



# Vertical training

Centennial High School senior Alexis Smith rappels down a two-story stairwell June 6 at the Fridley Fire Department.  
Photo by Paige Kieffer

## SLP High School Opportunities in Emergency Care students learn how to be first responders

By Paige Kieffer  
Staff Writer

Over a dozen juniors and seniors in Spring Lake Park High School's Opportunities in Emergency Care program had their last lesson of the school year June 6, in which they learned how to rappel down a building and stairwell at the Fridley Fire Department.

During their last week of classes the students focused on ropes training. Prior to the rappelling demonstration, students rode a zip line across Panther Football Field June 5 at Spring Lake Park High School.

Founded in 1976 at Spring Lake Park High School, the Opportunities in Emergency Care program, also known as

OEC, is an award-winning medical education program, according to OEC Director Bill Neiss, a graduate of the program who has been teaching it for over 30 years.

The OEC training program is open to all students in grades nine through 12 at Spring Lake Park and other area high schools. Currently students from Centennial, Irondale and Mounds View high schools participate in the program.

Classes include first aid and CPR (grades nine through 12), emergency medical responder (EMR) (grades 11-12), emergency medical technician (EMT) (grades 10-12), nursing assistant-registered (NA-R) (grades 10-12), and self defense and medical internship programs (grades 9-12).

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SBM Firefighter and Opportunities in Emergency Care instructor John Lindstrom teaches Spring Lake Park High School junior Kimberly Aguil how to rappel down a two story stairwell June 6 at the Fridley Fire Department.  
Photo by Paige Kieffer



Spring Lake Park junior Quincee Chanthanavong gives directions to junior Sophia Anderson as she rappels down a building June 6 at the Fridley Fire Department.

Photo by Paige Kieffer



Spring Lake Park junior Sophia Anderson rappels down a building June 6 at the Fridley Fire Department.

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## Spring Lake Park Opportunities in Care students scale to great heights

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Students can earn college credits and their National Registry of Emergency Medical Technician certification, which enables them to pursue careers in various emergency medical services and health care professions.

“The OEC program helps gets kids ready for life,” Neiss said. “High schools have been missing the mark for a long time as to what the community needs and what our kids need. This program helps get kids interested early so they find out what they like and don’t like instead of doing it at college, and it helps gives them a jump start on pursuing a career as a first responder.”

In addition to learning about emergency care, OEC students learn inter-

personal skills, teamwork, a strong work ethic, and the ability to analyze a situation and think on their feet, Neiss said.

“There are a lot of opportunities coming from this program that are helping us develop skills for our future,” said Spring Lake Park High School junior Sophia Anderson, who wants to become a cardiovascular surgeon.

OEC students are required to get hands-on patient training. Many have worked at senior living facilities, school sports games, the Twin Cities Marathon, soccer tournaments at National Sports Center or the USA Cup.

“We are providing real life experiences, and that is a résumé builder for these kids, and it gives them a leg up on other candidates into jobs and

medical school,” said John Lindstrom, Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View firefighter and OEC instructor.

Neiss added he’s continuing to look for more clinical opportunities for students so they can gain even more experience.

“When I was a freshman I always saw the cool OEC kids wearing uniforms, and I wanted to be one of them, so I joined,” said Spring Lake Park High School junior Sade Ayodele, who wants to become an obstetrics and gynecology doctor or medical pathologist. “I also wanted to follow a medical career, and I knew this would be a good stepping stone towards achieving that. I love that this program is extremely hands on and every day we’re doing something different

and we’re not just sitting in a classroom. You’re supposed to grow up fast here as you take on a lot of responsibilities.”

Every day during the school week, OEC students train.

Spring Lake Park High School graduate Brooke Trabant recently accepted an offer to be a community service officer with the Maple Grove Police Department. She starts July 2.

“I joined OEC because police officers are generally the first responders, and I wanted to learn what to do when I arrive on a scene,” she said.

“This program has given me a lot of confidence and skills,” she added. “I feel a lot more prepared because OEC has taught me how I can help people.”

Three students completed their EMT training earlier this year, and 28 recently passed their EMT test. Ten more will take the second half of the two-part EMT test later this summer.

Four of the OEC students recently completed an additional after school course called “Firefighter I and II,” which will be taught to seniors next year during school hours. The course is 200 hours of additional training that includes technical rescue and confined space training.

The after school courses meet on Tuesday evenings at Osseo High School and Thursday evenings and one Saturday a month at Spring Lake Park High School.

Spring Lake Park High School junior Quincee

Chanthanavong recently completed technical rescue and confined space training and will do the firefighter courses next year. He also works as an instructor, and on June 6 he taught students how to rappel.

Chanthanavong, who wants to be a firefighter-paramedic, said he has learned the most going on ride-alongs with the Fridley Fire Department, which provides training space and instructors for the students.

Neiss said the SBM Fire Department has also provided instructors and Allina Health has supplied OEC with an ambulance, equipment and instructors.

To learn more about the OEC program, visit [bit.ly/2R7lbQR](http://bit.ly/2R7lbQR).

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