

business in the park

School heating up with students

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Despite a change in ownership and competition from similar vocational training schools, success stories continue to come out of Emergency Services Academy Ltd. (ESA).

Currently located in Sherwood Park, ESA was established in 1995 in Edmonton, and provides emergency response training for EMR, EMT and firefighters.

"Our success rate in the past two years since I've taken over as the program coordinator is quite high," said Ian Clavelle, fire coordinator for ESA, who has been working with the organization since 2008.

"If the students are basically willing to work in any aspect of firefighting, whether it be industrial, safety standby or municipal, the sky is the limit for how successful our students are."

He said one success story from the program is a current Strathcona County Emergency Services (SCES) employee, who, as a student, took the fire, EMR and EMT programs before starting a job in Merrit, B.C. A couple of months after starting there, he received a job offer from the county.

"One of the things that we push hard for is job experience. He's a success story when it comes to ESA as he took all three of our programs successfully, did well on them, even (worked) with an affiliate department for job experience, then got hired on right here in our back yard," Clavelle explained.

"That was definitely something that we take a lot of pride in — it's a true ESA product that is successful."

While ESA was established in 1995, it was purchased by former SCES firefighter-paramedic and fire chief Darrell Reid in 2000, and moved to Sherwood Park in 2003. Ownership was changed after Reid became fire chief, and ESA is now owned by Chelsey Reid, who is the director and registrar.



As a part of the ESA program, firefighting students take part in hands-on training.

Photo Courtesy ESA

The firefighter program is a 12-week course based on a certifications award by the National Fire Protection Association's standards, and also includes practical training. During the program, students will travel to Vermillion, Alta., to complete 15 days of fighting live fires on the fire training grounds there.

More than 800 students have trained at ESA's firefighting program. Despite that, Clavelle said a challenge for ESA is to get strong candidates who are serious about becoming a firefighter.

"We like to get people that have good life experience and know what they want," he said.

"Growth in our program is just diversification from all three of our programs. Our fire program numbers, in the last year or so — we

haven't been completely filling our classes, so we've been really trying to work hard to do that... there's more competition out there for us to get students."

A unique aspect of the program is that ESA aids its students in finding employment.

"We're not just here to issue certificates and certifications," Clavelle noted.

"If you come and you're successful in the program, you're going to get all that, but what I really put a lot of focus on in our school is to produce career-ready, firefighting candidates. We have a rigorous fitness portion of our program that actually is catered to being successful on the physical examination that most departments require for you to get on."

"We also spend a lot of time with

career planning development with a resume preparation, interview preparation, aptitude test, and we run a candidate competition at the end of our program."

Most of the fire students range from ages 19 to 27, but with the minimum age of 18, there have been students as old as 45 who have successfully completed the program.

One thing ESA is looking forward to is the potential of working with more online content, as it has offered a large amount of online material in the last year and a half.

"We use e-books and we use online learning, which comes with a whole gamut of different resources to truly help the student be more successful when it comes to the scholastic side of things. So we're going to push forward on that,"

Clavelle noted.

He also talked about the advantage of having the school in the Park.

"The best thing about being in Sherwood Park is it's a nice central location (and a) really community-minded place where the students can come in from all over Canada," Clavelle said, adding that ESA promotes its students to live in the area.

"If we can keep these products that come from all over Canada to stay here and work here, we've succeeded in a couple ways," he added.

"We've got them a job and we've also helped the department in the area have strong candidates to be applying for their department."

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