



## Program Testimonial

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**Role(s):** Mentor, Service Leader

**Organization(s):** Bethel Ambulance Service

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My name is David Hanscom, and I am the Chief of the Bethel Ambulance Service. Initially my role with the EMS ConnectME program was to help build the program within our service while collaborating with MEMS and the other initial sites around the state. I worked with others within our service to develop our guidelines and schedule times to meet with the learners interested in participating. I initially spent a lot of time also serving as a mentor, meeting with the learners weekly to provide training and answer questions that they might have. As other members of the service became more involved, my role became more of a support and oversight role.

I became involved with the program at its inception. I happened to be speaking with Anna about some challenges we were facing in getting one of our Juniors to be allowed to take their NREMT test. While talking about our situation and our Juniors program, Anna brought up the program that they were trying to get started and asked if I would be interested. I love EMS and working with young people, so this seemed like a great fit. I want to see the EMS system become stronger and attract more people, so I happily accepted her invitation to be involved.

While being involved with the program, I have learned how interested some of the young people in our community are in EMS and helping others. It was refreshing to find out that there is interest and enthusiasm around this career choice.

There have been many challenges while building the program. We have had to coordinate schedules between our mentors and our very busy learners. We also have had to work through determining the best guidelines for when our Level 2 explorer could go on calls and when she couldn't. It is a very grey area between allowing them to experience EMS as young adults and protecting them from challenging calls as "youth". Another challenge that we faced was trying to build a program while also keeping the interest of our learners. We had one especially motivated learner who was always anxious for the next portion of the program to be ready for her to complete. She certainly helped ensure that the program kept moving forward.

I would definitely recommend EMS ConnectME to other services and participants. It is a great way to allow young people to see what EMS and related fields are all about. It is also a great way for services to be involved in their communities in ways other than just responding to calls. For me, this has been a very rewarding experience. Working with young people who are interested in our field gives me renewed energy. I also believe that allowing people to become involved with EMS at a younger age increases the chances that they will pursue a career in EMS or a related field, which will help make our system stronger. Even if a learner doesn't pursue a career in EMS, this program

allows us the opportunity to teach skills like communication, how to handle emergency situations even when those around us are unsure of what to do, responsibility, respect, confidentiality, and teamwork. The program allows us to foster a feeling of community among our younger people.

I have many moments and experiences that stand out to me surrounding the program. One of these experiences happened when one of our learners decided to take an EMT class. Early on in the class, she came in to the station very excited because they had started taking vitals and she was one of the first students to be able to take an accurate blood pressure. Seeing how excited she was and knowing that the training we had been working on at our station had helped her with her skills and confidence was so uplifting.