



## Tazewell County SAR: Mentoring Yields Depth & Continuity by Deb Collett

*In 2006, Tazewell County EMA'S Search and Rescue Team (TC SAR) was an unstructured group shunned by its own county's law enforcement agencies. Nine years and over 60 search calls later, it is a trusted resource working regularly with multiple agencies both within and without its county borders. The key to the turn-around was developing a proficient leadership team four tiers deep. Here's how they did it.*

### Start with Enthusiasm

Bryan Collett, current team lead of TC SAR, joined Tazewell County EMA (then ESDA) after a close-shave with a tornado prompted him to become a storm-spotter. A few months in, he became intrigued with "the ground-pounders" and joined the search team as an excuse to traipse around in the woods. But his interest in SAR quickly eclipsed his hiking ambitions. He began to study SAR craft in earnest, and what he discovered fascinated him. Like anyone learning something new for the first time, he went to the SAR leadership with his findings. As a business owner with significant project management experience, Bryan naturally had ideas on incorporating the information into the team.

### Overcome Inertia

Collett did not feel his ideas were met with enthusiasm or resistance, but apathy. A few key people had been keeping the Search Team going for a long time, and they had had enough success with their methods that they were either indifferent or ambivalent to his suggestions.

Looking back, Collett is sympathetic. "[The guys] ...did what they knew with the time that they had – and they didn't have the time or skill sets to do more. That didn't make them bad people." It simply meant they were folks who were very overcommitted, and tired.

Nevertheless, there were scuffles between personalities – even amongst those who

emerged to help implement improvements. That time period clearly still troubles him. "If I knew then what I know now, I'd have done different. But, I know what I know now because of the choices I made." By 2011, Collett had emerged as TC SAR Team Lead. He began his tenure with a goal: to give the team enough depth that he was dispensable.

### Dispensable Leadership

Having seen his predecessors' exhaustion, Collett knew he wanted to build a team of leaders and not do it all himself. So he brought principals from his entrepreneurial experience to bear: learn everything you can from whoever you can, hire people smarter than you, avoid group think at all costs, and invest in your employees for productivity and longevity. Tailoring those concepts to creating a SAR leadership team, the following principles emerged:

- 1) Recruit life-long learners
- 2) Have complementary strengths & weaknesses
- 3) Create an environment where differing views are freely expressed.
- 4) Mentor

*Article continues on page 3*



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### Events of Interest:

- *Search and Rescue Management Course, February 21-22, Normal, IL*
- *Ground Search and Rescue Training, March 21-22, Ottawa, IL*
- *Ground Search and Rescue Training, April 11-12, Effingham, IL*
- *Ground Search and Rescue Training, April 18-19, Tremont, IL*

On November 22, 2014, all 2014 ISARC members were invoiced for their 2015 membership dues and sent a new Membership/Resource form. Included was an explanation of what information is being asked for on the form, available as a fillable PDF document. If you have a computer program that saves/prints PDF documents, you can rename and save the completed form, sending it to ISARC as an email attachment. Alternatively, you can complete the fillable sections online, then print, scan, and email. Finally, you can still print it and mail it in with your 2015 dues payment via postal service.

This form accomplishes two goals. First, the membership portion lets us know who is point of contact for your agency, who will be the voting member at the annual membership meeting, and who is the search and rescue contact personnel. As things change within your agency, ISARC will at least once a year have the current information for that member agency. Secondly, the resource guide portion gives the ISARC Hotline duty officer a snapshot of personnel and assets you may have available to assist during a mutual aid call, as well as the best contact method for your agency in the event of a search (ex: contact an individual or a dispatch center).

The membership/resource form needs to be submitted to ISARC by March 31, 2015. The Mutual Aid Committee will update your changes and add in new information. If your paperwork is not submitted in a timely fashion, you give the Mutual Aid Committee permission to contact (*i.e. cordially harass*) you for the information.

We hope this form allows ISARC to better assist in the event of a search, and helps the duty officer to be aware of any specialty personnel/assets you may have available.

### Bylines

This quarter's contributing writers and editors are:

Kim Gotte, Chair of ISARC. When not overseeing the ISARC Board or stomping through a cold muddy thicket on a search, Kim can be found working as a Product Design Engineer or teaching Search and Rescue courses. She relaxes by spending time with her grown son or dog, Buzz.

Deb Collett, Program Assistant, Tazewell County EMA. Deb works in emergency management by day, and is a semi-professional writer by night. Author of 3 books and several blogs, discover more at [debracollett.com](http://debracollett.com)



*Tazewell SAR Training event,  
August 2013*

## Search and Rescue Emotional Health Safety Tips by Deb Collett

**Protect and nurture every team members' passion and sense of calling.** Every boots-on-the-ground search team member of every SAR Team *anywhere* has heart-and-soul empathy for other people. The way we answer the question: "What if it was my kid/parent/friend?" is what makes us get up at 2:30 am to go out in 12-degree weather when we have to be at work by 8 am.

As a team, know one another's "Why" stories, and keep that information confidential unless you have leave to do otherwise. Oftentimes the reason someone joins a search team is due to an experience of loss: a buddy in the war, grandparent, being lost and found as a child. Be respectful when someone

shares that information with you, they've made themselves vulnerable. Don't trample their trust.

**Protect Team Members from Themselves.** Face it, most ground-pounders are driven, Type-A, worker-bee, hunters. It makes us good at what we do, but it also means we wear ourselves out. Make sure every team member know it's every team member's job to keep each other safe.

In Tazewell SAR's case, that is led by example from the top down. SAR Team Lead, Bryan Collett, is hypoglycemic. Everyone on TC EMA SAR knows "If he starts to glitch, feed him" – and what that little slogan entails. They also know who is

most likely to dehydrate, who has what allergies and who has uncanny balance on hillsides.

There's another area of safety that is necessary and sometimes difficult: benching a team member for the sake of their mental health. It's a very uncomfortable thing to do, but it is important to recognize when someone is creeping towards burnout, and to come alongside your friend and encourage them. Oftentimes it is when people are being the most cranky and brittle that they need you the most. Be Kind!

# ISARC Hotline Improvements by Kim Gotte

Last year the ISARC Board grappled with improving the benefits of being a member of Illinois Search and Rescue Council. One of the areas we moved forward was improving our hotline dispatch service.

Previously, the ISARC Hotline procedure was to have an agency call the hotline when they had a search and then the hotline duty officer would give that agency contact information for teams in their area of need.

Now when an agency calls the ISARC Hotline, 870-270-4SAR (4727), the duty officer will first, with the aid of the caller, determine the Search Urgency Rating Factor for the search. The duty officer will take down basic search information and what personnel and assets you have on scene, if search management personnel are needed and what other

personnel or assets are you requesting. After providing your staging/logistical information to the duty officer, the duty officer will begin making the resource calls on your behalf. You can then go back to your search efforts and not worry about having all the calls/return calls impeding on your search planning.

Upon receiving information on the availability of search assets, the duty officer will then call back to the incident point-of-contact reporting the quantity and nature of incoming resources, their ETA and any other pertinent information.

In the event you have resolved the search prior to incoming search assets arriving, simply contact the ISARC Hotline again to relay the "Stand Down" information.



## *Tazewell County SAR, continued*

**Learning :** Lessons come in ways both expected and surprising. For instance, Bryan Collett has been put through his paces at AFRCC Inland Search and Rescue School ([www.uscg.mil/tcyorktown/Ops/SAR/Inland/default.asp](http://www.uscg.mil/tcyorktown/Ops/SAR/Inland/default.asp)), but has also learned search tips from Jim DeFord, a TC SAR member whose octogenarian vision can still spot bullet casings in autumn leaves at 9 yards! Key Point: Never assume someone is too old, young, or inexperienced to teach you. In SAR leadership, look for people who have curiosity. They tend to be flexible of mind and enthusiastic when trying new things – very important traits when developing or presenting new curriculum to your team.

**Strengths & Weaknesses:** By his own admission, Collett is terrible at giving PowerPoint presentations. But, he is excellent at explaining logistics and search strategy to individuals and small groups. Teaching SAR requires both abilities, so Collett compensated by recruiting Mike Carter ("a passionate PowerPointer") to be Assistant Team Lead. But there is much more to the two men's relationship than complementary teaching styles: they aren't afraid to butt heads on occasion. Which leads to the next point:

**Disagree Agreeably.** There is an art to this. First: Trust one another implicitly. Have faith that they, as you, have the best interests of the Search Team in mind. Second: Remember, Team Leader, you intentionally surrounded yourself with people who do not think like you *precisely because they do not think like*

*you!* During a search in the field, team members are aware of and cover one another's blind spots so an entire area is searched. There is no difference between doing this in the field or searching for a solution to a problem. Third: Check your ego at the door. If you cannot do that, please get out of the way. The rest of us are here to save lives, not dance to the drumbeat of our own agendas.

**Mentor:** Mentoring is crock-pot cooking in a microwave world. In Search and Rescue leadership, it means choosing enthusiastic, curious team members and feeding them high-quality information, like Bob Koester's book, Lost Person Behavior. It involves spending at least an hour a week corresponding/interacting with each person in your leadership team to develop that person's skills both as a searcher and as a leader. Eventually, you will have a skilled searchers who are also a skilled leaders, At which point the task shifts from teaching them what you know to teaching them to teach others. The beauty of mentoring relationships is that they are not one-sided or draining. Everyone is encouraged, because everyone is growing together

That's how the leadership tiers got 4-deep in TC SAR: Bryan mentored Mike, and they

in turn mentored Kevin, and the 3 of them in turn are mentoring Dan, Ally and another Mike.

Having quality leadership results in a dedicated team of searchers. All of the principles used team leadership apply to the whole team, which in Tazewell is a corps of a 15 searchers, and 2 support team members. Additionally, TC SAR has support from TC EMA's Communications & Unified Command Post Teams.

TC SAR Leadership offers two suggestions for teams as a whole: A) offer many, varied educational opportunities B) Make field trainings places to have fun and experiment with new skills. Not sure you have what it takes to be a flanker? That's okay; the only way to learn is to practice, and no one starts out getting it all right.

With 6 able to lead TC SAR in the field, there is continuity of operations, regardless of events like disrupted work schedules or illnesses.

For Bryan Collett, it means he can go on vacation without worry, because things back home will be fine. Best of all, this year he hopes to retire from presenting PowerPoints !



# Committee Help Needed by Kim Gotte

The heart of ISARC is YOU! Our goal as an organization is to provide state-wide resources and encouragement to Search and Rescue volunteers at both the agency and individual levels. Ultimately, ISARC is people helping people grow and develop Search and Rescue skills.

With that in mind, would you consider assisting on an ISARC Committee? It is a time commitment of 5-10 hours a month - most of which can be done on a laptop in the comfort of your own home—and via conference calls. Here is a list of Committees and a brief description of their functions:

- **Conference Committee:** Plans & executes the annual conference
- **Curriculum Committee:** Develops new curriculum based on the matrix set forth by the board
- **Community Outreach Committee:** Represents ISARC at conferences and events, reaches out to prospective member, directs new teams to sources to aid in their development.
- **Mutual Aid Committee:** Develops and maintains resource guide and database of contact and asset information for all member teams. Networks with first responder agencies to

educate them of our teams' capabilities.

- **Training & Validations Committee:** Sets the criteria for member teams to be validated based on developed curriculum. Assigns requested training sessions to the appropriate area lead instructors.

Interested? Please contact [board@illinoisar.org](mailto:board@illinoisar.org) for information & to volunteer.

*"Many hands make light work"*

# ISARC Quarterly Newsletter: Call for Submissions by Kim Gotte

Our Goal: to make this publication for you, *about you*, and *by you!* Is there a person and/or organization that you would like to see highlighted? Send in those suggestions! Learn something new during a search? Submit an article about it! Have SAR-related original-content photos and captions? We would love to share them with our ISARC family.

We are currently requesting ARTICLES on the following:

- ⇒ Lessons Learned from a recent search (2013 or newer)
- ⇒ Reflex Tasking Skills—recent successes in gaining speed and accuracy in the

task(s) - and *how* you made the improvement

- ⇒ Living Legends: focus on a member or a team

Accepting ANNOUNCEMENTS for:

- ⇒ Upcoming classes or trainings
- ⇒ Fund Raisers
- ⇒ And other SAR activities

Remember: this newsletter is yours, we will tailor it to your interests.

Publication months are: November, February, May and August.

Supplemental issues are possibilities.

Articles accepted year-round; please submit electronically in Word Format to [board@illinoisar.org](mailto:board@illinoisar.org) with "Newsletter Submission" as a subject line. Although there is no guarantee that all articles will be printed, all articles will be reviewed and you will receive a response within 40 days of submission.

Submit to: [board@illinoisar.org](mailto:board@illinoisar.org)



## Illinois Search and Rescue Council

### NEWSLETTER

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***So that others may live***

The Illinois Search and Rescue Council is a charitable, professional, and educational organization which supports, coordinates, develops, promotes, and implements search and rescue resources with the underlying principles of saving lives and preserving property through its support of the National Search and Rescue Plan, the National Response Framework, and Illinois Emergency Operations Plan.

Our membership is comprised of SAR teams from all across the State of Illinois, and some surrounding areas, that have come together to further the professionalism of the SAR discipline. Our teams include organizations from public safety organizations as well as non-governmental organizations providing search and rescue services for missing persons within the State of Illinois.

We are on the web at [www.illinoisar.org](http://www.illinoisar.org)

Check for event and training updates often

We are also on Facebook!