



# PawPrint

Newsletter of the New Zealand USAR Search Dog Association



**Vol #19 May 2008**

**Included in this issue....**

- October CREP report
- FEMA notes
- Pet Insurance

## President's Word

Greetings to you all, I trust you are all well and ready for a warm summer following our long wet winter.

As this latest issue of Pawprint rolls off the press we have seen the Advanced Canine Readiness Evaluation Process (CREP) take place for the year in Christchurch last weekend.

For those of you that haven't heard the jungle drums beating or had an opportunity to have a look at the website the results are:

- Linda Pike and Que - Basic
- Graham Joseph and Tala - Advanced
- Janelle Mackie and Cario - Advanced
- Sara Rad and Sasha - Advanced
- Brenda Woolley and Boss - Advanced

Congratulations to all of you, the many hours and hard work has paid off.

I have received a number of communications from our various stakeholders such as the Fire Service and MCDEM passing on their congratulations to the successful participants.

A huge thank you to the Christchurch based handlers, the members of Task Force 2 and Harewood Fire Station staff for the organisation and particularly 'hide' building that went on prior to the event. The undertaking of a CREP, especially the logistical requirements of an Advanced CREP means months of planning and hard work - so again well done all.

Hamish Patterson and Pip, along with Kerry Simmons and Jazz put in a valiant effort in attempting the Basic CREP but

unfortunately it just was not their day - keep up the effort guys and we hope to see you at the next Basic CREP in 2009.

A few happenings since July.

### National Training Weekend

As most are aware, a very successful weekend was held in Christchurch with the weather holding off for us. A number of training opportunities for both handlers and dogs took place in a well planned and enjoyable weekend for all. See article enclosed for more.

### New Committee

The new committee has met a number of times since July and are working hard on a number of tasks. To this point, the main focus was the CREP organisation, we move forward with a planning workshop in mid-November so it will be heads down and bums up with work on new initiatives being developed. Watch this space!

### National Trainer

Applications for the National Trainer Position have now closed, and we are eagerly waiting for the Fire Service to finalise the appointment.

### Website

I want to remind you all again that the website is for the members and is a great way of communication. Melody is happy to grow the website but she needs content. So if you have photos articles on training or anything related to USAR dogs send it to Melody.

Check out the website for CREP photos thanks to Graham Joseph and Julie Cowan (Australia) coming soon!

Finally due to changes in their work and life in general we say good bye to Malcolm York and Jack and Sue Chesterfield and Nugget. Both of these teams have in the past been operational for a number of years. Thank you both for the many hours of training, sweat and support you guys have given to the SDA but particularly your own regions. Your efforts in the 'early' days saw a USAR Search Dog capability in Auckland and Wellington and break down some barriers to search dogs as a whole. Enjoy your new ventures with your dogs and some more time to spend with family and friends.

*Brendon Irwin*



*I'll borrow the tops since you only walk on the bottom OK?*





## SEARCH DOG FOUNDATION

*Be Part of the Search™*

### News From the National Search Dog Foundation in America

In early September they wrote:

Three years ago, when Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, SDF teams were there, making sure no one was left behind in the rubble. And they are there again this week, ready to save lives.

In the wake of Gustav's wrath, Hurricanes Hanna, Ike and Josephine are threatening further destruction. In the event search and rescue operations become necessary, the following 14 SDF Canine-Firefighter teams will be called in to search for people trapped in the wreckage.

Deployed to Lafayette, Louisiana:

#### California Task Force 5

Firefighter Russell Tao & Andy, Chino Valley Fire  
Captain Marc Valentine & Val, Montebello Fire  
Firefighter/Paramedic Jason Vasquez & Maverick, LA County  
Deputy Su Vodrazka & Hero, LA County Sheriff's Dept.

#### California Task Force 4

Captain Jim Boggeri & Recon, Marin County Fire  
Engineer Mike Taul & Jessie, Novato Fire  
Captain Michele Vaughn & Comet, Salinas Fire

Deployed To Houston, Texas:

#### California Task Force 1

Firefighter/Paramedic Gary Durian & Baxter, LA County Fire  
Fire Safety Inspector Deresa Teller & Ranger, LA City Fire

Deployed To Atlanta, Georgia:

#### California Task Force 3

Fire Safety Inspector Tom Carney & Gypsy, South San Fran Fire

#### California Task Force 8

Captain Linda d'Orsi & Cody, Chula Vista Fire  
Firefighter/Paramedic Steve Swaney & Icon, El Cajon Fire  
Detective Kelly Gordon & Aspen, Montebello Police Dept.  
Firefighter/Paramedic Marco Maldonado & Hattie, El Cajon Fire

Our thanks to all of the SDF teams, for their stamina, courage and devotion to saving lives. And our thanks to you, our friends across the nation, for your steadfast support of these teams.

(<http://www.searchdogfoundation.org/98/html/index.html>)

### Chatsworth Train Wreck Search

On Friday, September 12th at approximately 4:30pm PST, a Metrolink commuter train collided with a freight train in the city of Chatsworth, near Los Angeles, killing 25 and injuring over a hundred others. Three Search Dog Foundation canine teams were deployed to the wreckage to assist emergency personnel in the search for surviving passengers trapped in the cars.

First on scene were Ron Weckbacher (an SDF civilian handler in service to California Task Force 2), and Abby, his Black Labrador. The team searched all four cars connected to the Metrolink engine. The first car had been reduced to mangled bits of steel after the Metrolink engine was shoved into it by the impact, making the search very difficult. Abby searched in several areas where, had she lost her footing, she would have dropped eight feet below into the wreckage.

Reported Ron, "It was very slippery and difficult at places. Thankfully, Abby knows what she's doing, and was able to maneuver well through these tough spots, including walking across four inch beams." During her search, Abby was supported by Ron and SDF Handler Gary Smith, who was already on scene in his capacity as a firefighter with Ventura County Fire.

SDF handlers Bill Monahan and Hunter (with L.A. County Fire) and Dan Solis and Sandi (with Kern County Fire) were also deployed to the disaster to assist in the search. Says Bill: "When we arrived on scene it was tragic. The loss of life was just devastating. Thankfully, the dogs did exactly what SDF has trained them to do, and impressed the other rescue workers with their ability to search the area so thoroughly and quickly. In the process, they brought comfort to all the families involved, knowing that everything possible was being done to find their loved ones."

Luckily, Ron and Abby live close to the crash site, but Dan and Bill were further away and had to be flown in by helicopter, courtesy of Kern County Fire Department. Dan says the time it takes to get to a disaster made all the difference in their ability to help. "The close working relationship between Los Angeles County, Los Angeles City and Kern County Fire departments made it possible for us to take advantage of the helicopter ride, which saved precious time."

Fourteen of SDF's canine search teams were in Louisiana and Texas, helping out in the hurricane search and rescue efforts. "It's lucky that Ron and Dan and I were available and ready to respond," says Bill. "This is why the country needs a full roster of teams, at full deployment readiness, at all times-to give our communities the protection they need, and deserve."

A week ago today we paused to remember the tragedy of 9/11, and the truly heroic efforts of the men, women, and canines who struggled to save lives on the days that followed. Hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, train derailments, building collapses can happen at any time, and we never know when our teams will be called to action. What we do know, is that thanks to the support of friends like you, SDF will continue to be a vital link in the safety net America relies upon in the time of need.

P.S. All fourteen teams that responded to Hurricanes Gustav and Ike have returned safely home, or are in route, after assisting rescue crews in canvassing neighborhoods to make sure everyone was accounted for.

## Companion Animal Conference

Janelle Mackie

In mid-September I was asked to present on USAR dogs at the 19th Companion Animal Conference held in Masterton. The Companion Animal Council was developed in 1990 with drive from the SPCA to recognize the link between humans and animals and is all encompassing with its definition and work. Initiatives include the development of writing groups to draft Codes of Welfare for submission to the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC). These codes aim to provide minimum standards for animals that are expected in law, in addition to recommended best practices. There is currently a Code for cats available and another for dogs in final draft.  
<http://nzcac.org.nz/>

This year's conference had a theme of The Connection- Humans and Animals, and USAR SDA was asked to present in a section called "Animals in our Community". It is always interesting to hear what others are doing with animals to enhance the lives of humans and I thought others might find it interesting too. As much as possible I have also included the websites of the organizations involved so you can look further if you wish.

One of other recurring themes for guide, mobility, hearing and epilepsy dogs was the chance their dogs gave them to interact with other people. The dogs act like a magnet in social situations and people were a lot more likely to engage them in conversation with their dog being the "ice-breaker".

It was also interesting to hear that so many service groups are accessing dogs from Animal Shelters and the SPCA – while we are all looking for something slightly different in a dog, the commonality was that good dogs are really hard to find, but once you have one and can train it, they truly do enrich people's lives.

Thanks to USAR SDA for the opportunity to attend this conference – there are a number of leads and contacts I made during breaks which will be followed up on. It was a good forum to promote what we do.

### Guide Dog Services

Probably the most widely known of the service dogs, this presentation went through the "life and times" of a Guide Dog from birth as part of their breeding programme, puppy walkers, basic training and then placement with a handler. The lady who presented it was one of the trainers and had the "challenge" of being the one who first took dogs-in-training for their first walk. She was blindfolded so could not subconsciously influence the dog – hmmm how is that for trusting your dog – but as she said she is still in once piece.  
<http://www.rnzfb.org.nz/ourservices/findingyourwayaround/guidedogs>

### Hearing Dog Services

Clare from Hearing Dogs talked about the history of hearing dogs and that a bequest is why they are set up in Taranaki with a training base. They train dogs to alert their owners to specific noises around the house including phone ringing, someone knocking on the door, and importantly the fire alarm. Some great work is being done. They tended to go for medium sized dogs due to alert of tapping paw on owner and that many recipients are quite elderly but have trained GSD, Bichon's and lots of x-breeds. On their website there are a couple of nice stories of people with hearing dogs and the difference they have made.  
<http://hearingdogs.orconhosting.net.nz/>

### MAF

Kirsty Ansell is the kennel and breeding manager for the MAF Biosecurity Canine Programme. I think most of us have seen the cute beagles at the airport which you hope don't sit next to your luggage but what I didn't fully appreciate is the scanning of mail, both inwards and outwards and other borders. "Behind the scenes" they tend to use x-breeds often from the SPCA or Animal Shelter that have an active alert of digging at a source. They have recently trained a Paua Dog for detecting outward smuggling which is a multi-million dollar issue.

### Outreach Therapy Pets

This is a joint initiative between SPCA and St Johns to use animals in the community. I tended to think of Rest Home visits but they have been doing some good work with troubled youth and mental health facilities with great results.  
<http://www.stjohn.org.nz/products/outreach.aspx>

### Mobility Dogs

This initiative was started by a university lecturer who ended up in a wheelchair following Meningitis. Mobility Dogs do a whole range of activities for people with disabilities from opening doors, picking up dropped items, fetching the phone if they need immediate assistance, pushing crossing buttons, reaching up onto counters at banks to deliver wallets etc. They think the average mobility dog knows up to 90 commands and Bradley (the founder and presenter) had his Golden Retriever with him and he was awesome to watch. The dogs often also carry panniers as the bags on the back of wheelchairs are often really hard for the user to get to so having keys, wallets, phone etc close by makes a big difference.  
<http://www.mobilitydogs.co.nz/>

This was a real case of one man's vision and drive and full credit to him and his dogs.

### Epilepsy Assistance Dogs

This is a relatively new area for dogs in New Zealand and internationally not that huge an area. It was started by a lady whose son had epilepsy. I had heard that dogs could predict when someone was going to have a seizure. What I had not fully appreciated is that the research shows that the confidence and stress reduction felt by someone with epilepsy of having a dog with them also significantly reduces the number of seizures they have. These two factors combined has had a dramatic effect on quality of life, particularly independence.  
<http://epilepsyfoundation.org.nz/index.asp?pageID=2145841675>





## National Training Weekend, Christchurch, 2008

*Matt Frater, and Flynn*

The weekend for Flynn and I was a really good time to asses where we were up to and where we needed to be going. It was cool to join together with all the other trainers from around NZ, and get to know them while learning from them too.

From the Friday morning, when we had to swap personnel (and dog-onnel) while en-route to Ashburton, I could see that it was going to be an action packed weekend.

Our first training site was Ashburton and one of the highlights was hassling Steve about how I wanted to drive the van, or the way he drove it, because he'd bite every single time shouting "you didn't pay the bloody \$3000 excess" in his pommy accent. In regards to the training though, the site was really good. The rubble didn't seem too difficult for the dogs and was, therefore, a good initiation. Coming from Wellington it was really awesome to train on rubble. It's few and far between here.

I think the training I most enjoyed on Friday was at the Women's Hospital. We were broken into groups and rotated around different stations set up by Brenda, Linda, Graham, or Janelle. Although the whole training was very valuable I took two important things away. The first was realizing when my dog was getting too tired and wasn't working to potential. The second was paying attention to the clues my dog gives when not barking. I sent Flynn to search a dark corridor and could hear his breathing change. I knew I should send him to check again more thoroughly. It was a good lesson.

My highlight of the weekend was not, in fact, hearing a Borat quote for the first time in over a year from Brendon, but instead the training we had with the Fire Service. As a painter, climbing the ladder wasn't much of an experience and I had abseiled before, but the Breathing Apparatus room was great fun. I enjoyed having to be very aware of everything and everyone around you, being the leader of a group as well as following orders from the leader, while also having to think fast in a pressure situation.

I felt that the rest of Saturday was about learning things for myself as well as good training for Flynn. We had the vet session, and I was also able to see how

the direction controls could be used in a search situation. We went to the 'Mother of all Wood Piles' where Flynn was quite successful – even managed to steal his toy without having to bark for it (although unplanned, not bad to vary how soon he gets rewarded). At this site we also did some directions on the top of some huge rubbish pile. I learnt how much more I need to work on the direction controls.

At this point I can briefly mention the dinner and the rugby that was played that night seeing as the All Blacks have conquered the beloved 'Dingo Deans.'

Finally, on Sunday we had dogs running over rubble and barking at people, as well as some work on the elements, for example heel work and agility. Then we had to say good bye to everyone. Thanks to the Christchurch team for all your hard work but more importantly for passing on your experience and knowledge – it was and is hugely valuable to us.

### Pet Insurance

For those of you who are interested in getting pet insurance for your dog, please consider PetProtect.

After discussions with PetProtect, it seems their Regular Care plan will suit most handlers. They are familiar with search dogs and some of the issues they face as they are already working with some avalanche dogs, and were very pleased to work with us.

They are offering SDA handlers a 10% discount off their Regular Care plan.

Briefly, the Regular Care plan offers up to \$3,000 benefit coverage for \$390 a year, before the SDA discount. Full plan details are available on the Pet Protect website at [www.petprotect.co.nz](http://www.petprotect.co.nz).

If you are interested please contact Melody Callahan in the first instance.

## 2008 National Training Weekend

