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**KENT COUNTY SHERIFF DEPARTMENT**  
**Lawrence A. Stelma – Sheriff**

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701 Ball Avenue, N.E. • Grand Rapids • Michigan • 49503



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 18, 2017**

**Contact: Lisa LaPlante – 616.632.7567**

## **Kent County to Host National Search and Rescue Training for Dogs & Handlers**

**GRAND RAPIDS** – During disasters, missing person searches and even terror attacks, rescue crews often rely on the amazing abilities of dogs. Their ability to pick up a person's scent and track it down is better than some of the high-tech equipment available these days. Kent County Search and Rescue (SAR) will be holding a K9 Training Seminar May 18-21, 2017, at Camp Roger in Rockford. This special three-day training will include expert instructors in man-trailing, human remains detection, and area search/disaster so that students and their dogs can fine-tune their search skills. This is the first time this training seminar is being offered in Michigan.

Having a solid staff of searchers with well-trained dogs can prevent tragic endings. "Having well trained dog teams give us some special resources that cannot be matched by humans working alone," said Kim Karr, Deputy Director of Kent County Search and Rescue. "Our volunteer handlers and their dogs work for the satisfaction of helping bring closure to families. Keeping our dogs' skills sharp through this training seminar is good for all of West Michigan."

Trainers scheduled for the event include:

**Denise Alvord:** firefighter/paramedic in Colorado, heavily involved in multiple aspects of mountain search and rescue for over 12 years. She has 3 certified dogs working in Trailing, Air Scent, Cadaver (land and water recovery), Avalanche and Disaster.

**Mary Carson:** K9 Handler since 2007, and founding member of Independent Search & Rescue Canine Handlers, Inc. (ISRCH) an all-volunteer team of SAR K9 handlers located throughout the US. As a Canine Response Team (CRT) for ISRCH she currently works three certified Bloodhounds who have been successfully deployed across the country.

**Teresa McPherson:** member of Virginia Task Force One and Virginia Search & Rescue Dog Association, has responded to numerous missions on a local, State, Federal and International level. Responses include the OKC bombing of the Murrah building, Hurricanes Katrina and Ike, the Haiti earthquake, Super Storm Sandy, as well as requests from the FBI, CIA, and local law enforcement agencies.

**Ann Wichmann:** the first female park ranger in the State of Colorado who began training service dogs in 1975. Ann served on the FEMA Canine Subcommittee and helped develop the teaching curriculum and national standards for the Disaster Search Canine Readiness Program. Ann has certified five canines to the FEMA disaster standard and four to wilderness airscents standards.

The seminar is sponsored by Kent County Search and Rescue and the Search and Rescue Dogs of the United States. More on registration can be found at [www.kentcountysar.org/k9seminar/](http://www.kentcountysar.org/k9seminar/).

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