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FEATURED

Phoenix High to launch new EMS career program in the fall

RCC, Mercy Flights join effort to establish pipeline for high school students to make early progress on future EMS careers and adjacent roles in firefighting, law enforcement

By JAMES SLOAN Rogue Valley Times
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Phoenix High School already offers three EMS classes and will be adding a new, co-taught class with teacher Carolena Campbell and an EMS professional from Mercy Flights in the fall.

Photo courtesy of Carolena Campbell

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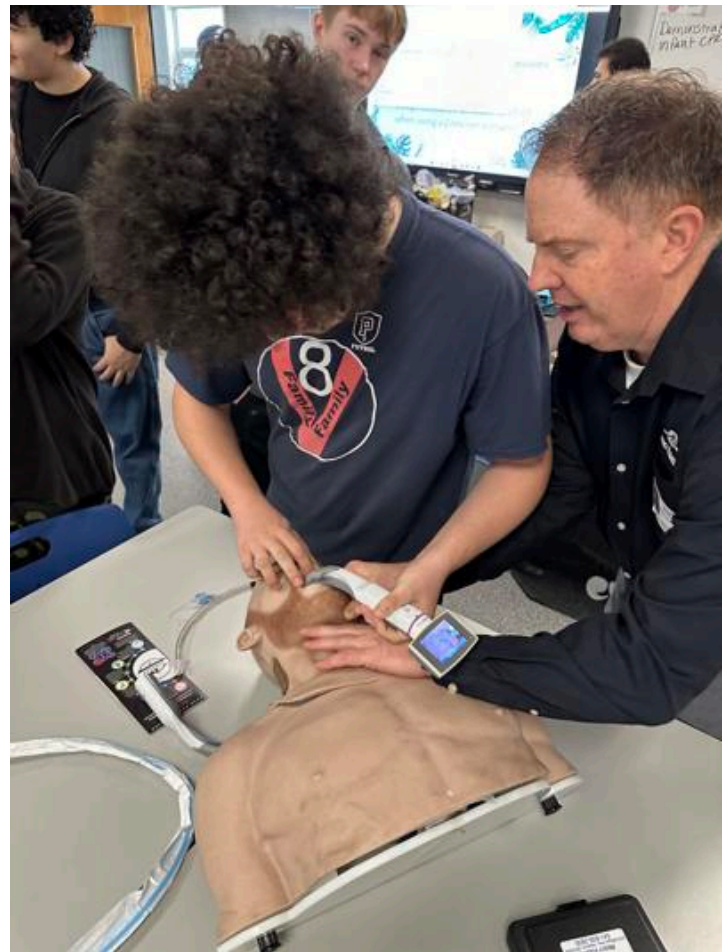
The Phoenix-Talent School District is teaming up with Rogue Community College and Mercy Flights to offer high school students college credits to give them a head start for emergency medical services careers.

Starting this fall, Phoenix High School will offer an emergency medical services course aimed at advancing students with an interest in EMS professions and receiving college credits for passing the classes.

The pilot project is intended to establish a pipeline for high school students to make early progress on future EMS careers. These could include emergency medical responders and technicians, paramedics, or adjacent roles such as firefighters or law enforcement — as well as learning basic procedures and skills that could save someone's life. It is the product of a collaboration forged over the last year between the school district, the community college and the nonprofit air and ground ambulance service serving Jackson County.

The college credits are transferrable at RCC, giving students in the program an advantage if they decide to pursue an EMS degree at the community college.

“It’s going to offer the students an opportunity to not only get four college credits through accreditation, but also get them experience with hands-on skills crucial to EMS and paramedics and give them an idea if they want to pursue that,” said Carolena Campbell, health occupations and physical education teacher at Phoenix High.



Mercy Flights employee Marcus Allen shows a Phoenix High School student how to intubate a patient.

Photo courtesy of Carolena Campbell

Campbell, along with an EMS professional with Mercy Flights, will co-teach the classes.

“Carolena will bring her academic knowledge and ability to teach high school students, while the EMS professional will bring work experience and what it’s like to work in the industry,” said Sheila Clough, CEO of Mercy Flights.

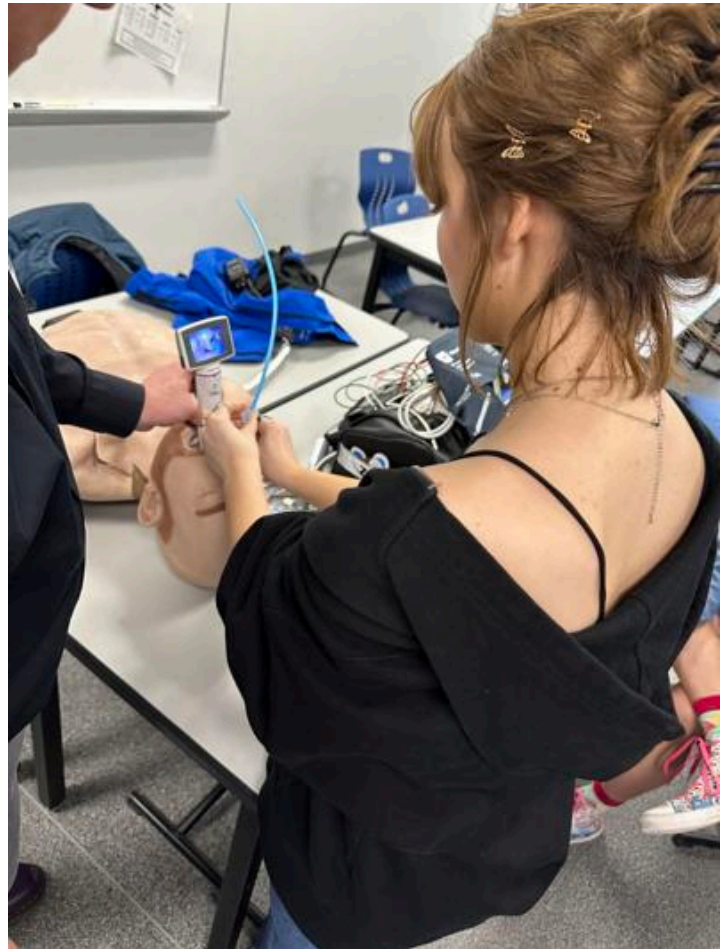
“I’m really excited, and I’m going to learn some stuff too,” Campbell said.

The new co-taught class, yet to be named, has been popular with students so far.

“We already have 53 students preregistered for it,” Campbell said.

In order to qualify to take the new course, students are required to have taken Emergency Care, Safety Plans and Prevention and Body Work classes.

The exact curriculum and safety skills students will learn will be decided between Campbell and Mercy Flight’s EMS professional, with Mercy Flights set to select its representative in the coming weeks.



Phoenix High School currently offers three EMS classes including Emergency Care, Safety Plans and Prevention and Body Work.

Photo courtesy of Carolena Campbell



Fifty-three Phoenix High School students have already preregistered for the new EMS pilot program.

Photo courtesy of Carolena Campbell

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Mercy Flights employee Marcus Allen showcases the interior of an ambulance to Phoenix High School students. Emergency Care, Safety Plans and Prevention and Body Work

Participants will learn “a lot of hands-on basic skills, learn how to check vitals, learn skills with simulation mannequins, practice stopping bleeding; a lot of what’s yet to come has yet to be decided,” Campbell said.

The three-way partnership parallels Mercy Flights’ vision of expanding and diversifying its pool of EMS professionals, addressing a potential forecasted healthcare workforce crisis.

“The more we can get people excited about the field, the better we can tackle shortages now and in the future,” Clough said. “EMS careers are rewarding; you’re saving peoples lives, there’s purpose in that, and it’s a decent paying job with good wages and benefits and a great jumping off point for other careers.”

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“Something I really appreciate about the partnership is that our student demographic is different from a lot of schools in the (Rogue) Valley; there’s a lot of underprivileged students and students for color and there are sometimes a lot of barriers on students for college or they don’t know where to begin,” Campbell said. “With this direct connection, we’re able to connect a lot of our students with college and a real opportunity for them for an instant career.”

If the pilot program is successful and well received, the partners intend to form other high-school programs to earn college credits toward an EMS career.



Three Rogue Valley organizations and institutions have partnered to offer the new EMS pilot program at Phoenix High School, including Mercy Flights, Phoenix-Talent School District and Rogue Community College.

Photo courtesy of Carolena Campbell

“For me, we’re testing a model of education that could really be replicated in other high schools in our region and even within our state; if it’s successful, there’s no reason we can’t replicate it in other areas,” Clough said.

“I think it’s important to note the collaborative spirit of all three organizations coming together to make this happen. It’s a testament to what we can accomplish in solving tough problems when we bring our resources together and combine them in a way to bring something to the community,” Clough added.

For more information on the pilot program, visit phoenix.k12.or.us.

Reach reporter James Sloan at jsloan@rv-times.com

James Sloan

Reporter

James Sloan is a general assignment reporter for the Rogue Valley Times. Hailing from Tennessee, he began his journalism career writing for his alma mater's student newspaper, The Daily Beacon, in Knoxville before moving to Washington state. He headed out to Southern Oregon in the summer of 2023 and has been a reporter for 3 years.

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