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No rest for the rescuers

By Alexander Wilburn

LAKEVILLE — While Hotchkiss School students enjoyed spring break, the campus's classrooms were filled on Saturday, March 19, for the EMS Institute in Sharon's annual EMS Symposium, now in its ninth year.

Sponsored by Sharon Hospital, Salisbury Bank, Vintech Management, the Foundation for Community Health, Emergency Resource Management, On the Run and Robinson Leech Real Estate, the event brought together 115 EMS volunteers from 33 different squads across Connecticut and New York to further their training and education.

The colorfully titled classes included Medical Examiner John Vose's "Dead Men Do Tell Tales," Pat Thorney's "Potential Pediatric Patient Problems," and Nicholas Maltby's "We're All F@#led Up — Minimizing Stress, Depression and Anxiety in EMS."

Opening the all-day lecture series was author Dan Limmer of Kennebunk, Maine. For the past 35 years, he has written the textbooks used for training EMS volunteers. This was his first time at the symposium, and the excitement was palpable — and well deserved. Limmer was engaging, funny and very candid as he delivered a talk titled, "75 Facts in 75 Minutes."

"Fact Number 13: The old 'scene safety' education isn't realistic anymore," Limmer said as he painted a scenario in which EMS volunteers, once taught to wait until police arrived, would instead have to enter a school if there was a shooting, to aid the wounded.

"The world's a crazy place," he said in an oddly reassuring manner. "You may be in the middle of it."

Fact Number 28 included the wisdom, "Intuition is valid. It looks out for your best interest. Everyone has it, but not everyone uses it."

And fact Number 19, "You can bleed to death in two minutes," was accompanied by a horrifying slide photo. Limmer's books may be so popular because of their stark realism, as indicated by a phone call from his editor early in his career: "We've never had anyone die in one of our textbooks before!" His reply? "Well, that's what happens."

Two Volunteer of The Year Awards were given out by the institute's Board of Directors, one to

Asa Goddard of Cornwall, for his 50 years of service, and one to Joan Van Tassell of the Millbrook Rescue Squad, for her equally long dedication to safety and care in her community.

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