Living in an area where ambulance response time is 5 minutes might seem like an eternity if your loved one is not breathing. Can you imagine if you lived in a rural area where it might be 45 minutes? Access to EMS is crucial to saving lives and the shortage of EMS personnel in rural areas is a challenge right now. Involving the generation getting ready to choose their future career is one possible solution.

If EMS agencies seek a way to increase recruitment, retention, and success of EMS personnel, outreach through high school and college programs is one way to reach students at a time when they are considering their next move in life. When a guest speaker talks about their career it is invaluable to learn about a career from someone who is actively doing the job. If EMS personnel visited high school science or college health science classrooms annually and gave a presentation on the day in the life of an EMT, more students might consider becoming an EMT or paramedic. Recruiting nursing students, potential pre-med or pre-PA students to consider working part-time in EMS will ease the shortage while giving those students valuable patient care experience. Recruiting college students interested in criminal justice would benefit them as they will be responders to emergencies in their future careers. Also partnering with national guards as potential responders might help minimize the current shortage of first responders. Most students think of physicians or nurses when they think of healthcare careers and fail to think of other careers, such as paramedics, a problem that can not be fixed without increased EMS visibility.

Making EMS careers more visible to high school and college students at job fairs and the first week of school welcome tables, would allow more students to see what their job entails, benefits, and how to become a paramedic. Students could ask questions to find out if this career is something they want to pursue. Offering internships for high school and college students to job shadow EMS personnel would help expose students so they know what they are getting into would help retention.

Putting a focus on the shortness of EMS schooling would also greatly increase the number of students interested in becoming a paramedic or EMT. One major thing that deters many people from pursuing a career in healthcare, in general, is the length of the schooling. EMS training is a perfect fit for those who want to do important life-saving work in the medical field without having to attend college.

With these strategies used in combination, EMS agencies could create relationships with prospective EMTs and increase the recruitment of employees which could help with the shortage of EMS personnel throughout the Upper Peninsula.