



## NEWS RELEASE

May 16, 2013

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Class helps firefighting students go from graduation to jobs**

GEORGETOWN COUNTY — Ten students who participated in the fire and emergency services course at Andrews High School this semester are set to receive their Firefighter I certification after completing a skills test on Friday.

The students — several of which will graduate next month — already completed a written exam this week. Certification will allow them to move straight into a firefighting job, and three are in the process of filling out applications to work for Georgetown County Fire/EMS.

The course, taught by Terry Skidmore, division chief of training for County Fire/EMS, was introduced as an elective at Andrews High in 2009. It is intended to help the department recruit and train future paid and volunteer firefighters, EMTs and paramedics. The program has been so successful that it will expand to Georgetown High School in the fall, and has also been taught at Carvers Bay High School.

Many of the students in the class signed up because they had a longtime interest in firefighting. Hannah Cumbie, a 10<sup>th</sup>-grader, wants to go to college and be a neo-natal nurse. However, her brother, Nicholas, is a firefighter with Andrews Volunteer Fire Department and, having spent some time with him at the station, she wants to follow in his footsteps as a volunteer.

David Greene, a graduating senior, thought he might want to be a career firefighter before Skidmore's class. After the class, he's sure that's the right choice for him.

"I want to go out and help my community; to make a difference and try to save some people's lives," Greene said.

Josh Hanser, another senior, will be joining Greene in the job hunt. But unlike Greene, Hanser didn't have any interest in firefighting prior to Skidmore's class.

"I hadn't thought about it at all," he said. "They (the school) picked this class for me, but I'm glad they did. It's really fun to experience the sort of things we have. It's exciting. You don't ever know what to expect."

The students had an opportunity to spend some time shadowing County Fire/EMS staff over spring break, responding to calls and even participating in a training exercise in which new thermal imaging cameras were tested.

(More)

It was during that training exercise, at the “burn building” at the Nine-Mile Curve station, that Nicholas Knight, a graduating senior, decided he wants to be a firefighter. He had always wanted to be a welder before that, he said. He was already considering changing his career path when he went to training that morning, but standing in front of that building, with smoke pouring out around him, he knew firefighting was the right choice for him.

Kaleb Thomas, a 10<sup>th</sup>-grader had a similar story.

“I didn’t think I wanted to be a firefighter until I started going to the station,” he said. “The first day I sat there and we didn’t have any calls all day long. The second day, as soon as I got there at 6 o’clock in the morning, a fire call came in.”

Thomas rode along and “there was a bunch of people hollering and screaming at me to unroll the hose and pull ‘em out of the trucks.” After that, he helped respond to a possible fire. On another day, he rode along with Skidmore to a fire call at a house not far from his own home. That day, he watched firefighters rescue a person from the roof of the burning house.

“It just hit me that was what I want to do,” Thomas said.

He’ll have the option of enrolling in the second level of the course next year.

“I came into the class thinking it would be easy, then come to find out there’s more to it than that,” said Dean Lambert, another 10<sup>th</sup>-grader. “You work hard, you learn team work, you learn all kinds of safety stuff. It’s a different experience than what I thought it would be.”

Yet one thing all the kids in the class agree on is that it’s a good experience, even for those who don’t see firefighting in their futures, like Ethan McDaniel, an 11<sup>th</sup>-grader.

“I’d like to go to college and be an engineer,” he said. “But I’m glad I took this class.”

Many of the students said they’ve already found a use for skills such as knot tying, and CPR is a useful skill for everyone to have.

“This class changed the way I think,” said Christian Weatherford, a 10<sup>th</sup>-grader. “Lives can be so fragile. But I feel like I can help people now because of what I learned in this class.”

Students will take their skills exam at the Nine-Mile Curve station at 8 a.m. on Friday.

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## PHOTO INFORMATION

GC Fire Class 1: Students in the fire and emergency services course at Andrews High School participate in a training exercise. They are, from left: Ethan McDaniel, Anna Nesbitt, Nick Knight and instructor Terry Skidmore.

GC Fire Class 2: From left, Blake Harrington, Ethan McDaniel and Nick Knight practice a method for removing an incapacitated person from a confined space.

GC Fire Class 3: Anna Nesbitt removes here gear after a training exercise.