

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

By Allen Miller, Staff Reporter

A small child wanders away and is lost. A young mother is bleeding after a vehicle accident. Families are displaced by a storm. Natural catastrophes. Disaster preparedness. Managing emergency shelters. And even helping to control traffic during community parades and celebrations. These situations are why first responders diligently train.

People depend on Police, Fire Departments and other Emergency Services to be there in times of crises. Consider for a moment the sheer number of people living and working in a small community. The ratio of private citizens to professional emergency services are often hundreds to one, if not higher. In cases where emergency services haven't arrived yet, or large-scale calamities where they might be overwhelmed, private citizens can and have come to the aid of their fellow residents.

One such group of these proactive citizen volunteers is the Hope Mills Community Emergency Response Team, or CERT. The CERT program was developed as a grassroots initiative in 1985 and specifically structured so that the local and state program managers have the flexibility to form their programs in the way that best suit their communities. Chartered under The Federal Emergency Management Agency (or FEMA), CERT volunteers are trained to

respond safely, responsibly, and effectively to emergency situations, but they can also support their communities during non-emergency events as well. There are over 2,700 local CERT programs nationwide, with more than 600,000 individuals trained since CERT became a national program.



Natasha Wise demonstrates how to stop bleeding

Locally, The Hope Mills CERT (HM-CERT) continually develops skills to better serve the community. This month alone, they have been conducting classes on bleeding management and emergency shelter setup as well as assisting the American Red Cross with installing smoke alarms in homes in both Fayetteville and Hope Mills. Additional classes for Ham radio operation and search & rescue are scheduled in upcoming months.

The Core Values of CERT

- Safety, safety, safety
- Teamwork: stronger together than alone
- Community members helping each other in the neighborhood, workplace, schools and other venues
- Valuing volunteers and CERT as an asset to the community
- Preparedness
- Importance of each individual's contribution
- Practice, practice, practice

- Self-sufficiency and problem-solving rather than the victim role
- Leadership
- Ability to do the greatest good for the greatest number in the shortest amount of time

Gregory and Melode Dickerson started and manage the Hope Mills CERT team and are always looking to grow and educate others interested in helping the community. Anyone interested or just wanting additional information are welcome to contact them at hopemillscert@gmail.com.

Trauma Nurse assists CERT members with placement of a tourniquet

