

# STUDYING IN THE SHADOW OF 9/11

By Jeff Konkel

The shadow of the Twin Towers will never again stretch across the streets of lower Manhattan, but the shadow of September 11 continues to loom large both in New York and around the globe. In many ways, the events of that day are directly responsible for the latest technical program offering at two high schools in Missouri's St. Louis County.

North Technical High School is located in Florissant in North St. Louis County, while South Technical High School in Sunset Hills is in South St. Louis County. Programs at the two schools are open to all 10th through 12th grade students from the 23 public school districts in the county. Approximately 2,000 students are enrolled and taking advantage of the career and technical programs offered by the two schools.

These programs include traditional technical courses such as precision machining, construction, network administration and health sciences. However, in the fall of 2006, an exciting new opportunity opened up for the county's students when both of the technical schools in the Special School District of St. Louis County began offering a domestic preparedness and security program for high school seniors.

Students in the program learn emergency dispatching procedures and development of disaster plans using emergency response. The program is also intended to help them develop an understanding of terrorist threats, prevention and deterrence activities; incident command and law enforcement response actions;

## A NEW DOMESTIC PREPAREDNESS AND SECURITY PROGRAM IS THE FIRST IN THE NATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS.

target identification; and signs of chemical, biological, nuclear, radioactive and explosive hazards.

### A Generation Reclaims its Future

"Although it's hard to imagine, the students enrolled in domestic preparedness and security were just starting middle school when the World Trade Center fell," says Esther Angelos, the program's instructor at North Tech. "Like all of us, the events of that day had a profound effect on these kids. They felt scared, angry and helpless. And many of them decided that they wanted to pursue careers that would

ensure that day would never be repeated."

Students enrolled in the program have a wide range of career goals. While the program prepares them for entry-level positions such as dispatcher, first responder or private security officer, some plan to go into careers that will require additional education, such as police officer or FBI agent. Jobs as lawyers or in forensics are also among those that students are considering that will require postsecondary education. Other options might include detective, Secret Service agent or jobs in corporate security.

Many of the students in the domestic preparedness program were enrolled in the junior year law enforcement program offered at both schools. One such student, Jeff Streib at South Tech, has planned to be a police officer since he was a small child. Like everyone, Streib was "shocked and really upset" by the events of September 11, but his dedication to pursuing a career in law enforcement never wavered. When Jeff learned that domestic preparedness would be offered, he knew that it would help him build the skills and knowledge that police officers in the post-9/11 world would need.

"It's been really thorough so far," says Streib. "I'm enjoying the

Jeff Konkel

is director of publications for the Special School District of St. Louis County. He can be contacted at [jkonkel@ssd.k12.mo.us](mailto:jkonkel@ssd.k12.mo.us).



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT OF ST. LOUIS COUNTY

Students in the first of its kind domestic preparedness and security program in St. Louis County, Missouri, practice decontamination drills in their hazmat suits.

program and learning a lot.”

The program’s curriculum covers such topics as weapons of mass destruction, domestic and international terrorism, the Patriot Act, the Homeland Security Act, preparedness for natural disasters, and emergency responses.

Students also will have the opportunity to earn several certifications in this program, including National Emergency Telecommunicator, Department of Homeland Security Weapons of Mass Destruction for Law Enforcement, and various certifications from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

### Instructors and First Responders

The program is the first of its kind to be offered to high school students in the United States. The program’s instructors traveled to Anniston, Alabama, where they completed an intensive weapons of mass destruction training course at the Center for Domestic Preparedness, which is operated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Grants and Training. It is the only federally chartered weapons of mass destruction training facility in the country. Emergency responders from disciplines ranging from emergency management and health care to law enforcement and public works were specially selected to participate in the training.

Also participating in the training in Anniston were instructors from the EMT/firefighting program at both North Tech and South Tech.

“Domestic preparedness is, of course, not limited to the law enforcement field,” says Skip Parmley, instructor for EMT/firefighting at North Tech. “We all remember well the brave firefighters, EMTs and paramedics who played such a key role on September 11. So students in my program will be involved in training related to weapons of mass destruction as well.”

In fact, students in the domestic preparedness and security program will do considerable cross-training with students in the EMT/firefighting program. “One of the lessons learned from September 11 was that the various groups involved in preparing for and responding to disasters need to be more adept at working and communicating with one another,” Parmley says. “We’re trying to establish those habits early.” **T**

## What They Are Learning

The students in the domestic preparedness and security program at North Technical and South Technical High Schools are being introduced to skills and subjects that include the following:

- community-based corrections;
- physical fitness;
- basic computer skills;
- emergency telecommunicator training;
- private security;
- domestic and international terrorism;
- legislative acts in the war on terrorism ;
- weapons of mass destruction; and
- homeland security.



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