

# HOPE ANIMAL-ASSISTED CRISIS RESPONSE

## President's Report

March 30, 2008

### Purpose

This report is mandated by the bylaws for the purpose of updating the board of directors with the activities of the president and organization.

### Activities:

Since our last board of directors meeting, on November 10, 2007 the following has occurred within HOPE AACR:

### Callouts

1. A PNW callout took place in February in response to the death of a student at an elementary school. Mary Rioux-Forker & Zach and Carol Markt & Katie responded.
2. A PNW callout took place in March in response to the death of a student at an elementary school. A callout report is pending.

### Open Houses

1. Three open houses were held in Georgia (EUS), one in December, and two in February.
2. An open house was held March 9 in PSW region. We had 25 people attend.

### Upcoming Drills & Events

1. The PSW region is planning to provide one K9 team for an upcoming Environmental Protection Agency drill schedule in May at their offices in San Francisco. The primary contact person for the EPA first learned about AACR through a seminar taught by Cindy Ehlers in Washington, D.C. This will be the first time the EPA has used an AACR team.
2. The PSW region will be participating this year at the Santa Clarita Emergency Expo.

Note: Please let me know if you have any events, trainings, or drills you want posted on the website. We've posted all of our known events for our members benefit, and to demonstrate to any visitor that we are active in our continuing education training.

### Los Angeles Superior Court Program

I have been working on a new opportunity for PSW teams to work at Los Angeles County Superior Courts. A good friend of ours is a judge at the Santa Monica Courthouse. He is a dog lover, and in fact has Bonnie's cousin. It turns out many of the judges at the court are also dog lovers and see the value at having well trained, crisis response dogs come and work in areas that are very stressful. I have an appointment next Tuesday, April 1<sup>st</sup> to meet with the supervising judge. We will be setting up a pilot program at that time. Right now they are thinking we will work with stressed out juries, witnesses, and court staff. We are consider this AACR work and not AAT because of the stress levels involved and potential for strong human emotions. Eventually they may want us to work at the criminal courthouse in downtown Los Angeles.

This kind of program is in operation in various places and in various forms around the country. This is the first I am aware of that this kind of program will involve AACR teams.

## **HOPE ANIMAL-ASSISTED CRISIS RESPONSE**

### **Professionalism**

The professionalism of our teams is vital for this organization. It's important because it can be a distinctive when approaching response and relief agencies. In addition, the professionalism of our group will be monitored as we respond on callouts, and when we apply for grants. As a volunteer organization we need to keep a balance between creating too many rules and still provide a reasonable level of freedom. We need to remind our teams that AACR is not the same as AAT, but is a paraprofessional endeavor.

Creating a uniform look helps to establish credibility with responders and others. The appearance of our teams has an impact on how our organization is perceived. I believe it was 2006 when the board established that teams should wear green HOPE shirts with black or khaki pants, with the RD as having the final say as to how teams should dress on a callout. I am still seeing members wearing purple shirts, or no HOPE shirt at all.

I believe the board should establish a reasonable time frame for members to purchase at least one green HOPE AACR shirt, and retire the purple shirts. I think a reasonable time frame for teams to this would be 3 months. If you recall, we voted to ban the use of the "working dog" patch on shirts, but I still see this too. I would recommend that teams have at least two shirts. I know some may have trouble with that.

Another issue related to attire is shoes. I've seen some members wearing open toed shoes. Clearly this would not be appropriate on callouts or public events. Closed toed shoes should be worn at all times during a callout or other public events. RD's should make sure their teams know what is expected. The S&O manual needs to be updated in area of uniform requirements.

### **Committees**

I have been encouraged by the activity levels of our committees since our last meeting in November. We need to continue our efforts at energizing each committee if we ever want to get anything accomplished. I would encourage each committee chair to keep plugging away at the tasks assigned. We are approaching the "hazy-lazy-crazy" days of summer. We need to try and keep projects moving, even if some members are not able to participate.

From my perspective, it is far more productive to assign tasks to individual committee members rather than trying to involve everyone on the same task. Full committees can review and revise materials as necessary, which insures that all perspectives are considered and factored into the work. This is far more efficient, easier on committee members, and will help to complete tasks in a more timely manner.

Please consider using the phone conference system more often for committee meetings. Email can be slow if committee members don't check and respond to emails frequently. Also, email doesn't work as well as a phone call for conveying ones thoughts and ideas.

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### Committee Tasks Accomplished since November 2007

The following is a list of tasks/activities of accomplished under each committee heading.

**Animal Welfare** – Claudine Singer chairs this committee, and has done a wonderful job keeping the committee working. They've met nearly every month since our last meeting. The draft manual has been completed and will be sent out to the board for review. A veterinarian will be reviewing the manual as well.

**Bylaws** – Eric Rynar took over the chair of this committee and has restarted discussions on the bylaws project.

**E&T** – Vicki Lee took over as chair of the E&T committee in December. Several new members joined the committee and begin their work in January. Although the work has been slow, I am encouraged by the tone and content of the communications of the committee. With workshops coming up this year, the efforts of this committee is vitally important.

**Fundraising** – Taryn Hefler has taken the chair for this committee. The committee held their first phone meeting February 24, and have since held another phone meeting. I am very encouraged that we now have a working fundraising committee who are developing ideas for this vital work.

**Membership** – Melanie Davis chairs this committee. Since our last meeting we created an online method for renewing our membership which includes paying dues online. Nearly all teams, in all regions have renewed their memberships. We have a few stragglers that still have not completed the renewal process, but are working on it. Certification Letters have been sent to the Regional Directors as of March 21<sup>st</sup>. 40 plus members renewed online. I would like this number to increase significantly next year. Paper/check renewals are far more time consuming.

**Public Relations** – I continue to chair the PR committee for lack of a willing member. We've made many changes and improvements to the website since November. The national brochure was updated and is available for your review on the website.

**Services & Operations** – Amy Rideout chair this committee. The committee has grown since November by two, with Vicki Lee and Catherine Congleton joining the committee. The S&O manual really needs an overhaul on many levels, one being the uniform requirements.

### 2008 Directors Election

As you know, we are in the middle of the nomination period for the directors election. We have two members, Eric and Amy, whose terms are expiring, and we have three directors (Lori, Richard, and Bill) that were appointed by the board following vacancies. The bylaws stipulate that appointed directors serve until the next election, whereby they can be nominated anew.

Lois Abrams is chairing the election committee, and has one member from each region on the committee. Nominations will end April 6. We will have an online ballot available by April 9 for members to vote. Voting will end May 1<sup>st</sup> with the results announced by May 3.

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### **Email System Change**

During the membership renewal process I discovered that less than 60% of our teams were on the Yahoo Group. As a result, I found a way to setup an email system that accomplishes nearly everything the Yahoo group did for us. The new system is easy to maintain and we control who is on the email list, rather than hoping our members join the group. Email is the primary method of communicating with our teams and therefore needs 100% participation. If only we could get people to check their email!!

### **Conclusion**

I would like to thank all of you for agreeing to our fixed meeting schedule. Hopefully this will help you all plan ahead for these meetings. I am looking forward to a very productive board meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dave Valentine  
President  
HOPE AACR

### **Board Meeting Schedule**

#### **2008**

Mar. 30	Phone Conference
June 21-22	Annual Meeting (PNW)
Sept 21	Phone Conference
Dec. 7	Phone Conference

#### **2009**

Mar. 22	Phone Conference
June 27-28	Annual Meeting (EUS)
Sept. 13	Phone Conference
Dec. 6	Phone Conference