

## Innovative program trains students in emergency services

**"The students benefit from a high discipline required for an occupation like emergency services."**

It was not that long ago when communities were protected by dozens of volunteer firefighters. In those days, there were just a few basic skills required to be a volunteer firefighter, mostly trained by company officers of the individual company. But times have changed considerably. Volunteers are hard to come by today. Most municipalities could not even consider the added load to the budget of a career or paid fire department, and they are heavily dependent on the few volunteers to do this important job. The situation seems quite dismal. What would a community do if there were not dedicated volunteers to turnout and serve at emergencies?

Firefighters have to deal with grim situations and the firefighters and volunteer companies of the Highlands SD have a long history of improvisation, innovations and getting the job done. Being proactive instead of reactive, a new organization has helped to address this situation. Eight fire companies from four different municipalities have formed an alliance, known as the Highlands Emergency Services Alliance or HESA. This partnership has promoted a new elective course at Highlands High School in Natrona Heights, PA. The fire service training elective is now in its second year in the 2009-10 academic year. Students enrolled in the class can earn both credit for graduation, and certificates

for fire training. The students learn some of the basic skills and practices of being a firefighter, and are recruited and encouraged to volunteer to serve their community. The first year of the course includes students mastering the skills of, and earning fire training certificates in, basic first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation and automatic external defibrillation, fire extinguisher operations, incident command systems and the national incident management system.

The students benefit from a high discipline required for an occupation like emergency services. They stand at attention at the start of class, and are often referred to as cadets. They are held to a higher standard by use of a merit and demerit system. Their performance in other academic classes is monitored and excellence is encouraged and promoted. These life skills should help them to become not only successful in the emergency services, but also in any field they may enter.

Through a challenge grant from the Allegheny Kiski Health Foundation, a \$25,000



Highlands Emergency Services Alliance participants.

For more information on the Highlands Emergency Services Alliance, visit [highlandsemergency-services.com](http://highlandsemergency-services.com).



# Making connections happen.



## PSBA's Institute for Collective Bargaining and Labor Relations

Make the connections your school district needs to motivate, educate and empower your bargaining team for upcoming contract negotiations. This three-course series offers everything your district will need, including:

- Understanding your management rights as school directors.
- Union proposals, strategies and goals.
- Analyzing a collective bargaining agreement.
- Drafting proposals and counter proposals.
- Preparing for impasse procedures, such as mediation, fact finding and arbitration.

Attendees also will be exposed to a simulated bargaining session where they will put their skills to the test in real-life situations.

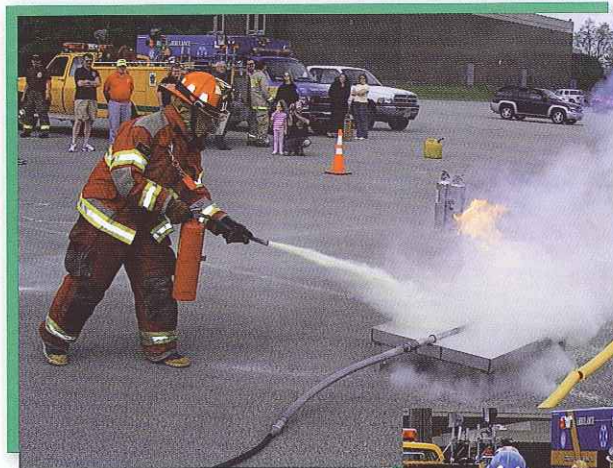
Dates for the 2010 Institute are:

**March 26**

**June 25**

**Sept. 24**

For more information, contact PSBA at (800) 932-0588, or visit [psba.org/workshops](http://psba.org/workshops).



scholarship fund has been established, and the alliance has a committee to award participating students with a scholarship to any post high school field of study they choose. The new program has been a great success. The community benefits as volunteer companies see new and well-trained firefighters ready to respond to any emergency. This literally saves municipalities millions of dollars annually. The fire departments are stronger with new junior members and recruits.

Through this change and innovation in the Highlands SD, one ingredient of success has been always apparent: cooperation. The fire companies, though independent and serving different municipalities, are cooperating and working together, just as they do at a major incident that requires mutual aid. The school district leadership has listened to the community and understands the need for the program. Grant funds have been secured for basic equipment and municipal, state and federal government leaders have helped the program through its infancy. With cooperation, the HESA can continue to provide excellence in emergency services and foster community services in students now and in the future.

