

A VCARS Volunteer Perspective

When it was my scheduled shift to be on call, I would check in with my Dispatcher and VCARS partner to let them know I was ready. I would always say "I hope I don't hear from you." I really meant that.

You see, I knew that if my pager went off and I was given a real call that something bad had happened to someone in our community.

For example, my first call was very serious and very sad. Prepared with my training and kit bag, my volunteer partner and I assisted a family who were in the first throes of grief and tragedy.

Now I can look back on my experiences and can tell you a few things I have learned about myself, VCARS and people in general.

- 1) When people are hurting either physically or emotionally the background gets blurry. The social scale becomes invisible and the pain in their eyes is all you see.
- 2) Helping people is not only defined in what you might say, but what you may do. Handing someone some Kleenex to replace the paper towel that is making their face raw might seem inconsequential initially, but monumental afterwards. Helping people to dial a phone because their hands are shaking too badly may seem simple, but that phone call could be the one that gives the comfort the person seeks.
- 3) Being modest in helping is more satisfying than I thought it would be. I think that it is important that VCARS volunteers realize (like I recently did) that we are not just watching life go by on television or in the newspapers, but rather we are doing something to try and make a difference. We are all trying to make this world we live in a better place with silent courage.
- 4) Even though I HATED practicing scenarios in training, they were the most important aspect of training to prepare me for the real thing. Learning how to do something that you might not be comfortable with is key when walking into someone's home, listening to tragedies, and trying to be useful.

"When you take a step into the darkness of the unknown one of two things is going to happen ...you will find something solid to walk upon or you will learn how to fly" (Sark). I believe that my training, and begrudgingly, the scenarios gave me the solid foundation to do what is needed.

So this is my experience so far. To say that it has been incredible is an understatement. I will leave you with this poem because we as VCARS

volunteers will have to measure our successes not in monetary ways or in admiration from the public.

SUCCESS

by Ralph Waldo Emerson

To laugh often and much;

To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children;

To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends;

To appreciate beauty,

To find the best in others,

To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition;

To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived.

This is to have succeeded.

Submitted by Jennifer