



Career Choices for EMS Students

by Dianne Krulick

Students in the *Ellenville Middle School* had the opportunity to learn about career choices as they spent two sessions with local-area representatives of various professions.

Participants included: Phil Cataldi (attorney), Carl Chipman (auto sales/body/mechanics), Lynn McDonald (banker), Andy Weil (carpenter), Dr. Allise Craft (chiropractor), Vince Napoli (computer tech.), Dr. William Redding (dentist), Marie Randazzo (dog breeder), Heidi Wagner and Steven Grundt (EMT/Rescue Squad), Carl Kass (engineer), Brian Schug and Ralph Stephens (firefighters), Robert Christian (florist), Gabe Chapin (forestry), Judi Auerbach, Tanya Allen Lyles, Erica Coombe, Nilsary Rivera, Megan Serico (cosmetology), Kathy Quinn and Michel Bonnin (health/hospital careers)

Also: Trooper Leroy Seals (law enforcement/state), Chief Phil Matracion (law enforcement/local), Sgt. Andorion (Military/Army), Sgt. Lando (Military/Air Force), Petty Officer Wimberly (Military/Navy), Michael Stearns (pharmacist), Kathleen Strong (physical fitness trainer), Sandi Hecht (social worker), Janine Mignemi (teacher), Joy Webber (television producer), and Jesse Olsen (travel agent).

Ellenville Rescue Squad volunteer Heidi Wagner and Paramedic Steven Grundt demonstrate the stabilization technique for an injured person (photo above) while *Ellenville Fire Department* volunteers Brian Schug and Stephen Stephens show the apparatus used in fighting fires (photo below). 



A Special Career Choice

by Dianne Krulick

Ellenville Middle School Lincoln Academy 6th graders had a special opportunity to hear from Mrs. Maureen Leo, (photo, below, center) mother of *Ellenville Middle School* teacher Theresa Hartnett (photo, below, right), one of the first women firefighters in New York City.

For 110 years, there were no women who worked as firefighters in the Fire Department of New York. In 1977, a test was offered to women but it took five years for the courts to decide that women could take a new physical that was less discriminatory than the one in the past. The original physical was more than what someone would have to do in a fire-fighting situation. The new physical included running 1½ miles in less than 15 minutes and completing pull-ups (number determined by weight).

As a Physical Education teacher with a 15-month old daughter, Mrs. Leo decided to make a major change in her career path. She took the test and physical, passing both, and joined 32 other women and 150 men as new firefighters for the FDNY.



This was a new way of life for Mrs. Leo. She had to cut her long hair, use the same bathroom as the 12 men in her firehouse, and often work for 24 hours at a time. A typical schedule would be to work 2 days straight, have 3 days off and work again for 15 hours. (As a mother of two daughters the three days off gave her time to spend with her two daughters. Another first was taking a maternity leave when her daughter Susan (photo above, left) was born.)

Women were not given preferential treatment when fighting fires. Each firefighter had to carry heavy equipment, wear heavy protective gear, and move quickly. Dangers existed for all fighting the fires. After only three months working at the job, Mrs. Leo was in a building collapse, one of three in her career, and had to be dug out. In 1987, she had a skin graft on her knee. After 20 years in her job, she fell at a fire, sustaining major injuries needing surgery. At that point, she had light duty and then retired.

Her enthusiasm and pride in what she and others accomplished was evident as she spoke about her fire station (Engine #234, Truck #123, Battalion 3A) being named #1 in New York City for fighting occupied structure fires.

When asked about what she missed most and the least, she told the students that the pranks and hardships were difficult but she loved her job, especially the opportunity to work in such a good firehouse. Mrs. Leo told the students the "feeling is incredible... never know what it is when you are going... what to expect." She is featured in the book "Amazing Women, Amazing Firefighters," © 2002, written by Marsh Engle. 