

Rescue Me  
Explorer classes teach wide array of programs  
by Lacey Hartzell

Picture it Coldsprings Excelsior Fire and Rescue Service, a.k.a “Station 6,” your home away from home. The most comfortable place next to your actual bed, the place where you feel the most at ease. And, it’s not in a relaxed, carefree tropical location, but in Northern Michigan instead; in fact, it’s a fire station that, for some, is really their home away from home.

At Station 6, which is located on the way to Manistee Lake, the atmosphere is laid back. Upon entering the building for an explorer class, and station members talk in moderate tones, with an occasional outburst of laughter resounding through the room.

The Explorers program of Station 6 is an emergency service program that is sponsored by “Learning for Life.” The program provides classes for young adults interested in careers in EMS, law enforcement, and firefighting. They do have a set curriculum to follow, but enrollment in the different programs depends upon the students’ interest. It is the only emergency service in the area.

The program is open to young adults between the ages of 14 and 21, but usually after the age of 18, explorers want to join the department. For those going to college, the classes can count for up to 27 college credits.

There are currently five high school students from KHS involved in this program: Kelsey McCullen, Bill Smith, Larry Bissett, Kyle Beaver, and Brittany Jackson, two of which are children of Station 6 members.

Most of Explorers plan on going into the field they are studying in the program.

“If something happens in their own lives, they’ll know how to deal with it,” commented Drew Donegan, who is the lead advisor of the program.

Also, Explorers may be used in the case of a mass casualty incident where they are short on firefighters or EMS to help with the situation at hand.

The program gives young adults experience and training in their fields that they can use later in life.

“They know what happens and they know what to expect,” said Donegan.

One Explorer, Kyle Beaver, who is involved in the firefighter portion of the Explorers, plans on using the knowledge gained from the Explorers to have extra certification for DNR if the need to use his firefighting skills arises.

Beaver has also taken Firefighter I and II and has CERT (Certified Emergency Response Team) training. “Larry, Bill and I are three out of 27 or 30 kids in the nation that have CERT program training,” Beaver explained.

For Explorer Kelsey McCullen, this program is not her first time around Station 6. Both of her parents are firefighters and EMT’s on Station 6 and have been for almost 25 years. Kelsey, at age 17, has been around firefighting literally all her life.

McCullen is currently taking her Firefighter I class in Kalkaska.

“I respect my parents for what they do and the hundreds of lives and homes they have saved. I want to do the same, that’s why Explorers mean so much to me. It gave me the opportunity to start firefighter class and get experience I can use when I go to college and for the rest of my life. This department is my family,” commented McCullen.

Brittany Jackson, whose father belongs to Station 6, is also involved in the firefighter program and is considering a career in it.

“I’ve been around it most of my life and I wanted to learn about what my dad does,” commented Jackson.

The Explorers program has also had members sent to Illinois for SAR training, or Search and Rescue, to bring back and teach not only the Explorers, but the department as a whole also.

But the program isn’t just a learning experience for the students.

“The Explorers program has been a life experience for me. I learn from them all the time,” concluded Donegan.