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Huffman teens learn to be first responders

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Thirty-five Army JROTC students from Hargrave High School are prepared to save lives during disaster situations. The Huffman Hargrave High School students are members of the Teen Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

Team CERT members from Hargrave traveled after school for eight weeks to train with Harris County Department of Education's Center for Safe and Secure Schools through a collaborative with the Harris County Citizens Corp. They gathered on Feb. 9 for the final exam exercise at the Harris County Citizen Corps Team CERT roundup at the Harris County Fire and Sheriff's Training Academy.



Hargrave High School Army JROTC students join a practice exercise for Teen Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) a collaborative with Harris County Department of Education's Center for Safe and Secure Schools and the Harris County Citizens Corp.

Teen CERT members who are first at the scene of a disaster may act as critical community supporters to provide assistance to victims; organize spontaneous volunteers at disaster sites; or help with non-emergency projects that improve community and school safety.

The students joined hundreds of adults to show off skills in hands-on tests with basic medical operations, search and rescues, fire suppression, incident command and essential emergency preparedness skills. They learned basic first aid skills. Training included light search and rescue, disaster psychology, terrorism, 911 communications, hazardous materials and responder roles.

Rosie Flores is the Teen CERT coordinator for the Center for Safe and Secure Schools.

"Teen CERT also helps students develop critical thinking skills as they take on real-world issues," she said. "They gain an opportunity to give back to the community, and in doing so, develop a sense of confidence and pride."

Army JROTC instructor, 1st Sgt. Terry Vaughn, said the Teen CERT offers valuable leadership training, giving the teens a chance to give back to the community.

“It instills a sense of urgency,” he said. “It teaches them to be decisive and to take action; to size up the situation, make a plan and execute it. (At the Humble Teen CERT rodeo) they were on task. They knew what to do. They knew how to handle situations. They knew how to do the medical. It builds their self esteem.”

Travis Jarrell, participated in the Teen CERT training which is tied to his Army JROTC program at Hargrave. “We’re excited because we (practiced at the rodeo) everything we learned at school to train for CERT,” he said.

The staff at the Harris County Department of Education’s Center for Safe and Secure Schools states that from natural disasters to threats from intruders, schools increasingly need training in how to prepare and react to disasters According to its literature, the Harris County Department of Education’s Center for Safe and Secure Schools Center is America’s first regionally focused operation that contractually networks with schools and other government resources to help educators keep children safe during times of crisis. It interfaces with school districts and emergency management organizations to help the greater community have a comprehensive plan for disasters.

In addition to leadership, the center hosts workshops on Internet safety, bullying, peer mediation and emergency preparedness. Experts present research-based information critical to school districts. After Hurricane Rita, the center joined with the HCDE Technology Division to offer Network Operating Center storage for school district computer serves in times of disaster.

In the past, grant funding has paid for the training. New funding sources are currently being sought to pay for student transportation, training materials and stipends for the high school trainers. For more information about future training for teens, contact the center at 713- 696-0770.

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