

FEATURES

Students overcome nervousness volunteering with county rescue squads

By Karen Crutchfield
Staff Writer

It's not a typical Saturday night activity, but some UNC students spend their Saturday nights administering medical care and helping people to the hospital.

Both the North and South Orange County rescue squads have UNC student volunteers. South Orange's squad has 63 volunteers, several of whom are UNC students. Geoff McDonough, Jeff Moyer and Pam Welsh made up one of the two crews working last Saturday night.

McDonough, a sophomore from Toronto, Ontario majoring in philosophy and biology, heard about the volunteer program one day in December and immediately inquired. This January, he began training to become an emergency medical technician (EMT).

Jeff Moyer, a pre-med senior from Lilburn, Ga., has completed the training and is an EMT. He has been with the volunteer rescue squad for nearly two years.

Pam Welsh is a volunteer paramedic and head nurse for the respiratory intensive care unit at UNC Hospitals.

The shift began Saturday at 6:15 p.m. with crews verifying that their ambulances were fully stocked. The surrounding station was like a small, cozy apartment with a comfy couch and a basket full of warm laundry. L.L. Bean catalogues with worn pages were neatly stacked on a kitchen table next to the stove.

The first call came at 6:50 from the Carolina Meadows Retirement home. A 92-year-old man apparently had gone into septic shock. As the red lights flashed and the siren blared, Moyer grabbed onto a hanging I.V. in the back of the ambulance and explained that he usually was not too nervous on the way

to calls. He justified his calmness by explaining that the call-in often sounded much more serious than it actually was.

McDonough, on the other hand, admitted that he still became nervous on his way to some of the calls. "My heart was beating out to the wall," he said about his first serious call. Since then, his nervousness has subsided.

The crew members are familiar faces to those working in the emergency room. Welsh explained that the relationship between the rescue squad and the UNC hospital is one of the main reasons the program is successful.

Squad members feel as though another part of its success can be attributed to the Chapel Hill police officers. Unlike most officers who are required to answer 911 calls only when an assault is involved, those in Chapel Hill are summoned to every call because they are medically trained. They can resuscitate victims if there is an extreme emergency and they arrive before the rescue squad. "That can make a difference," Welsh said.

Another successful characteristic of this county's rescue squad is its refusal to charge patients for the calls. Many counties charge \$110 to \$120 for a visit, Welsh said.

This policy impressed McDonough. He said he was used to seeing people of the community get medical help easily and with no charge because in Canada there is no medical expense. McDonough said it was important for citizens to be able to get help when they needed it without concern for costs.

"It should not matter who they are, where they live, how much money they have... They should all have easy access to the medical attention they need," he said.

South Orange rescue squad has fought the county several times to assure that

the service remains free for its citizens. Welsh said they were worried a charge would cause people who badly need help to hesitate to call.

One of the calls the crew received Saturday night may have been one of those calls. An elderly woman who claimed she had never been in the hospital before, except to have children, called the rescue squad nervously complaining about blood in her urine. Although her circumstance was not immediately serious, she had no way to get to the hospital other than the ambulance that the squad carried her in.

"I would rather have a million cases like this that was not too urgent and not really that necessary, than miss one who needed us immediately but was too scared to call because of the fee," Welsh said.

All three confessed that some of the cases go home with them. "I have had nightmares about some happenings," Welsh said.

It is easy to wonder how these student volunteers find time to work, especially without pay. They explained that the program can be a great time commitment when in training, but the system overall is flexible.

Spending time with these volunteers suggests they would be there regardless of the time involved because of the satisfaction they get from helping people. To McDonough, this program is "a perfect example of human spirit... there is not a more graphic way of helping your community."

The program gives people a chance to realize how reality is since they actually go into people's homes and see the way they live, he said.

"You recognize just how bad things really are socio-economically. There are no more disillusionings."

There are usually four to eight calls



Geoff McDonough and Pam Welsh demonstrate rescue techniques for trauma victims on a fellow paramedic in an ambulance

per night. Although not many of the calls are from UNC, the majority of those that are are alcohol-related. Chapel Hill gets approximately 3,000

calls each year, whereas a larger city such as Durham receives about 27,000. Durham's large number can be attributed to its relatively large population in ad-

dition to its major drug problem. If interested in volunteering, call the North or South Orange County rescue squads or stop by.

'Phone slammers' change customers' long-distance service without consent

By Laura Williams
Senior Writer

Lighten Up! But watch out. Your long-distance service may not be safe from "phone slammers," telemarketers who switch your long-distance carrier without your consent. And you may not even know about it until the bill comes.

Sybil Rhodes, a UNC student, said neither she nor her roommate gave permission to switch their long-distance carrier or even remembered receiving a phone call from MCI to switch. But on Nov. 30 her long-distance service with AT&T was switched.

Rhodes said she thought there was something wrong with her phone because each time she tried to call home she got a short busy signal.

"When I found out there wasn't something technical wrong with the phone—that someone had simply stolen our long-distance—I was infuriated," she said.

Students at UNC who have been phone slammed are not alone. Phone slamming has become a problem all over the country, prompted by stiff competition between long-distance carriers since the breakup of Ma Bell in 1984.

Craig Stevens, a consumer advocate at the N.C. Utilities Commission, said long-distance customers were usually slammed by telemarketers who were trying to earn a large commission based on the number of customers they signed on. The telemarketer usually switches the customer to another carrier after a phone call, Stevens said. Despite what the customer may request, the telemarketer initiates the change, he said.

Afterward, it's difficult to prove the customer was slammed, Stevens said, because the telemarketer was not required to get written permission to switch the service.

Stevens said the utilities commission office received about 75 complaints of phone slamming last year. The commission works on behalf of the slammed customer to return the original service and to waive the charges for the unwanted switch, he said.

Although the charges only amount to a few dollars, sorting out the problem is often the biggest cost of the practice, he said. "Most of the time it seems to be more of an aggravation to the customer

than anything else." Bob Page, a Chapel Hill attorney who represented a long-distance telephone company that lost out in a switch, said although slamming cost individual customers only a few dollars in service charges, the company that lost the business lost a lot of money.

Page represented Phone America, a long-distance carrier in western North Carolina that provided long-distance service to pay telephones in Charlotte/Douglas International Airport and to hospitals in Hickory and Asheville. A Maryland communications company secretly switched the pay phones in the airport without the consent of airport managers, Page said.

Phone America did not know the phones had been switched until it tried to collect revenue from the pay phones. The company's profits dropped thousands of dollars within a month, he said.

Phone America filed a complaint with the N.C. Utilities Commission and the case was settled out of court about a year ago, Page said.

The motivation for the scam was money, he said. "It is sometimes unscrupulous sales agents working on commission." Agents make a commission on the number of switches they make and the money customers spend on long-distance once they have switched.

Karen Long, N.C. assistant attorney general, said the best way to stop phone

slamming was to require the phone companies to get written permission from customers to switch their service.

Ron Laughlin, state public relations manager for AT&T, said MCI and AT&T were trying to cool their fierce competition and reduce the risk of phone slamming between the two companies. In December, MCI and AT&T agreed to take steps to stop phone slamming by requiring an independent company to confirm customer approval of the switch.

Nationwide, more than 100,000 long-distance customers have been slammed, Laughlin said.

"We believe these safeguards will put the long-distance decision in the hands of the consumer," he said.

Both Laughlin and Steve Fox, regional public relations manager for MCI, said they did not know whether long-distance telemarketers worked on commission. MCI instructs its telemarketers not to switch long-distance carriers without permission, Fox said.

Phone slamming sometimes occurs because of a computer error, he said. The agreement between AT&T and MCI has greatly reduced the number of complaints of slamming that MCI receives, he said.

Phone slamming causes ill will toward the company and costs everyone involved money, he said. "It's not in anyone's best interest for a customer to be switched without their permission."

Players

PRE-SPRING BREAK BLOWOUT

Thursday, March 7th

50¢ DRAFT

\$1²⁵ BOTTLED BEER EVERY NIGHT!

929-0101

Study in Germany

with
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Spend the most exciting year of your life in Germany at

Technische Universität Berlin
or Universität Göttingen
or Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen

Receive major, perspective or elective credit
Receive up to 30 credits
Four semesters of college level German required

For information, contact:
UNC-CH Study Abroad Office
12 Caldwell Hall, CB 3130
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3130
919-962-7001

BERMUDA SHORTS

ON BREAKING WITH CIVILITY.

RDU - BERMUDA NONSTOP

EFFECTIVE MARCH 2, 1991

BARBECUES, BANDS AND LUNCH UNDER THE SUN.

All compliments of the Bermuda Department of Tourism. Pink sand and turquoise water compliments of nature.

WE ONLY RENT CONVERTIBLES.

They're the perfect way to party hop. Just remember, the left side is the right side.

American Airlines
Fly Aaway VacationsSM

BERMUDA COLLEGE WEEKS

MARCH 3 • 31

\$503

FROM 3 nights / 4 days Air / Land inclusive.

Call your travel agent or American Airlines Fly Aaway Vacations at 1-800-321-2121. Travel is valid Mon.-Fri. thru March. Some restrictions apply. Travel Is from Raleigh-Durham. Double occupancy. Taxes and gratuities additional.

*Packages available through wholesalers listed above. Prices based on round-trip purchase, weekend airfare, through 3/31/91 from New York. Prices slightly higher from other cities. Prices slightly lower for weekday travel. Prices are per person, based on four per room. Prices vary by wholesaler and are subject to change and availability. Taxes and gratuities additional.

Burnout from page 1

"When you're seeing a daylong concert like that, having a beer goes hand in hand, Charles said. "I don't see a problem with it at all."

"It's a shame to say you have to drink to have a good time, but you do," said fraternity member David Crist. "I think it could be a real positive thing if it was dry, but I don't think many people would be that interested."

Charles said having the party at He's Not Here, which can accommodate about 1,000 people, was the fraternity's last option. "We didn't want to exclude any non-Greek people from campus, but there is a limit to the number of people we can have," he said.

Money raised from Burnout had been donated to the N.C. Jaycee Burn Center since 1978. Pi Kappa Phi president Mike Reynolds said the fraternity had donated more than \$30,000 since then.

Charles said fraternity members hope to raise \$10,000-\$15,000 for the Burn Center this year by selling T-shirts.