

Students feel the heat at firefighting boot camp

Spruce Grove Fire Hall offers taste of training at NorQuest

- Edmonton Journal 25 Jul 2015 SAHAR SAIFEE



Student Amanda Black gets a helping hand Friday from Lt. James McNeill of the Spruce Grove Fire Department as part of a hands-on boot camp.

SPRUCE GROVE — Several Edmonton high school students got a taste Friday of how tough it is to be a firefighter.

The one-day boot camp at Spruce Grove Fire Hall 120, at 410 King Street, was designed to highlight NorQuest College's newly approved firefighting training program that allows students to receive national and international credentials to become firefighters. Friday's camp gave students a chance to receive hands-on training.

"We could talk about it, we could show it on video, but if you don't have your hands on, you don't have that built-in skill that really has to happen," said Dean Colthorp, assistant deputy chief of Spruce Grove's fire department.

Students were suited up in full firefighter gear: protective overalls and jackets, heavy-duty boots, balaclava and fire helmet. With the sunny weather and temperature reaching 25 C, it was tough going, especially trying to put out a car fire with a high-pressure hose.

“I held the hose by myself for a little and it was throwing me around, but it was fun,” student participant Lucas Owen said.



The firefighter for a day program by Norquest College and Spruce Grove fire department gives people a chance to try being a firefighter.

With the help of a firefighter who controlled the weight of the hose in the back, students led the way, hose in hand, ace visor down.

Colthorp said it's not only important to have the training, but the academic background as well.

“This is a win-win for us, to see students that are actually able to participate,” Colthorp said.

“Once we get the firefighter program done for the students, as they get hired on for their career or just as a volunteer, they can expand onto other things. In this career, the jobs are endless”

NorQuest's firefighting program will provide its courses online, in a classroom, or a blend of both.

While people can work at their own pace, online courses can take up to six months while for those who already volunteer as firefighters, it could take up to three weeks. Training centres are located throughout the province to help make the program accessible.



Reporter Sahar Saifee suits up Friday to take part in firefighting scenarios through the Spruce Grove Fire Hall.

“There is about 14,000 firefighters in the province and 80 per cent of them are volunteers. We find that a lot of the volunteers don’t have the time or money to leave their families for 13 weeks and go someplace else for the training so we’re going to try to help them as much as we can,” said Ed Kohel, business development officer at NorQuest.

Students will be able to enrol in NorQuest’s firefighting training this September.