

2020 JMGBL Awards Application

Submission Date	2020-06-26 15:05:33
This application is for:	J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award
Project Title	Lancaster County EMS Boot Camp
County/Counties	Lancaster
Staff Contact	John McCain
Job Title	Deputy Director, Economic Development
E-mail Address	jmccain@lancastersc.net
Phone Number	8032863605
Mailing Address	Lancaster County Economic Development PO Box 1809 Lancaster SC 29720

Please provide a summary of your entry (no more than 100 words) to be used in a handout for the awards competition and included in press releases/publications. You may either type the summary in the text box or upload it as an attachment below.

Summary Attached

To upload your summary, please type "see attached" in the text box, then upload a Microsoft Word or PDF document below.

[Lancaster County-JMG 2020- EMS Boot Camp Entry Summary.pdf](#)

Presentations may include more than one speaker; however, each speaker should be aware that the 10-minute time limit is strictly enforced. Please list the name, title, and e-mail address of each speaker:

Name	Title	Email
Clay Catoe	Lancaster County EMS Director	CCatoe@lancastersc.net

Please check boxes for attachments you will submit as part of your application

CHECKED: A concise Project Description to explain the purpose and significance of the entry (up to eight pages). Please follow the prescribed naming convention for your Project Description file.

CHECKED: Any additional materials needed to support your application (up to five pages).

UNCHECKED: Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award applications must include letters of support from the chief administrative officers for each participating political subdivision.

CHECKED: Submissions for The COVID-19 Response and Resiliency Showcase and the J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award must include a letter of support from the county council chairman or the county chief administrative officer.

To submit these attachments online, please upload Microsoft Word or PDF documents below.

[Boot Camp Story Gateway News.pdf](#)

[Lancaster County - JMG 2020 - Award Submission.pdf](#)

[Lancaster County-JMG 2020--Abigail Roberts Letter.pdf](#)

[Lancaster County-JMG 2020-Brandi Heydon Letter.pdf](#)

[Lancaster County-JMG 2020-EMS Boot Camp Flyer.pdf](#)

[Lancaster County-JMG 2020-Letter of Support.pdf](#)

[Lancaster County-JMG 2020-SCEMSA Press Release.pdf](#)

Lancaster County J. Mitchell Graham Award - EMS Boot Camp

Entry Summary

*Lancaster County's Emergency Medical Services Department, responding proactively to the shortage of qualified Emergency Medical Technicians statewide, took the initiative to develop the first-of-its-kind in South Carolina **EMS Boot Camp** program! EMS Boot Camp takes qualified applicants through an approximately 12 week program of classroom, self-study, skills lab and direct observation on an ambulance to prepare the individual to care for victims of sudden illness or injury. Upon successful completion, students are eligible for National and State certification exams. Once required certifications are obtained, part-time employment is guaranteed!*



J. MITCHELL GRAHAM MEMORIAL AWARD LANCASTER COUNTY EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES BOOT CAMP

BENEFIT/IMPORTANCE OF PROJECT

Why was this project undertaken?

A principal component of any Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system is its workforce. The ability of an EMS system to deliver high quality prehospital emergency care depends upon a qualified and capable workforce. However, over the past 40 years of modern EMS, the focus has been on clinical improvements, with little to no attention paid to workforce issues. While very few EMS systems appear to be able to successfully meet their workforce needs, most struggle to recruit and retain volunteers or paid staff. Among national publications, little to no formal best practices for recruitment, retention or health and safety pathways exist.



In recent months, South Carolina has taken a step forward to combat the ever growing workforce issue in EMS. The South Carolina EMS Association, in conjunction with the South Carolina Office for Healthcare Workforce, spearheaded a workforce study to show just how behind the curve EMS was in our state. See press release in the Additional Materials Section dated February 11, 2019 that highlights this study. The normal hiring and retention efforts of most have fallen well below sustaining staffing levels across our state over the last several years. The perceived increase in the need for EMS has been fueled by both natural disasters and our current pandemic.



Given these workforce challenges, Lancaster County EMS (LCEMS) took the initiative to develop the first-of-its-kind in South Carolina **EMS Boot Camp** program! The initiative moved rapidly from concept to implementation with the enthusiastic support of the County's leadership team. EMS Boot Camp takes qualified applicants through an approximately 12 week program of classroom, self-study, skills lab and direct observation on an ambulance to prepare the individual to care for victims of sudden illness or injury. Upon successful completion of the program, students are eligible for National and State certification exams. Once required certifications are obtained, part-time employment is guaranteed!



What is the significance of this project to your community as a whole? How does it relate to the other problems in your community?

LCEMS has a long and distinguished record of service to our citizens. Here’s a short summary of our historical impact to the community:

- **1967:** Founded as one of the first non-funeral EMS Systems in South Carolina.
- **1971:** First EMT class in South Carolina held in Lancaster County.
- **1985:** LCEMS had one of the first AED programs in the state.
- **1997:** LCEMS had the first pre-hospital RSI programs in the SC, NC or Georgia.
- **Today:** LCEMS responds to more than 18,000 calls for service each year!

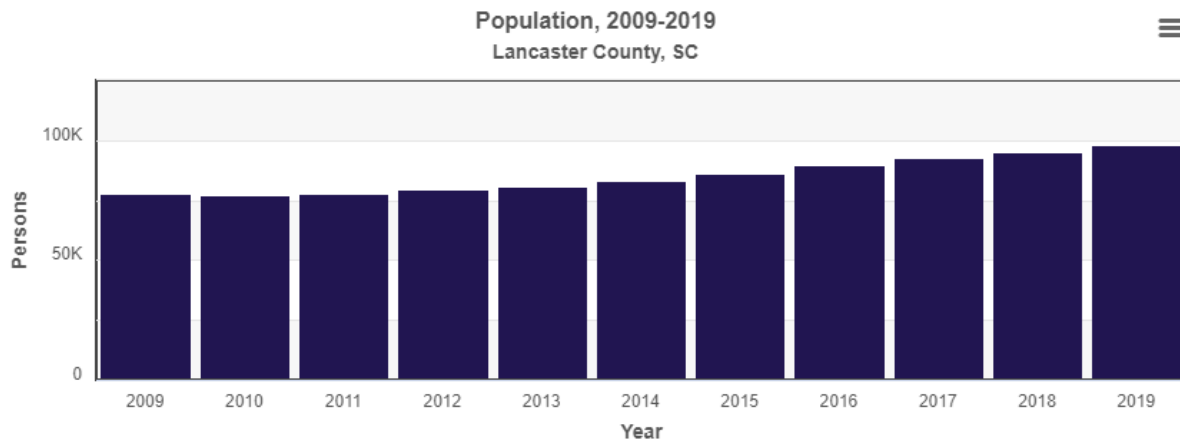


Given the challenges faced state-wide sourcing qualified EMS personnel, the success of the EMS Boot Camp program will play a significant role in bridging the EMS workforce gap here in Lancaster County. Our citizens expect and deserve the highest professional service during a time of crisis. When the 911 call is made, the last thing a resident should concern themselves with is whether or not the ambulance is staffed with a qualified EMT.

As it relates to other community challenges, ensuring the availability of EMS county-wide is significant to the quality of life for everyone. Our 8 EMS stations, strategically located across 540 square miles, provide residents with a level of confidence that their emergency medical needs will be met rapidly and professionally 24-hours a day!

How much of the county’s population is benefited by the project? In what specific ways are different groups of citizens within the county better off than before?

As Lancaster County’s population continues to soar, the need to provide professional EMS services to our citizens and visitors grows as well. We want to continue this legacy of leading from the front and providing world-class care to our citizens. Over the last 10 years, Lancaster County’s population has grown from 77,000 residents to over 98,000, an astounding 21% increase and is one of the fastest growing counties in the state of South Carolina!



All of our citizens ultimately benefit from the success of the EMS Boot Camp! As we face the need to expand service coverage to meet population growth demands in particular areas of the county, the need for qualified EMTs only becomes more vital. Our goal is to always provide the highest level of service to every part of the county. Regardless of where you live – urban or rural – the highest quality of care and timeliness of response across the full spectrum of emergency services is always the best it can be!

What degree of success did the project attain? What major objectives were achieved? Provide data where possible.



EMS Boot Camp, in its initial January 2020 launch, graduated 5 students! Lancaster County gained 5 new highly energetic, enthusiastic and very positive staff members, or as we say family members. The current success of this program has become infectious. We are proud to share that all 5 students have passed their National Registry Exams and have hit the road running! They have put energy and enthusiasm into the workplace and have challenged older medics with their knowledge. The feeling among the crews is, why have we not done this before?

Major objectives achieved along the way include:

- Gaining a well-trained workforce with ownership in their profession and loyalty to their employer.
- LCEMS gets to know the students and their work ethics.
- Students gain more experience riding as a third-person on the unit, including more “hands on” training with patients.
- Full-time openings could be filled with these more experienced EMT’s now familiar with Lancaster County and our work force policies and duties.
- Normal 200 hours of EMT class now expanded into 480 hours! Each week students spend 2 days on EMS units, equaling 16 hours of training time.

This program has developed better-qualified staff, allowed our profession to be in the spotlight of the community, and has opened a new pathway for employment. We are thinking outside the box and ridding ourselves of the “We have always done it this way” mentality.



PROJECT EFFORT/DIFFICULTY

What did your county have to do to accomplish its objectives? If your county worked with another local government or consultant, how was the work divided?

Our county leadership team was very supportive of the initiative and allowed us to develop the program as we envisioned.

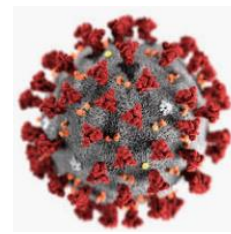
We paired with York Technical College to use their certification for instruction and Lancaster County’s Accredited Instructors, to offer the Boot Camp within the Lancaster County Teaching Classroom. This meant Lancaster County negotiated a much cheaper per student cost, since York Technical College had minimal expense. Traditional Technical College overhead costs (instructor or classroom usage) were avoided with our EMS Boot Camp. We utilized our facilities, equipment, and instructors to teach the Boot Camp classes. Each student was paid a modest hourly wage, which essentially equated to a rate halfway between part time and minimum wage.

Along with the Technical College, Lancaster County applied for and was awarded from the US Department of Labor, the Certification of Apprenticeship for our program. The ability to get the Technical College, Department of Labor and County Government to work together as one team to make this project a success is in itself a major accomplishment.



What challenges occurred during the project? Were there any community concerns?

No project worth undertaking escapes the inevitable challenges. For EMS Boot Camp the challenge was a previously unknown adversary called COVID-19. COVID-19 disrupted the ability to meet and teach face to face and delayed the ability of students to obtain the required practical skill check offs.



Once we were able to complete the classroom and skill check offs, the challenge became the National Registry Testing. The National Registry closed all testing sites which meant students could not attempt to obtain credentials by passing their exams. However after a wait of 6 weeks, the sites opened and all 5 students tested and passed. We have heard nothing but positive feedback from community leaders and citizens. In fact, we are already getting calls for the next class!

What were the nature and extent of the county government’s efforts to alleviate the problem(s)? How difficult was it to accomplish the project’s goals and /or objectives?

Lancaster County has aggressively recruited staff but we have been unable to maintain a steady flow of new staff to offset the aging and retiring employment pool. When the idea was presented, it was welcomed as a fresh new idea and not a single County Council Member objected. Based other trial projects Lancaster County EMS has requested, a track record for success by this department had already been established!

Was financing the project an obstacle? Were there any unusual factors inherent in financing the project?



The single biggest hurdle was securing the necessary funding for the program, which largely was dedicated to paying wages for the students during the course. The request for additional funds came as a simple request for a trial project. Based on staff shortages we were able to move some already allocated funds to this project. County Council liked the project so much they agreed to fund the additional money for a one-time beta test program to see how well it worked.

Did any agencies, citizen groups, or other organizations assist your county with this project? Did their participation pose any particular challenges or offer any unique contributions or benefits?

York Technology College allowed us to teach under their credentials, thus saving the county money per student of class cost. Our partnership with York Technical College and their tremendous support was a major factor in both establishing the program initially and making the finances workable--allowing the classroom cost to be converted to a payroll funding per student.

Are there any unresolved problems or other goals left to tackle?

We are pleased to report that our EMS Boot Camp was a complete success and Lancaster County EMS is fully staffed! Goals remaining to accomplish include:

- Increasing our part time EMT staff.
- Creating a pipeline for continued employment in our profession.

PROJECT ORIGINALITY/INNOVATION

Justify the uniqueness of this project. What makes it different from other projects designed to achieve the same objective?

This project is one that has never been attempted! Based on South Carolina DHEC Regulations, 911 EMS services must have two certified staff members on every unit on 95% of its call volume. The remaining 5 % is for those large scale events or natural disaster responses that overwhelm a system. Based on this requirement, hiring non-certified staff that cannot be used on an ambulance is not effective. Therefore, the EMS community in general has never looked to hire non-certified staff and training them due to the risk potential to gain nothing. In doing so, they failed to look objectively at the possible benefits of this approach and using current staff to teach the class! A side benefit we observed is the increased ownership that takes place, both from instructor cadre and students.



This project was supplanted by requiring each student to sign a contract with Lancaster County requiring them to pay back the cost of the class if they failed to become certified. This was another part of ownership put in place to ensure only those really dedicated to this opportunity would apply.

Do you know of any similar programs in South Carolina? If so, how is your program different?

To the best of our knowledge Lancaster County’s EMS Boot Camp is the first and only program of this type in our state! We welcome the opportunity to share our program and initial lessons learned with all 45 counties and we are always eager to benchmark other programs nationally to continually improve our program.

What innovations were required in accomplishing your objectives?



The EMS Boot Camp classroom portion was taught on the National Registry curriculum and needed to be adjusted from 6 months to 12 weeks. The objective was to provide each student more hands-on experience with live patients and employment, allowing them to earn a salary. **Results:** Lancaster County and our newest EMT employees both win!

Who provided the creativity and imagination in your project?

The genesis of the program began with some brainstorming ideas from our EMS Director, Clay Catoe. Here's a quote from Clay describing his early thoughts on how to tackle the local EMS workforce dilemma:

“Driving home one evening and contemplating how to combat the ever increasing perception of a shortage of EMS workforce, I asked myself the question, ‘why can’t we hire and train new EMT’s through an on the job training program’? To me the only hurdle was money. My thought was to begin a program where we hire several people (based on approved funds by the county) and teach them an EMT class over a 10-12 week period. Those hired would be required to sign a contract. If they obtained the required National Registry Certification, they would be hired as a part-time employee of Lancaster County EMS. If they did not become certified, they would be required to repay the cost of the course. This course would provide many benefits for Lancaster County and would pay for itself many times over down the road.”



Clay quickly acknowledges the many contributions of his amazing team of professionals who built the EMS Boot Camp from the ground up. Designing the curriculum, selecting the candidates, acquiring support and critical funding from the county, scheduling and teaching the classes and monitoring the progress of each student required a total team effort.

EMT boot camp will select 5 prospects for free training

Lancaster County will address the continuing shortage of emergency medical workers by offering free training through an EMS Boot Camp – the first of its kind in South Carolina.

“We’re the guinea pig. I think the return the county gets for its investment will more than pay for the long-run expense,” said county EMS Director Clay Catoe.

The 12-week course starts Jan. 27. Applications are available at www.mylanastersc.org. The deadline to apply is next Wednesday, Dec. 11.

Catoe said five people will be selected for the boot camp will receive \$1,400 worth of training needed to become a certified EMT (emergency medical technician) at no charge. They will also get part-time jobs.

Funding for the boot camp was included in this year’s county budget.

It’s the first time that an S.C. county has tried to boost its depleted emergency ranks through this type of program.

Catoe noted there is a high demand for certified medics in the state.

Research released in June by the South Carolina EMS Association and the S.C. Office of Healthcare Workforce shows a 40 percent decline in graduations from EMS training courses.

“There is a potential to reverse the trend. There just isn’t enough medics to go around, and I’m excited about what this can accomplish,” said County Administrator Steve Willis. “It’s forward thinking. If it works, we might be the first, but we won’t be the last.”

The issue, Catoe noted, is there aren’t enough EMTs to replace the ones retiring. Three Lancaster County EMS workers retired this year, and eight more are eligible to retire in 2020.

The training

Until 2016, an EMS ambulance crew could include one certified paramedic/EMT and a non-certified driver. State regulations now require all ambulance crew members to be certified.

“EMS has always been under a mandate that you don’t hire people unless they first have the training needed and certification. By comparison, law enforcement can hire officers and do some on-the-job training before you attend the state criminal justice academy certification. The question I asked is why can’t we do that,” Catoe said.

That’s where the boot camp concept comes in.

EMT certification requires 200 hours of training over five weeks. The five boot camp participants will receive 480 hours of training in 12 weeks, with the county footing the bill.

“The 480 hours produces better EMTs, since they will have more time in the back of an ambulance than required and will become more proficient with their skills,” Catoe said.

“We’re hoping that this, in turn, provides loyalty to Lancaster County. We’re giving you an opportunity to start a career that doesn’t cost you one dime. Plus we’re going to pay you an hourly salary while you are in class.”

The boot camp will include classroom time, self-study, skill labs and direct observation in an ambulance to learn how to care for injured and ill victims. Two certified EMS instructors will lead the class.

There is one catch. The five participants must sign a one-year contract to work only for Lancaster County or reimburse the county for the cost of training.

“We’ll pay you while you are in school, and when you pass, you will have a job,” Willis said.

The same contractual arrangement is also made for EMTs who want to become certified paramedics. The county pays for the advanced training, but makes paramedics sign a longer, three-year contract once they become certified.

“If Lancaster County citizens are going to pay their hard-earned tax dollars to send you to school, then you need to give something back to Lancaster County after getting your certification,” Catoe said. “That’s just being a good steward.”

Interested?

Lancaster County is accepting applications for the EMS Boot Camp through this Wednesday. Classes start Jan. 27. Applications are available at www.mylanastersc.org. Applicants must be at least 18 years old, have a high school diploma or GED and pass background and driving-records checks, as well as a drug screen. Details: Contact Stacey Chapman at (803) 416-9903 or schapman@lanastersc.net.

EMS BOOT CAMP



GET PAID WHILE OBTAINING YOUR EMT CERTIFICATION!

Get started on an exciting career by joining the Lancaster County EMS Boot Camp. You'll receive training to become a certified Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), AND gain valuable experience in the field while getting paid!

Contact us today if these apply to you!

- *Have a desire to serve others and/or the community?*
- *Prefer to be out in the field where the action is?*
- *At least 18 years of age.*
- *Possess a High School Diploma or GED.*
- *Clean background and driving record.*
- *Ability to pass a drug screen.*

The course is approximately 12 weeks in length, and uses a combination of classroom, self-study, skills labs and direct observation on an ambulance to prepare the individual to care for victims of sudden illness or injury.

Program begins January 27th! Apply today at www.mylancastersc.org.

Contact Information:
Stacey Chapman, Instructor
Direct Line: (803)416-9903
Email: schapman@lancastersc.net

Upon successful completion of the program, students are eligible for National & State certification exams. Once required certifications are obtained, part-time employment is guaranteed!

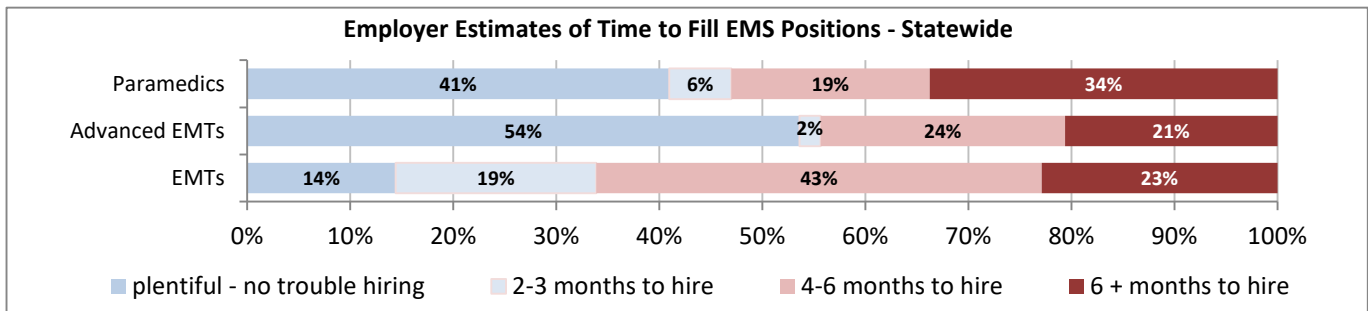


To: EMS Agency Directors and Primary Contacts
From: Henry Lewis, President of the SC EMS Association
Re: EMS Workforce Study Results
Date: February 11, 2019

New Report on the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Workforce in South Carolina

The South Carolina EMS Association (SCEMSA), in partnership with the South Carolina Office for Healthcare Workforce has recently conducted a study of the EMS workforce in South Carolina. EMS agencies and the communities they serve nationwide are facing a tightening labor market with the potential for staffing shortages in the coming years. The SCEMSA and its membership have recognized that South Carolina is not immune to these national trends and have proactively begun working with partner agencies across the state to begin studying both the current and the future state of the EMS workforce in South Carolina.

The results of the study show that some agencies are beginning to experience high vacancy rates for EMS personnel and long fill times to get new hires on board. Overall, about 13% of all of the full time positions for EMTs and Paramedics were vacant in the last quarter of 2018 statewide, but only about half of the agencies participating in the study had an open position. It is also important to consider the diversity of EMS in our state and note that some agencies are not experiencing any effects of workforce shortages. The time it takes to fill a vacant position varied widely, depending on the type of personnel. See the chart below:



This initial workforce study is intended to provide decision-makers with valuable information that highlights both the challenges and opportunities facing the EMS workforce in South Carolina. This report is the first step in a concerted effort by several organizations to explore the many factors that impact the EMS workforce in our state, and find solutions that ensure a sufficient and well qualified EMS workforce in the future.

South Carolina is not unique in the workforce challenges we face compared to other states across the nation, however, it is our hope that a collaborative approach to studying and understanding the numerous factors that impact the EMS workforce in South Carolina will yield above average results for the field providers, citizens and visitors of our great state.

--END--



June 25, 2020

South Carolina Association of Counties (SCAC)
PO Box 8207
Columbia, SC 29202-8207

Dear SCAC 2020 Awards Competition Panel,

On behalf of Lancaster County I am pleased to submit the attached application package for the 2020 SCAC *J. Mitchell Graham Award*. Filling the ranks of our Emergency Medical Services (EMS) workforce is a state-wide challenge and absolutely vital in meeting the needs of every community. We are extremely proud of our EMS Department for their leadership, creativity and forward thinking approach to meeting our local Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) workforce needs.

Lancaster County's EMS Boot Camp program was created locally by our EMS Department as a proactive initiative to address recruitment of EMTs. The program is a tremendous success, gaining five certified EMTs in the initial rollout of the Camp. We look forward to growing and further developing this initiative and are excited to share our program with others around the state!

Should you have any questions our point of contact is John McCain and he can be reached at (803) 288-7868 or via email: jmccain@lancastersc.net.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Willis".

Steve Willis
Lancaster County Administrator

cc: Alison Alexander, Lancaster County Deputy Administrator
Steve Harper, Lancaster County Council Chairman
Charlene McGriff, Lancaster County Council Vice-Chairwoman
Terry Graham, Lancaster County Council
Billy Mosteller, Lancaster County Council
Larry Honeycutt, Lancaster County Council
Allen Blackman, Lancaster County Council
Brian Carnes, Lancaster County Council

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Brandi Heydon and I have recently completed the EMT Boot Camp through York Tech/Lancaster County. I would like to start with how grateful I am to have been chosen for this opportunity. Working in the field healthcare quickly became a life consuming passion for me when my mother passed away in March of 2019. Seeing the things all of her healthcare providers (from emergency care, doctors, nurses, and hospice) were capable of and seeing how they can truly make a difference not only to patients, but to families, really sparked something inside of me. I was actively looking for some kind of classes to get me started when this opportunity arose. The rest was in Gods hands.

Upon acceptance of the class, I expected it to be a hard 12 weeks with a lot of material being thrown at me nonstop. However, once the classroom setting actually started I was pleasantly surprised! My instructors were phenomenal not only as teachers but as people. Myself and the other 4 people in the class quickly became a small family. It really makes a difference in the learning environment when everyone is hands on and willing to help no matter what.

Now that class is over and I have gone on to start working for Lancaster County as an EMT, I truly believe there is no other place for me. This class was an opportunity that opened doors for me that I may have otherwise never been able to open. As a working mother, just the idea of being able to be paid to go through this class was a miracle! It allowed me to be able to complete the class without having to be away from my daughter night and day.

To avoid rambling, I will go ahead and end with saying this... Thank you to all the people who took a chance on me. All who played a part in making my dreams a reality. This has been a life changing opportunity for myself and my family. I cannot thank you enough. I will promise to never let down any of you and to serve my county to the best of my ability for as long as you'll have me!

Brandi Heydon

To Whom it May Concern

My name is Abigail Roberts, a completer of the EMT Boot Camp. This opportunity has been one I will forever be grateful to be a part of. I am honored to have been chosen to complete this course. I have always been fascinated by the medical field, my husband has been part of the fire service for years and I always enjoyed seeing the work that he and his fellows accomplish and the impact that it has on the family and patients. I have a passion to help people and I felt like this profession is where I belong.

When I first heard about the Boot Camp my first thought was how amazing it would be to become a part of something so new and ground breaking and that the opportunity for a new career in which I dreamed would be perfect. As anyone would be, I was skeptical on leaving my job at the time that was natural and comfortable. Once the class started I had no idea what I would be in for, I felt like a 12 week course would be overwhelming with all the material that we would be covering in such short time. As the class started and we got into the material I was taken back at how smooth and planned out the process and material was laid out and it was not just thrown on us. The instructors were amazing and took time to help us understand the material and skills that we needed to know. Our class quickly became a small family and we were able to use our strengths to help one another with things we may have struggled with.

I would have to say that my favorite part of this process would be having the opportunity to have more ride time. We were able to have firsthand experience and put what we had been learning to use on the trucks and gain even more knowledge. I have thoroughly enjoyed this class and the opportunity to take part in something so amazing.

Since the completion of this class I have accepted the offered as a full time EMT with LCEMS. I cannot express how thankful I am for everyone who made this class possible and I hope to see this offered again in the future. I can truly say that I have found my forever job and I look forward to a lifelong career in EMS, and with the help of everyone involved in this process my dream has become my reality!

Sincerely,

Abigail Roberts