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## High school students get the ultimate learning experience



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**Brandon Uranga, left, receives his pin, certificate and bag from Cedar Park Fire Chief Chris Connealy after graduating from the Teen Advocates for Community Safety Program (TACS).**

Posted Wednesday, May 20, 2009 6:00 pm

**by Jenn Rains, Four Points News**

Vista Ridge students Ryan Woosley and Brandon Uranga were spending their Sunday at the Cedar Park Fire Department for a ride-along. The day had been uneventful and the teenagers were about to head home, when they got a call that gave them an experience they would never receive in a classroom or textbook.

"We were about to leave and we heard the call and asked if we could go," Woosley, 18, said.

The call took them to a home where tragedy had struck, a 10-year-old girl had been electrocuted.

"We stayed back out of the way and just watched. Then they announced that she was dead," said Woosley.

The scene painted a very realistic and tragic picture for the teens, giving them a side of the job they couldn't learn in the classroom.

"The hardest part was the family's reaction when they were told. The little girl's mom was so upset," Uranga said.

Uranga and Woosley are part of the Teen Advocates for Community Safety Program (TACS), which allows them to learn all about firefighting and emergency services while also equipping them with the knowledge needed to help in a disaster.

Though the experience was anything but pleasant for them, both teens said it wouldn't deter them from their interest in firefighting. In fact, it made them more willing.

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"It taught me that going out to a call, you have to be aware of your surroundings and prepared for anything," said Uranga.

"You have to focus on other things instead of mourning," Woosley said of what the experience taught him.

"They handled themselves very well," said Chris Connealy, Cedar Park Fire Chief. "We're preparing them as best we can. When we go out on calls, some things are not pleasant to see and it's important to give them that exposure to truly understand what they're getting involved in."

The TACS program wrapped up its first nine weeks last week, having completed the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) component of the program. The participants received a pin and certificate for the completion along with getting a bag with many emergency and safety supplies.

"The program has exceed my expectations. I've been just ecstatic with their strong interest," Connealy said. "I couldn't ask for a better group to start off the program. They're very attentive and willing to learn."

The program, which is the first of its kind in the country, is year-long and teaches the parti-cipants about CPR, first aid, disaster psychology and other components needed to make help the teens be prepared to lead in emergency situations.

E-mail [jenn@hillcountrynews.com](mailto:jenn@hillcountrynews.com) (mailto:jenn@hillcountrynews.com)

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