

# Dog Talk

The official *unofficial* newsletter for FEMA dog handlers

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## The USAR Foundation K-9 Drive & Decoy Workshop

Program Managers/ K-9 Managers,

The USAR Foundation is pleased to announce a **K-9 Drive and Decoy Workshop** in Collierville, TN on Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011. The course will be conducted at the E-Plex Facility, 10636 Shelton Road, Collierville Tn 38017

The Drive and Decoy Workshop is a 24 hour, highly interactive class, designed to breakdown “Drive” as it relates to working dogs. It will demonstrate how to develop and channel that drive to maximize training time and make your team as successful as it can be. The class instructs the student how to decoy for and motivate different breeds in order to capitalize on positive characteristics of each breed. You will see successful techniques and timing for reward delivery to develop a highly motivated search dog and produce highly successful teams.

This class requires attendees to be in good physical shape as 16 of the 24 hours will involve decoying for multiple dogs during practical field exercises. Last year’s class was a huge success and we are pleased to offer this course again. We will also have some additional instructors available this year.

Task Forces electing to send participants will be responsible for supporting their member’s travel, lodging and per diem expenses. Transportation to/from the airport, hotel and training site is the responsibility of the candidate. The cost per student will be \$600.00. Students will be responsible for

their own meals. Candidates are expected to provide their own personal protective equipment appropriate for training ground exercises Leather gloves, steel toe and shank boots, knee pads, elbow pads ,helmet, and safety glasses. **Teams without such equipment will not be allowed to participate in field exercises.** Portable kennels will also be the responsibility of the candidate. Candidates are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Code of Ethics and Aggression Policy and must sign a liability release.

Hotel accommodations will be at Days Inn and Suites, located at 1230 W Poplar Ave, Collierville TN. 38017 (Phone: 901-853-1235). Please request the “K-9 Workshop” block when making your reservation. Room rates are \$65.00 + tax per night. The hotel offers a complimentary Continental Breakfast every morning, Free Wi-Fi and Free Parking. There are numerous restaurants located near the hotel. Check in time is 1500, check out is at 1100. Cancellation policy is 48 hours before check in date. Reservations should be made as soon as possible to secure your room.

**Payment will be made to : USAR Foundation.** Tuition can be invoiced to each task force prior to class. For tuition information/registration please **contact Heather Wilkerson at 423-421-4880 or e-mail at hjwomac@yahoo.com**

### ***Instructors will be Sonja Heritage and Darrell Wilkerson***

#### **Sonja Heritage:**

Sonja is all about the dog. She is a FEMA instructor, mentor and evaluator and has presented FEMA/OFDA canine training courses to the national teams of Iceland, the United Kingdom, and Taiwan as well as all over the USA.

Sonja has been a member of the Fairfax County US&R Team VATF 1 since 1997 and has trained and certified 4 FEMA certified Disaster Search Canines to date. International deployments include the U.S Embassy Bombing in Nairobi, Kenya, earthquakes in Turkey, Taiwan, Iran and Haiti as well as the 2008 Haiti School Collapse. National deployments include the Pentagon, Hurricanes Isabel, Rita, Katrina, Gustav and Ike, as well as responding for the recovery efforts of the Space Shuttle Columbia crew with her recovery canine.

She has a private dog training business serving the Washington DC Metro area.

#### **Darrell Wilkerson:**

Darrell's love of dogs is what drives him daily. Darrell is on TNTF 1, He is a FEMA Instructor where he has been a part of numerous training courses within the Federal and State USAR Systems.

Darrell is currently the K-9 Coordinator for a State USAR Task Force as well as a Canine Search Specialist for a Federal USAR Task Force. He also sits on the K-9 Sub-Group for SUSAR. He has trained and certified 2 Type I Disaster Canines to date and been on several National and State Deployments.

Darrell has a broad knowledge of most working dog breeds and is an Advanced Trainer for a National Service Dog Non-Profit Organization.



## ***Life after FEMA?, by Ann Wichmann***

In June I resigned from the Colorado Task Force, and therefore became a non-FEMA person for the first time in 25 years.

I remember being so inspired by the folks who responded to Mexico City and then put on a conference in Reno in 1986 to share everything they learned - I particularly remember a conversation with Judy Graham, who sympathized with me that I lived in the wrong part of the country for disaster response. I came home from that conference committed to developing a way for canine handlers to help victims of disaster in any part of the country! My dear friend Matt Claussen and I started talking and training and exploring - I began traveling to California where handlers had been influenced by trainers in Switzerland, to Seattle, where the fledgling Pacific Rim Disaster Response Team sponsored a conference, and Montana, where Sandy Bryson, Vikki Fenton, and others organized disaster training in 1991.



In 1991 I was appointed to the FEMA Canine Subcommittee, and at the first meeting, met Jan Brennan, a powerhouse influence on the early formation of the system, and Chuck Mills, who so adeptly guided and encouraged our committee. Several of us went to Berlin that year for the International Rescue Dog Symposium (IRDS), where we learned training techniques developed over years of disaster response in Europe. Our presence and eagerness to learn and share knowledge earned us consideration on the international scene, and we again participated in Stockholm in 1993, and hosted the IRDS in Boulder in 1995. Marian Olson, FEMA Region 8 Director, was hugely supportive of this international learning exchange. Ben Ho and I spoke at Praha in 2003, but I think I was the only American in Seoul in 2005.... This international involvement was so rich, so instructive, and I encourage you all to develop friendships with search handlers around the world.

Our effort to establish a national disaster training protocol and certification was a thrilling, complex, and contentious process. We put on the first training camp in 1992 in Maryland, and then started using Camp Atterbury in Indiana as the annual Canine Search Specialist school location. It was a wonderful setting, with plenty of time for spirited discussions on the way to and from the classroom, late night meetings, and constant adjustments to what we learned from each other, the participants, and the dogs. So many incredible people were involved in this early process - Jan, Shirley, Elaine, Caroline, Beth, Annie, Matt, Hidi, Al, Michelle, Ed, Vikki, Jim, Bruce, and so many others ... all of us developing the teaching materials and the methods of the CSS, working together for a national cause.



On the subcommittee, we continued to grind away at developing a certification standard and honing our teaching materials, with every class and evaluation giving us new insights. During my last years on the sub-committee (retired in 2004), Shirley, Teresa and I had so much fun writing and developing. We began to get teams certified – I remember the dis-belief that Elaine, Matt and I shared when we achieved the Type I in 1995 – especially since we had only been able to train on tiny little pieces of rubble that we could find in our areas. Those first big rubble piles were truly heart stopping! The World Trade Center taught us that our system worked, and lessons from tragedies since then have taught us, and will continue to teach us.



And the dogs..... those bold, big-hearted, patient partners of ours who would try whatever we asked, pat us on the knee, and assure us that we would get it right next time. They have been our guides and our true inspiration to make this system work. Whenever things got a bit intense, we would watch a promising young dog or a masterful old one, and we would forget our arguments in the sheer wonder of watching a good dog work. They are the important ones, and they are the foundation of our timeless friendship.

Life after FEMA? Absolutely. Like most of us, I will continue to train and teach and learn, perhaps in a different setting, but with big dreams and good teams in my heart.



# Disaster Dog Challenge Coins

**Attention: CERTIFIED Disaster Dog Teams Past  
and Present!!!**

They're finally here!!! Own the challenge coin worth carrying, one specifically made, and sold only to Certified Disaster Dog Teams.



**Cost: \$15.00**

Here's what you get:

1. Specially designed Coin with unique paw shape
2. Engraved with your dog's name (coin will only be sold engraved, NO blank coins)
3. Can be used as a key chain with supplied hardware
4. Shipping and handling to your doorstep

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order form (1 coin per order form)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Shipping Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Certified Dogs Name: (Attach copy of Certificate -Type 1,2, CE \_\_\_\_\_)

(Delivery will be delayed w/o copy of certificate, K-9 certification status will then be verified by the K9 Sub-Committee)

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Make Checks Payable to John Gilkey. Send Order Form, Payment, and Copy of certificate to:  
K-9 Challenge Coin, 434 Pine Rd., Mt. Holly Springs, PA 17065. Allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.





# OKLAHOMA TASK FORCE 1

Oklahoma City Fire Department / Sponsoring Agency  
850 N. Portland Oklahoma City, OK 73108

DATE: Aug 24, 2011

TO: Task Force Representatives  
SUSAR & FEMA Response Teams

FROM: Oklahoma Task Force 1

SUBJECT: Oklahoma K9 Challenge

Oklahoma Task Force 1 will be hosting the National SUSAR Conference in Oklahoma City on November 7- 11, 2011. In conjunction with the conference a K9 search competition will be held November 11<sup>th</sup>. This will be open to both SUSAR and FEMA handlers/K9s with a FSA or higher certification.

The K9 challenge will consist of 5 timed and/or successful completion based search scenarios at 3 different locations throughout Okc. The competition will decide the best overall handler/K9 teams.

ENTRY FEE: \$25 (entry fees will be awarded as a progressive pay out for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places)

ENTRY DEADLINE: October 15, 2011

Space is limited to the first 20 handlers/K9 teams who RSVP to the contact below.

CONTACT: Dane Yaw at [dane.yaw@okc.gov](mailto:dane.yaw@okc.gov) or 405-615-9311 for more information or to enter.



# ☆☆☆☆ Kudos to.....☆☆☆☆

DOGTALK is pleased to announce that the following Canine Search Teams have recently gained certification (or re-certification) as FEMA US&R Canine Search Specialists:

## ☆☆ Dayon, OH – August 2011

Handler	Canine	Task Force
Todd Reed	Private	NE-TF1
Pam Bennett	T.C.	OH-TF1
Beckie Stanevich	Juno	OH-TF1
Debbie Triplett	Rush	OH-TF1
Tom Brown	Phoenix	PA-TF1
Dustin Rauch	Bailey	NM-TF1
Elizabeth Chaney	Ventoux	VA-TF1



# Kyle and Reggie

They weren't the most promising pair. Kyle had no training experience and a last name no one could pronounce or spell. Reggie, bred by the Mennonites in southern Missouri, had spent his puppy days in doggie day care, where he learned (A) toys are nothing special and (B) you only need to pay attention to people when there's nothing else you'd rather do.

But if Kyle Tjelmeland (just slur Chum-Lun and you've got it), a young cop, could put up with middle-aged women telling him what to do, we decided we could live with his "I'm never wrong; sometimes I'm misinformed" attitude.

It soon became apparent Kyle had that natural ability and timing that some who train dogs for years never master. And the goofy lab who just wanted to have fun became a toy-driven searching machine.

Before long they were solid on the elements and nailing victims on our home pile in Springfield, MO, 375 miles from our task force in Lincoln.

I remember our first road trip to Nebraska and all my admonitions, "Now, Kyle, don't call the firefighters 'hose draggers' – "Don't wear your Iowa State ball cap in Husker country." I worry too much – Kyle and Reggie fit right in.

In 2005 Kyle transferred to the SPD canine unit. I figured we'd seen the last of him once he got Kilo. I wasn't wrong; only misinformed.

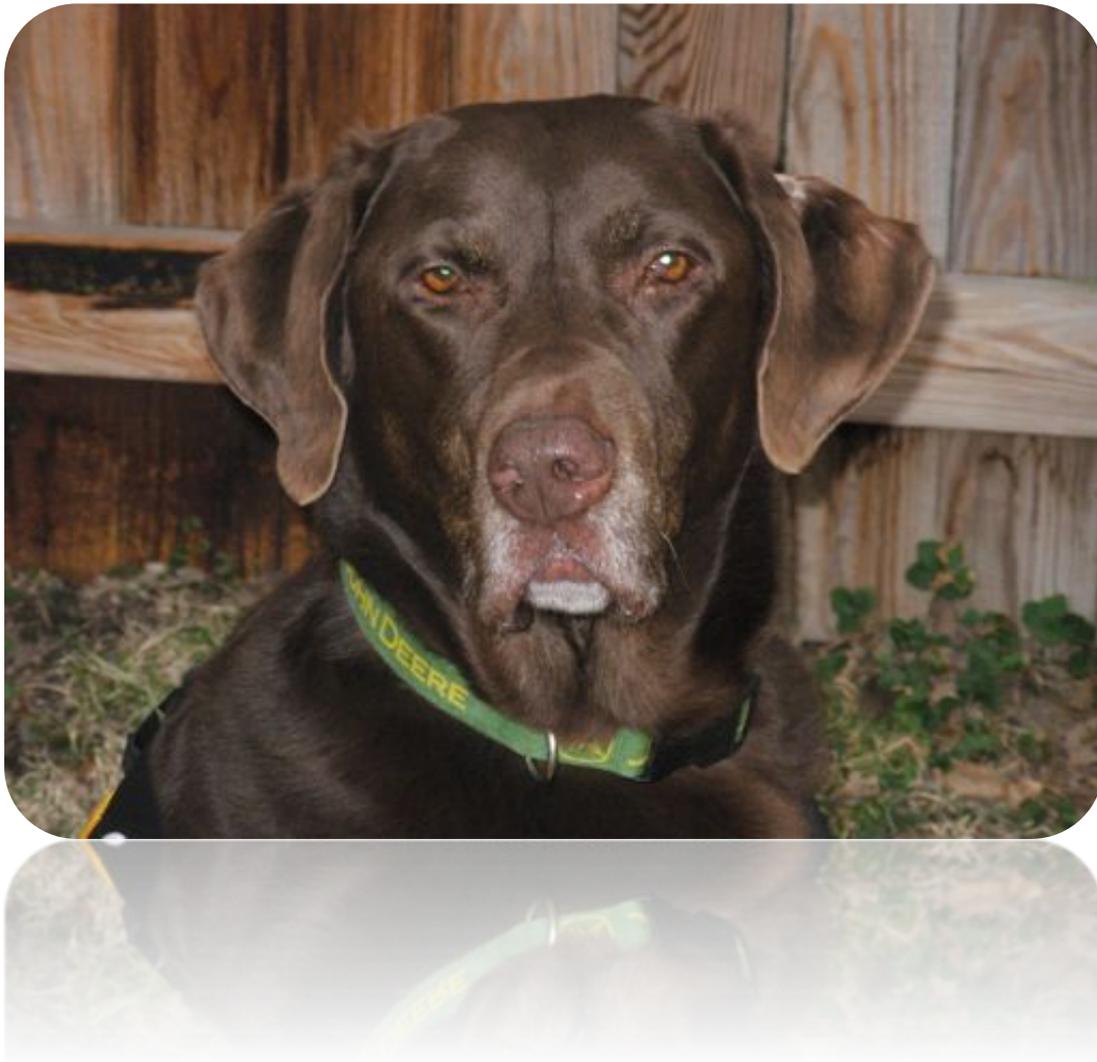
Kyle and Reggie responded to Katrina twice and were up for recert in 2007. Shortly before the test Reggie had malignant tumors removed from his stomach and ear flap. The vet gave clearance for the test, but we were all concerned about Reggie's fresh incisions. Kyle and Reggie passed recert and headed home to Missouri for rest and recuperation.

However, within 24 hours NETF1 was deployed to Greensburg, KS, where an EF5 tornado had demolished the town of 1,800. Kyle and Reggie responded from Springfield and spent several days searching in hot, humid, nasty conditions. Except for the stitches and a gaping hole in his ear, you would never have known what Reggie had been through.

Along with NETF1, Kyle and Reggie made the hurricane tours in 2007 and 2008, the last one being the infamous Hannah-Gustav-Ike trio, where we moved around like pieces on a chess board.



Kyle was an instructor in Lincoln's Handler Academy in 2009 and 2010; and he and Reggie retired from NETF1 in May 2010. In July 2011, Reggie lost his battle with cancer. Kyle may someday have another USAR dog, but as with all our first "greats," he will never have another Reggie.



In a recent interview I was asked what qualities I look for in a canine handler and in picking a canine for USAR work. My response was we look for the same traits in the handler and the canine: physically active, mentally stable, team player, one who enjoys training and loves to play the game; natural ability is more important than previous experience.

If I were asked that question today, I would simply say: Kyle and Reggie.

Submitted by Elaine Sawtell

Please forward any news, scheduled events, letters to the editor, or other info you want disseminated via **DOGTALK**, the underground canine newsletter to Anne McCurdy: [amccurdy@iuhealth.org](mailto:amccurdy@iuhealth.org)

