

Teens showcase fire-fighting skills

By Robert Igoe
The Winchester Star

Winchester - A future generation of firefighters showed off their talents at the area's fire and rescue training center, and many of them may soon be back to take the next step.

The Frederick County Fire and Rescue Explorer Post 154 held its graduation ceremony on Saturday, with nine students being recognized for their efforts to learn fire-fighting skills that can serve the community in the future.

"There is a lot of interest in fire and rescue out there among kids, but they are not eligible to volunteer for local fire departments until they're 16," said Explorer Post 154 advisor Gail L. Miller. "So we have the program to let them explore their interests by learning basic skills such as CPR, first aid, fire extinguisher training, and basic hose work. This helps them see if this is something they would want to investigate before they get bogged down with other interests and distractions."

Graduating on Saturday were Allison Cather, Jesse Downey, Josh Hockenberry, Cody Link, Matthew Miller, Bradley Pitt, Brooke Snapp, Ryan Steele, and Ashley Yaider.

While rain forced the ceremony to move inside the Millwood Station Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company near Winchester, the weather held off long enough for the Explorers to demonstrate their skills for family, friends, and mentors.

Among the skills demonstrated were:

- * Using a fire extinguisher to put out a diesel fuel fire in a 55-gallon drum.
- * Entering a darkened building to pull out a rescue dummy.
- * Using a high-pressure water hose to extinguish a fire that engulfed a van.



Matthew Miller, 15, of Clear Brook, and his teammates spray water on a burning van during a demonstration at Saturday's graduation ceremony for members of the Frederick County Fire and Rescue Explorer Post 154.
(Ginger Perry)



"It's a lot of fun, and it's something I can use to help people later," said Jesse, 15, who plans to volunteer at the Greenwood Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company when he turns 16. "I want to get two years of college while I volunteer, because that will help me to turn professional. It's saving somebody's life."



Explorer Allison Cather, 14, of Stephens City, is supervised by advisor Gail L. Miller as she extinguishes a diesel fuel fire in a 55-gallon drum at the Millwood Station Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company near Winchester.
(Ginger Perry)

Frederick County Fire and Rescue Department Operations Chief Timothy L. Welsh said the program, which is open to youths from 14 to 20 and meets at the Frederick County Public Safety Building on Coverstone Lane every month, is an opportunity for young people to give back to their community in a fun and meaningful way.

"In today's society, it's hard to find time to volunteer," Welsh said. "We have a group of young people who gave up their time to come out and learn something about what firefighters do. They've accomplished a lot and learned a lot about what we do, and maybe take the first step to building some careers."

Miller said fire-fighting technology is always improving in an effort to make the work safer and more efficient. But new equipment can only go so far in replacing high-quality training.

"The bottom line is that fires will always be fires, and the name of the game is putting water on them," Miller said.

For more information on Explorer Post 154, call Frederick County Fire and Rescue Association Volunteer Coordinator Christine Franchok at 540-722-8358 or visit www.couragetocare.net.

Volunteer for Frederick County Fire & Rescue Today!

To learn more, contact Christine Langley, Volunteer Coordinator, by phone (540)722-8358 or by [email](#) or use our [contact form](#).