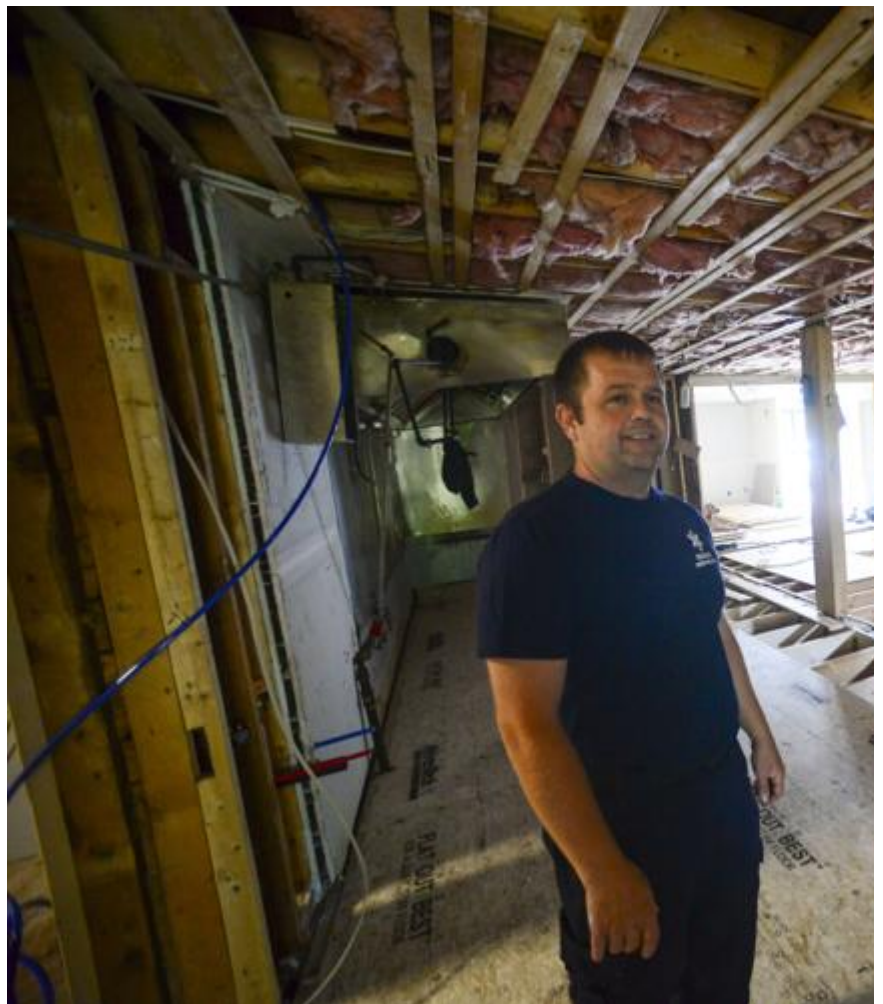


https://www.reformer.com/local-news/rescue-inc-to-open-vermont-ems-academy/article_c4c4a2a0-1e80-11ed-96e7-9f00ad862439.html

TOP STORY

Rescue Inc. to open Vermont EMS Academy

By Chris Mays, Brattleboro Reformer
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Drew Hazelton, chief of operations at Rescue Inc., shows the room that will house an ambulance simulator for students. Photos by Kristopher Radder — Brattleboro Reformer

NEWFANE — A new academy due to open soon will offer many types of health care and emergency medical services training both for Vermonters and those coming from other states.

A soft launch for Vermont EMS Academy (VESMA) is scheduled for September with a grand opening in October.

“I’m excited about it,” said Drew Hazelton, head of operations at Rescue Inc.

His group is opening and running VEMSA. Marc Bernard Schaubert will be program manager for the academy, which will have instructors and simulator center staff.

Hazelton said the program has been in development since the beginning of the year. A search for property started last fall.

In the spring, 1096 Route 30 in Newfane was selected as the site. After the building was purchased, renovations have been underway and training equipment was procured.

Staff were lined up to provide “some pretty amazing health care education,” Hazelton said. Having been heavily involved with the Vermont Ambulance Association and the Vermont EMS Advisory Committee, he noted workforce development has been identified as a “critical weakness” every year for the last decade.

“We’ve done a lot of things in Vermont to kind of ease up our workforce challenges in EMS,” he said. “This is a natural step for us at Rescue. We’ve always done education.”

Workforce challenges in the field are not just being experienced in Windham County or Vermont but across the U.S., Hazelton said. Schaubert expects to focus on bringing in students from the region then expanding to train people from other states.

“It’s open to people anywhere from the country and we do expect we’ll have students who come from out of the area,” Hazelton said. “We have a very unique course offering that we believe will draw people from Vermont and surrounding states as well.”

The academy is roughly on the Newfane-Townshend line near a field where helicopters land, directly across from Bensch Mountain Maple and just north of The Lodge at West River. Renovations in the former restaurant once known as Bootsy’s Grille and apartments include construction to add the simulation center and the partial removal of the original kitchen to allow accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

Several grants and donations funded the approximately \$1 million project.

As far as Hazelton is aware, the academy will be the only full-time EMS training facility in Vermont. He said it has been approved by the state, as well as a national registry for testing.

“This is kind of a big deal,” Hazelton said. “It’s been needed in Vermont for a while.”

An emergency room simulator will help show “the natural transition” of transporting a patient to hospital care, Hazelton said. He noted the first courses are open for registration now on vemsa.org and financial aid is available through multiple sources.

Emergency medical technician (EMT) courses are mostly grant funded in Vermont currently, Hazelton said. That allows most costs to be covered for the student.

“We’ll be providing American Heart Association classes and will be increasing our offerings as we open in the fall,” he said.

Schauber said the project combines his two big passions: education and EMS. He serves on the River Valleys Unified School District Board and Hazelton is on the West River Education District Board.

Schauber recounted how Hazelton mentioned the idea for the academy a few years ago when they met. Schauber, president of The EMS Fund, said his group provided several grants to Rescue and he became good friends with Hazelton.

As program manager, Schauber will be responsible for many tasks.

“It’s all the organizing, scheduling, getting instructors, making sure that we’ve got the materials, the assets, whether that be mannequins, textbooks,” he said. “Part of what I’m doing is getting us up and running as a training center for different organizations.”

Schauber is working with the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians and securing some accreditations. He laughed when he said the job involves “everything, unfortunately, in many ways.”

“But it’s been fun being able to develop a program from the floor up, you know, organizing what classes we’re going to run, when we’re going to run them,” he said.

Challenges cited by Schauber involve ensuring the classes are of the highest quality so students are “extremely knowledgeable and prepared to operate in the field.” He said the goal is not just to increase the number of new people entering the field but to also raise the overall quality of care.

“We’ve got classes coming in the next few months that include swift water rescue, rope operations, animal rescue,” he said. “So those are kind of outside the medical aspects but they’re tactical.”

Another course Schaubert touted is paramedic level training for critical care. Students will learn about how to dispense the same medicines hospitals do for critical care.

Having access to a higher level of care is important because there's a lot of interagency transporting in Vermont and only two trauma centers, Schaubert said.

"Rescue has a lot of paramedics," he said, and he has been one himself. "It makes them an outlier in the region and a fair amount of the state."

In a news release, Hazelton called the project "both a natural progression and a dream realized for Rescue Inc."

"We've always wanted to create a place where doctors, nurses, teachers, and first responders can hone and broaden their skills," he states, noting how VEMSA will focus on the latest in emergency medical techniques for all skill levels. "We will offer CPR courses, for instance, to high school students and teachers, while also providing instruction to practicing medical professionals."

Part of the funding to start the academy came from federal money that flowed into states in order to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, according the news release.

"Having been the vaccine providers for so many Vermonters, Rescue Inc. received a surprising influx of federal dollars," states the news release.

Hazelton said, "We knew it was a one-time thing and not the 'new normal' so we discussed how we could use those funds to serve the health needs of our communities — the Academy was a clear choice."

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