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NEPTUNE — A baker's dozen of aspiring doctors and nurses on May 21 received a tour of Jersey Shore University Medical Center's trauma center and an up-close look at a medical evacuation helicopter.

The occasion was the last meeting of the medical center's JumpStart mentoring program, a collaborative effort among the hospital, Neptune High School and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Monmouth County.

The students met at the hospital twice a month since December. The program included tours, demonstrations and course work.

Senior Loren Sutton said she most liked the "hands-on" part of the program because concepts were explained more in-depth.

Sutton said she wants to study to be a nurse.

The students were also given an overview of trauma medicine from Dr. Ivan Maldonado, a hospital trauma surgeon.

The day's events, Maldonado told the students, was to give them "a real sense of the tasks and the service given to the community by the trauma center. This is a different kind of medicine, a medicine of urgency and emergency," he said.

After Maldonado's introduction, the students were taken to the hospital's roof, where the Monmouth-Ocean Hospital Services Corp. medevac helicopter was waiting for them.

Sent out in teams, the students were told what the helicopter and its team does when responding to an emergency.

For senior Tasciana Rosales, being a medical professional runs in her blood.

"I come from a family of nurses," she said, as she waited her turn to go to the helicopter. "I figured working in a hospital is going to be inevitable."

Rosales said she wants to study to be a forensic nurse, and she might also work to get a pharmacy technician's license so she would have the chance to work in a laboratory.

"I wanted to be a history teacher, but now I want to go into nursing," she said.

Hospital spokesman Robert Cavanaugh said the program has been a success.

"This program was a great opportunity for 13 Neptune High School students who are interested in careers in health care to tour different areas of Jersey Shore and get an understanding of what happens in a hospital," he said.

Among the departments toured by the students are the cardiac catheterization lab, emergency department, transformation project, and nursing units, he said.

"Our goal at Jersey Shore is to provide these students with a real understanding of what we do each and every day," he said.

Shannon Mauer, the Big Brothers Big Sisters manager for the program, said the program has "gone beyond our expectations."

"These kids have been enjoying this tremendously," she said.

Mauer said the organization is looking to expand the program into Monmouth Medical Center with students from Long Branch High School.

"We're reaching almost 300 kids now," she said. "We trying to reach 600 by 2010."



Neptune High School students get a look at a medical evacuation helicopter at Jersey Shore University Hospital. (STAFF PHOTO: TOM SPADER)