

Award Title

Student EMTs Can Save The Day!

Awards Categories

Violence Education and Prevention, Crisis Management, Campus Security, and related

Executive Summary

A professor collapsed during lecture. A student is having an asthma attack in lab. A car struck a group of fans leaving the basketball arena. Who you gonna call? BERT! We're not quite there, but well on our way. BERT is the Bellarmine Emergency Response Team- the first and only collegiate emergency response team in Kentucky. BERT is currently composed of 18 student-volunteers (along with one staff member, one faculty member, and 3 alumni) at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky. BERT members provide free standby Basic Life Support care for on-campus events such as invited lectures, sporting events, dinners, and concerts. The group has also assisted local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) with larger community events such as the Kentucky Derby and the Ironman Triathlon.

This service organization was conceived shortly after a terrible fire in the surrounding neighborhood claimed the life of a homeowner. Senior students in Dr. Joan Combs Durso's seminar course discussed this tragedy and began to explore ways of improving safety and pre-hospital care on campus. They discovered Evan Kuhl, a first-year student who was already nationally certified and working part-time as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). Together, they examined the Web site for the National Collegiate Emergency Medical Services Foundation (NCEMSF) and found details on the establishment of collegiate emergency response teams. Major Mike Will of the Metro Louisville EMS was contacted and convinced his superiors to allow for 10 free spots to be reserved for Bellarmine students in the summer EMT training program. Dr. Durso and a core group of students enrolled, passed the course and became state and nationally certified as Basic EMTs. The group applied for and was granted approval to form a Registered Student Organization as they began to fundraise and establish important liaisons with the city EMS and administrators. After a period of developing protocols and agreements, after which Dr. Neil Richmond of the Metro Louisville EMS agreed to serve as Medical Director for BERT, the group was upgraded to a division within the Department of Public Safety at Bellarmine University.

Although we lose some students to graduation each year, our pool of team members has steadily increased and each year we are able to increase our service on and off campus. Continuing education classes, necessary for maintaining EMT certification, are arranged and offered through Bellarmine University and include biohazardous materials awareness, mass casualty incident training, large scale triage, and various skill reviews. One aspect of BERT that makes it somewhat unique is our emphasis on education. BERT members have played a critical role in certifying students, staff and faculty members in CardioPulmonary Resuscitation, Automatic Electronic Defibrillator use, and Basic First Aid. Becoming a BERT volunteer provides students with the chance to acquire professional competencies in medical treatment and disaster

management. BERT is a unique model for student involvement and leadership in emergency planning, crisis management, and public safety. The ability of a student organization to provide such major contributions to campus life is an affirmation of a supportive and encouraging administration.

Award Description

Three years ago, there was no organized EMS presence on any Kentucky campus. In the event of an emergency, medical care could be a half-hour away or more. On-campus first aid or CPR training was hard to find and often only provided for pre-professional students. A small group of students were no longer willing to remain uneducated, and were no longer willing to wait for medical care in an emergency. With one faculty member and a handful of students, the Bellarmine Emergency Response Team (BERT) was born with the distinct goals of a) increasing student knowledge and emergency preparation, b) staffing a volunteer-based emergency response team, and c) becoming a model for other universities.

Although an independent university, Bellarmine was founded as a Catholic institution. We still embrace the spirit of Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk, social activist, and writer who encouraged his readers toward justice, hospitality, and service. We feel that BERT is a logical extension of the ideals espoused by Merton as well as those found in our institutional mission- to provide an intellectual, moral, and ethical base for living, working, leading and serving. BERT members are in the unique position to use our professional competencies to serve others by helping improve the human condition via education and emergent pre-hospital care.

Each spring, students are invited to apply for a position on the BERT team. After application reviews, candidates are interviewed and ten students are chosen to attend the 160-hour emergency medical technician (EMT) course held in the summer by Metro Louisville EMS. After passing a rigorous series of written and physical skill assessment tests, the successful student, faculty, or staff member becomes a state and nationally certified EMT-basic. Our EMTs, including 18 current students, 3 alumni, one faculty and one staff member, provide care for on-campus events, such as concerts, receptions, festivals, and sporting events. In addition, our members work alongside Louisville Metro EMS crews at major events including the Kentucky Derby and The Oaks horse races, Thunder Over Louisville fireworks and air show, and the Ironman Triathlon. Some of our volunteer students are also CPR instructors, but with a slightly different mission. Each student attends a Core Instructor Course designed to educate the volunteer how to effectively teach and manage students in a classroom setting. Then, the students are led through a CPR Instructor training program by the Education Coordinator, a student who manages every aspect of CPR and first aid courses. In the past three years, we have grown from one nurse providing CPR courses for nursing and respiratory therapy students, to a student-organized team of volunteer instructors. In addition to on-campus training we are beginning to teach courses at local hospitals for nurses and staff members who require CPR training.

To track these services, BERT utilizes an electronic database to document student participation as well as maintain a bank of all continuing education hours (each EMT is expected to attend 72 hours of continuing education courses in order to be eligible for recertification every two years) as well as an electronic scheduling system for all events and classes. BERT was developed with

the assistance of several University entities. Three years ago, we began collaborating with Bellarmine's Safety and Security Chief and the Department of Campus Health and Public Safety as well as Vice-President for Academic and Student Life to initiate BERT. Protocols and agreements were developed in conjunction with Risk Management and members of the University President's support staff. These collaborations continue as we work together to provide services and improve the campus as a whole. The establishment of BERT has effectively freed security personnel of the occasional burden of providing care with little or no training. Academic departments including Biology (for Biohazardous waste disposal, equipment storage and continuing education facilities), Nursing and Respiratory Therapy (for CPR equipment, etc.) have and continue to be involved in assisting BERT operations. Each week, BERT coordinates with the Student Recreation and Fitness Center to provide flexible CPR course scheduling for students.

The University's physical plant and facilities department has worked with BERT to allow for the training of a staff member as an EMT, as well as provide proper location and direction for helicopter landing zones during continuing education exercises. Lastly, each year student leaders of BERT work to contact each University department to ensure they are aware of the services provided by BERT volunteers. While we hope that these services are never needed, the reality is that BERT allows students to be available when a natural disaster or crisis occurs. During the year before BERT was organized, Bellarmine fell victim to a potent windstorm which knocked out power for over a week. No more than six months later, a major snow and ice storm left the campus hunkered down for two weeks while repairs were made. The following semester, the swine flu epidemic became the center of attention on and off campus. Now, with the ability to respond to such events, our students have proactively created protocols which arrange for emergency aid within moments, provided by the trained peers around them. If the campus is not in need, our students are the reserve corps for our county-wide Louisville Metro EMS and will immediately be available for the surrounding community. These skills, while impressive on their own, also provide opportunities for learning outcomes beyond medical care. Each EMT has a vast array of knowledge when it comes to medical emergencies and diagnostics. Yet this is not the only result from our program. Caring for patients permits the student to develop good patient rapport. Sometimes, difficult news or urgent situations require a compassionate and reassuring bedside manner that is only possible through experienced interaction combined with professional training.

Participation in BERT has had a positive impact on student learning and retention. Students see more of the real-world applications of their science courses in particular. They become more engaged in their curriculum when they realize that they may be called upon to care for a fellow student or community member in the very near future. Furthermore, caring for individuals from diverse backgrounds increases their awareness of social, legal, and ethical issues within our culture and within healthcare. BERT is the first and only volunteer collegiate emergence medical response team in Kentucky. It was, in essence, a grassroots development from a dedicated group of students. These students recruited help, forged relationships with local EMS and administrators, wrote their protocols and procedures handbook, and even designed their own logo and uniforms. There was a tremendous amount of work that went into creating a new organization that could meet all levels of concern from liability, safety, patient care standpoints. BERT has grown steadily over the last 3 years and we believe the organization is sustainable.

We have recently supplemented the student pool with a faculty and a staff member and hope to continue adding a few of these each year- but at its heart, this is a student organization. Another positive sign for the continuation of this program is the fact that our protocols now allow for alumni volunteers and 3 have already signed on. It is hoped that BERT will serve as a model for other universities in Kentucky and beyond, and that our organization continues to grow. Our ultimate goal would be to have a sufficient pool of volunteers such that we could provide 24-7 emergency coverage for our campus in addition to the current event standby and off-campus support roles.

Assessment Data

When a group of students first began to organize BERT, their assessment strategy was very simple; how many students can we get involved? In our third year of operations, BERT has expanded to include not only students, but is a living, diverse cooperation between students, faculty, staff, departments, and outside agencies. The major goal of BERT to expand education and become a model for other schools is still maintained today, as is useful as a measure of success as well. Beginning with just a single EMT three years ago, our program has expanded to include not only nationally certified EMTs, but also American Heart Association CPR Instructors.

Currently, we are home to 18 student EMTs, 3 alumni, one faculty and one staff EMT. As we continue to grow over the next few years, we are expecting to maintain an average student EMT population of 30, with the additional ranks of alumni adding to our ability to expand from the campus and into community outreach. BERT has treated a total of 16 patients including 3 in critical condition, and our EMTs have completed over 250 hours of standby at events. Starting with simple first aid, we have expanded our educational methods dramatically. Students have been involved in National Incident Management Systems training (NIMS) as well as courses in Mass Casualty Incidents (MCI), Hazardous Materials, Hydrogen Sulfide training, and a three day Nuclear Weapons and Disaster training held by the Department of Homeland security.

In December, part of our team will be traveling to a Federal training site for a week long hazardous materials course including a live agent session. Every month our students organize a training session in basic skills, advanced techniques, or additional education. Continuing education ensures that all of our EMTs are able to recertify when their two year certification expires. In total, our EMTs have attended over 1560 hours of continuing education courses outside of their normal collegiate course schedules. Our CPR and first aid training has also expanded rapidly across campus. Before the BERT organization became a reality, there was only one staff member, a nurse, responsible for all CPR courses. In 2009 alone, BERT certified 17 students as CPR instructors, and provided CPR and First Aid courses for over 240 students, faculty, and staff. In 2010 we have already trained 19 new instructors.

By producing our own CPR instructors Bellarmine has become a self-sufficient training center for the American Heart Association. The number of training mannequins has more than tripled since 2008. We are now expanding our program to provide CPR courses for local hospitals, with the projected ability to certify a minimum of 480 hospital staff each year in addition to a growing Bellarmine population. Each year provides the opportunity not only to sustain the status quo, but

the ability to grow. Not only does our training provide a way to expand our team's knowledge, it is also another way we are becoming a more sustainable organization. In January 2011, BERT will be hosting an Advanced Ballistic Trauma Management Course, which will include a tour of the local Level 1 trauma center, live fire exercises with porcine remains, and lectures from various experts. This special continuing education opportunity is open not only to doctors, nurses, and EMS personnel, but also to the National Guard and local police force. Creating such close ties to our local emergency response personnel allows BERT to become more sustainable in the future by building and upholding a responsibility within the current state and local resources. Becoming an interlaced partner will continue to provide additional training, funding, and events for our organization. In the event of a major crisis, on or off campus, BERT has the ability to provide the most advanced, up-to-date care possible.

Off campus, our EMTs have built relationships with responding agencies that will allow seamless interaction. On campus, our EMTs are moments away as a proficient element in the chain of survival. Although the BERT program is still in its infancy, much progress has been made. By providing a hands-on educational opportunity, BERT provides a unique experience while becoming an intricate part of crisis management on and off campus. Working together with Bellarmine departments and off campus elements, BERT has strengthened its role in emergency services while providing the emergency management community with additional instruction. Utilizing incoming classes as well as a growing alumni group, BERT will continue to progress into the future to provide the services required most when our community is in crisis.