

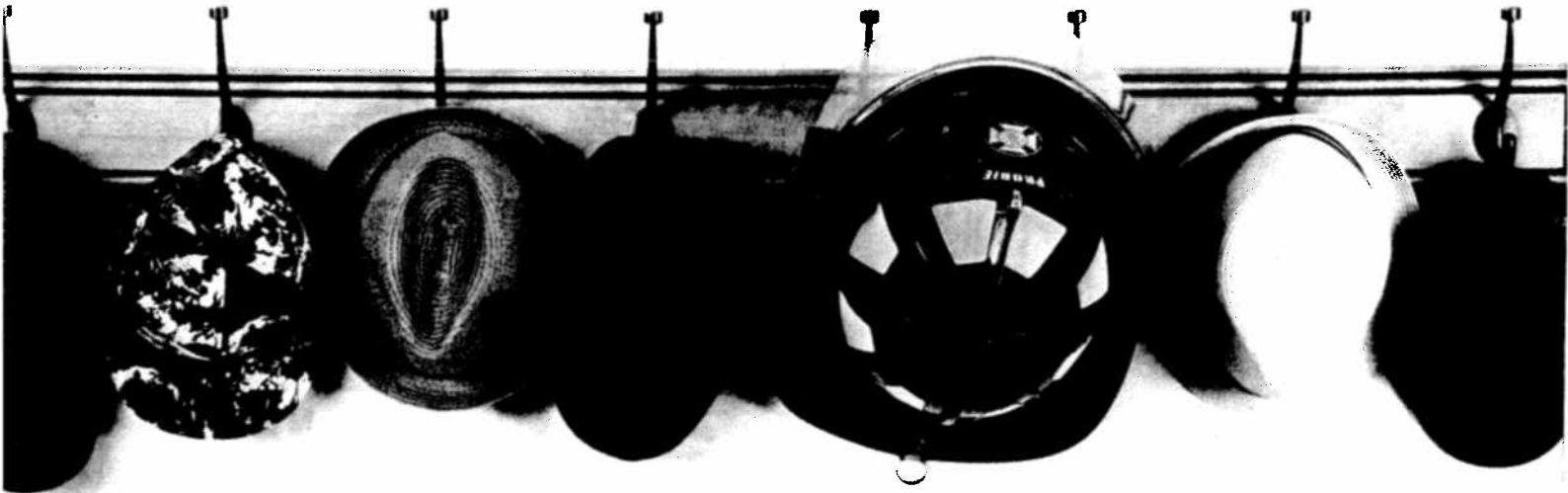
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Is there
a **FIRE** in you?



Also Inside:

RecruitNY: Bigger and Better in 2012

140th FASNY Convention:

A Look at the Third Annual Training Day Speakers

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FASNY Firemen's Home: Part II of the Series

Niagara University First Responders Disability Awareness Training for Emergency Responders

By David Whalen
Statewide Program Coordinator
First Responder Disability Awareness Training
Niagara University

On a cold, wintry night just south of Syracuse, Mike Burke and his 14-year-old son Jamie were attempting to get home through blizzard-like conditions. They didn't reach their destiny unscathed. Mike hit a stranded car he never saw until it was too late, breaking his arm and smashing Jamie's face into the dashboard. When first responders arrived, they did all the right things to tend to their needs. However, when it was time to transport, they were met with resistance when Mike refused to travel separately from his son. Jamie has autism, and at the time, was non-verbal. Responders didn't see the need to comply with Mike's request until he refused treatment and they realized they needed to do as he said.

On a daily basis, emergency responders are challenged with proper response to individuals with disabilities. And with the spectrum of disabilities varying in large degrees, the need to be both sensitized and educated is paramount. It alleviates any uncertainty a responder may have, it allows for a more appropriate interaction as it clears up any doubt one may have, and it promotes confidence so as not to wonder if one is doing the right thing. It allows for responders to set an example for the community in dealing with individuals with disabilities, it promotes equity, dignity and respect, it ensures better immediate response and care, and it saves lives.

Niagara University's First Responders Disability Awareness Training (NU FR DAT) program provides firefighters, EMTs, law enforcement, 911 operators and emergency managers with all the tools needed to better understand the characteristics, needs and challenges individuals with disabilities may pose when called into action. The program has developed the nation's first comprehensive awareness training for first responders through a grant from the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council.

Currently, NU FR DAT is working on a website (www.fr-dat.com) to allow for first responders to access information on a wide variety of areas that will assist them in proper response and is in the planning stages of video production and online training development. NU FR DAT is also rolling out the pilot training sessions across New York State, receiving input and feedback on the presentation while providing responders with resources, materials and information they can use immediately.

Over the course of the next two years, we will be rolling out the curriculum for law enforcement, firefighters and emergency medical services in regards to proper response to individuals with disabilities and all that this entails. This presentation brings together an education on disabilities while enhancing sensitivity. Included in this are: disabilities defined and appropriate response; characteristics and how to identify disabilities; the role of caregivers and service providers; federal and municipality roles and responsibilities; the perspective of the disability community; challenging scenarios and behavior and how to address them; current trends and topics; and etiquette and interaction skills. An extensive amount of resources will also be provided. This program will evolve into a Train the Trainer curriculum and also have other forms of delivery to best meet your needs.

The ultimate goal is that all first responders go through the training and utilize the office for all their needs relative to individuals with disabilities and disability response.

Upcoming sessions are posted on www.fr-dat.com or you can call the office at 716-286-7355 to receive more information.

David Whalen is the Statewide Program Coordinator for Niagara University's First Responder Disability Awareness Training program. He has been training all walks of life in disability awareness for the past seven years and has been in the field of disabilities since 1986. Contact him at dwhalen@niagara.edu.