

Yueaipa/Calimesa NEWS MIRROR

Originally published in the News Mirror on April 17, 2008

Ambulance visits DES

By BILL BROWN

American Medical Response team of Robert Coster and Garrett Todd arrived April 11 at Dunlap Elementary School in their ambulance fresh from an accident call.

The AMR team came to visit an after-school program known as “Think Together.” The program is directed by Cheryl Kleeman who explained, “The program is state funded and is academically oriented. The kids are actually doing homework, physical education and learn about community organizations like today's visit by the ambulance. Also, it is free.”

While waiting for the ambulance arrival, Kleeman discussed the normal student routine. “They start out with a snack. After time to eat and relax awhile, they are given an hour to work on homework with staff available to answer questions as needed. Then time is provided for a planned hands-on learning activity prior to an outside team recreational activity. Today's hands-on is the AMR ambulance.”

Kleeman also said that this program had its start in 2007 with help from an ASES grant under Prop 49. “The program is mandated to have a 20 to 1 student to teacher ratio. Volunteers must have at least an AA degree or 48 college units or already be an instructional aide.” Security is also a high priority and only authorized and recognized parents or guardians may pick up the kids. Each student wears a “Think Together” T-shirt as well.

What is an emergency?

Coster, the AMR team leader, caught the students big time, asking, “How many of you know how to dial 911?” Most of the students raised their hands. “Now, how many of you have actually called 911?” Most of the students raised their hands.

Then Coster asked, “What is the first thing they will ask you when you call?” The students all correctly shouted out, “What is your emergency?”

Then Coster lightheartedly nailed the class asking, “How many of you have called 911 for something that was not an emergency?” He was genuinely surprised at the response of at least a third of the students who raised their hands. They were “busted.”

Coster then went through a few moments to ask them what constituted an emergency. “What if you broke an arm?” The answer was “yeah.” “What if someone has fallen and can't get up?” The answer again was “Yeah.” Then he asked, “What if you just don't want to do your homework?” The answer again was, “YEAH.” Wrong. They were busted again.

After students were grilled on just what an emergency actually is, volunteers were taken as participants in a make-believe accident. A few of the Think Together students were “casualties” and given real treatment with splints, bandages for head injuries, given blood pressure checks, attached to heart monitors, connected to a breathing apparatus or strapped to the gurney and transported around the cafeteria.

The day the ambulance came to DES, the Think Together students learned what an ambulance does on a daily basis, were allowed to ask questions as they went single file through the ambulance itself and were taught what information they should all know when making an emergency call at 911.

We all need have readily available: the type of emergency, names of parties or victims, the exact location or address and have the ability to tell the operator what is actually happening.

Kleeman asked the students to express to everyone present what their main policy is as a program, “We must be responsible, respectful and ready to have fun.”

Before the AMR ambulance left the school each student received a badge as a junior Paramedic and a booklet which tells the inside story of how emergency services save lives.

For more information about the Think Together program contact the site coordinator, Cheryl Kleeman at (909) 380-2147 or Dunlap@thinktogether.org.