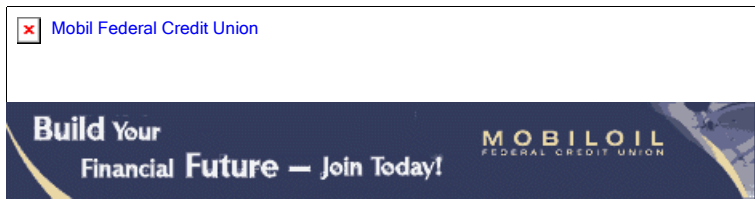




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## Search dogs, handlers learn set of new tricks

By: KEVIN J. DWYER, The Enterprise 02/23/2005

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LUMBERTON - Search-and-rescue teams from across the United States are in Lumberton this week to bone up on their skills and learn a few new tricks to help them find lost people.



Scott Eslinger/The Enterprise  
'Jazy,' a border collie, alerts her handler, Aki Yamaguchi, 33, of Katy after finding her target during a cadaver dog training session Tuesday in Lumberton.

With their well-trained wet noses leading the way, the blood hounds, German shepherds, retrievers - both golden and Labrador - collies and mutts are working with their handlers in various search-and-rescue techniques.

"This is mainly to teach the handlers how to work their dogs and how to read their dogs," said Roland Farrar, 48, of Silsbee. Farrar, a lieutenant at the Mark W. Stiles Unit, helped organize the five-day seminar with Texas Bloodhound Search-and-Rescue.

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dogs that detect human remains.

Because of their acute sense of smell - dogs have 200 million smell receptors and humans have 5 million according to the Web site petplace.com - not much gets past their noses.

"If you were to walk through the middle of the mall at high-peak traffic, we could track you through all those people," Farrar said.

A big part of the event for the handlers is the chance to observe their counterparts at work, said Chris Hill, 38, of Raywood.

"You get to meet a bunch of different people and see how they run their dogs," Hill said. "You might see something you want to incorporate when you train your dogs."

Handlers praised the seminar and the opportunity to work with their partners.

"It's almost like a melting pot," said Colleen Murphy, 55, a materials manager from Houston. "You get to see how other handlers and dogs work the problems and how they work them out."

Unlike many of the handlers, Hill's job as the kennel sergeant at the Hightower Unit in Dayton has him working with dogs every day. Most of the handlers at the seminar are volunteers who work with and train on their own time.

"There's people from all different walks of life who do this," said Dana Berry, 29, a firefighter from Houston. "They have real jobs and then they have this."

Berry attended with her 4-year-old golden retriever, Geneva.

Air Force Tech. Sgt. Julie Davis, 41, of San Antonio, got involved with Greater Houston Search Dogs about six years ago. For the past seven months she has trained her German shepherd, Reina, as a human remains search dog.

"It provides a service to the community and to families who have lost a loved one and helps to give them closure," Davis said.

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