

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Presents Two Outstanding Leadership Awards

Date: 2/16/05

Location: Pueblo West High School, Pueblo County, Colorado

Transcript of Event

Pat Smith, Pueblo West High School Teacher

“About two years ago, I got together with Haley Rich and we talked about the possibility of starting a class that focused on teaching disaster management. And what that means is that in a post 9-11 (September 11, 2001) world, we decided it would be good to bring a course to this school that not only focused on the fundamentals of disaster management, but also how to be prepared in such a way so that instead of being reliant on police and firefighters, but start preparing for things in our own homes, so the people we care about can be taken care of when we need.



Section of Teen SERT students (standing)



So, we started this program last year and before we continue, I would like for every Teen SERT (School Emergency Response Training) student to stand (over 200 students stood, applause from audience). Every single student that is standing right now is prepared to respond to a car accident, a family emergency, and any type of emergency that can occur in your very own home. These students know exactly what to do, whether it be evacuating people, supply first aid or evaluate safety. Thanks, you can sit down.

This program would not have gotten off of the ground without Haley, but it would also not have happened without Melissa Colussi and Louise Rael. Please stand and be recognized. (Applause)

...This afternoon, I would like to recognize one student, not only for his interest regarding the Teen SERT program, but for his goals. It's pretty cool to see somebody who pretty much thumbs his nose at the rest of the world and does pretty much what he wants to do and many have said the same about me and maybe that is why I like him so much. I would like Tim Crabtree to come on up. (Tim crosses the gym floor to the podium, applause)

That's the fastest that (wheel) chair has ever moved (laughter from audience). Tim and I have had the chance to talk a lot and he is really interested in emergency management. More so, that he has ignored the fact that he just won't be able to (physically respond) and despite that, he learned as much as he could learn about the Teen SERT program, even though he may not be able to treat somebody, he can tell another person exactly what needs to be done and believe me folks, he can.

So Tim, this is what we're going to do (holding up a fanny pack/kit filled with first aid supplies). This is a first aid kit with everything Tim is going to need to help somebody. This is going right on your (wheel) chair, so if anybody ever needs this guy, he's going to be there for (you). (Applause, Mr. Smith attaches kit on wheelchair, more applause)

I also have a certificate of achievement. This award is for Tim Crabtree in recognition for valuable achievement in Pueblo West High School's Teen SERT classes.

I've had the pleasure of working with the disabled in my whole educational career and it's absolutely been a pleasure; one of the best is when a family can take their pride and joy (their



child) and let him take chances. Behind every courageous human being, there is a family supporting him. I'd like Tim's mom and dad to stand. (Applause)

When it came to planning this program, I wanted to give Tim a certificate from the State of Colorado because I thought it would be kind of cool, so I talked to Haley. She said, "Yeah, I'll call some people." These people called some people; and those people called some people, and then, (pause) those people called some people (longer pause, laughter from audience). Next thing you know, Haley and I have a celebrity on our hands. The word of Tim's achievements have gotten all over the United States, and when I mean all over, I mean everywhere and the next person who is about to speak to you is living proof!

Don Lee retired as Captain of the Los Angeles (City) Fire Department after 31 years of service. He's one of the founders of the national Community Emergency Response Teams or CERT program in 1987. Captain Lee was one of the trainers of the first CERT class and has trained over 45,000 people.

CERT is what Teen SERT evolved from and Pueblo West High School was the first pilot school program which has spread across the nation; which means we were the first in the entire United States to offer this program (of its kind). (Applause, yells from audience)

And before I bring Don up; there would be no Teen SERT here; there would be no Teen SERT program, if it wasn't for Haley Rich. My friend, Haley, please stand up. (Applause, yells from audience) She not only brought the program, but she also found the money for it. This lady can shake a dollar out of an apple tree, man, this is amazing what she has done for this program.

Without further ado, Don Lee has flown from Los Angeles (California) to speak to you about the work Tim has done, so I'm going to get out of his way. Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Don Lee." (Applause, yells from audience)

Don Lee

"Thank you. Before I get into it, I'd like to thank a few people. Mrs. (Nogare), the principal, Mr. Pat Smith, Haley Rich, and of course, Tim Crabtree and his mom and dad, and especially you students for allowing me to be in your school, because I was asked to leave my high school (laughter from audience); no, I'm joking.

Why am I here today? I'm here today to tell you, the students, to never read a book by its cover, because every one has words. The other reason I am here is to honor Tim and also change your DNA into preparedness, so you become prepared in case of an emergency... including DNA with preparedness is well worth it over apathy.

I need to recognize the great work this school has done; Haley Rich and Pat Smith have done with Teen SERT. Many of you have no idea of their efforts and success of getting Teen SERT into schools across the nation.

Many of us are told in (the) academic setting to think outside (of) the box; I must commend this school for *playing* outside (of) the box and taking a chance and making (Teen SERT) such a success.

For you who don't know about Teen SERT and may have thought about signing up for taking the course, take a moment; just take a moment. What would you do if one of your friends or family members got hurt? How would you feel? (pause) How would you feel? (pause) You wouldn't feel very well.

In Teen SERT, you learn life saving skills (pause) and in the time of need, you will be able to save a life (pause) Teen SERT and CERT itself, is like riding a bicycle; once you've completed (the training), it's with you for (your) lifetime. It never goes away; you never forget what you learned. I can tell you with over 30 years of service in the fire service, there is no better feeling than helping someone. (pause) There is no better feeling.

We all know that disasters will happen; we just don't know when or where they will be. We cannot predict the future, but we certainly can prepare for it by taking a program such as Teen SERT (pause) education does reduce fear.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, apathy is lethal. If you do nothing, people will die. I can tell you one thing, and I know first hand, living in southern California, there are no Atheists during an earthquake. (laughter from audience) When that ground is moving, you're saying, "Oh, my God." And when your house is around your ankles, you're going to look up.

A quick story for you about Haley. She and I met a few years back at a CERT conference where I was honored to present the CERT program. (She and I) got into a long conversation about CERT: (pause) everything about CERT (pause) and I think it went on for about a day and a half. We talked and talked and talked about CERT and CERT and CERT (laughter from audience) and what they were doing with it across the nation.

A few months later, I was back in my office and I got a call from Haley and she said very quickly, and if you know her, she speaks *very* quickly sometimes. She said to me, "Don, am I crazy (about the concept of CERT in schools)?" And just as quickly, I said, "Is this a question or an affirmation?" (laughter from audience)

That was the first time I'd heard of (Haley's) concept of Teen SERT and bringing CERT into the classroom. I'd thought of bringing it to the teachers, but I hadn't thought of bringing it to the students; she had.

I came to find out she is a very tenacious lady. When she gets motivated, she will not let go and she gives it her all, believe me. To me, she is like a Chihuahua on crack (applause and laughter from audience)... and now we're changing the DNA of young adults by getting Teen SERT into schools.

I want to tell you a story that correlates as to why I am here today. There's a man in the country that you've probably never heard of that works for the National Football League. His job is to teach place kickers how to put that football through the uprights. That's all he teaches. He had a very good season this year, because the two place kickers were on opposite teams in the Superbowl that he had taught. He did this through teaching the technique of kicking. Mr. Joe Blevins has never kicked a football. Mr. Blevins has never walked. Mr. Blevins has had cerebral palsy all of his life. But he could teach the NFL (kickers) how to do their job. So, if you dream the big dream, and Tim this is for you, you can live the big dream.

Earlier, I asked you not to read a book by its cover. Some of you may have done that with Tim. How wrong were you? Here's a young man who has not only completed Teen SERT, but will go on to help others. Sure, he could have just stayed where he was and not gotten involved in Teen SERT, but that's not what is in Tim's DNA. It's in his DNA to help people. He will go on to make a difference to many peoples' lives. How many of you can say that today? He can.



Front l-r: Jerry Estep, Debra Estep (Tim's parents), Tim Crabtree, Don Lee
Back l-r: Martha Nogare, Pat Smith, Todd Vancantfort

There's a word that is tossed out too often and that word is 'hero.' You hear about heroes all the time and most in the wrong context (like) athletes, rock stars and folks of that sort. So often, that it has lost its meaning.

Well, the word 'hero' has not lost its meaning by me. Knowing what Tim (will do) to go on and help people, and what he has already accomplished through his experiences, knowledge and willingness not to give up on himself, or others, it makes me proud to call him my hero and make him an honorary member of the LA CERT team. (Yells from audience and

applause as Don presents Tim with an LA CERT certificate, then a standing ovation).

In closing, let me leave you with this quote, "He who saves one life, saves the world entire."
(Applause)

At this time, I'd like to introduce Todd Vancantfort from the United States Department of Homeland Security."

Todd Vancantfort

"I have two awards that I am bringing with me. Like everything else in the federal government, it comes with strings attached. One of them is for Tim. I've heard a lot about him; I've been briefed on everything that he represents and for all of you out there, who that the disabled like to say are "temporarily able," you never know what's going to happen to your future; you never know what's going to happen to your life that's going to change the dynamic of what you have today.

One thing that you need to think about - what the CERT program is about, which is a national movement and a national program which has been directed under President Bush as one of the Citizen Corps components, is personal preparedness and taking efforts in preparedness to prepare your community for any emergency, and any hazard, and any disaster that might befall you or befall your community.



Left to right: Jerry Estep, Deb Estep, Pat Smith, Tim Crabtree, Todd Vancantfort

Community service and community support is what it is all about and the challenge that I'm going to have with Tim is to continue to do what he's been doing and to continue to go out there and educate everybody else on what you, as an individual can do, regardless of your capabilities, regardless of your attributes, and regardless of what you think you have to offer. Everyone has something that you can give to the greater community; every one of you has something that you can do to help somebody to execute, whether it's a small event or it's a small contribution, or a large one.

I'm here to present on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security an Outstanding Leadership Award. The United States Department of Homeland Security commends the exemplary example of courage and tenacity shown in his efforts of preparedness of his peers and the greater Pueblo community for emergencies and disasters and for being an unwavering example of the ideals proven in the Citizen Corps initiatives to Tim Crabtree, this 16th of February 2005. (yells, applause and standing ovation)

I have one more award here and it also comes with strings. This award is for Pueblo West High School, for every one of you in the student body, for every one of you in the faculty, and every one of you parents, because let me tell you something folks, not a single one of you, not a single one of us will achieve anything in my life or your life without helping somebody or some group that's around you. There's no such thing as individual success; everything comes from the collective; everything comes from a group. You need to keep this in mind.



Todd Vancantfort Presenting Award to Martha Nogare, PWHS Principal

I have this award for all of you. It's also an Outstanding Leadership Award. The United States Department of Homeland Security commends the exemplary leadership of Pueblo West High School and its entire staff and student body for their dedication to the preparedness of the greater Pueblo community and for being an unwavering example of the ideals proven in the Citizen Corps initiatives. Congratulations to every one of you." (Yells and applause)

Haley Rich

"I wasn't going to say anything, but I do have to say something. To all of you Teen SERT students: Remember when you said (Teen SERT) should be in every high school in the U.S.? Do you remember that? Do you remember writing the letters (the students wrote letters expressing their feelings to local, state and national leaders)? (pause) They listened and you made a difference. Thank you." (Yells and applause)