

MIDDLETOWN

Emergency drill documentary honored

The drill tried to recreate situations similar to what occurred during the Columbine High School shootings.

By **CHRIS ENGLISH COURIER TIMES**

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Preparing for the worst apparently made for good film material in Middletown.

A documentary of a June 20 mass incident drill at Neshaminy High School has tied for second place in one category of the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors' 40th Annual Township Citizen Communication Contest, said township public information coordinator Lisa Berkis.

The drill, organized by township Fire Marshal James McGuire, tried to recreate events similar to those that occurred during the tragedies at Columbine High School in Colorado and a school in Beslan, Russia, said Berkis. It was designed to test the command structure, interagency communication and adaptability of police, fire and emergency medical services as they worked together, she added.

Berkis conducted interviews for the documentary, which was filmed by David Kelliher of Foster Digital Media Productions in Lower Makefield. He runs the broadcasts of Middletown supervisor meetings that are seen on the township's cable television government access Channel 22.

The film was recognized from among seven entries in the "cable TV channels" category of the contest, said Brenda Wilt, associate editor of the PSATS monthly magazine. The first-place winner was an entry from Upper Merion, Montgomery County, about that township's cable TV feature called "Spotlight" that highlights news from the community.

Middletown tied for second with another Upper Merion entry, a feature about the township's Citizens Police Academy, said Wilt, who said she was impressed with Middletown's entry.

"I thought it gave people a good sense of the incident drill and the quality of the production was excellent as well," she said.

The five-minute documentary film of the drill can be seen on Middletown cable Channel 22 all this month and next month at 1, 6 and 10 a.m. and 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 p.m. on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays, said Berkis. The drill included simulated gunfire and smoke, she added.

"Any time our township staff and volunteers are recognized at any level, we're very pleased," said supervisors Chairwoman Lisa Pflaumer. "All of our different departments worked very hard and well together to make this drill happen, and I think that was shown on the video. I think people can see from the video they are well prepared in case of a disaster."