



Multnomah County Search and Rescue



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Enrollment begins for search and rescue academy

The Multnomah County Sheriff's Office will begin enrollment this week in its annual search and rescue (SAR) academy. An orientation meeting for those interested will be held at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 21 at the MCSO Hansen Building located at 12240 N.E. Glisan St. in Portland.

Those who enroll in SAR academy will become members of the MCSOSAR tradition, becoming members of an active search and rescue team that is regularly called to find the lost and care for the injured in the Columbia River Gorge, throughout Multnomah County and around the state of Oregon. The academy will accept volunteers over the age of 14, in good health, who are able to pass a background check. Middle and high school students must be making sufficient progress toward their diploma.

The 7-month academy offers training and experience in current search and rescue techniques and culminates in Oregon state Search and Rescue certification. After the first month of training, students will be able to participate in some searches. After just a few months, students can participate in all search types.

"SAR has been an invaluable experience," said Reserve Team Leader Lauren Dillard, who has been a member of the unit for 8 years. "I walk a little taller knowing that my hands have saved lives. My hands and my skills have brought loved ones home to their families. There is no greater human experience."

Key elements of SAR academy training include search techniques; wilderness awareness; outdoor survival skills; evidence identification and crime scene preservation; land navigation using GPS, map and compass; medical assessment; and first aid.

"MCSOSAR is an organization built by volunteers and overseen by the sheriff's office. Our primary missions include locating and rescuing those who are lost or injured in Multnomah County, as well as aiding the sheriff's office in criminal investigations," Head Advisor Courtney Keller said. Keller has been a member of the unit since 1999. "While my three siblings have also been members, this unit – as a whole – is my family. Our lives have literally depended on each other and our training."

Those interested in joining are encouraged to attend the orientation night on Sept. 21 or e-mail mcsosar@gmail.com for more information.

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