

## Everyday Heroes

*'Bringing back the pulse of Aggieland,' Student EMS workers voluntarily sacrifice time to help and save others*

By MARIANNE HUDSON  
THE BATTALION

The alarm goes off. Quickly waking, they flee from the comfort of their bunk beds.

These are not students late for their 8 a.m. classes, they are Emergency Medical Services (EMS) volunteers who spend their days and nights anticipating and responding to on-campus emergency phone calls.

EMS workers, who are on duty 20 to 40 hours per week, devote a significant part of their schedules to the "squad room," located on the second floor of A.P. Beutel Health Center. It has become a second home to many, furnished with bunkbeds, couches and a refrigerator.

"Half of the time, we don't sleep in our beds nearly as often as we sleep here," said Jennifer Shoemaker, an emergency medical technician (EMT) and a senior speech communications major.

While on duty, EMTs are responsible for handling virtually any emergency call they receive. Sports and

bicycle accidents top the list of on-campus emergencies, followed by general-illness calls, such as headaches and stomach pains.

However, calls regarding alcohol are not filtered through the University Police Department (UPD), but are instead referred to as "sick calls." By abandoning the former filtration process, UPD does not know if a student is being taken to the hospital because of alcohol-related illness. This prevents the University from contacting a student's parents and makes it more likely that students properly handle this type of emergency.

EMS ambulances, which take sick students to the hospital or health center of their choice, are free of charge, as they have been included in student fees. This service benefits students because hospital ambulance rides generally cost around \$300.

While in the ambulance, EMS workers administer a variety of procedures, ranging from setting a broken finger to reviving a heart attack victim. "Patients are usually in our care

for a very short amount of time," said Sarah Sweeney, an EMT and a sophomore biology major. "It is our job to make them feel as comfortable as possible."

Student EMS workers devote their time on a voluntary basis. Around 13 people apply each year. There is a formal interview process, and applicants enter two months of training as soon as they are accepted. During this time, students gain hands-on experience, such as learning how to drive the ambulance. Once the training period is completed, students receive the title of Medic 2. After a year, they have the option of being promoted to Medic 1, which is the head medic. Workers are not paid, but gain a different kind of reward from the experience.

Many students originally chose to work as EMS workers for the medical training.

"I have always wanted to work in the medical field," said Rebecca Debrecht, an EMS volunteer and a senior community health major. "I started working here for the experience of working with patients."

However, the benefits of being an

EMS worker are much more than just technical expertise.

"We are a close-knit family," Shoemaker said of her relationship with the 50 other workers.

Shoemaker said tragedy brings this family even closer together.

"In instances such as Bonfire, our service was affected as a whole," she said. "Some students went into denial — others, depression. Personally, I felt I hadn't done enough, [but] we supported each other during that tragic time."

A&M EMS workers said they empathize with the EMS workers in New York.

"There are college EMS in New York doing what we do, and my heart goes out to them," Shoemaker said.

In light of the New York tragedies, EMS workers will receive recognition for saving lives during Collegiate EMS Week, which will be held during the week of Nov. 11 to 17. During this week, EMS workers will be present at Rudder Fountain and events will focus on making students more aware of the EMS program.

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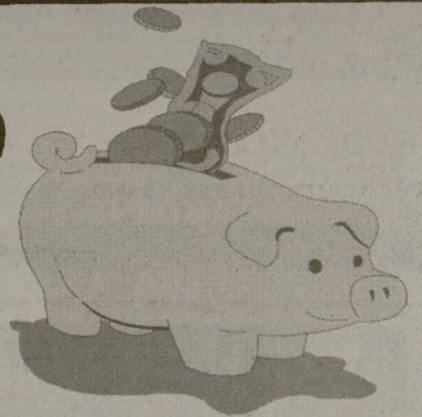
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