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RESCUE ME

"That others may learn"

Winter 2002

Volume 2002-1

Preparing For Dog Teams to Arrive



A search request for Greater Philadelphia Search and Rescue (GPSAR) cannot come from a private party, it must come from a official federal, state, or local emergency service agency, law enforcement agency or search and rescue agency. There is no cost to the requesting agency or the victim's family. GPSAR members are volunteers that do not charge for services, although donations to offset expenses are always greatly appreciated.

It is important that search dogs are notified early. Search dogs can be utilized well as a hasty response because they can often cover more area than many ground searchers. GPSAR often searches in the middle of the night, when scenting conditions are optimal for dogs, and when the subject may be stationary.

If GPSAR knows of qualified dog teams that are closer to you, who are not members of GPSAR, we will advise you. GPSAR can be used as an additional resource or for a second operational period. The goal is to get the quickest response to the person in need.

GPSAR members carry cell phones, and/or pagers for turnaround notification en-route to a search. GPSAR does not mind being turned around en-route.

GPSAR can provide a lost person questionnaire. Answer as many items as possible, make several photo copies for each task team. It will be helpful and speed up the briefing process.

GPSAR handlers may arrive with 1-3 trained support persons per dog team, when possible. (1 handler + 1 dog = 1 dog team)

If possible, collect scent articles belonging to the missing person, that have been acquired without contamination in a new paper or plastic bag. Some-

thing that has a lot of scent (dirty socks, ball cap, dirty t-shirt etc.) are ideal. Articles should not be collected from the family laundry, because of contamination. It is very important that no one touches the scent article. Use rubber gloves or turn the bag inside out, grab the scent article and pull it back into the bag.

GPSAR maintains a number of maps for Pennsylvania, but may not have a map of the specific area. A map, or aerial photo would be useful. Photo copies can be made for each team.

Set up a command post away from the Place Last Seen (PLS). Keeping the PLS as isolated as possible.

GPSAR handlers will respond with appropriate equipment for the environment , including foul weather gear, first aid, radio, and search pack. If required, they will be self sustained for 24 hours.

GPSAR will look for lost or missing persons. GPSAR can assist in searches for deceased persons, drown persons, article search, and for evidence at a crime scene. Since GPSAR handlers and canines are not law enforcement trained, they will not respond to a search for a felony suspect or for an individual known to be armed and dangerous. GPSAR dog teams do not search for bombs or drugs. If you have a question on a particular need, feel free to call.

GPSAR is on a digital phone/pager callout, that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To ask for GPSAR to be paged, dial 911 (in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania) or 610-630-6744 (outside Montgomery County, Pennsylvania). Give the dispatcher information relating to the type of search, location and a contact phone number. The dispatcher may ask for additional information. An officer of GPSAR will return the call as soon as possible.

Preparing for dog teams to arrive.

1

Elections, Notes, Endings, Beginings

2

Explorer Perspective

3

Trainings

4

Election Results

Once again that time of year has come and gone for the democratic process to run it's course. This past January we had our elections for Chief, President, Finance Officer, and Communications Officer.

The results are as follows:

Chief	Mark G. Hopkins
President	T.J. Wallace
Finance Officer	Executive Board
Comm Officer	Andy Shecktor

The current Finance Officer did not have the time, due to personal commitments, to continue the office. When no one felt comfortable taking over the office it was decided that the Executive Board would manage the position in an attempt to get a tighter reign over the paperwork.

Notes from the Chief

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that elected me and insure them that I will do all that I can to fulfill the trust they have placed in me.

In my time with the team I have sat back and watched and thought about ways to do things differently. Now we'll get to see if it pays off.

One of the things that I will have to get used to is delegating. I look forward to learning that new skill in my first few months.

If anyone has any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at chief@gpsar.org.

Regards,

Mark G. Hopkins, Chief, GPSAR

Endings



Recently our Lieutenant and Vice President left the team due to personal commitments. While most people are satisfied to give less and less, Lt. Park was not. He refused to renew due to the fact that he could not

give close to %100 percent of himself.

His attendance was near perfect for the duration of his membership. I would hope that members would learn from his example and give a little more of themselves when they can. %100 is not realistic (like I told him) but %33 is not that much to ask at times.

New Beginnings

Some times you loose a member and it doesn't affect the team that much. Some times you loose one and the team never quite gets over it. Nadine was the latter type.



We're all glad that she is back. She pursued working with another team for some time but ultimately came back to where she started and found it still to be her home in SAR.

Welcome back, Nadine.

EXPLORER PERSPECTIVE

We're happy to say that we delayed this article for a couple months until the Explorer started college so it could come complete with a happy ending.

I'm what society would call "at risk" child. I come from a lower middle class, single-parent family, and according to my high school guidance counselor, it meant that I'm doomed to be a statistic, that I'd be another teenager who never got to reach her potential. Prior to joining SAR, his guess didn't seem to be that far off. In my sophomore year of high school, both my grades and attendance starting slipping, when I wasn't in class, I was probably cutting and sitting in the lunchroom with what you would call the trouble makers, the wrong crowd. I lost interest in everyone and everything that was important to me, and was depressed a lot. They told me that I was going to fail, and I figured why should I try to prove them wrong?

So why I am sharing all of this embarrassing personal history with all of you? It's definitely not something I'm proud of or like admitting to. But without knowing this, you can't understand how far I've come. I joined GPSAR in February 1999 after months of begging and pleading from my best friend, and one of the only people who hadn't lost faith in me at that point. I don't know if she knows this or not, but she probably saved me by bringing me to that first meeting. When I first joined, I saw a strong, confident group of people, and knew that I wouldn't last too long there. Each had made their contribution, both to the team and to the world, and there I was, the reject, the one who'd never make it. Something changed me after I joined the team, I don't know what, but I'm glad it did.

After finding my own little niche and becoming comfortable with all of these new people, I started opening up, expressing my ideas and gaining some much needed self confidence. Not long after this, I also started going to class, and my grades were definitely improving. The members of GPSAR have become a second family to me, offering guidance, support, concern, encouragement and a sense of belonging. They have been there every step of the way, whether I've wanted them there or not. Assistant Chief Hopkins, Captain Ferron and Lieutenant Park

have all been brave (or crazy enough, I'm not sure which) to teach me to drive, in their own cars. Assistant Chief Hopkins has become a mentor and a friend, always being the first to encourage a job well done, praise me when I succeed, and offer what he calls "a foot up the *** [censored for print]" when I need one of those as well. I don't know what I'd do without him, he's the big brother I don't have. Explorers Bleckman and Weir have changed me as well, and while they're often somehow apart of why I'm getting Assist. Chief Hopkins' foot up my butt, I'm grateful for all they have done.

SAR has taught me so much about so many different things, but I have learned the most important lessons about myself. I'm not a statistic, I'm not destined for failure because I don't live with the Brady Bunch, but I am a success, because I'm me. I can be or do anything I set my mind to. My opinion matters and what I have to say does count. I've come full circle, and while my journey's not over yet, I've learned from my mistakes and have begun passing on what I have learned to others. I may never be rich and famous, but I will succeed because I know I can! "This we do so others may live," but this we do to help ourselves as well. The next time you're too tired to get out of bed and go to a meeting or are in the field and getting ready to give up on your task, stop and ask yourself "What has SAR done for me?" I'm sure that it's helped you as well.

I don't know where I'd be without GPSAR and the Explorers, but I'm kinda glad that I don't. I like myself so much more now. I believe that I can do anything, and know I will. I've done so much already. I graduated from high school ranked 55th in a class of 576, with a cumulative GPA of 3.79, and was a member of the National Honor Society. All this from the at risk kid, the one who was told she wouldn't succeed. Thank you SAR, for rescuing me. By the way, those "friends" from 10th grade, the ones who haven't dropped out, gotten shot, or ended up in jail, are still in the 10th grade.

You're welcome!

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GPSAR

Mailing
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Goes
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Some Recent Training's



Since our last newsletter we have had several trainings. While no one prefers to train in colder weather it's necessary. We've been to several

state parks around the area and covered topics from canine to map and compass to grid and patient packaging.

At our last Ft. Washington training we got to work with the canines in freezing weather with winds that reached speeds of 40mph +.

Some of the members that had not worked with the canines had some good hands on field experience with the canine unit under some of the most disruptive conditions that could exist for a air scent canine.

Despite the conditions we had 16 members show up for the training. While it's not the full contingent it's not bad for a freezing Sunday.

Another recent training we had was at Valley Forge in which we covered several canine lessons, worked with some new and potential members, and had a cross training with the mounted unit.

This spontaneous training turned out to be an excellent opportunity to introduce all members to equine safety and operations.



All members that were interested got a chance to ride and see the search from a different view.

All in all it was quite educational.

Meanwhile early in February we were back at Ft. Washington we did some rainy day winter grid practice. Nasty weather is not preferred by anyone but we don't get to



choose when people need our services so we train whenever and under whatever conditions.