Emergency drill at Hamilton College 'extremely realistic,' prepares all

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CLINTON —
A child abduction, a fatal two-car accident, a shooting and a hostage situation—all occurred Monday morning at Hamilton College. “I was shot in the Glen,” said Regina Johnson, staff assistant in the Dean of Students Office. Though the bullets, blood and even the cheese sandwich requested by a hostage-taker were staged. The staged scenarios were part of the college’s 4th annual Emergency Preparedness Exercise. “This is extremely realistic,” said Steve Dziura, Central Oneida County Volunteer Ambulance Corps Emergency Medical Services chief and member of the planning committee. The drill tested the skills of local law enforcement, emergency responders and college staff including campus safety officers, public relations representatives, and those answering the phones. The exercise not only fosters relationships between agencies, but also fulfills mandated training for the agencies, Dziura said. In upcoming weeks a debriefing of the scenario will be done to find out where the college and the responders can improve. “It’s a win-win,” said Francis Manfredo, director of Campus Safety. “Play how you practice. It’s invaluable.” For example having acting students screaming in pain and made up with makeup helps emergency responders know what they really would be dealing with and how to work under pressure. With a gunshot wound to the shoulder and a helicopter waiting to pick her up for treatment, Johnson knew it was fake, but that didn’t make it any less unnerving. “It was a little disconcerting because I knew the shooter. It was crazy,” Johnson said. “I really don’t want to do that in real life.”

Agencies involved included:

* Hamilton College faculty and staff
* Central Oneida County Volunteer Ambulance Corps
* New York State Police
* Clinton Fire Department
* State hostage negotiators