

Mats Search and Rescue Gives Back

No one expects to be the victim of a disaster. However, when one occurs, it comes to a few, well-trained people to step in and save those worst affected. Some of these people aren't just firefighters and police officers, they're everyday citizens who dedicate their time and expertise to help their fellow community members. These brave volunteers aren't all just generous strangers, some are rather familiar faces. The local Search and Rescue team has members of many ages, some are even students at Miramonte.

Junior Peter Hillen is a member of the Contra Costa Search and Rescue team. He has been a member for over a year. His journey began as many do, at an informational meeting. He attended a meeting at the sheriff's office about what it takes to become a member of the team. This team has existed since 1974 and has over 200 members whose journeys all began at similar meetings. Many, after hearing the extensive training and time commitment it takes to become a member of the team, simply drop out of the program. Hillen did not. He decided that it was worth his time and effort to learn what he would need to know to be helpful in an emergency. "I really wanted to do it because I wanted to give back to my community. I live in a bubble and I wanted to get outside of that bubble and help people that weren't as fortunate to live in that bubble," Hillen said.

His journey began by attending cadet training. Hillen and the other cadets learned how to operate in an high-stress environment, provide medical assistance, and respond to various hazardous situations. It took months. By the end of it, Hillen was a full member of the team. He can continue to train in various specialties like wilderness rescue, mountain rescue or canine rescue.

Also in Hillen's cadet class was another Miramonte junior, Liam Ferguson. Ferguson is certified in both Emergency Medical Response, similar training given to EMTs, and in wilderness rescue. Contra Costa Search and Rescue has allowed him to have a real positive impact on his community. "It's a great way to give back to your community in a meaningful way, because you're on call 24/7," Ferguson said. At any moment one of these students could be called out to an emergency to help their fellow citizens.

Once inducted onto the team, members can help their community in many ways. Search and Rescue team members can be called out for everything from helping a lost elderly person to assisting trained superiors in providing medical care following a mass casualty incident. Their extensive training allows young people to make a real impact on their communities.