

HOLYOKE

First-class EMTs inaugurate innovative HCC course

The patient, Mr. Santiago, was in cardiac arrest, so Justin Cook and his wife, Bonnie, began CPR.

Justin performed chest compressions; Bonnie handled ventilations.

Despite their best efforts, Mr. Santiago died.

"That was terrible," Justin Cook said a little later while evaluating his performance.

"We're gonna get there," Bonnie Cook offered, in consolation.

The scene took place back in March, when the Cooks were about halfway through a new, enhanced EMT training program at Holyoke Community College.

Mr. Santiago is actually a \$58,000 high-tech patient simulator. This was the Cooks' first time putting their classroom training into practice during an emergency simulation exercise.

"The experience was intense," Bonnie Cook said.

This spring, after more than 170 hours of training, in the classroom and in the medical simulation rooms at HCC's



Bonnie and Justin Cook, of Hardwick, perform CPR on "Mr. Santiago" during a simulated emergency at Holyoke Community College. The married couple was part of the first class to graduate from HCC's new EMT training program.

Center for Health Education, the Cooks passed the course and their state exam. They are now both certified basic-level emergency medical technicians.

The Cooks were part of the inaugural class of this new program, which also included Justin Cook's fellow on-call firefighters from Hardwick, Leroy Hannon and Doug Anderson. According to Ken

Last fall, the college received a \$127,741 state Workforce Skills Capital Grant to purchase new equipment to enhance its EMT training program, which is now offered through TWO - Training and Workforce Options - HCC's collaboration with Springfield Technical Community College.

"It is the exact same equipment you will find in well-equipped modern ambulances today," White said.

"So our students already have experience using the same equipment they'll be using in the field."

Grant money was also used to purchase "Mr. Santiago," a simulator specifically designed for EMT and paramedic training.

"He hemorrhages, and you can apply pressure to stop bleeding or use a tourniquet, and he has a computer that records how much pressure is being applied," said Michelle

Sherlin, coordinator of the college's simulation laboratories, who orchestrated the simulation exercises for the

EMT program.

Not only that, but students can use a real defibrillator to shock him, and he has a built-in CPR monitor that shows the effectiveness of compressions and ventilations.

"This is actually the highest level of equipment that I've seen or taught with,"

said course instructor Mike Marafuga, an EMT with the Southwick Fire Department.

"I've never used simulation with an EMT program, so this is actually one of the first classes that I know of in the state that does this."

Sherlin agrees. "This is pretty innovative, what we're doing here," she said.

The next Emergency Medical Technician Basic Course begins Sept. 12 and runs through Dec. 7, on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6 to 10 p.m. and Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., at HCC's Center for Health Education, 404 Jarvis Ave.

For more information or to register, call White at 413-552-2324 or email kwwhite@hcc.edu.