

Unfolding Our 25-Year History

by Michelle Limoges, secretary, founding member and dog handler

Overarching themes in SARDAA's history include our tenacity, our willingness to reach out to other SAR groups both at home and away, our never-ending search for new/different/improved training methods, our goal of improving our organization and its processes, and our dedication to providing the best darn SAR dog teams around!

Furthermore, there have been many people over our history who have believed in us, used our services and stood by us through thick and thin – we won't list your names for fear of missing someone, but you know who you are!

Thank you for honouring us with your support and confidence.

Very early days

Prior to SARDAA's official formation under the Alberta Societies Act in November of 1989, the original six dogs and people had been training in obedience, protection and tracking together for some time at a local Edmonton dog school run by Kevin George. We hadn't even begun to think about SAR work at that point!

Original Objectives

It's important for newcomers to SARDAA to be aware of the organization's history. SARDAA is much more than individual members and their dogs; we are a team dedicated to training and deploying the best SAR dogs we are capable of producing. We take this mandate very seriously.

1989 Objectives of the Society

- a) To encourage and promote the use of SAR dogs throughout the province of Alberta
- b) To establish performance standards for SAR dog teams
- c) To educate both the community and government in the training and deployment of SAR dogs
- d) To establish a resource library of SAR dog subjects
- e) To train dog and handler teams for mission-ready SAR work in wilderness and disaster duty.
- f) To provide all necessary equipment for carrying on its objectives

The original group

All of the original six dogs were very good dogs, each in their own way, and by the time they got involved in SAR work, they had already had three or four years of training in various disciplines under their belts (collars). The group somehow become aware that British Columbia had a SAR dog group and obtained the BC standards in the mid-1980s. At the time, the thought of getting a SAR group started was too big a commitment; however, history and certain circumstances, not the least of which were the Edmonton tornado and the loss of a friend who died as a result of getting lost in the wilderness, nudged the group into action. Kevin George provided the initial leadership needed to get a group of people motivated, and he provided his training expertise; the group contributed

their commitment to the cause to carry the group forward. Although the members have mostly changed, the dedication of the group remains the organization's mainstay.

Kevin George and Asta, Malinois
Mike Andresen and Picco, Malinois
Barb McLeod and Toby, Boxer
Michelle Limoges and Ira, Doberman
George Hart and Kelly, GSD (German Shepherd Dog)
Bob Wynnyk and Princess, GSD

We had an exciting time during those years; eventually (inevitably) we grew a bit older and, of course, the dogs aged too. Kelly was the first to go, in June of 1993. She was a wonderful dog who did a great job searching and was an enviable duck retriever too. If you gave Kelly an inflated balloon she was expert at keeping it in the air using just her nose! Kelly died of cancer quite suddenly.

Bob Wynnyk left SARDAA in the spring of 1993 to join another team.

In April of 1994, about a year before the RCMP certification program came into being, Ira died of cardiomyopathy, a heart disease common in certain lines of Doberman.

Asta died in 1997. Kevin had brought Asta to Canada from Holland in 1987, and he could be described as intense!

In November of 1997, Toby died, at the age of 10 ... you could always count on Toby to make everyone one smile – he was bouncy and enthusiastic in his work and very, very energetic too!

That left Picco, who retired in the late '90s. When the first account of SARDAA's history was written, in November of 1997, all of the original SARDAA dogs were gone from active duty. They were quite a crew and should always be remembered for their important contribution to getting the SAR dog movement off the ground. Without them and their calibre of training and work, it's possible that we would not have a SAR dog program in Alberta today.

1989–1990 – Training in the early days

Early on, our focus was on disaster training, which was a direct result of the 1987 tornado that devastated Edmonton. Our original training standards were written in 1988 and covered disaster, wilderness and water search work.

We were very fortunate to be able to use the now defunct Alberta Public Safety Service training building in Edmonton's west end. They had a wonderful 'rubble pile' constructed in the gymnasium area of the former school they occupied. During the early days, we also worked the dogs on the old Gainers meat packing plant, which was being torn down and the bricks reclaimed ... the demolition took at least a year and the plant

offered a different scenario each week. We produced our first SARDAA video tape, focusing on our disaster work.

The City of Edmonton held the “1990 Rosslyn Drop-In” simulated disaster exercise, and SARDAA members and their dogs participated with enthusiasm; this was the first exercise of its kind in the city and we were very excited to be included and able to deploy our dogs with successful ‘finds’.

SARDAA members were also invited to present regular lectures to Alberta Public Safety Service rescue leaders training course participants on the use of SAR dogs; these lectures and demonstrations with the dogs enhanced our profile in the community greatly. Bert Reed trained many members over the years in basic rescue skills. We also trained at the fire school and tower belonging to Edmonton Fire Service; and we were invited to do a demonstration for the Fort Saskatchewan Disaster Response Association.

Through membership in national organizations and presentations to local and international organizations, along with attendance at many training sessions, our knowledge and reputation grew; for instance, SARDAA took out membership in the North American SAR association (NASAR) and members regularly attended and made presentations at their conferences; we also made presentations to some of the local dog clubs and the Ponoka Fire Department. The Ponoka Fire Department remains one of our longest standing supporters. We have a long history of cooperation and we are happy to have worked with their members on two successful searches.

Members also attended a FEMA (United States “Federal Emergency Management Agency”) meeting in Montana in those early days.

Kevin George acted as our first president.

1991

The first edition of *Scent Dog News* came out in June of this year. The September issue of our newsletter announced our first call-out, from Lloyd Gallagher to Kananaskis Country. The Morley and Canmore incidents were water searches and led to enhanced relations with both the Kananaskis Parks and Calgary Dive Rescue Team representatives. SARDAA also gained charitable status with Revenue Canada that year.

1992

Throughout 1992 and '93 we continued to make public presentations, including various demonstrations to the Alberta Public Safety Service (APSS) Rescue Leaders Courses on the use of dogs for disaster searches. We were written up in several publications, we continued our fundraising efforts, and members attended many seminars, both in Alberta and elsewhere, that would prove to be important to our training. Weekly training sessions continued, at length, for the dogs and handlers; in addition, a smattering of actual searches called us into action.

1993

The Krista Rychliski search at Rocky Mountain House (Ram Falls) occurred in July of 1993 and was one of the first big wilderness search incidents we were involved in. Four of our handlers joined the efforts of more than 200 searchers; Krista was found alive, after three days in the wilderness, by a group on horseback rounding up their cattle and not involved in the search!

In 1993 we first began using DogStuf vests for the dogs and we formalized our brochure.

1994

“Paws for the Cause” was launched in November of 1994, the brainchild of Karen Clouston. “Paws for the Cause” sustained us until 2007, when participation in Alberta Gaming casino fundraising program took its place. However, with our first “Paws” effort, our members raised enough money to purchase our SAR van. Through further donations of money, time and expertise, the van was painted and outfitted with new seats, benches, storage space, and six kennels in the back. The van eventually proved to be expensive and impractical; it was disposed of in 2002, along with the trailer that was acquired in 1994.

1995

In January of 1995 we held an open house to give friends and supporters the opportunity to view our new vehicle. The “SAR-dine” was useful to us on searches – its primary purpose is to transport everyone, including the dogs, in one vehicle and to provide a command post on site.

Mike Andresen was elected president.

Between 1991 and the end of 1995, we were called to a total of 20 search incidents.

Original SAR Dog Standards in Alberta

During the early 1990s, the SARDAA executive had been working with the RCMP to develop SAR dog standards for the province of Alberta using the British Columbia SAR dog requirements and some parts of the RCMP dog standards. The RCMP SAR dog certification standards became a reality in the spring of 1995, developed by both SARDAA and Cpl. Jim Galloway of the RCMP. As a result of the implementation of these standards and an associated evaluation process, all SAR dogs in Alberta were to be certified under these standards before being permitted to participate in searches initiated by the RCMP. Prior to the establishment of these standards, SAR dogs and their potential were neither recognized nor appreciated in Alberta, and the use of SAR dogs was on a hit-and-miss basis. SARDAA members played a key role in developing the credibility of search dogs in the province.

For the first year of RCMP certifications (1995), six SARDAA teams were fully certified: Mike Andresen and Picco (search and tracking), Karen Clouston and Indy, Keith Hannem and Wolf, Rick Hopwood (Camrose police officer) and Plaz (tracking), Barb McLeod and Toby, and Maggie Schlegl and Sudden.

That same year, Cpl. Galloway created the RCMP Civilian SAR Dog Program as an umbrella organization for all the individual SAR dog groups in Alberta. Cpl. Galloway was killed in the line of duty in 2004. The SAR dog organization he started changed its name in 2008 to Canadian Search Dog Association, dropping the RCMP designation.

In the fall of 1996 at the SARScene conference in Kelowna, BC, Kevin George was presented with the Canadian SAR Secretariat Search and Rescue Achievement Award for efforts in promoting search and rescue dogs in Alberta. SARDAA members secretly submitted the nomination, unbeknownst to Kevin. Kevin certainly embodied this award but it's important to remember that the contribution of the entire team made this award possible. We were all very proud of our collective role in this accomplishment.

In the spring of 1996, SARDAA members were fortunate to be able to bring Andy Rebmann and Marcia Koenig to Edmonton from their home in Seattle, Washington, for a week-long Basic Cadaver Dog training session. This was excellent training; everyone who participated enjoyed it and learned a great deal. This training was partly sponsored by the Edmonton Community Foundation. The *Edmonton Sun* published a two-page colour spread about this training.

1996

Mary Ann Warren, Mike Andreson, Chris Lyseng and Michelle Limoges and their dogs were included in a cadaver search dog study led by Dr. Deb Komar, of the University of Alberta. This was an excellent opportunity for extra training in the area of human remains detection.

Thirteen teams certified under the RCMP program in 1996: Mike Andresen and Picco (search and tracking); Karen Clouston and Indy; Claudette Gratton and Kira; Keith Hannem and Wolf; Rick Hopwood and Asker; Rick Hopwood and Plaz (tracking); Michelle Limoges and Retta; Chris Lyseng and Shaitaan; Barb McLeod and Toby; Lynda Robertson and Jesse; Maggie Schlegl and Sudden; Mary Ann Warren and Yukan (search and tracking); and Vonnie Wood (RCMP officer) and Owahteeka. On September 11, the RCMP held an official ceremony during which Cpl. Galloway made a speech regarding the SAR dogs; certificates were presented to each handler and dog.

Several SARDAA members attended a Mantracking course in Rocky Mountain House, and other members on another weekend in the fall attended a disaster dog training session at the Calgary Fire Department training facility.

There were 18 call-outs in just that one year.

1997

1997 saw a number of retirements, and a couple of dogs passed away, leaving us with six certified teams for 1997/98.

There were a total of 13 call-outs that year, and we received three separate letters of appreciation: members participated in a search in Ft. Smith, NWT, and received written appreciation from RCMP for our assistance in the Wolfram Koehler incident; Ft. Saskatchewan RCMP sent appreciation for our assistance in the Wayne Hoffman Jr. incident; and we received appreciation from Edmonton Police Services for our participation in a suspicious death investigation.

1998 – A watershed year for our organization

We had the most call-outs ever (28) and the highest number of active-level dog handler members (12). Specific recognition was received from the RCMP for our assistance in the Wilson Nepoose incident at Hobbema, Alberta.

Mary Ann Warren stepped in as president.

As a group, we traveled to the NASAR conference in Portland, Oregon, where one of our members was a speaker and another attended the pre-conference Disaster Responders Seminar given by Andy and Marcia Rebmann. A utility trailer and a Zodiac boat and motor were acquired through donations and fundraising. SARDAA signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Edmonton Police Service.

The RCMP took action to amalgamate all the individual SAR Dog groups in the province and to make some changes to the program that SARDAA did not agree with. We decided to continue independently and, as a result, were threatened with not being called upon for future searches by the RCMP. This rift was felt across Alberta, not only by dog handlers but by others in the SAR community as well. Within the next year, SARDAA lost a number of its members – some joined the RCMP-CSDA (Civilian Search Dog Association), and some of SARDAA's key members retired from SAR dog work entirely.

1999 – 10th anniversary

Mary Ann Warren assumed training responsibilities as Training Coordinator/Director. Our active level membership was eight dog handlers.

Gary Murray, former RCMP dog man, was hired to provide a tracking seminar for SARDAA members and others at a location close to Rocky Mountain House. This was a seminar geared to real-life wilderness tracking and provided excellent information on training techniques.

SARDAA members attended the SAR Alberta conference in Penhold with a booth promoting our services.

Edmonton Police Service invited us to participate in their annual mock search exercise.

We initiated “Wing Night” as a fundraiser for our organization. The idea was to buy tickets for chicken wings and the proceeds would go to the group; it was also a good excuse for a mid-winter gathering of SAR friends! Wing Night has persisted over the years, and we added a silent auction and 50/50 Draw to the fun.

SARDAA also made the acquaintance of Jan and Irene Bodgers, from Holland, who are long-time disaster dog trainers in Europe. Jan and Irene provided a training session for SARDAA members for the first time in 1999, with more seminars following in later years.

SARDAA completed and approved Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

We had the fewest call-outs in our history – just one, and that search ended with the person being found and the search called off by Edmonton Police Service.

2000

Looking back, 1998 seemed to be a catalyst for SARDAA, causing us to move into high gear. We redoubled our efforts to refine and enhance our training techniques by seeking out other trainers in the USA and Europe for seminars; we expanded our horizons, pushed the limits of ourselves and our dogs, and got out of our comfort zones; and injected variety and imagination into our training.

SARDAA members began to travel regularly to join training days and mock searches in communities such as Camrose, Bonnyville, Drayton Valley, Cold Lake, and Sundre.

SOPs and standards manuals were improved and updated. A formal, ongoing evaluation process was initiated using recognized Edmonton Police Service SAR managers as co-evaluators.

One of our members and her dog travelled to Holland to train with the Dutch group headed by Jan and Irene Bodgers. One of our executive members traveled to SARScene in Montreal to represent our organization.

There were four call-outs that year, including one water search in the Ponoka area. Our teams did report indications by the dogs and the body was recovered in the vicinity of those indications.

2001

The SARDAA website was launched on January 1, with the objective of offering education to potential dog handlers, the public and tasking agencies.

SARDAA was represented by one of our members at SARScene in Whitehorse, Yukon.

SARDAA organized a water search seminar for about a dozen of our members, with Deb Tirmenstein of Montana, at Nordegg. Funding for this seminar was donated by the Cook Rees Foundation for Water Safety. Jan and Irene Bodgers presented another seminar on disaster search for our members, in Calgary.

SARDAA has made a habit of attending every SAR Alberta conference offered; since SAR Alberta's inception, SARDAA has supported this umbrella organization, with SARDAA members acting as regional directors, deputy directors, and secretary. Only within the last year (2008) has SARDAA not had a member on the SAR Alberta board.

There were two call-outs, and six active-level dog handlers.

2002

SARDAA members took the first ever Safety and Awareness Training course at *fire etc* in Vermilion, Alberta; this course was specifically designed by our members so that we would be adequately prepared to work our dogs in a disaster scenario in a safe manner.

Founding member Kevin George was given newly created SARDAA Life Member status on the occasion of his formal retirement from SARDAA.

There were eight call-outs this year, and four active-level teams. One water search resulted in the recovery of a drowned victim, based on the SARDAA dog's alerts.

2003

As a result of our continuing development, SARDAA began to review how new members were evaluated and how our testing was conducted. For example, drive evaluations were initiated for all new dogs coming into to the group. Criteria testing sheets were developed are now used consistently. Evaluation request forms were also initiated, along with the addition of a K-9 Health form, which came into use in 2009.

SARDAA also instituted a new membership level, Support Personnel, for members without dogs or those who are in between dogs. These Support Personnel are deployed on searches and their purpose is to support the handler/dog team as required, and specifically to act as navigation and communications support. Support Personnel are voted into this position after gaining adequate experience as detailed in our standards and by successfully completing the same array of courses as dog handlers. In 2013 the name of Support Personnel was changed to Field Tech and an extensive testing process was initiated.

Terray Moore was elected president.

We signed an MOU with Elk Island Park regarding search dog services to the park.

Nominated by SARDAA, Kevin George received the inaugural presentation of the Alberta Emergency Services Medal, awarded in recognition of emergency service volunteers who have contributed 12 or more years in the field.

Membership levels were detailed in writing and prepared for dissemination to prospective members for information; the application form was revised and updated.

There were four call-outs, including one where a member and dog located a deceased person on a Ponoka search. This resulted in a letter of appreciation to SARDAA from Ponoka Fire Department.

2004

SARScene was held in Calgary, Alberta, and included pre-conference presentations organized by SARDAA: Dave Brownell on “Choosing the Best SAR Dog Candidate”; Jan Bodgers on “Training Disaster Dogs”; and a presentation by Mike Cook, Edmonton Police Service, on how to deploy SAR dogs during incidents.

The RCMP K Division Civilian SAR Volunteer Recognition Award for years of service was presented to Darrell Dancause, Terray Moore, Mary Ann Warren, and Ingrid Bredt (5 years); and to Michelle Limoges, Mary Ann Warren and Kevin George (10 years).

There were four call-outs, and five active-level teams.

2005

The 2005 SAR Alberta conference was held jointly with Saskatchewan SAR; SARDAA members Michelle Limoges and Mary Ann Warren made an inaugural presentation on “How to Choose a SAR Dog Candidate.”

SARDAA attended the Elk Island Park mock search.

The Calgary Task Force USAR Multi-Agency Training Centre opened; Mary Ann Warren and her dog were invited to attend and participate in the inaugural exercises.

Terray Moore was recognized as CHED radio’s “Volunteer of the Week.”

We held our last “Paws for the Cause” fundraiser, in St Albert.

There were four call-outs, including a search in the Sundre area, during which a team member’s dog indicated the location of a lost hunter who was subsequently located, but unfortunately deceased. This participation resulted in a letter of appreciation from the RCMP. There were four active-level teams.

2006

SARDAA member Mary Ann Warren was invited to the National USAR Deployment Exercise in Calgary, and she was involved in the initial development of the Canadian Disaster K9 Standards.

German SAR dog trainer Axel Sauter was invited to the Calgary Fire Training Centre to provide a seminar on disaster dog training.

A SARDAA member attended the Washington State SAR conference and the pre-conference human remains training.

The *Scent Dog News* began to be distributed electronically!

Members attended SAR Day 2006 at Elk Island Park and provided a SAR dog demonstration. SARDAA members participated in the first annual City of Edmonton Emergency Preparedness Day at Hawrelak Park, Edmonton.

There were seven call-outs this year; one search resulted in a SARDAA team discovering the location of a deceased person in the Edmonton area. There were four active-level teams.

2007

The SAR Alberta conference took place in Rocky Mountain House, and Mary Ann Warren gave a presentation on deploying SAR dogs.

SARDAA presented a K9 First Aid course in conjunction with the Pet Therapy Society of Northern Alberta.

SARDAA received approval to participate in an Alberta Gaming casino fund raiser in November 2007, with outstanding monetary results. Casinos replaced dog walks – a lot less effort for a much greater benefit!

We participated in the second annual City of Edmonton Emergency Preparedness Day at Hawrelak Park, Edmonton.

Education is an ongoing focus for handlers and their dogs; SARDAA provided extra information to tasking agencies on how to use us effectively.

There were ten call-outs in 2007, and four active-level teams.

2008

SARDAA members attended the Washington State SAR conference, and Mary Ann Warren and Michelle Limoges again presented “How to Choose a SAR Dog Candidate.”

Over the years, SARDAA members have made numerous presentations to school children and Boy Scout groups, and this year was no different.

We obtained a new boat to enhance training efforts for our water search dogs.

There were seven call-outs this year, and six active-level teams.

2009

Heading into our 20th anniversary year, we are enjoying a very healthy financial state, we are looking forward to several new dog/handler teams qualifying for our Active Level membership, we anticipate a number of new members moving up through the training process; and, we anticipate exciting new training opportunities.

Steve Otto was elected president.

SARDAA was honoured with the presented of a plaque by SAR Alberta at the annual provincial conference – ‘In recognition of 20 years of dedicated service to the people of Alberta, 2009’. We are the first officially formed SAR dog organization in the province. There were a total of 13 searches this year with two successful finds – one for human remains and another in water. There were six Active Teams and four Support Personnel.

SARDAA was invited to make presentations at the Disaster Forum in Banff; and a presentation along with Edmonton Regional SAR to the Edmonton Police Commission. A number of our members attended the Provincial SAR exercise in Rocky Mountain House area.

In September, Michelle Limoges and Mary Ann Warren were presented with the Alberta Emergency Service Medal by Edmonton Police Service Chief Boyd.

For our next 20 years, we are planning to continue to offer education to tasking agencies though out Canada about the use of SAR dogs and we will make this information available to other interested organizations and the general public. Having forged many cooperative working relationships with other SAR groups around the country, we anticipate continued cooperation in every way possible. We are also looking forward to many chances to host workshops and to make presentations on topics such as - how to best choose a potential SAR dog, and instruction in the various training techniques that have worked well for us.

Most importantly, it is our intention to continue to provide a well-trained resource that can be easily integrated with the efforts of fellow SAR groups – all with the *potential survivor* in mind.

2010

2009 was a busy anniversary year and 2010 was equally active. The newsletter editor must have been busy since there was only one issue published – the Annual Review! Sadly, 2010 marked the passing of a special search dog, Mary Ann Warren's German Shepherd, Hill.

Another Casino late in 2009 provided us with funds to pursue important out-of-town training opportunities and equipment, including the purchase of our jet boat from Explorer Industries of Edmonton.

SARDAA was launched on Facebook this year; and the Active Dog teams were issued trading cards. Our new window shade style display was a welcome replacement for our old two-fold table top display. Local graphic artist James Shrimpton designed the display and also an accompanying brochure. Edmonton photographer Jim Dobie generously donated his services so that would have professional photographs for promotional use. Violet Lafleur was born to Support Person, Zara Lafleur.

SARDAA annual membership fees increased for the *first time in history* to \$50.

12 Edmonton Police Service searches, with success on three. Nine Active level teams this year and six Support Personnel.

2011

This year members experienced a large number of promotional events, from Scouts to Jr. Forest Warden Camp to Emergency Services Day to Strathcona Emergency and Oliver Community Canda Day event... we might deem this an 'awareness' year!

In 2011 we welcomed out-of-town members – from Whitecourt and from Coronation. Former dog handler/support person/treasurer Darrell Dancause was made a Life Member – one of only two persons in the special membership category.

Casino in the fall of 2011 refuelled our Casino bank account.

Mary Ann Warren became an evaluator for SARDUS (SAR Dogs of the United States) and participated in a certification event in Michigan. Mary Ann also made a presentation to Alberta SAR Managers at a recertification event in Turner Valley with the objective of making the use of SAR dogs clearer for these managers.

Ten Active Level Dog teams; four Support Personnel. Seven searches for official police agencies.

2012

This year SARDAA finally moved into the 21st Century and traded in our Pager for a Cell Phone. We were forced to take a new phone number which was cause for some concern, but the transition proved to be a fairly smooth process.

Paula Hale was elected president.

Recognition and a donation from the Town of Devon was gratefully received in June.

Cabela's asked members and their dogs to attend their Hometown Hero's Day in November.

Mary Ann Warren released her search dog training book titled 'Bark Alert'.

We welcomed our first members from the Fairview, Rimbey, and Strathmore areas of the province.

Adrian Marr, a long-time EPS search manager retired from Edmonton Police Service to take a position with Alberta Fish and Wildlife, stationed in Edmonton.

SARDAA member and president Paula Hale was Called to the Bar in August.

SARDAA Personnel Handbook was developed and became available this year. The Handbook includes details of training requirements for SARDAA members and contains a section for sign-offs of training categories.

Ten Active Dog teams and five Support Personnel.

Seven searches total this year.

2013

The organization changed the name of Support Personnel to **Field Tech** in order to better represent the function. A testing process was also initiated for Field Tech's to ensure they meet all the required criteria.

Support Person, Sam Hofmeyer and his wife Stefanie, had a baby girl Abby; Abby is little sister to Emily - both future dog handlers, we are sure!

This is another year for promotional events at Cabela's, plus attendance at the annual Get Ready in the Park event for Edmonton Emergency Services. We were also invited by long-time supporter Ponoka Fire Service to attend a fund raiser the local Curves group had organized for us.

Edmonton Police Service held an Appreciation Night for search and rescue volunteers.

Their recognition is very much appreciated by our organization!

SARDAA created a new position – Active Level, Administration... this position was created for a SARDAA member who will act as a resource to SAR managers, assist with management of call-outs for our organization, act as preceptor for new members, and provide instruction in some areas of our training.

Members attended SARScene in Chilliwack, BC.

Participated on organizing committee for the 2013 Provincial Mock Search event in October. Several members participated on the day of the event.

Two members and their dogs attended a mock search organized by our Fairview members.

Members are participating on a committee focused on developing new provincial SAR dog standards, and an additional committee working on general SAR worker standards. "SARDAA" was officially added to our full name just to facilitate banking requirements. We also developed and initiated use of our "Personnel Handbook".

15 searches this year with three successes! Nine Active Teams with five Field Techs.

2014

25th Anniversary Year!

Did you know that SARDAA's motto is *Numquam Cedere* Latin meaning "Never Give Up" ... we have never given up working together with our agency partners in providing SAR dogs and handlers plus Field Techs as a search and rescue resource.

We are very proud to have such a long and illustrious history and we look forward to many more years.

Anniversary celebrations occurred throughout 2014. For instance, Wing Night was replaced with a celebratory Perogy Supper and Silent Auction. SARDAA produced Anniversary decals, a special promotional item, Anniversary uniform patches, and various other forms of celebration throughout the year.

2014 was marked by the passing of one of SARDAA's founding members, Kevin George. Kevin died of a stroke on May 4 and will be remembered as an excellent trainer of dogs and people. His motivational training presentations provided entertaining information to many in Canada and the USA.

Nine searches this year with 11 Active dogs and six Field Techs.

2015

During the year, SARDAA members and dogs attended a half dozen different public relations events including – City of Edmonton's Get Ready in the Park, Strathcona County Emergency Services Day, St. Albert Public Safety open house and Cabela's Hometown Heroes event.

SARDAA launched its new Social Media Policy which details our position on use of social media by our members.

Mike Arychuk elected president.

Four teams and our training director travelled to Victoria in March to train at the CFB Esquimalt USAR team site along with the SAR Dog Association of Victoria (SARDAV).

SAR Dog Shadie retired this year; and, sadly, Shadie then passed away in 2016.

The Federal Government announced that Edmonton would host the 2016 SARScene conference and one of our members found herself on the Planning Committee. Michelle was therefore part of the Alberta delegation that travelled to Charlottetown, PEI to the SARScene conference.

Twelve Active Dogs, seven Field Techs and seven searches.

2016

In 2016, we used the newly developed Provincial SAR Dog Standard as our testing criteria with Edmonton Police Service. Although this new Standard had not yet received full endorsement by the tasking agencies, we decided to try it out on our live find and our human remains detection dogs.

SARDAA members developed several new documents and updated others: Personnel Handbook, New Member Process, new member interview process, and consent form. Also, our ByLaws were updated.

SARScene 2016 was held in Edmonton with a SARDAA member acting as Operations Section Head.

Paula Hale, Anita Schmidt and Steve Otto received the Emergency Services Medal.

Ten Active Dogs and eight Field Techs with 13 searches.

2017

SARDAA members completed amendments to our Standards this year which included updating the contents for clarity but without substantially changing the requirements. Since signing up the team members on the D4H database in 2015, we have been able accurately track training session, event, and incident hours. This capability became particularly useful when the Federal Government instituted the SAR tax credit, since proof of minimum volunteer hours must be substantiated.

Five SARDAA disaster teams were equipped and then certified by an outside evaluator this year.

As our Active Team dogs age, they need to retire from service. The following dogs have recently retired – Gotta (who has since died), Parquetta, Aussie, BB and Tyndre. All these dogs contributed immensely to our search efforts. Several new dogs and pups have been added to the team!

Of our 30 members, we have nine Active Teams and ten Field Techs; and, 17 searches for the year.

2018

For this year's evaluations with the Edmonton Police Service K9 Unit S/Sgt. we resumed use of our original Standards and abandoned the provincial SAR Dog Standards as they

were never officially recognized by SAR Alberta. We were able to certify or re-certify 7 teams; 5 in live find and 2 in human remains detection. We also certified our first Saskatchewan member Kate and her Golden Jenga.

Zara received her Provincial Emergency Medal; and Michelle and Maryann received their 22 year Emergency Services Medal.

Sadly, Mike lost SAR dog Jaida this year.

Our members totaled 29 on average this year and teams participated in 13 searches.

2019

Celebrating 30 years of excellence in K9 SAR

Growing from merely six members in 1989, our membership has increased substantially over the last 30 years. This is contrary to what some hoped would happen back in the early years!!!

But there are many other reasons why we are fortunate— we typically have 25 to 30 **members** at any given time. The membership consists of a diverse group of people who bring a variety of valuable talents to us. We pick dog/handler teams carefully, making sure the dogs have the aptitude for the work and that the handlers are a good fit. For the most part, everyone gets along well since we afford each other a high level of respect, cooperation and a common desire to advocate for civilian SAR dogs and to provide an important SAR resource to authorities. Continuity in an organization is important – SARDAA has several long-term members who have over 12 years of service, one member with 25 years, and another with 30 years.

We are fortunate because we have stable **financial** resources but even more important, we are fortunate to have a solid **structure** consisting of our Training Standards, SOPs and Personnel Handbook. Our new member process is thorough, giving all new members every opportunity to accomplish the goals laid out for them in our program. Each member has levels of training and time lines to follow, augmented by regular progress reviews.

Training is of course at the heart of our activities. We all thoroughly enjoy our training activities and have a great time; the dogs have a blast. SARDAA can boast an accomplished Training Director who has decades of experience with SAR dog training, and with official searches. Mary Ann Warren guides our weekly training sessions for the entire team with alacrity. It's an accomplishment to effectively plan weekly sessions where everyone is kept busy simultaneously with activities that address all levels of training from the puppy beginner to challenging exercises for the Active Level dog teams. Our Field Techs are also thoroughly trained by another accomplished member who is responsible for that task.

SARDAA is very appreciative of our relationship with **Edmonton Police Service** who has deployed us continuously since 1992. We are fortunate to have had several successful finds for them over the years and to have the EPS K9 Unit staff sergeant evaluates our Active Level dogs.

Finally, we are fortunate because our **Leadership** is strong and dedicated to the mission and values of SARDAA – to provide trained resources to agencies in aid of the missing person.
