



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2016.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Powhatan

Program Title: Junior Emergency Technician "JET" program

Program Category: Criminal Justice & Public Safety

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Steven Singer

Title: Fire & Rescue Chief

Department: Powhatan County Fire & Rescue Department

Complete Mailing Address: 3910-C Old Buckingham Rd


Telephone: 804-598-5646 Website: www.powhatanva.gov

Email: ssinger@powhatanva.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: Patricia A. Weiler

Title: County Administrator

Signature:  3/8/2016

Overview

When appointed in December of 2014, Fire and Rescue Chief Steven Singer began a journey to help re-vitalize the membership of the volunteer fire and rescue departments of Powhatan County. With the number of volunteer members dwindling in the normal recruit demographics of late teens to early twenties, Chief Singer looked to introduce a new younger generation into emergency services. With the help from current and past members of fire and EMS they formed the Junior Emergency Technician or "JET" program, bringing exposure to volunteer fire and EMS to a new generation. The program brought together children aged 12-15 to get them interested in emergency services and volunteerism. The program has been successful since first organizing, introducing teens and adults to emergency services and renewing interest from former members.

Problem

Powhatan County currently has an all-volunteer fire and EMS service, supplemented by minimal EMS contract services. Powhatan relies heavily on the dedicated volunteer members. Volunteerism within emergency services has been on a steady decline after its high in 2002. This downward trend has been seen nationwide, not just in Virginia. While each volunteer department continues to recruit for active members, it was felt not enough outreach was being performed to the younger generation. There was very little interest from the 16-20 demographic to be encouraged to volunteer. The JET organizers decided to go even younger to the 12-15 year old bracket. These children did not yet have all the activities of High School age kids, and showed a desire to be involved in the community. While other efforts continue to aim at the other demographics, the JET program is designed to orient them when they are young and keep them engaged in emergency services as they grow older.

How the program meets criteria

The JET program specifically targets the younger 12-16 year old demographic. While other programs such as the Boy Scouts of America or the National Volunteer Fire Council have programs to encourage this younger demographic, the JETs look to bring boys, girls, teens, and adults all together to learn about volunteer emergency services. Since individually each volunteer department did not have the number of interested participants, the program was organized at the county level. It takes the cooperation of all departments to keep the program going. The program changes its meeting spot monthly. This exposes the program to each one of the stations and organizations in the system. As a hands-on program, the managers have developed scenarios and activities that are age appropriate, yet get the participants involved in learning about fire and EMS. Most hands-on programs start at 16 years old, developing activities has created several model practices that other junior program have begun to inquire about. The benefits are numerous and undoubtedly worthwhile: members are active in the community, they are learning to lead, they are communicating, they are acquiring skills for the workplace, and much more. The fire or rescue station has always been a community meeting place and a natural partner for connecting teens to the community.

How the program is carried out

After researching junior firefighting programs, the group was chartered in the summer of 2015. Outreach was performed to middle school and high school age children eligible for the program. Even before meeting for the first time the group had received over 25 applications for membership. When formed, the JETs were organized as any other volunteer fire department. They conducted elections for chief and assistant chief, created company by-laws and organized the members into small groups with group leaders. This provides leadership opportunities for all members. As the older chiefs graduate into being a full time member of a volunteer department, rising members will step up to take their place.

The group designed their own patch and emblem which they proudly display on t-shirts and outerwear at school. Each member was issued a helmet, eye protection, gloves, and a fanny pack for EMS supplies. They are required to come to the monthly meeting with all of their gear or are unable to participate.

The group meets monthly at one the county fire or EMS stations on the second Sunday of the month. The meeting place rotates each month to help expose the members to different parts of the county. The group conducts its business meeting and then participates in learn hands-on skills such as CPR or ropes and knots.

“Active members” are required to also participate in a further 10 hours of community service within the year. Members can gain these hours by assisting the volunteer department with their fundraising, assisting other community groups, or participating in non-mandatory activities such as the Christmas parade.

Members reaching the age of 16 are encouraged and sponsored to joining one of the volunteer departments. They are allowed to assist with JETs activities until they are able to enter certification training as a firefighter or EMT.

Designated parents and assisting adult volunteer members assist in teach the hands-on portions of the program and help to organize other activities.

Staffing & Costs

The JETs received oversight from Jamie Timberlake a former volunteer firefighter and family of three JETs. He received assistance from several active volunteer and other parents of JET members. While initially receiving seed money from the volunteer departments and county, the program has begun to perform their own fund raisers. While capital purchase of protective gear is performed by the county, the group is been very self-sufficient with other costs. The county has been impressed with the program and has agreed to donate yearly funding to support the program.

Results

From the start the JET program has been a great success. Starting with 29 members, the group has only lost 2 members over the first year. Succession planning is taking place for the Chief JET to graduate the program and new leadership come forward from the ranks. Mentors keep

developing innovative scenarios and activities for the JETS to participate in and the program currently has a waiting list of 10 and 11 year olds waiting to join.

The program has also brought in three senior members (parents) into the volunteer fire and rescue services so they could better understand and spend time with their children.

The program has met and exceeded the desired outcome and the return on investment of time and resources to make the program well worth it. While it may take a couple of years before the first JET can participate in a LIVE emergency, Powhatan County is laying the groundwork to help continue and support their volunteer fire and rescue services.