requires Holland to do some in-house training. This can include things like equipment specific training. For other training, Holland will bring in some-

one to give an outside perspective to give a new look at how the station can improve and learn from what others are doing.

Holland first got interested in fire-fighting when he was in high school and many of his friends and family members served as volunteer fire-fighters. When he was a junior in high school he started volunteering and became a regular volunteer when he turned 18. He's now served as a volunteer for the past 10 years.

"I enjoy helping people," said Holland. "I also love the type of comradery we have. It's a really special brotherhood you create when serving with others."

According to Holland, volunteering with a local fire department is a great way to get involved with the community and give back. For his job, he travels around and works with different fire departments with training. However,



he hasn't found one quite as special as Toga.

"Today especially, it's important to volunteer any way you can with

an emergency agency," said Holland. "There's a sense of pride and a sense of duty in public service you can't get anywhere else."



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What is a first responder?

That's one of the questions Emergency Medical Service (EMS) workers in Charlotte and Lunenburg counties have heard at times. What is it they do? What exactly is a first responder?

The Office of Emergency Medical Services works in partnership with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to reduce death and disability. The Office of EMS notes that the best preparation for any incident, whether it's big or small, is a comprehensive EMS system with skilled personnel ready to respond every day and to every emergency.

EMS workers provide an invaluable service to communities like Charlotte Court House and Victoria, and projections indicate those services could be in even greater demand in the years to come. For example, projections from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that, by 2026, job opportunities for emergency medical technicians could grow by 15% compared to a decade earlier. During

that period, more than 37,000 new EMT jobs could be created or need to be filled.

EMS workers serve in a variety of capacities. The following are four unique roles that fall under the EMS umbrella.

1. EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONDER

Often referred to as an "EMR" an Emergency Medical Responder has the skills and knowledge to provide immediate services to individuals in emergency situations. Qualifications vary, but EMRs must complete EMR coursework and pass a variety of examinations before they can take on this vital role. EMRs do not offer advanced care, but they can provide potentially life-saving care in emergency settings until other responders arrive.

2. EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN

Emergency Medical Technicians, or EMTs, provide medical care after responding to emergency calls. The BLS indicates that job growth among EMTs is

expected to outpace growth in all other occupations by 2030. That illustrates both a need for the vital services EMTs provide as well as a need for special individuals willing to pursue this line of work. EMTs often help to stabilize patients and provide patient care in an ambulance en route to the hospital.

3. ADVANCED EMT

Advanced EMTs, sometimes referred to as "AEMTs" must meet extra educational and certification requirements compared to EMTs. AEMTs can provide the same services as EMTs, but are often chosen to respond to situations that require or potentially require more advanced services, such as administering fluids and medications. Many states consider AEMTs advanced life support providers, which also differentiates them from EMTs.

4. PARAMEDIC

Paramedics often must complete a degree program and pass a variety of



exams before they can be certified. According to the UCLA Center for Prehospital Care, a paramedic program may require between 1,200 and 1,800 hours. Once certified, paramedics can provide both basic and advanced care, including critical care during emergencies. To become a paramedic, individuals must be an EMT and have experience working as an EMT.

Emergency medical services is an umbrella term that includes an assortment of trained professionals who perform a variety of tasks in an effort to protect public health.

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Flock cameras keep town connected

BY BRIAN CARLTON

The goal, as with anything Chief Andy Ellington and the Farmville Police do, is to keep the town safer. The department's latest project definitely does that. Earlier this year, Ellington applied for and received grant funding to install Flock cameras at certain points in the town. As of June 23, those cameras are up and active, but they do more than simply take pictures. The cameras connect Farmville to a statewide and national database.

"Let's say a vehicle from Richmond gets stolen and enters town tonight," Ellington said. "These cameras can recognize it and alert us."

The same thing goes for any type of vehicle. If someone is driving past the Moton Museum and highly exceeding the speed limit, the cameras can help officers identify where it is and be able

to pull it over. Or let's use a more state-wide example. Remember back in May, when two convicts escaped from the Piedmont Regional Jail. The one man fled while driving a very specific type of red car. Across the entire network, not just here in Farmville, the system would start searching for instances of where a vehicle of that description had been spotted.

"If we have a description or a tag on a vehicle, we can put that through the system and it's immediate," Ellington said. "All of these cameras are connected together."

And when the chief says it's a network, it's a fairly large one. The network is available right now in 42 different states. In those states, more than 1,500 towns and cities are part of it now, connecting all of those operations together in times when help is needed for a search. It also works in cases with no criminal issue. If a person goes missing,



the system can identify the vehicle they were last seen in and track down where it's located. The idea here is to speed up response times, which can be critical, especially when searching for someone.

"One of the first things I did when I took over as chief was to increase security measures inside the town," Ellington said. "This is another way to keep building on that."



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Always room for more when it comes to volunteers

BY RACHEL AUSTIN

There are many great ways to get involved and make your community a better place. One rewarding way to do so is by becoming a volunteer firefighter or EMS provider.

Even though Cumberland County is not in the deficit for volunteers, according to Fire Chief Andy Aigner, there can never be too many. Cumberland has recently updated their volunteer process and is ready to have more residents join.

When becoming a volunteer for the fire department the process can vary depending on the station. Each station manages its own volunteers in the best way that works for the station and the members there. The process seems to work as Station 2 hasn't missed a call since 2010.

"Each manages their own station and it works well," said Aigner. "They get it done answering calls and doing what they need to."

The process is a bit different for those looking to become a volunteer Emergency Medical Services (EMS) provider. The process is standard as this is with the county versus a specific station. Once Aigner approves the application, the EMS volunteers can start ride-alongs and other training to get them familiar with the process.

The main difference is that being part of the EMS volunteers can't run to calls from home like the volunteer firefighters do. The volunteers work as a third member of the unit to learn on the job.

According to Aigner, volunteering this way is one of the best ways to get to know the community and do so in a rewarding way every time.

"You get to make someone's day by

interacting with people on a good and bad day," said Aigner. "Whether volunteer or career you have that ability to make their day even with just a handshake every time you go out."

Even though there is no minimum of volunteers the stations need, Cumberland does currently meet the state's requirements. However, there is always room to add more people to make sure there are no gaps when it comes to keeping members of the community safe.

"Anytime we can get people to fill those gaps it makes the community better," said Aigner.

Applying is now a new automated process. Anyone wanting to apply can do so by visiting the Fire & Emergency Medical Services section on the county website or the Cumberland Volunteer Fire Department's Facebook page.



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Why law enforcement is essential for the community

Unprecedented and stressful circumstances can contribute to spirited debates and uncertainty about the future. Complicated situations can affect people in many ways, but the public may be wise to take some cues on how to navigate challenging situations from the professionals who routinely find themselves confronting adversity.

Law enforcement officers who don the uniform each and every day routinely put others first in the name of public safety. According to the National Law Enforcement Memorial Fund, there are now more than 800,000 sworn law enforcement officers serving in the United States, which is the highest figure ever. Officers often step up to serve despite the risks associated with working in

law enforcement. A total of 1,627 law enforcement officers died in the line of duty over the past 10 years. There were 226 law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty in 2022 alone.

Law enforcement personnel serve many important roles in the communities they serve. Here's a closer look at the integral roles of police and other law enforcement personnel.

MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER

The police force is made up of many different departments with the collective goal of maintaining law and order. Traffic police are responsible for enforcing the rules of the road and minimizing the chance of accidents. Other departments canvas the streets ensuring that residents' civil liberties are not being

compromised.

SAVE LIVES

Whether they're preventing a life-threatening crime or administering emergency medical care at a car accident until an ambulance can arrive, law enforcement officers save lives every day.

ASSIST IN ADVERSE SITUATIONS AND PROVIDE CRISIS SUPPORT

Police officers often fill the role of counselor or friend to people who find themselves in difficult situations. An officer can play a part in helping people make better life choices in the future. Training in situational de-escalation also means police officers are capable of defusing difficult situations before they snowball into serious, potentially life-threatening confrontations.

INVESTIGATE CRIMES

Police are the first people to respond when crimes have been committed. These individuals investigate the situa-

tion and find the perpetrator.

FOSTER STRONG COMMUNITIES

Law enforcement officers share a unique solidarity with other officers, peers, community leaders, and even medical professionals, which helps to create a strong fabric for a community. Officers frequently have each other's backs as well as the respect and support of the public for putting their lives on the line.

Law enforcement is an essential component of orderly, safe and supportive communities. Recognizing and respecting the important role law enforcement officials play is a great way to show them how much their efforts and sacrifices are appreciated.



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Doulas provide care to struggling residents

Pregnant women in Charlotte and Prince Edward counties can find help without even visiting the hospital. That's where the doula service comes in. It's a profession whose services Virginia is encouraging pregnant people to use through a new Medicaid program.

Virginia is the fourth state in the nation to offer community doula services to people enrolled in Medicaid. Twenty-six state-certified doulas have been approved to work with Medicaid since the program began this spring, according to a statement from the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services. The department hopes to have 100 by the end of this year and 1,000 by the end of the year.

HOW DO DOULAS HELP?

Doulas have been found to improve maternal health, especially in low-income and minority populations, according to a recent study published in

The Lancet.

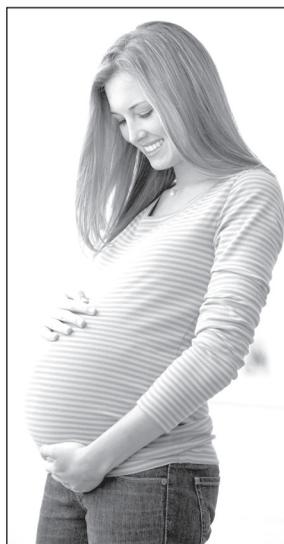
The program expansion comes at a time when preliminary state data is showing Virginia's maternal mortality rate more than doubled from 2018 to 2020. In 2020, non-Hispanic Black women nationwide experienced maternal mortality rates nearly three times higher than those of their white counterparts, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

WHAT IS A DOULA?

A doula is a non-medical professional who is trained to provide a broad range of support services during pregnancy, birth and the postpartum period. A community doula is someone who shares lived experiences with the individuals they serve and can provide

support that takes into account and incorporates the person's culture and needs during the birthing process.

"This will be the person that would give her the kind of care and wisdom that we think traditionally the mother or the grandmother would give you but this would also give you the medical basis to be able to alert and say, 'Oh, we see that you have hypertension, you really need to talk to a doctor,'" said Cheryl Roberts, acting director of the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services.



DEATHS ARE PREVENTABLE

The majority of these deaths are preventable, and the U.S. "can do much better," said Chethan Bachireddy, chief medical officer for

DMAS.

"We know a lot about what is and isn't contributing to mortality and morbidity," Bachireddy said. "That really inspired us to start to act and so that brought us to the work around doulas."

Now, with the expansion of Medicaid coverage to doula care, doulas like Phipps-Hawkins can offer their services to the more than 22,000 pregnant women currently enrolled in Medicaid in Virginia.

HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

A woman seeking doula services under Medicaid must first get a recommendation from a physician or licensed practitioner. Once connected with a doula, she has access to a total of nine prenatal and postpartum visits, each lasting 60 minutes, except for the initial prenatal visit, which can last up to 90 minutes, as well as attendance at delivery. A person may have access to more visits if it is medically necessary.



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Finding excitement and friendship in firefighting

BY RACHEL AUSTIN

For Ronald Shult, his job is more than just taking care of the station but taking care of the community.

Shult is a paid firefighter at the Farmville Volunteer Fire Department. When not responding to calls, his job is to make sure everything at the station is in order. He takes care of the trucks and keeps them clean and makes sure all the supplies are ready for when the tone drops.

Being paid means that he has a different schedule than the volunteers. He works four 10-hour days from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday. He can choose to work extra as a paid standby after his normal shift is done those days the station needs some extra help.

Growing up, his father served as a volunteer firefighter in Cumberland



County creating the first sparks of interest for Shult.

"I remember seeing his pager sitting on the bedside table," said Shult. "I

would put on the gear that he had. It was the excitement of it I guess that really sparked it."

As his interest continued to grow, watching the 2008 movie "Fireproof" also created an appeal to the field. In the movie, the main character is a firefighter and includes scenes showing the exciting yet challenging work that firefighters face when responding to various calls. After seeing this movie, Shult knew this was the field he wanted to pursue.

"I love pretty much everything the job entails," said Shult. "I get excited to

go on calls and helping people out is a big thing for me. I also love interacting with the community and police officers, making new friends is one of the biggest things I enjoy."

Shult started his work with the Farmville Volunteer Fire Department as a volunteer. After eight years of volunteering, Shult was able to get hired for a paid position.

Even though the job is very rewarding, Shult warns that it's not for everybody. Volunteers are always needed and those who have a desire or calling to help should absolutely do so.

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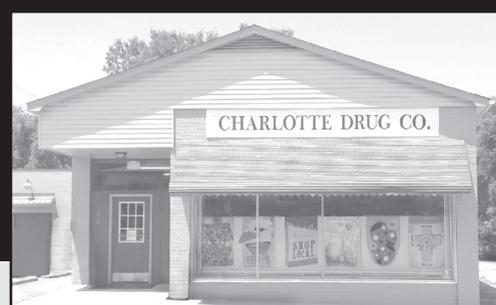


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Telehealth workers provide comfort to the region

Today, if you feel sick in Charlotte or Lunenburg counties, you're not guaranteed a face to face visit with your doctor. At least not in person. The same goes for Cumberland and Buckingham. Across this region, telehealth doctors are becoming the new face of medicine for residents. In fact for some, these are the only doctors they've seen since the pandemic started. They know your name, know your symptoms and keep up with your health, all while looking at you through a computer monitor or a television screen.

Telehealth services, which the Massachusetts Medical Society defines as the delivery and facilitation of health and health-related services including medical care, provider and patient education, health information services, and self-care via telecommunications and digital communication technologies, are revolutionizing the healthcare industry. In many instances, patients need not leave the comfort of their beds or sofas to be diagnosed and treated. The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology says telehealth, which is a broader scope of remote healthcare services than telemedicine, can utilize everything from videoconferencing, the internet, store-and-forward imaging, streaming media, and terrestrial and wireless phone communications.



Many providers and insurance companies now offer some method of telehealth services. Consider some of these statistics.

- The American Telemedicine Association says more than one-half of all hospitals in the United States have a telehealth program.

- Forty-eight states require payers to cover telehealth, says the Center for Connected Health Policy.

- BBC Research indicates that telehealth makes up roughly one-quarter of the healthcare-related technology market.

- The American Medical Association says nearly 75% of all doctor, urgent care and emergency room visits could be handled safely and effectively over the phone or via video.

- Beckers Hospital Review says 82% of millennial patients surveyed would rather have a telemedicine visit than an in-person consultation.

- Around seven million people use telehealth services across the globe, according to eVisit.

Telehealth can connect rural providers and their patients to services at other sites and promote patient-centered health care. With a shortage of some medical specialties in rural areas, telehealth can play an important role in ensuring all patients get access to care they need. But the benefits do not only extend to rural patients. Individuals who are elderly and/or

those who have mobility issues and cannot travel easily can benefit from telehealth services. Furthermore, any patient with a rare condition may no longer have to travel long distances to consult with specialists in that field.

Telehealth applications and programs on smartphones, tablets or laptops can make it easy for people to monitor their health. These apps can enable patients to do things like

track health measurements, share information with clinicians, manage chronic illnesses, and set medication or appointment reminders. Patients also can communicate with providers to get health information through patient portals or to refill prescriptions effortlessly.

Telehealth is changing the face of medicine and utilizing technology in unique ways.

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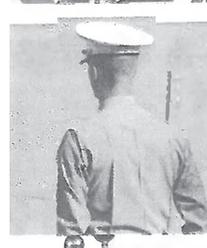
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How to pursue a career as an EMS pro

Emergency medical personnel are often first on the scene when someone experiences an accident or a medical emergency. Emergency medical service (EMS) workers are generally trained and certified as certified first responders, emergency medical technicians and paramedics. However, the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians recognizes five different levels of EMS worker. Though similar, the requirements governing each type of EMS worker vary.

All EMS workers provide life-saving services and help transport individuals to hospitals for additional treatment and care. Here is a deep look into the different EMS personnel and the training one might expect.

CERTIFIED FIRST RESPONDER

A certified first responder is an integral member of an EMS team. These individuals provide basic medical care



at the scene of emergencies, including basic first aid, stabilization of injuries, treating shock and other tasks. First responders must be certified by the National Registry of Emergency Technicians, according to Learn.org. The American Red Cross offers first re-

sponder training courses. Certification requirements vary by state, and here in Virginia, there are five. First, you have to physically and mentally be able to perform all practical skills required. Second, you have to hold current certification in CPR at the beginning of your EMT course. Third, you must successfully complete the EMT program. Fourth, you need a clean background check and finally, you must pass the National Registry exam.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN

According to the UCLA Center for Prehospital Care, emergency medical technicians (EMT) complete a course that is a minimum of 170 hours. One

does not need to have previous medical experience to become an EMT, but eligibility requirements may vary from school to school and state to state. For example, to be EMT eligible in California, a person must be 18 years of age. In Pennsylvania, one must be 16 years of age and the training course is 240 hours and includes both classroom and practical lab scenarios. Like certified first responders, EMTs must pass the NREMT examination in order to obtain certification. EMTs can be EMT-B (basic) or one of two EMT-I (intermediate).

PARAMEDIC

Paramedic students complete many more hours of training that may last between six and 12 months. Coursework builds on EMT education and blends additional medical training, including courses in anatomy, cardiology, medication, and physiology. Paramedics will take part in lectures, skills labs and a hospital internship, followed by an EMS field internship before passing the national certification exam. Upon passing, these individuals will receive the highest certification of pre-hospital care in the United States.

EMS workers provide life-saving medical care and are often first on a scene when a medical emergency takes place. Working as part of an EMS team is a demanding but rewarding career.

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How can I support the police?

In Farmville, you turn to Chief Andy Ellington and his group. In Buckingham County, it's Sheriff Billy Kidd and his deputies who get the call. In Cumberland, Sheriff Darrell Hodges and his deputies keep people safe.

Across the region, law enforcement make many sacrifices, often putting their physical and mental well-being on the line to protect and serve.

The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund says there are more than 800,000 sworn law enforcement officers now serving in the United States. Several hundred of those call Central Virginia home and are your neighbors, attend the same churches and have children in the same schools. Since the first recorded police death in 1786, more than 21,000 law enforcement officers have been killed in the line of duty. A statistics study released in 2010 found that, with the exception of taxi drivers, police are the most likely people to die on the job.

Unfortunately, hateful and violent crimes against police continue to make

the news. In recent years, a California University student painted cops as pigs for an art project, while an Atlanta gym and a Brooklyn doughnut shop refused to serve police. As recently as January of 2020, anti-cop protesters vandalized New York City subways and elsewhere to bring attention to supposed over-policing.

Communities can turn the tides and help the world focus on all the ways individuals can support and thank law enforcement. Here are some ways to give back.

- Stand outside a local police department or courthouse and say 'Thank you' or 'I appreciate your work' to any law enforcement agents you come across.

- Wear blue in solidarity with the police.

- Campaign for local commemoration of Tuesday Blues Day, which encourages people to wear blue on Tuesdays in support of police officers.

- Become a citizen volunteer to help supplement and support officers in many ways, such as clerical tasks, as-

sisting with search and rescue, writing parking citations, and providing additional patrol and visibility to neighborhoods.

- Serve on a citizen advisory board to help implement effective crime reduction strategies, advises the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

- Assemble gift baskets (with school children, if desired) and deliver them to your local police department. Items to

include are gift cards to nearby coffee shops, gyms, restaurants, and more.

- Local businesses can be supportive of law enforcement by offering a daily discount with proof of ID or setting aside a day of the week for a police discount.

Police can use community support and gratitude to help them feel appreciated as they work one of the toughest jobs around.



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How to make homes safer from fires

In the southern part of Buckingham County alone last year, fire departments responded to 33 calls. In addition, there were 56 calls for Emergency Medical Service (EMS), including six pulmonary, six cardiac, a stroke and three seizure calls. The numbers get more involved once you cross into the Town of Farmville. Last year, the Farmville fire department ran 1,145 calls. That's an average of 3.14 calls a day.

That fire data alone underscores the significance of home fire protection measures. Yes, the trucks are on their way just as soon as you call. But there are steps you can take to protect your home, Buckingham County fire officials say, to prevent a problem from igniting in the first place.

ROUTINELY INSPECT SMOKE DETECTORS

Smoke detectors can only alert residents to a fire if they're working properly. Battery-powered smoke detectors won't work if the batteries die. Routine smoke detector check-ups can ensure the batteries still have juice and that the devices themselves are still functioning properly. Test alarms to make sure the devices are functioning and audible in nearby rooms. Install

additional detectors as necessary so alarms and warnings can be heard in every room of the house.

AUDIT YOUR HOME

Electricians can inspect a home and identify any issues that could make the home more vulnerable to fires. Ask

electricians to look over every part of the house, including attics and crawl spaces. Oft-overlooked areas like attics and crawl spaces pose a potentially significant fire safety threat, as data from the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) indicates that 13% of electrical fires begin in such spaces.

INSPECT THE LAUNDRY ROOM

The laundry room is another potential source of home structure fires. NFPA data indicates around 3% of home structure fires begin in laundry rooms each year. Strategies to reduce the risk of laundry room fires include leaving room for laundry to tumble in washers and dryers; routinely cleaning lint screens to avoid the buildup of dust, fiber and lint, which the NFPA notes are often the first items to ignite in fires linked to dryers; and ensuring the outlets washing machines and dryers are plugged into can handle the voltage such appliances require. It's also a good idea to clean dryer exhaust

vents and ducts every year.

LOOK OUTWARD AS WELL

Though the majority of home fires begin inside, the NFPA reports that 4% of such fires begin outside the home. Homeowners can reduce the risk of such fires by ensuring all items that utilize fire, including grills and firepits, are always used at least 10 feet away from the home. Never operate a grill beneath eaves, and do not use grills on decks. Never leave children unattended around firepits, as all it takes is a single mistake and a moment for a fire to become unwieldy.

SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

Hair dryers, hair straighteners, scented candles, clothes irons, and holiday decorations are some additional home fire safety hazards. Never leave candles burning in empty rooms and make sure beauty and grooming items like dryers, straighteners and irons are unplugged and placed in a safe place to cool down when not in use.



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How can I help? By giving to the Red Cross

For first responders across the region, one thing they say residents can do to help is give to the Red Cross. The Red Cross is perhaps most visible in the aftermath of natural disasters. However, the Red Cross is active year-round, and there are plenty of ways for individuals to contribute to both organizations throughout the year.

RECEIVE TRAINING FROM THE RED CROSS

The Red Cross notes that many professions require individuals to master lifesaving skills such as CPR and first aid. But millions of people are not required to learn such skills, even though they're useful for anyone. The Red Cross offers an array of courses, including lifeguarding, caregiving and babysitting, swimming and water safety, that train individuals about how to effectively prepare to respond to emergencies. Enrolling in these courses

contributes to the mission of the Red Cross by building its potential base of qualified volunteers who can pitch in when natural disasters or other emergencies occur.

DONATE BLOOD

Blood donations are uniquely valuable to the Red Cross at any time, but the organization noted in early 2022 that it was experiencing its worst blood shortage in more than a decade. The Red Cross notes that the pandemic contributed to a 62% decline in college and high school blood drives. So while student donors made up roughly 25% of all donors in 2019, they now make up just 10% of the donor population. Eligible adults, including students, can contribute to the Red Cross by donating as often as possible. Students back on campus can work with school officials and local Red Cross chapters to organize blood drives in their school communities.

PITCH IN WITH DISASTER RELIEF

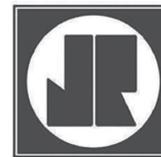
The American Red Cross notes that it responds to an emergency every eight minutes. Perhaps most remarkable is that 95% of the organization's disaster relief workers are volunteers. The Red Cross relies on volunteers from all walks of life, and each organization has plenty of opportunities for individuals willing to give back. Learn more about volunteering at www.redcross.org.

CONTRIBUTE FINANCIALLY

The work of the Red Cross continues after the emergency phase of a response has ended. The Red Cross provides emergency financial assistance in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, but also offers such aid to households that need extra help in the long-term. The financial contributions of donors help make that assistance possible and the Red Cross have made it easy to donate funds via their website.



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