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More than two dozen students at Burleson's Centennial High School are learning how to prepare, respond and recover from a disaster thanks to a partnership with the City's fire prevention department.

Fire Marshal Stacy Singleton and Fire Inspector/Investigator David Butler work with Leesa Starrett's Health and Science Technology students weekly. Starrett's husband is a CERT volunteer, so she thought CERT would be a perfect fit for her students.

"It is the ultimate combination of the need our young people have for serving the community while using their knowledge of meeting health care needs," Starrett said. "Not all the students want to pursue a career in health care, but the CERT program is teaching them life skills and giving them a sense of civic contribution."

The program is geared toward students, 13-18 years old. The Centennial students are juniors.

CERT is designed to empower youth in disaster mitigation, whether it is at their school, at work, or in their own neighborhood. The program covers fire safety and basic fire fighting techniques, recognizing injuries and basic first aid, CPR, basic team building and emergency communication systems. Teen CERT members can assist others when professional responders are not immediately available. The students receive backpacks that contain gloves, goggles, helmets, and first aid equipment.

"We think that Teen CERT is very important because it teaches the younger generation how to be self sufficient in the event of a disaster. It also teaches them how to help their neighbors," Fire Marshal Stacy Singleton said. "These students are very outgoing."

The City's Adult CERT program has been in place for more than five years. Crucial areas on the team include computer/web design skills, communications/education, legal and tax expertise, phone calling and runners. The adult classes are open to citizens of Burleson or employees of a Burleson business who are at least 18 years old.