



Photo by LAURIE WEIR

The Rideau Search and Rescue Team trained in Montague Township Sunday morning. The team now includes a half-dozen members on horseback, four of whom are pictured here.



Submitted photo

Chris Ledder steadies the 'victim' onto a backboard.



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Dan Beaulieu (third from left) is the search commander for the Rideau Search and Rescue Team. They were on a training mission Sunday where volunteers were given clues to find a missing person. It took the team of about 20 volunteers about four hours to perform the exercise.



Submitted photo

Tom Berrigan (left side of the back board) and Jon LeMarbre lead the way for the SAR team as they extricate a 'victim' from the woods during a training mission.

## Search and rescue team on a mission in Montague

By LAURIE WEIR  
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EMC News - They do it so other people may live.

The Rideau Search and Rescue Team was deep in the woods Sunday morning (Sept. 30) on a training exercise. They had to find a missing hunter - who happened to be a 180-pound dummy, strategically placed inside a densely-wooded, 250-acre parameter in Montague Township, just east of Smiths Falls.

Dan Beaulieu is the search commander. The group has been helping assist the Ontario Provincial Police in ground searches of missing persons since 2009.

Their most recent deployment was in the spring, as they helped to locate a missing senior in the White Lake area.

Beaulieu is retired from the air force, but he has experience in search and rescue. It was a natural fit for him to jump on

board this local volunteer initiative four years ago.

About 20 members of the team were in the woods for this training exercise, including four on horseback.

They were given the details of the missing person, divided into groups and then searched in grid patterns along the areas where the hunter was last seen. They were not looking for the hunter specifically, but for clues.

"I've been in here (the woods) since Friday, and yesterday (Saturday) I dropped clues along the route that will direct them to the 'body,'" Beaulieu said.

A backpack, shotgun shells, a glove and other items were hidden in the woods for the team to find, among other clues like a footprint.

"I was very impressed. They found about 80 per cent of the clues," he said.

Another 10 per cent of the clues weren't found by the

ground teams because the mounted group discovered the dummy. The ground teams then stopped their search to help bring the dummy out of the woods.

Monday, Beaulieu said he graduated eight members from their initial year probation, to the search and rescue team who are now able to go on a call for service.

"It was one of the best training exercises we've had yet," he said. "They really excelled at the practical aspect of this training exercise."

When volunteers are first recruited, they are on probation for a year. During that time, they learn the ropes, and are certified and trained before being called to the SAR team.

The group gets together for training about twice a month. Everyone volunteers their time and all are trained in various search and rescue techniques, including a Level

C CPR.

"The team is a member of the Ontario Search and Rescue Association (OSARVA), which is the governing body for Volunteer Search and Rescue teams within the Province of Ontario and is the liaison between the OPP, NSS (National Search and Rescue Secretariat), EMO (Emergency Management Ontario) and other Volunteer SAR teams," Beaulieu said.

The group may be having a homecoming of sorts in the near future, as the Gallepeau's of the Gallepeau Centre (formerly, the Rideau Regional Centre) in Smiths Falls, have offered the team the use of a room on the property to use as its headquarters, Beaulieu said.

There was a search and rescue team on the property when it was the RRC. The team was formed to help detect missing residents. They also worked with the police and the army,

said Tom Whitney, who was a former employee of the RRC and also one of the members of that rescue team.

"We had a couple residents go missing about 30 years ago and died from exposure to the elements," Whitney said.

It was because of this that Bill Armstrong, another staff member at the RCC, felt the need to have a search and rescue team on the grounds.

"We worked with Bill and eventually he retired and John McConnel and I kept the team together and we completely inventoried every door - each person was accounted for so that it was easier to track them down when they went missing."

"We helped the police find missing persons too, and sometimes the army would send young troops to get some initial training in search and rescue with us."

It was when the centre closed in 2009 that the name

changed to the Rideau Search and Rescue Team as more community members became involved.

"Once the RRC closed, the team reached out to the community and there were 15 members on it," Beaulieu said. "Now we're up to 52 members. It's growing in leaps and bounds."

Beaulieu says the team is now in talks with the Smiths Falls Police Service to be able to work along side the local force as well as with the OPP.

Deputy Police Chief Mark MacGillivray says they are optimistic to be able to team up with more resources.

"We've been in discussions with the group with the possibility of adding the use of their services in Smiths Falls," MacGillivray said.

"We are partners with the OPP and the added use of resources would be great."