

Wednesday, January 27, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Mark Gunderman, Communications Specialist
Chippewa Valley Technical College
Desk: 715-831-7288
Cell: 715-210-4714
mgunderman1@cvtc.edu

CVTC Class Allows RN's to Work as First Responders

Local services hope it helps ease their staffing shortages

Eau Claire, WI - Cheryl Bergmann, a registered nurse who lives in Pepin, knows there is a great need for help at the local ambulance service. As a medical professional herself, she wanted to help, but didn't have the training necessary.

But Bergmann will soon finish a class at Chippewa Valley Technical College in Eau Claire that is providing the training she needs, and she's anxious to put it to work in her community.

"I heard that they didn't have a lot of coverage," Bergmann said. "Sometimes our ambulance can't even cover because they don't have the people to staff it. I thought as a nurse, I could help."

Similar thoughts went through the minds of her fellow RN's, Lucas Peterke of Menomonie and Emma Flury of Boyceville, both of whom work at the Emergency Room at the Marshfield Clinic Hospital in Eau Claire. They are not only interested in helping as EMS responders but see the value in learning more about what responders they see in the ER regularly do.

The idea enlisting RN's to help meet the needs of local ambulance services came from Mark Schwartz, emergency service continuing education coordinator at CVTC and director of the ambulance service in Bloomer. He found a strong partner at Marshfield Clinic.

"In Wisconsin, RN's are able to work in ambulances on their own licenses without EMS licenses," Schwartz said. "But state statute says they must be trained in the procedures and equipment of the particular service they want to work for."

That usually involves an RN-EMT 60-hour bridge class that many RN's see as a barrier. Schwartz's idea was to create a streamlined class that focuses directly on the additional skills RN's would need to work on an ambulance emergency response team.

"I worked with the CVTC Nursing instructors to learn what skills the students learn in Nursing training and compared that with skills learned in EMT training," Schwartz said.

The result was a 16-hour class that as far as Schwartz knows is the first of its kind in Wisconsin. The initial group of nine students is scheduled to finish Feb. 3.

Schwartz didn't do this all on his own, however. His wife, Lexi Schwartz, is the EMS coordinator for Marshfield Clinic in Eau Claire. She advocated for her employer to support CVTC's efforts.

Matthew Schneider, regional communications manager said Marshfield Clinic saw the value in the class in helping local EMS meet staffing needs, but also in enriching the experiences of nurses.

"There are nurses out there that can become better nurses if they know more about what first responders are doing," Schneider said. "Our commitment was helping with resources to make this possible because there are benefits, and not just to our nurses."

Schneider added that Marshfield Clinic made their nurses aware of the opportunity and supported those that chose to take part.

Bergmann works in a Marshfield Clinic long-term care facility in Lake City, Minn., so she didn't come to the class with a lot of experience in EMS work, even with over 25 years in the profession. "The class has been fantastic," she said. "A real eye-opener."

"Working in the ER, we meet EMS personnel all the time," Peterke said. "But this class has been interesting. As nurses, we don't learn a lot about what EMS does."

"When I heard about this class, I wanted to be a part of it," Flury said. "I love emergency medicine and I hope to work for my local EMS in Boyceville if they have an opening."

"I have a couple of friends who work with EMS services, and once I get the knowledge I will be applying too," Peterke said.

"I really loved the hands-on part of the class, like learning how to open obstructed airways," Flury said. "A lot of this we don't see in the ER. I'm really grateful that nurses can take this class. It will give us the opportunity to be part of the EMS scene."

Schwartz said the next step will be to evaluate the class from the perspective of students and the EMS departments they work for. That will help instructors improve the curriculum to ensure it meets everyone's needs. He added that CVTC hopes to offer the class at least once a year.

With over 115 programs offered both online and on-campus, Chippewa Valley Technical College delivers superior, progressive technical education which improves the lives of students, meets the workforce needs of the region, and strengthens the community. CVTC programs are designed with input of business and industry to prepare graduates for today's jobs, with 95 percent employed within six months of graduation and associate degree graduates earning an average annual salary of \$47,452.

Cutline

CVTC Instructor Mark Schwartz explains to a group of registered nurses how to approach an auto accident scene and some hazards to look out for as part of an RN-EMT class at the Emergency Service Education Center Wednesday, January 27. The class will enable the RN's to work as part of ambulance EMS teams in their communities.

#

CVTC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in employment, admissions, programs, or activities. General inquiries regarding the College's non-discrimination policies may be directed to:

Director of Human Resources

Chippewa Valley Technical College

620 W. Clairemont Ave. Eau Claire, WI 54701