

NEWS RELEASE



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August 11, 2015

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Anniston Fire Department partners with Anniston High School for Student First Responder Training Program

The Anniston Fire Department has teamed up with the Anniston City School System for a new Student First Responder Training Program aimed at giving high school students hands-on training for careers as firefighters and first responders.

“This quality program opens a new and rewarding career path for our students,” said Mayor Vaughn Stewart. “I urge them all to give it careful consideration.”

The program began on Aug. 10, the first day of school for ACS students, and has since enlisted the talents of several ambitious seniors from Anniston High School’s Career Tech department.



“We’re allowing some of our best 10 or 12 students who are career-ready to participate in the program,” said ACS Superintendent Darren Douthitt.

“We want it to be something that grows and we want to train students who are serious.”

The program will be split up between firefighter training, known as Firefighter 160, and Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) training, and culminates upon each senior’s graduation from AHS in 2016. Each student will undergo an intense certification and physical training process, and must pass the Candidate Physical Ability Test, also known as the CPAT.

According to the Alabama Fire College and Personnel Standards Commission, CPAT candidates must wear a 50-pound vest to simulate the weight of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) and firefighter protective clothing. An additional 25 pounds, using two 12.5-pound weights that simulate a high-rise pack (hose bundle), is added to their shoulders for the stair climb event portion of the test.

“If they want this job, they’ll know by the end of this program,” said AFD Training Officer Johnnie Phelps. “We’re going to immerse them in the life of a firefighter.”

The CPAT is just one of many certifications needed for the Firefighter 160 portion of the program that doubles as the first level of training every firefighter must complete, known as Firefighter I Training. During Firefighter 160, students will also learn the proper way to carry fire extinguishers and fire ladders, how to drive a fire truck, and will undergo numerous simulation exercises, including a mobile home fire simulator where students will have to put out a live fire.

“It’s not easy at all but you have to have that if you want to work as a firefighter in the United States,” said Phelps.

In addition to physical aptitude, each student must hit the books both at AHS and in the classroom at AFD’s Fire Station #1 with “The Essentials of Firefighting,” and an Emergency Medical Responder textbook designed to lay out the basics of being a first responder.

Students’ EMR training will also include HeartSaver CPR Certification, a very important requirement for all EMRs.

“My goal when they get out of this program is for them to come to work for Anniston Fire, or if they want to go anywhere else, to be able to start that work right out the door,” Phelps said.

“Once they graduate, I can put them through a five-week bridge program, so when they finish up here in Anniston they don’t have to travel anywhere else for that training. After that, they’re ready to hire.”

The program works two-fold for the Anniston Fire Department.

Not only does AFD have the important task of teaching and training future firefighters and EMRs, they also have the prime opportunity to create and maintain a pipeline of talented, certified, and diverse young people from the Anniston community.

“With the program being homegrown, they’re familiar with me and with the staff,” said AFD Chief Tony Taylor.

“Hopefully they want to stay here at Anniston Fire and find out that being a firefighter is not a bad idea and that being in public safety is not a bad idea.

It will do nothing but make our department better and this is the key I think.”

The City of Anniston

Located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in northeast Alabama, Anniston sits as the county seat for Calhoun County and a regional hub for legal, medical, and banking services. Home to the bronze-level mountain bike ride center of

Coldwater Mountain, Anniston offers a wide range of recreational options such as biking the Chief Ladiga Trail or visiting the Anniston Museum of Natural History. For more information about the City of Anniston, visit anniston.al.gov.