

College Takes On EMT Training

Despite virus, next generation is prepared

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the region last spring, Matt Zukosky, Suffolk Community College's emergency medical care and fire programs coordinator, who is also a professor and assistant academic chair, came up with a creative solution to train and keep current the next generation of first responders in Southampton Village.

"Ours is an ever-changing body of knowledge and skills and training," Mr. Zukosky said.

Mr. Zukosky, a paramedic for 23 years and nearing 30 years involved with fire and emergency medical services, proposed bringing instruction from Suffolk's campuses directly to Southampton Village in partnership with the Southampton Village Volunteer Ambulance. Trainings were held in village's newly opened volunteer ambulance facility, which is equipped with state-of-the-art classrooms large enough for students to maintain social distance while learning in person and hands-on.

Southampton Village Volun-

teer Ambulance Chief Cheyne Finocchiaro explained that training courses are typically run by Suffolk County through the Department of Health with limited options on the East End.

"We were able to work with Matt in developing a program that would offer us a local class. Our goal has always been to host local training," said Mr. Finocchiaro, an alumnus of Suffolk County Community College.

The college and village executed an agreement for the spring semester to offer the college's Emergency Care course on Tuesday and Thursday evenings for 12 students at the volunteer ambulance corps's new Windmill Lane facility.

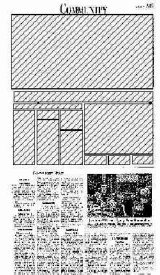
"It is so appropriate for us to embed our educational work within the community," said Dr. Paul Beaudin, Suffolk County Community College's vice president for academic and student affairs. "Professor Zukosky's initiative reminds us that where there is a need, that is where we belong."

"EMTs and paramedics

were in high demand prior to the pandemic, but since then, the demands have only escalated along with the medical needs of communities," Mr. Zukosky said. "I appreciate the college's confidence in me to allow an alternate teaching location that will have a great impact in our community. I am also fortunate to have a professional, dedicated, and innovative faculty from within the EMS community."

National data on the number of EMT openings is unavailable, but pre-pandemic data did show the paramedic/EMT field was growing quickly. Data in 2019 from the Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed the number of EMT and paramedic jobs was expected to grow by 17,000. That's a 6-percent growth rate, which is higher than the average growth rate of 4-percent.

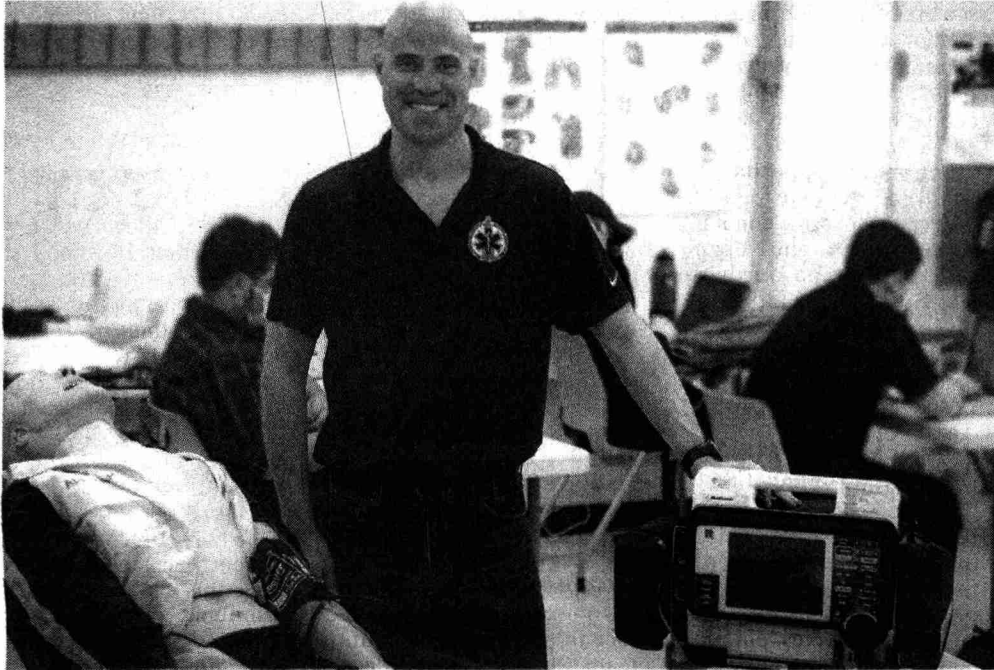
Mr. Zukosky said the current class will graduate its members this May and that plans are underway to continue the remote training partnership this fall.





Students gather in the Southampton Village Ambulance facility on Windmill Lane for socially distanced EMT classes led by Suffolk County Community College.

PHOTOS COURTESY SUFFOLK COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Matt Zukosky, Suffolk County Community College's emergency medical care and fire programs coordinator, and professor and assistant academic chair.