

## Rapid assistance program keeps members prepared with 2-day training

BY SEAN GOLDEN • The Eagle-Gazette Staff  
• February 22, 2010

LANCASTER -- It's all about preparedness and a healthy volunteer spirit for the members of Rapid Assistance to Community Emergencies.

RACE is a nonprofit, volunteer disaster response and search and rescue organization based in central Ohio. The group conducted a two-day training session for its members this past weekend at Alley Park.

Wendell Adams, 42, has been with RACE since 2003. He said that sessions such as the one took place at Alley Park are invaluable in preparing fellow members to respond in situations where they are called upon.

"We have lot of new guys and ladies, and we need to quickly show them all the different aspects of what we do," Adams said. "We've done indoor courses on map reading, compass reading search techniques and basic principles of how an incident command system works."

RACE does not self-dispatch but works in cooperation with local law enforcement of emergency personnel when their services are requested. They use their resources to aid in everything from missing persons cases to assisting with travel in hazardous weather conditions.

Members of the group conducted a mock search mission on Saturday at Alley Park. A field team leader played the part of a subject lost off the trail with a broken leg, and members learned how to prepare and execute a search and rescue plan safely and effectively.

Sunday's training included rope work as well as different techniques for building fires.



Each member of RACE is required to have basic CPR and first aid training as well as a sufficient amount of field instruction such as the kind offered at Alley Park. They must complete both the IS100 and IS700 online courses through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which deal with the incident command system.

The group also encourages its members to acquire a search and rescue certification through the National Search and Rescue Conference, commonly called SARTECH II.

The SARTECH II level of certification is the intermediate level for search and rescue personnel.

RACE members go through training at least two times a month at locations across Central Ohio. The instruction and certifications are an effort to show local law enforcement and emergency personnel what the group is able to do.

"We want to show them that we're a capable, professional resource for them," Adams said. "We're not here to take over someone's job. We're here to assist them and lend our support."

The group is a probationary member of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference, a wilderness search and rescue organization that provides professional volunteers trained in search management and field operations for missions in the mid-Atlantic region.

RACE is working to acquire the necessary certifications to become a full-fledged member.

Brian Wimer is a Field Team Leader for the ASRC and has been a member of RACE for almost five years. Wimer decided to get involved with search and rescue after traveling to Pensacola, Fla., to help relatives in the wake of Hurricane Ivan in 2004.

“I saw the devastation, because the first responders were stretched to the max,” Wimer said. “There’s a lot of great information and skills that we provide to our membership here. Stuff that’s good outside of just being in search and rescue, to keep yourself safe.”

Brian Meier, 28, of Columbus, has been involved with RACE since September. He said the knowledge and skills he has picked up in training with the group have been enlightening.

“The reason I got involved was to take an active role in my community,” Meier said. “They make it very clear in whatever situation we’re asked to respond where our responsibilities start and definitely where they end.”

## MORE INFORMATION

To volunteer, make a donation or request services from Rapid Assistance to Community Emergencies please contact Beth Huhn, CEO, at (614) 204-3412 or at [admin@disaster-response.org](mailto:admin@disaster-response.org). Or visit the group’s Web site at [disaster-response.org](http://disaster-response.org).