

**BATRA FAMILY
SLAPS COUNTY,
CITY WITH CLAIM
FOR \$20 MILLION**

**Graystone Lane is still
dangerous, daughters say**

By EMILIE CROFTON

Puja and Mala Batra, whose parents Inder and Uma Batra, were killed by a speeding teen on Almaden Valley's Graystone Lane, have filed claims against both the city of San Jose and Santa Clara County.

In a claim filed on Jan. 15 by Richard Alexander, the attorney for the Batra daughters, he stated that the city and county failed to install stop signs, speed bumps, curve warnings and controls for speed on Graystone Lane after continuous complaints by neighbors.

"It's been six months since Inder and Uma Batra were killed, and neither the city nor the county have done anything to make the road safe," Alexander said.

The daughters are seeking \$20 million in damages, \$10 million each from the city and county. They hope their claims will create awareness and initiate changes in ensuring neighborhood safety.

"We just want to keep attention on the fact that nothing has changed even though it's known as an unsafe area," said Mala Batra. "We are real people and not just another statistic."

On July 23, 2007, 19-year-old Erik Satterstrom was speeding down Graystone Lane when he struck and killed the senior Batras, who were taking an evening stroll.

The car, a silver Nissan 350Z, then smashed into a nearby tree, killing Satterstrom and his 18-year-old passenger, Max Harding.

Witnesses told authorities the 2003 Nissan was traveling 80 mph on a road. The speed limit is 35.

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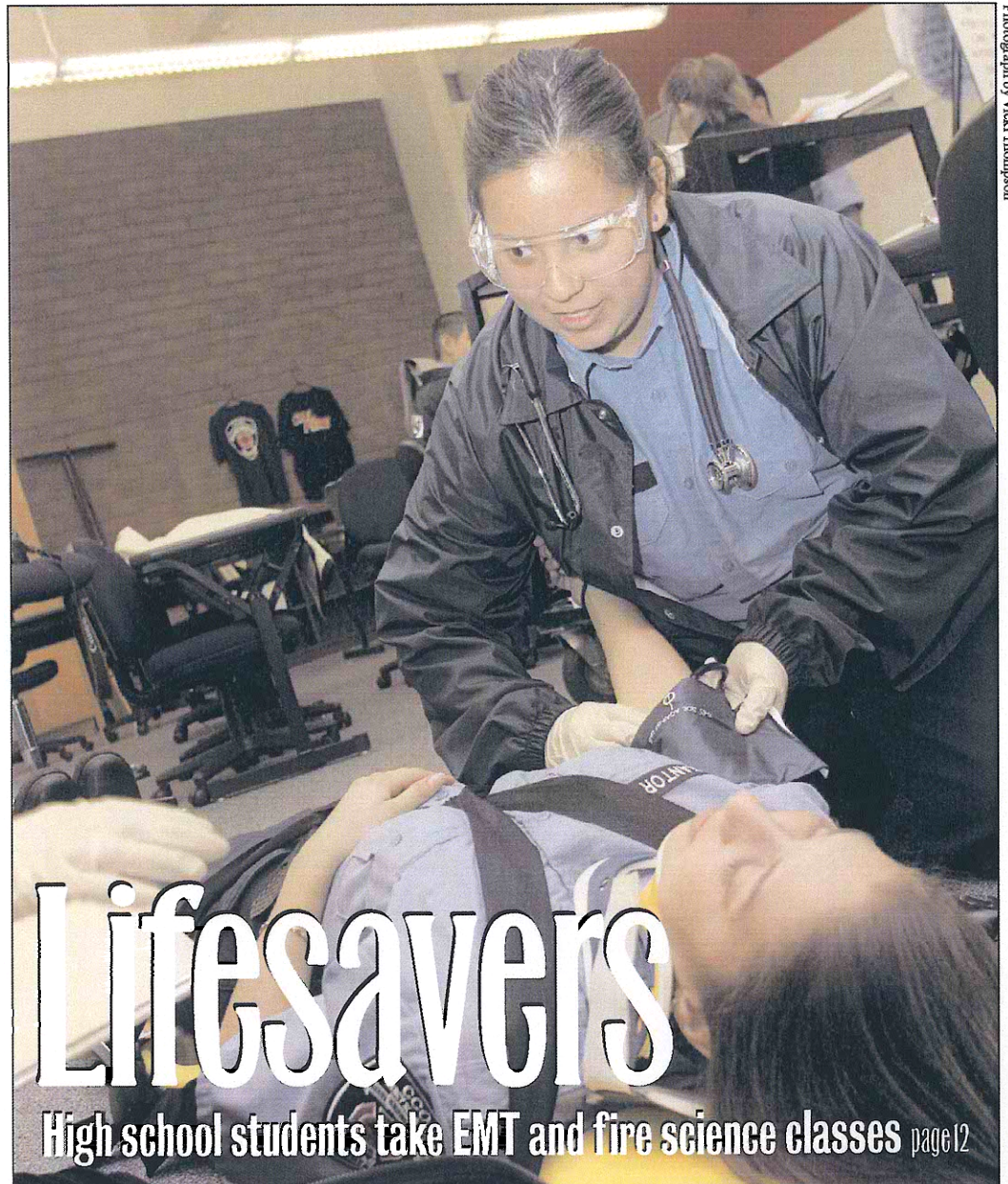
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Almaden Resident

Volume 5, Issue 15 January 31, 2008 www.almadenresident.com



Photograph by Vicki Thompson

Lifesavers

High school students take EMT and fire science classes page 12

Michelle Rodriguez (right) is enrolled in Metropolitan Education District's emergency medical technician program. She takes classmate Alexandra Kanton's vital signs, as part of the EMT program.



Branham High School seniors (from left) Danny Stock and John Van Nuland learn ladder drills in a fire science class taught at the Central County Occupational Center. The new course trains high school students interested in pursuing a career in firefighting.

Fired Up

Students are in for the long haul

By EMILIE CROFTON

Photographs by VICKI THOMPSON

Chelsea Nesmejanow was at a restaurant when a patron cut her finger and fainted from the blood. Instead of panicking, Chelsea knew exactly what to do. She made sure the woman was in a safe and comfortable position and called out to her in an attempt to wake her. She then gave her

water and sat by her side until paramedics arrived.

Chelsea is not a medical professional but a high school junior enrolled in Metropolitan Education District's Emergency Medical Technician program. The EMT program and the fire science program are the newest offerings at

the vocational school.

Like her classmates Evan Devito, John Von Nuland and Kevin Tully, Chelsea is fired up about the program and getting hands-on experience.

"What I have learned from the program and my experience at the restaurant has given me tons of

confidence and made me realize that I've chosen the right path," Chelsea says. "I know what I want to do for the rest of my life."

The EMT and fire science programs began in September 2007 to provide new opportunities for high school students who found a traditional classroom not the right fit.

Students spend half the day at their home high school and three hours a day, five days a week at the Central County Occupational Center in San Jose, a unit of MetroEd. The program is open to students in a number of school districts, including Campbell Union High School, Los Gatos-Saratoga

Joint Union High School and San Jose Unified School districts.

Both programs require students to dress in appropriate gear or uniforms, and physically complete lessons instead of just reading them from a textbook.

This hands-on training has been very beneficial and a great learning experience, the students say.

"I was average in all my classes in high school, but I'm excelling in this class," says Kevin, a senior at Prospect High School. "We're going through real-life scenarios. This is the best thing you could ask for in a classroom setting."

The scenarios include learning how to hoist tools up a fire ladder, protect household belongings during a fire, handle patients who are bleeding, in shock or have been poisoned. The students learn how to lift and move injured patients safely.

Leland High School senior Evan Devito says his experience in the program will give him confidence as he continues his firefighter training at Mission College.

"I know that when I get to Mission I won't be lost, and I'll be a step ahead of everyone else," Evan, 17, says. "Everything we do now is covered in a college class. It's what we'd be doing if we were out in the field."

The programs are instructed by two experienced veterans, Phil Gonzales and Oscar Tovar. Gonzales is a retired San Jose fire prevention officer, who was a fire technology instructor at West Valley/Mission College and a certified state fire marshal officer instructor.

Tovar is a San Jose Fire Department Captain with Station No. 16.

"These new programs are great because students leave here with a lot of experience and a lot of knowledge," Gonzales says.

Future Heroes

Students who have completed the programs leave with confidence and are well prepared for future careers as a firefighter, EMT, paramedic, first responder or registered nurse.

The students graduate with a completion certificate and are certified in first aid, CPR and in the use of an automated external defibrillator.

The curriculum's been a win-win for the students. Their success in the CCOC programs has led to increased motivation and success at their home high schools. Through the program students learn work, social and life skills, Gonzales says.

"I've never been an 'A' student, but since I've been in the class I interact better; I've raised my work ethic and have actually improved in school," Kevin says.



Branham High school seniors (from left) Danny Stock and John Van Nuland learn ladder drills from fire science course instructor Oscar Tovar, who is a captain at San Jose Fire Station No. 16. The newly offered class has attracted students who learn better through hands-on curriculum.

"It's like an 'easy' button; this class has simplified everything."

The two new programs are run in a military-like setting where students must address instructors and adults as either sir or ma'am. They start every day with 20 points that can be marked down if a uniform shirt is sloppy, if they talk too much or are not properly groomed.

The environment promotes a sense of responsibility, and students grow more mature as they work their way through the semester-long course.

John, a Branham High School senior in the fire science program, says the classroom setting will help him when he joins the marines after graduation.

"It has really helped me improve my leadership and organization skills," John says. "I'm learning things I will definitely face once I'm in the academy."

Spending 15 hours a week together, the students have also developed close bonds.

"We're a lot more close to one another here than at our own high schools," Kevin says. "It's like a real department here. We consider each other brothers and sisters."

It's hard for some students to spend 45 minutes in a high school classroom, but students say time goes by quickly in the three-hour morning and afternoon CCOC courses.

"This is better than high school," Kevin says. "I live in Saratoga and have to drive 17 miles everyday to get here, but it's totally worth it. Time just flies by when you're here."

Chelsea says whether it's a student whose been dreaming of becoming a paramedic or firefighter since childhood or students still figuring out their future, the CCOC is the place to be.

"I didn't even know what an EMT was until I got into the class, and now I want to be a paramedic," Chelsea says. "It's a school environment that encourages you. I've learned more in the class than



Prospect seniors Jane Bringes (left) and Kevin Tully give each other a high-five after a successful hoisting drill. The students say the hands-on fire science and EMT classes have made them better students in the classroom.

any other class I've had."

The Metropolitan Education District is located at 760 Hillsdale Ave., San Jose. For more informa-

tion visit www.metroed.net.

For more information on Central County Occupational Center, call 408.723.6407.