

Fake disasters train Scouts in emergency preparedness



By WENDI WINTERS, For The Capital

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Published October 16, 2007

Bright and early Sunday morning, the hills of the Naval Station on the Severn River rang with screams and shrieks - followed by giggles.

Those were the sounds of Boy Scouts staging their annual disaster drill.

In and around the dozens of pop-up tents that dotted the campground lay several bodies bearing ghastly, bloody wounds. Though they looked real enough to turn one's stomach, all the injuries were fake.

Travis Jackson, 16, a Life Scout in Annapolis Troop 771, seemed quite capable of handling a conversation with another scout while a "stake" appeared to protrude from his bloodied, bare chest.

Thirteen-year-old Danny Danck-werth, also of Troop 771, ambled by, his left "eye" dangling out of its socket.

"I'm a tornado victim," he said. "They chose me because my blue eyes matched the fake eye." His brother, Donovan, 17, bore several head lacerations.

Near the Retelle Pavillion, an event organizer Jim McNitt crouched over an unconscious-looking Aaron Canale. "When you come across a victim like this, who may have fallen down a cliff, look around to make sure no more debris is around to fall on you. Then, check the victim. Look for obvious bleeding and if the heart is beating. Call 911," he said.

He showed how to check for broken bones without moving the body, to avoid further damage to the spine.

He discussed the mnemonic "SAMPLE" if a victim is conscious and can talk. "SAMPLE means Signs and Symptoms, Allergies, Medications, Past pertinent history, Last oral intake, Events leading up to incident," he said.

Later, as screams of the volunteer victims filled the air, he grinned. "We're trying to remove barriers to responding to an emergency. We want to give the Scouts an opportunity to practice so they know how to act. We're teaching them to be aware of their own safety as a responder and to do no harm to the victim."

Mr. McNitt, of Admiral Heights, is a meteorologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and a retired Navy captain. He said 155 Scouts attended the long-weekend program to work on several merit badges.

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Assistant Scoutmaster George Daelemans lay beside a broken mountain bike. "It hurts when I take a breath," he moaned. Over a hill, his son, Kyle, 14, lay prone. His back had been broken by a falling ladder. Ann Junkins, a Troop 382 parent volunteer from Annapolis, was nearby, the victim of a gashed leg. The bloody wound perfectly matched her cheery, cherry-colored toenail polish.

Fourteen-year-old Venture Crew 422 member Shannon Ryan, who is a freshman at Arundel High, sported nasty-looking burns on her face and hands. She claimed the contents of her campfire pot overheated and exploded as she bent over to stir the soup. Jason Campbell, 22, appeared to have a grisly compound fracture of the femur and some internal bleeding. He was spurting blood. Matt Kline, 17, also of Venture Crew 422, had lost his left leg below the knee.

Then he stood up on both legs and went looking for some more fake blood.

Three troops berthed on Navy YP boats. Six troops and Venture Crew 422 camped on Retelle Hill at the Naval Station, and 120 Scouts attended merit badge classes at the Naval Academy in the Hendrix Oceanography Lab and Rickover Hall, and 35 took courses at the Retelle Recreation area.

"Troop 815 of Edgewater asked if the three troops could stay on the YP boats," said Ron Masgay, the scoutmaster. "They learned not to touch anything and got a feel for living on a boat in tight quarters."

It wasn't all tough-guy stuff. Saturday night was a different scene as every troop competed to see who could whip up the tastiest entree and dessert in a cast-iron

Dutch oven. Sam Raithel of Troop 366 created the prize-winning chicken and dumpling recipe, consisting of a pre-mixed tube of biscuit dough on the bottom, layered with 2 cans of chicken, two packets of chicken noodle soup, a half-can of mixed vegetables covered with a second tube of biscuit dough. The troop's "Chocolate Volcano" - three cans of cherry pie filling sprinkled with Betty Crocker's devil's food mix - didn't win any prizes, but disappeared shortly as soon as chef Brandon French, 13, said it was ready.

Local groups helped make the program a success. The Brigade of Midshipmen Eagle Scouts sponsored the three-day event and volunteered to run many of the Merit Badge classes. The Naval Academy and Naval Station opened up classroom space for the youth, plus the Navy provided two YP boats for cruises. Mike Schwarz of Annapolis Healthcare donated rubber gloves and first aid supplies for the disaster drill.

Nurses and nurse interns drove in from the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, each carrying a footlocker filled with "art of moulage" tools: embalmer's wax, fake intestines, boxes of eyeballs, realistic glue-on bloody wounds, and plenty of bruise-colored cosmetics. They set to work creating grim-looking accident victims.

Anne Arundel County Fire Department dispatched a "quint," a quintuple combination pumper fire apparatus with fire hoses, aerial ladder and ground ladders - a sort of Swiss Army knife of firetrucks. Not to be outdone, the Maryland State Police swooped down on the base fire station with a helicopter loaded with all the latest law enforcement toys.

Ens. Travis Albright, Academy Class of 2007, is attending graduate school at the University of Maryland before heading to a school in Charleston, S.C., after Christmas.

An Eagle Scout from Reading, Pa., he was a member of the Brigade of Midshipmen Eagle Scouts. Along with fellow Eagle Scout and academy classmate, Ens. John

Gilligan, of Dallas, Pa., and Senior Patrol Leader Aaron Canale, the trio was busy overseeing the disaster drama.

"We've got volunteers out here simulating campsite accidents like cuts, burns and hypothermia," he said. "One guy has fallen from a cliff. Other folks are victims of a mountain biking accident, a tornado, structural collapse and electrocution."

Navy medic Patrick Minor, 20, an Eagle Scout from Indiana, learned to do "mouflage" - disaster makeup - through corps school training at Bethesda where mass casualty drills are routinely performed. "The better we can simulate injuries, the better we can train other corpsmen for certification and recertification," he said.

He dabbed fake blood on Jason Campbell's leg wound as the "victim" watched intently. Corpsman Minor helped thread a clear tube and pressure pump under Mr. Campbell's shirt and shorts to his "wound." On the ground lay a bag filled with fake blood. When another youth got too close, Mr. Campbell squeezed the pump hard, squirting the red stuff on the youth's pants.

Cdr. Joel Parker hovered as Lt. Cdr. Kelly Gann, a Navy nurse, turned Shannon Ryan into a burn victim with a few deft strokes of paint.

"Everyone's screaming and yelling," said Mrs. Junkins, holding her "wounded" leg as Life Scout Geoff Eckert elevated it with a box. "But, by the end of it, they jump in and help people. It's really good for them."

"Oooh! Oooh!" she groaned theatrically.

Wendi Winters is a freelance writer who lives on the Broadneck Peninsula.

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