

# SAR Dog News

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## New Dog SAR Group Forming

### Dee Wild announces New Group

Dee Wild announced the formation of a new SAR Dog group whose aim is to become an exemplary group representing the interests of SAR dog handlers. Dog handlers have needs that are not being met by other organizations. We want to provide programs designed and developed for the dog handler. We will be reaching out to handlers to get their feedback on issues, as this organization is being developed with them in mind. Dee indicated that currently there is no national SAR dog organization with wide acceptance. She said, "there is a vast community of dog handlers who want an organization which is solely dedicated to issues facing dog handlers."

### Who is Involved?

The number of people involved is growing very quickly and by the time you read this letter the list will be out of date. The true brains behind the idea were Dee Wild and Lisa Higgins. Terry Crooks and Sherry Scruggs were asked to be a part of the effort. When it was learned Norma Snelling had resigned her position as a NASAR Board member, she was invited to join, as was Mary Jane Boyd when she resigned from her position in the Canine Section. The Executive Board is currently comprised of Dee Wild, Lisa Higgins, Sherry Scruggs, Terry

Crooks, Mary Jane Boyd and Norma Snelling.

### How are they qualified?

For those who are unfamiliar with these individuals, here is a little about them:

#### Dee Wild, Louisiana:

Dee has over 25 years experience training dogs. She co-founded LaSAR with Lisa Higgins in 1989 and has served as Director of Training since its inception. She is an instructor of land cadaver, water recovery, air scent and tracking/trailing at seminars across the US and the United Kingdom.

Dee is NASAR SARTECH II certified. She and Sky obtained their Canine SARTECH certification in Area, Water and HRD. Dee was a Coordinator for the Canine SARTECH program. She and her canine partners Maggie and Spice, deceased and her current K9, Sky have responded to over 175 searches for local, state and federal law enforcement agencies in Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Arizona and Canada.

Dee and Sky were recently sworn in with St. Tammany Fire Protection No. 1. Dee is a past NASAR SAR Dog Section Chair, a member of the Federal DMORT Region VI Team, Louisiana Mass Fatalities Taskforce, and a member of the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office. Dee and Lisa both

received the NASAR 2001 State of Louisiana Award for excellence in canine training and response, and the proliferation of the NASAR SARTECH Certification Program in the State of Louisiana. They have authored or co-authored several articles and a book chapter on water search and recovery.

#### Lisa Higgins, Louisiana

Lisa is a nationally certified HRD canine handler that volunteers her skills to local, state and federal agencies in their search for missing persons and homicide victims. On their first search, she and Frosty located a body that was four feet under water and three feet under sand. This would mark the start of SAR canines being used in the state on a regular basis.

She is certified as a subject matter expert in the state of Louisiana and has worked multiple canines in over 250 searches across the United States, Puerto Rico and Vancouver, British Columbia. She works regularly for the Forensic Canine Program, Evidence Response Team Unit, for the FBI. She has participated in an ancient archeological study in Mississippi.

In 1989 Lisa and her daughter, Troi-Marie co-founded LaSAR Dog Team, the first search and rescue dog team in the State of Louisiana. Lisa and her canine, Maggie obtained their NASAR Canine SARTECH in Area, Water and HRD and HRD

through NNDDA. She was a Canine SARTECH Coordinator. Lisa has worked in law enforcement since 1982, with St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office as a SSgt. with the Special Operations Division, with the Mounted Division and the K-9 SAR units, serving over 1,000 hours yearly. She and Maggie have recently been sworn in with St. Tammany Fire Protection No. 1. She is a member of the Federal DMORT Region VI Team and Louisiana Mass Fatalities Taskforce.

**Norma Snelling**, Washington:

After 18 years as a volunteer Sheriff's Deputy in California, Norma started the first of her four dogs in 1989 with the California Rescue Dog Association (CARDA). She later served as both Secretary and President of CARDA. She has worked on county, state and FBI searches over the years and has certified dogs in the areas of area, water, cadaver, evidence and tracking. She has been a team member of six different county teams in two states. Norma recently resigned from the NASAR Board of Directors as well as from her position as Western Field Projects Coordinator, which covered dog issues and testing for the western United States. She remains a NASAR testing coordinator.

**Terry Crooks**, Montana:

Terry has twenty-five years of search and rescue experience. Seventeen of these have been as a K9 trainer/handler. His three SAR K9's, Jess, Cima and Avy have successfully worked in avalanche, water, HRD, evidence and tracking/trailing. His experiences have included law enforcement criminal assistance as well as lost and missing persons. With Cima, Terry responded to hurricane Katrina with a Federal DMORT team assigned in Mississippi.

Terry is a Coordinator/Evaluator with NASAR. He coordinated the development of the NASAR K9 Avalanche Responder testing criteria. He has served as a speaker numerous times at the NASAR Conferences and as a speaker/trainer at various SAR K9 workshops and conferences. He is currently a K9 handler and Mountain Unit Leader for David Thompson Search and Rescue. He is a past president of David Thompson Search and Rescue and also of Western Montana Search Dogs.

**Sherry Scruggs**, Florida:

Sherry was born and raised in Gainesville, FL. and has lived there most of her life. She is a graduate of the U. of Florida in 1978 with a degree in Animal Science. She began working for the University 28 years ago. Most of her career has been in the large and small animal surgery suites at the College of Veterinary Medicine, working on client and research animals that were her projects. The last eight years have been spent as a manager of many of the animal research facilities at the University.

Sherry's has been hooked in her interest in search dogs since attending a seminar by Andy Rebmann 13 years ago. She is known for working labs but has added a German Shorthaired Pointer to her team and works one of each. She has certified dogs in all disciplines except tracking/trailing. She has worked with local law enforcement as well as the FBI in several states other than Florida. Sherry has been a Coordinator for NASAR since 2002 and has administered field tests in all disciplines except disaster. She is presently a member of Marion County Fire Rescue.

**Mary Jane Boyd**, Texas:

Mary Jane began her canine SAR career in 1998. In 2000 she and teammates formed K-9

Search and Rescue of Texas, based in Houston. She currently serves as Training Coordinator for the team and is the team's representative to the Southeast Texas SAR Alliance.

For 2 ½ years she has served as a member of the NASAR SAR Dog Committee where she held several positions: Ace Transportation Program Coordinator, Canine SARTECH Resource Database Coordinator and Western Region Field Projects Coordinator. Mary Jane is an NASAR instructor, SARTECH Coordinator and Canine SARTECH Coordinator. She has certified dogs in Area, HRD and NASAR First Responder Disaster.

To support her three search labs, Mary Jane works as a Controller for a Houston area homebuilder. She is a CPA and a licensed real estate broker with twenty-eight years of financial management and business experience.

## Why?

People should ask, "Why form a new group?" This is a good question that the founders have well considered. They know just how much work it will take to develop a successful organization.

The philosophy that those involved have all agreed to is that the membership is very important and their input is vital in helping our organization grow. We want the handlers to have an organization that will meet their needs and help them prepare for the future of canine search and rescue.

As of January, the largest search and rescue association has made its dog section centrally controlled with layers of approval by the Curriculum Director, Certification Director, Standards Director, Education Director and Executive Director before reaching the Board. Many members have expressed

exasperation with the total lack of communication.

We believe only through communication with the members can you design programs that meet the needs of the members and quickly react to situations which might be detrimental to the organization.

From the start, the new organization is committed to working with the best dog handlers in the country to draw from their vast experiences. As Policy and Procedures, Standards and Programs are developed, efforts will be put forth to obtain insight and input from many of these handlers.

The new organization believes that quality standards reflect well on an organization. It is recognized that NIMS will play a major roll in the future of search and rescue. Our standards will meet or exceed NIMS and programs will be developed to help handlers prepare for NIMS standards.

### **Who can Help and How?**

There is a role for almost every experienced dog handler. Most often that may take the form of giving input on drafts on Policy and Procedures to Testing standards to new programs. Once the organization is up and

running being a member will help keep you abreast of what is happening in the SAR dog arena.

One way everyone can help is by being understanding in that developing a new organization will take time. There is so much work to be done. Soon we will have lots of dedicated professionals working to produce a 501.c.3 corporation, a legal name, a Board of Directors, Policy and Procedures, By-Laws and all of the other necessities. At the same time, other individuals will be working on developing the operating issues of Standards and Testing and all of those items associated with program development.

### **Communication**

For now we will communicate through our newsletter.

In the near future, a website will be developed where handlers can go to find out what is happening. It will also provide opportunities for handlers to provide their opinions and input, and help us identify gaps in services that they would like to see us tackle. When the time comes, you will also be able to join our organization.

### **What will it Cost and What Benefits will I get?**

To be truthful we don't know all of the answers yet because many of these issues will be decided upon with input from people who are just now being selected. What is known is that the new organization will be a non-profit organization and it will operate on a very tight budget with the goal of bringing the services it offers to the membership at the lowest cost. This organization will involve a lot of volunteers and not need to charge for overhead to support disciplines other than canine.

### **In our next Issue**

Our next issue will talk about our Mission Statement and address any questions you might submit. Do you have some thoughts on what we should be doing? Let us know.

### **Want to Be on our E-Mail List?**

If you would like to be on our newsletter mailing list and keep abreast of our progress, please send us an e-mail confirming your desire. To hold costs down, this letter will only be available by e-mail. If you might be interested in joining our organization, please let us know about that also.

Contact Address: [snelling@olvpen.com](mailto:snelling@olvpen.com).

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## **Dog Whispers**

### **Norma Resigned from NASAR**

Norma's resignation was a surprise to many as she had just joined the board in 2007. We

asked Norma why she left NASAR's board. Norma stated "I have a great deal of respect for many of the people in NASAR and I will stay involved with them because I believe they

have some excellent programs like the SARTECH program. The question for me was, "Can NASAR fulfill the needs of the dog search community?" They surely have done a lot of things

correctly and perhaps if they had listened to their membership they would be an even better organization. But to answer your question directly, I believe a new organization is needed to really meet the needs of dog handlers. I like the open attitude

of those involved in this organization and I believe they really want good communication with the SAR dog community. They have great plans for the future and are full of energy so I know they will succeed.”

### **Did you know?**

**Mary Jane Boyd** resigned her NASAR position as Western Region Field Projects Coordinator for the SAR Dog Section? We'll ask her why in the next newsletter.