

# Students simulate rescues

Argyle group receives training for disasters

01:25 AM CST on Saturday, January 17, 2009

By Britney Tabor / Staff Writer - Denton Record Chronicle

Screams of “We need help in here!” and “Please help them!” echoed through a corridor on the northeast side of Argyle High School on Friday, during a disaster drill.

Theater teacher Nancy Chumbley stood near a female student pretending to be trapped underneath a beam that fell from the ceiling and screamed for help for several students who were injured in three rooms.

Twenty students answered her pleas, tending to the female student and searching two classrooms and the auditorium.

They found debris and tables, desks and sofas toppled and their peers sprawled across the floors, bleeding with cuts and bruises to their heads, faces, legs and arms.

The team rapidly went through each room to pick up students who cried and screamed in agony.

They carried them to some tarps and created a medical triage. The team went around to the 19 injured students, asking where they hurt, then assessing their injuries and bandaging them.

The actors were participating in a disaster training simulation for the high school’s Teen Community Emergency Response Team, also known as Teen CERT. The program trains students in crisis response skills, fire safety, light search and rescue, teamwork and disaster medical operations.



For more than two months, 20 Argyle High students have taken the classes during their student council elective, learning what to do if natural disasters, fire or acts of terrorism occurred on campus. Friday was the final portion of the course — a drill in which students had to use what they learned in response to a disaster.

“I didn’t think I would be able to react as quick as I did,” said 11th-grader Luke Laird, a Teen CERT member. “It was exciting. It got the blood flowing.”

Everything was realistic, he said, and when he heard his peers screaming, he sprinted to areas where he was needed and helped where he could.

“After the drill, you can really feel the impact of what the situation would be,” he said.

Argyle High is the second campus in the county to form a

Teen CERT, said county organization coordinator Brenda Gormley. The county’s first Teen

DRC/AI Key

Members of the Teen Community Emergency Response Team at Argyle High School tend to victims during a mock tornado drill at the school on Friday.

CERT formed in the fall at Denton's LaGrone Advanced Technology Complex.

Argyle Police Chief William Tackett said he presented the program to the high school so students would be equipped to respond to emergencies either on the campus or in the community. Tackett, along with city and county medical professionals, taught several of the Teen CERT courses to the students.

Looking at school campus catastrophes historically, Tackett said, it takes time for professional emergency responders to arrive at a scene and administer medical aid. He said he's comfortable knowing that Argyle now has students trained to treat injuries until medical professionals arrive.

"Having people to be here who are trained and can handle things until an emergency responder gets here may save a life," Tackett said.

The Teen CERT program is federally funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Center for Regional and National Security at Eastern Michigan University, he said.

Roland Asebedo, assistant chief of Denton County Emergency Services, observed the students Friday. He then shared his experiences responding to crisis situations. He told them that in the case of a disaster, people would look to them for knowledge and control and they could do the job successfully.

"You're cutting-edge," he told the students. "You're a step in the direction of taking care of not only yourself but your friends and your teachers and people you're spending four years of your life with in this building."

Argyle High Principal Jeff Butts said he thought his students did "a super job" at responding in a crisis scenario and he hopes the number of students taking the course increases.

"A community and a district must remember that if a disaster hits Argyle, the high school is not the only facility that's going to need help," he said. "So it's very critical that students learn how to tend to people if a crisis occurs.

"There's going to be a time that we're going to have to take care of ourselves. ... The more kids we can get trained, the better off we will be, no matter if it's a fire or any type of crisis."

*BRITNEY TABOR can be reached at 940-566-6876. Her e-mail address is [btabor@dentonrc.com](mailto:btabor@dentonrc.com).*

## **Origins of CERT**

The original CERT was formed in the 1980s by the Los Angeles Fire Department as a way to train citizens and private and government employees on how to handle disasters. The training was made available nationally in 1993 by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and has been implemented in 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico.

Source: [www.citizencorps.gov](http://www.citizencorps.gov)