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My name is Ellen Morrison Yarborough, and I currently serve as the Deputy Chief of South Media Fire Company in Nether Providence Township, Delaware County. As part of that position, I am active in recruitment and retention of members as they are both critical factors in the sustainability of our all-volunteer force.

For the past four years, I have focused my recruiting efforts on students from our local high school- Strath Haven, in Wallingford. As a social studies teacher and the Gifted Coordinator there, I have the opportunity to interact with any number of students on a daily basis. In the Coordinator role, I meet frequently with students who seek opportunities for community service. For a few, it is of the (quote)'check off the box for the college application' persuasion, but for others, it is out of a genuine desire to do more- to give back, to serve, and to find something that will help them better define who they are and guide who they will become as young adults.

About four years ago, I looked at my own son's programming for Firefighter 1 certification at Montgomery County Fire Academy and wondered how junior firefighters like him could earn academic credit for what they already do- specifically, for the sheer number of hours (188) required for PA state recognized certification as a level 1 firefighter. I realized too that my recruiting efforts for the fire company, that I was doing rather casually while at work, would prove more fruitful if I could answer the question "What's in it for me?" with the answer "Academic credit". At the time, it was an a-ha moment- our school, and others like it, already provide students with independent study options. Why not allow for students to work independently from school, on their own time, in a field that is both interesting and challenging to them, and one in which dovetails nicely into PA State Standards for Secondary Education?

State Standard 13: Career Education and Work emphasizes the development of workplace skills such as Commitment, Dependability, Communication, and Problem Solving, and puts the onus on schools to provide students with opportunities for career awareness and preparation to include community service. This is in line with acknowledgment by the Senate Resolution 6 Committee that the primary vehicle for change would be the creation and implementation of school programming under a Public Safety umbrella.

What came from this at Strath Haven, and what is now in the works at a small handful of other schools in the Delaware Valley, is a program called Field Careers: Emergency Services. It does not compete with existing Vocational Education programs offered at County Technical High Schools. Rather, this is designed for students who carry a full course load and are largely college bound, but are also active members or considering

such at one of our three local fire companies- South Media, Garden City, and Swarthmore.

How the Field Careers: Emergency Services course works at our school is simple- the fire company designates a member as a school liaison. That liaison establishes a line of communication with the high school counseling staff. It falls to them to:

1. Provide practical information about the operations of the fire company
2. Cover state laws regulating participation by minors in the service
3. Address training- both in house and county wide- and the progression of skills and how they relate to responsibilities
4. Define the characteristics of the ideal candidate for membership

Schools will be interested too in how personal safety and both physical and mental health issues are addressed, as well as what roles other opportunities are available outside of emergency response operations.

Once the students have submitted any necessary paperwork that the Fire Company requires for membership, and the school requires for off campus credit bearing programs, students simply record their hours spent in terms of task- events, public education programming, response to incidents, training, and formal fire school classes. The liaison signs off on their paperwork submitted on a biweekly basis and, assuming ten hours per week is met, the student is in compliance with the school and working towards completion of a recognized course as evidenced by inclusion on a report card and transcript. Failure to meet the commitment as agreed upon at the beginning of the semester would result in a failure of credit, though through mentorship at the fire company, and a commitment to students fulfilling their service obligations, that failure is only a slight risk.

Now in its fourth year, the Field Careers: Emergency Services class is a success. We have six students currently enrolled for 1.0 academic credits for 100 hours of service to a community of 13,000 people. They are athletes, scholars, budding engineers, mechanics, psychologists, medical personnel, and yes, career firefighters. Long gone are the days of our ranks bolstered by sons following in the footsteps of fathers, and growing up around the firehouse. Instead, we need to pursue students. To hand pick them. To reward them for their efforts. And to convince them that volunteerism in the fire service is a tradition worth keeping.

Thank you.