

DISASTER

ASSISTANCE TEAM

*Beulah High School
Valley, Alabama*



What a surprise to find a Disaster Assistance Team (DAT) in a community with a population of less than 3000 people. If you visit the little community of Beulah, Alabama, a DAT team is just what you will find. Beulah High School has only had a Healthcare Science Program for one full school year, and already the healthcare science students are making a difference. Working together with the local Lee County Chapter of the American Red Cross, the students have developed a Disaster Assistance Team within the high school to assist any surrounding areas in the event of a disaster.

Under the direction of Dr. Roderick Powers, the students and their teacher completed the course work necessary to certify them as a Disaster Service Human Resource. Dr. Powers organized the instruction of five of the seven courses necessary for certification, and the remaining two classes were taught by the student's regular healthcare teacher, Debra Wiggins, RN.

The Disaster Assistance Team centers around the high school's new gymnasium facility which has been designated as an official Red Cross Disaster Shelter. The students have developed a telephone tree that will be used in activating the team. A call is initially placed by the Red Cross to Debra Wiggins, the teacher, who then activates the phone tree by calling the team's captains. The students then meet at the designated shelter sight and are assigned various tasks.

The DAT team had its first experience in a Weapons of Mass Destruction exercise in May 2002. The drill was organized by the Lee County Emergency Management Agency to test the roles of emergency responders in the Lee County area. Beulah High School's DAT team simulated the opening of a shelter at a local community college. The students had the opportunity to work with trained, experienced professionals from many different agencies including area hospitals and fire and police departments. The drill was a great learning experience for all the agencies involved.

It is a rare gift for such a small community to have the ability to work side by side with the volunteer efforts of an organization like the American Red Cross. This ongoing volunteer project combined with the students' commitment to delivering quality service to those needing this service will be a valuable asset to Beulah Community for years to come.

