

the **REACTer** spring2014





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snapshot



Oklahoma County Emergency REACT members looking great in their uniforms.
Front row, from left: Jon Yingling, Harry Goodman, Jim Clanin, Lois Spencer, Glenn Hagstrom.
Back row, from left: Paul Deaver, Kevin Bunde, Bob Kaster, Dale Ellis.

forward thinking



MODERN REACT

Kirk Walker *Executive Director*
Waterloo Regional REACT

What is the modern REACT all about?

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to speak to members and directors all across North America and Trinidad and Tobago. It is amazing to see the various programs and relationships that have developed between REACT teams and their local governments and emergency services.

International teams may: provide first-aid and communications at a multitude of publicly-attended events, directly assist local police services with traffic control, provide specialized equipment such as scene lighting, and the list goes on and on.

The interesting thing is that these initiatives come from local teams recognizing needs in their communities which, with planning and creative thinking, their organizations can fulfill.

Although our roots are in communications, most successful teams have gone way beyond this role in their community. Given the incredible advances in personal communications, successful teams have honed in on an expanded role to ensure their long term viability in providing a multitude of services.

Keep in mind, communication technology is only one of the tools teams can utilize to solidify their position within the community.

So, what is modern REACT all about? Modern REACT is about the future. We can only imagine the incredible technologies that will be available for REACT teams to use in the next few years!

Are you prepared to recognize new and exciting opportunities as they present themselves? What is YOUR team doing to be a modern REACT team?

To recognize modern REACT is to recognize that the future starts today.

membership corner



Bob Kaster being recognized for his dedication to volunteering within the community

Bob Kaster, Oklahoma County Emergency REACT (team 2620), was presented the first Robert L. Kaster award for dedication to service.

This award is established to recognize volunteer public safety communications personnel who have demonstrated the highest level of personal and professional conduct, performance, and longevity for the safety and security of the public.

This award is named for Robert L. Kaster who has provided over 30 years of communication and public safety support in various capacities, including: president of Oklahoma County Emergency REACT, chairman of the board of directors, and regional director for REACT International—representing teams in Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, and Texas.

Bob Kaster has also worked with many of the local public safety agencies including, but not limited to: Oklahoma City Police, Fire, Emergency Management;

“Bob Kaster has provided over **30 years** of communication and public safety support”

Midwest City Police & Fire; Bethany Police; Nichols Hill Police; Oklahoma State Highway Patrol; and Moore Police, Fire, and Emergency Management.

He was responsible for establishing the escorts for the Olympic Torch when it passed through Oklahoma City. He also coordinated REACT volunteers during Presidents visits to the Bombing Memorial, where REACT assisted in motorcade route security and outer perimeter security.

As a trained weather spotter, his warnings to the Moore Emergency Operations Center saved countless lives.

Submitted by Dale Ellis



Vern Moore, left, and Ed Fujii, right, being recognized for their years of service within the community. (Photo by Keiko Fujii)

THAT'S DEDICATION

Tim Brewer *Team Secretary*
Valley Wide REACT

On May 21, 2014, Valley Wide REACT (team 4956) and the Boise Police Department honored Edson Fujii, 90, and Vernard Moore, 86, for their many years of service to the community in and around Boise, Idaho. Both Ed and Vern were surrounded by family, friends, and team members joining in the celebration. Valley Wide REACT serves many communities and groups in southwestern Idaho and southeastern Oregon.

REACT International president, John Capodanno, and region 6 director, Tom Jenkins, presented plaques to Ed and Vern to thank them for their years of dedicated service. Boise Police Sgt. Kyle Christensen presented Vern and Ed with certificates signed by himself and Boise Police Chief, Mike Masterson.

Ed (W71ZZ) and Vern (KC7YUI) are long-time HAMs living in Boise. They have served in Valley Wide REACT since soon after it was formed in 1996. They were integral members of the team providing communication support and pedestrian/traffic control services for countless events including parades, fireworks displays, marathons, triathlons, relay races, Boy Scout activities, Movie-Nights-in-the-Park, and walk-a-thons.

Sgt. Christensen stated many times that Boise could not have had all these events without the unwavering support of volunteers like Vern and Ed.

LOCAL REACT TEAM HONORED

The Recorder recorder@portervillerecorder.com

The Porterville REACT team, around since 1974, was honored by REACT International with the President's Certificate of Appreciation.

The honor was bestowed upon the local organization last month in Glendale.

It was recognized as a Chartered Team of 40 years.

"Your team is one of the oldest, largest and best equipped teams. Thank you for your 40 years of service and dedication," noted the certificate given [to] the local REACT team by John Capodanno, International president.

Porterville REACT has been very active both locally and throughout the state. They have responded to natural disasters and have provided traffic at a number of local events, including the Springville Rodeo and Porterville Fair.

"Our main objective is public safety," said current local President Tony Robison.

As originally published in *The Porterville Recorder*
www.recorderonline.com



Porterville REACT members, front row, from left: Maddie Morton, Shirly Hallum, Brian Patterson, Elnora Patterson, Donna McElrea. Back row, from left: Christopher Morton, Tony Robison, Bill Morton and Kira Morton.

opinion



THE NEW GENERATION

Kirk Walker *Executive Director*
Waterloo Regional REACT

Face it – none of us are getting any younger!

For those of us who have had the honor and privilege to serve our local communities as member of REACT, we can all take pride in our past successes. We can all look back fondly and be proud of the steps we've taken to get us where we are today.

A successful team is built on the actions of those who have come before. While history is what our team's reputation has been built upon, such history is locked in. I suggest that what matters now is the future, and how our actions will impact REACT's future success.

No matter how involved you are today, and no matter how committed your members are, if you do not plan for the future your team's existence may be at risk. It is important to welcome and train a new generation of members while encouraging them to become involved in your organization—with any luck they will one day replace you!

I have always believed that no matter how successful you are at managing your team, if you neglect to: facilitate the training of newer and younger members, develop their confidence and management skills, and give them the chance to grow and learn, then you haven't done your job as leader.

We must be open to fresh ideas and different perspectives, which can take your local teams in directions that you would have never dreamed of!

At the same time, embracing new technologies will help to attract a younger demographic to your organization. It will also send out the message that your team is a dynamic and flourishing organization—one that is able to change with the times and adapt to different needs within your community.

What are you doing to attract younger members? If you are unsure of how to answer this question, then the future of your team may be at risk.

Food for thought!

send your opinion article to:
editor@theREACTer.com

success in the field



From left, C. Huckleberry, president, and D. Campbell, vice-president, work the air show.

“AND IT’S FREE”

Leo Rhoda
Circle City REACT

One of the strengths of REACT is the fact that members come from various parts of the community it serves. This indicates that there is diversity in its membership.

It is this diversity that can open opportunities for a team's success. By this I mean it can be a powerful tool in spreading the word of what a team does. This tool has been referred to as “word-of-mouth” or “networking.” Recently, Circle City REACT Inc. benefited from this type of activity.

Our team had been involved in an air show for half a dozen years at a regional airport just outside of Indianapolis, Indiana. In 2012, due to difficulty in obtaining sponsorship, a drop in attendance, and the US government grounding the Thunderbirds and Blue Angels, the organizing committee cancelled the 2013 air show and disbanded the committee.

This eliminated one of our major efforts to spread the word locally about Circle City REACT. As a result of our involvement, a large number of people had become aware our existence and capabilities.

During these air shows we demonstrated some of our capabilities, which included monitoring arriving traffic and parking spectator automobiles. The maximum spectator count was 150,000 and we learned to control the arrival and parking of thousands of cars.

“We received many accolades from the organizers and spectators”

In early 2014 we found out that there was going to be a fly-in at the airport in late May. We notified the airport of our interest in assisting them. Aware of our previously demonstrated ability, they immediately accepted our offer of assistance.

This was a one day event, during which 350 general aviation planes and 700 cars were parked at the airport. Our team performed its high level of service on a beautiful day that lasted about 14 hours.

Needless to say, it took a significant number of our members working two shifts to accomplish this high level of service. We received many accolades from the organizers and spectators on how well the parking was organized.

This is an example of how we heard about an event through one of our members and, with this, a large number of spectators had an opportunity to see Circle City REACT in action.

So don't underestimate the value of “word-of-mouth.” It can work for your team, and it's free!

more success in the field

THE BIG RIDE

Lee Besing

Hill County REACT

Four members from Hill Country REACT (team 4804, San Antonio, Texas) were in three of the six SAG vans that went to Houston this past weekend for the 30th Anniversary BPMS150 Ride.

Charlie Land was driving SAG 11, while I was driving SAG 12 with my son, David, who is also a REACT member. Finally, Joe Bruno was driving SAG 18 with his grandson.

This event had 13,000 riders and used three different stadiums as starting points. The longest route was 177 miles over two days.

We had winds gusting up to more than 30 mph and some light rain on Sunday morning. Three Life Flights were called in to transport injured riders, one on Saturday and two on the Sunday morning.

Communications were a series of IRLP linked repeaters from Houston to Austin, with the same net control team handling both days. They had HAMS at every breakpoint, plus shadows with medical and tour directors. Around 250 HAMS were on the net over the weekend.

REACT member, Joe Bruno, ended up transporting an injured rider to an area hospital at the request of one of the medics. They had waited for one of the ambulances to be dispatched, but all were busy. The medic asked

Joe to transport the rider (who had non life-threatening injuries), along with one of the bike EMS riders, to the hospital. He brought the EMS rider back afterwards so that he could resume riding on the route.

We have more large bicycle events coming up. At the end of April, we will be coordinating communications for the Fiesta Wildflower 100 Bicycle Ride and two weeks later, we will be coordinating the American Diabetes Tour de Cure.



Follow RI on twitter:



@REACTINTL

REACT road warriors celebrate 50 years

By **Greg Sowinski** gsowinski@civitasmedia.com
July 12, 2014

LIMA—Anyone who’s been driving long enough likely has come across an accident, house fire, or downed power line blocking the roadway that impedes his or her travel even if they didn’t get close enough to see it.

And there’s a pretty good chance the road was blocked by a member of the Radio Emergency Associated Communication Team, or REACT, safely directing people onto a different route.

REACT is an all-volunteer team of people helping out police, firefighters and other emergency responders. They are not police officers. They do not carry guns and do not have arrest powers beyond that of the average resident.

They are a modern version of the minutemen, for emergency response, who drop everything at a moment’s notice and head out to the highways in a five-county radius of Lima. They go anywhere, anytime.

Rain, snow, the baking sun, it doesn’t matter, they go. Calls could place them on the scene of an accident for a half-hour or it could be 10 hours. No matter the task these road warriors are there standing guard, helping police and keeping people safe.

Members carry around radios to communicate the same as police. The secretary and jack-of-all-trades for the organization is Carolyn Cross. She’s also the main dispatcher in addition to keeping up with the paperwork.

At her Lima home, Cross has a bedroom set up as the group’s makeshift dispatch center. It’s not as high-tech as the police or sheriff dispatch of today but it has the same feeling with emergency calls coming in and Cross calling out responders.

REACT units can be found around the world. Lima’s unit was formed 50 years ago. Its 14 members are celebrating the local group’s 50th anniversary at 2 P.M.



Sunday at the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge.

Allen County Sheriff Sam Crish praised REACT and said the organization and its members are the unsung heroes of the local public safety effort. He said the battle-tested road warriors dedicate an untold number of hours each year to help deputies on various emergencies.

Without their help, a traffic crash could easily tie up two to four deputies who could be handling other emergencies.

With the help of REACT, one or two deputies can investigate the crash with REACT handling traffic diverting it away from the crash site, Crish said.

“We utilize them a lot. It frees up our manpower. We certainly appreciate their efforts in helping us,” Crish said.

Article continued on page 10, see “road warriors”

“road warriors” cont'd from page 09

Cross said members are very proud of the work they do and know what they are doing provides a valuable community service.

“It’s about being a good citizen in the United States of America for Lima, Ohio,” Cross said.

She said the efforts of the people in her group often go underappreciated by the public but they easily could be saving lives. If there’s a flooded roadway with a downed electrical line charging the water, they keep people way from that danger by blocking a road, she said.

Sometimes members of REACT also have to deal with impatient drivers, some who even express their anger and frustration at REACT volunteers when they block the roadway of an impatient person’s travel plans, Cross said.

“There’s always one in every crew. There’s people who have to go places quickly and they can’t get around,” she said.

Cross realizes people can be in a hurry and have schedules to meet but she assures people REACT would not block a roadway without authorities directing them in the name of public safety.

Through the years she has had profanity directed to her and people giving them obscene gestures.

“If fire, EMS, police from all over the place need us, we’re there.”

“We can’t be crude and rude,” she said. “We are trying to save them from getting hurt because they don’t understand what is going on.”

REACT is one of three organizations that perform the same function around town. There’s also ACERT or Allen County Emergency Response Team and Northwest emergency response.

REACT was formed in Chicago by a group of people with citizens band radios during a snowstorm emergency. It quickly grew and spread around the world. Members volunteer their time, pay for their gas and drive their own vehicles to scenes without any reimbursement, she said.

“I do about 5,000 miles a year,” she said.

Many members don’t work outside of their volunteer work, she said.

“Most of us are on disability,” she said.

For many, it’s something to do, more like a hobby for the people who range in age from 20s to 79. They either love it or they don’t last long in the group.

REACT volunteers stand out in all types of weather and everyone carries warm clothing and boots in their cars just in case, especially in the winter, she said.

The group is on call 24/7 year-round.

“If fire, EMS, police from all over the place, even federal agencies need us, we’re there,” she said.

While members are not commissioned police officers, they do have to undergo background checks. The U.S. Secret Service does not allow anyone with a felony conviction to help manage the presidential motorcade, which REACT does when the president comes to town, she said.

While the organization does not have many members, everyone is dedicated.

“There are not many of us but the ones we have work to death,” she said.

As originally published in *The Lima News*
www.limaohio.com

ECHOLINK & REACT NET

EchoLink is a free internet-based Windows software application that allows licensed Amateur Radio (HAM) radio operators to connect to each other. This connection may take the following forms, or a combination thereof:

- Computer-to-Computer
- Computer-to-Repeater
- Repeater-to-Repeater

The software is relatively easy to set up and use of the interface is quite intuitive.

The linking, made possible using the Internet, extends the range of mobile and portable stations to distant systems across the globe.

For instance, it is possible for someone with a hand-held radio to connect to a local repeater in Miami to speak with a mobile operator located in Los Angeles.

It is possible for someone without a radio to connect to a distant repeater and carry out a QSO (conversation) by using their computer microphone and speaker.

REACT International, recognizing the possibility to conduct a “wide area” global network, started the Worldwide REACT Information Net in 2010.

The net takes place via EchoLink REACT conference server node 109779 every Saturday night at 9 P.M. EST and averages about 30 minutes in duration. It is a great opportunity to exchange information on REACT activities and to hear from different teams around the world. The net is not limited to REACT members and is opened to all amateurs.

The net control is Jay Flora (WA4JAY) from Cleveland County REACT, assisted by Joe Zych (KD4YSH), of Star Mountain REACT.

Spread the word and we hope to see you on the next edition of the net!

*For more info
on downloading,
verifying your license
and installing the
software, visit:
www.echolink.org*



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