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## Nursing students participate in emergency simulation

September 01, 2008 | Jennifer Schmidt

More than 60 nursing students posed as victims of a terrorist attack in a full-scale exercise held in Lynchburg in March. The exercise was designed to evaluate how Lynchburg's emergency services personnel, police and fire departments would respond to a crisis. With a price tag close to \$200,000, Professor Sharon Koplis explained the gravity of the situation to her students before she gave assignments.

"This is a very serious work day," Koplis said. "Dignitaries, school administrators, and city officials are watching by video."

Koplis also offered her students some intrinsic motivation.

"Remember the spirit of Liberty and share that with each one we touch today," she said.

The students appreciated the event for the opportunity to learn about emergency health services.

"I'm excited about the experience," senior Sarah Lewis said. "It helps prepare us for what we might see in the future."

"The danger zone," as student Lauren McQuain referred to it, was a simulated crisis, complete with two gunmen and a staged explosion at the old site of Thomas Road Baptist Church. The original Liberty Christian Academy facilities housed the hostage room and professor Kathryn Miller's moulage lab, where dozens of students were prepped with fake gunshot wounds and burns.

"I feel like I'm in Hollywood," senior Nathan Crabtree said as a laceration was applied to his forehead. Wax, gelatin, and purple powder were some of the ingredients used to create the true-to-life wounds.

“It sounded cool, but not this extreme,” sophomore Jessica McCaslin said with a jagged piece of plastic protruding from her cheek. Though she found her makeup to be “nasty,” McCaslin said the day would show her the nuts and bolts of real nursing.

“You learn by doing. There’s only so much you can read about,” McCaslin said.

Following the exercise, sophomore Sanjay Rawal said he felt more prepared to be a health worker.

“Teamwork is important because people interpret things in different ways,” Rawal said. Concerning the simulation, Rawal said, “It was fun, but kind of awkward for me. I’m not a professional actor — just did the best I could.”