



Havasu couples celebrate anniversaries
Page 10B

Back-up plan

When duty calls, volunteers look after emergency crews

By JAYNE HANSON
TODAY'S NEWS-HERALD

A 35-member volunteer group logged about 1,300 hours working in both emergency and non-emergency capacities in the area in 2009.

The Lake Havasu City Community Emergency Response Team was formed about six years ago at the request of the Lake Havasu City Fire Department amid a nationwide sweep of interest in volunteer-based emergency responders.

The volunteer teams first proved themselves invaluable following the 1994 Northridge earthquake in Los Angeles, Calif. Coincidentally, retired Los Angeles Battalion Chief Bob MacMillan, who distinctly remembers the Northridge earthquake, now leads the Havasu-based CERT members.

"It hit at 4:31 a.m. I remember because it bounced me out of bed at the fire station," MacMillan said. The CERT teams were formed to help people help themselves, to help their neighbors and to help first responders, MacMillan explained. Today, there are about 2,400 CERT teams in place in the U.S., according to the team leader.

Since the implementation of CERT in Havasu, the effort has taken on a life of its own, according to fire department officials.

"It (CERT) has evolved tremendously, more to the credit of the (CERT) leaders and participants. They truly want to be involved in the community," said Fire Marshal Chip Shilosky of the Lake Havasu City Fire Department. "With their enthusiasm, the opportunities are endless," he said.

The local CERT members have evolved into a downright necessity for Lake Havasu City firefighters over the years.

"They (CERT) are hands down about the best thing, in my opinion, that we ever did for the fire department," said fire department firefighter/engineer Eddie Fischer. "I don't know what we would do without them. We would be in a world of hurt," Fischer said.

Last year, CERT was called upon 14 times and provided 339 hours to support local firefighters. The team currently staffs the fire department's Rehab Division and helps to provide personal restorative measures such as re-filling air packs, providing sports drinks, coffee, snacks, wet rags or shady place to sit during the high temperatures of summer.

"We (CERT) really enjoy being there for them whether it is three o'clock in the morning or three o'clock in the afternoon," said Jim Thill, CERT assistant team leader.

CERT members are trained in basic first aid and provide a watchful eye on the physical conditions of the working firefighters. They look for symptoms of dehy-

dration or fatigue. CERT reports to the battalion chief, or command post, if a firefighter seems unfit to return to the frontlines of the fire, said Havasu firefighter Nathan Adler.

An escalated fire requires about 17-20 firefighters to work the scene. In turn, about eight or nine CERT members would be there to provide support to the firefighters. However, both the CERT members and firefighters interviewed agree the number of responders is situation-specific.

CERT members also function in a non-emergency capacity within the community.

Last year, CERT logged 147 volunteer hours of service providing scene safety on 20 projects in Havasu. They include Desert Hills Fire Department live fire training, the American Veterans Traveling Tribute event, Pyrotechnics Winter Blast, Fourth of July celebration, the National Christmas Tree arrival event, Wounded Warrior bicycling event and, more recently, Uptown Countdown New Year's celebration, according to MacMillan.

According to CERT partner Citizens Corps' Web site www.citizenscorp.gov, there are 54 CERT teams in Arizona. Six exist in Mohave County, including teams in Colorado City, Mohave Valley, Golden Shores, Golden Valley, Kingman and Havasu, according to MacMillan.

All six teams are trained by Federal Emergency Management Agency and operate within Mohave County Emergency Management Division. Training lasts 20 hours and includes identifying hazards and threats in their community; how to locate and shut off utilities such as water, gas and electric; how to use fire extinguishers; basic first aid; damage assessment and welfare checks; how to develop reception centers or shelters; assist first responders; and assist in search-and-rescue operations.

Mohave County Disaster Team's trailer is stored at Fire Station No. 5 and is used less often than the Rehab truck. It is equipped for search and rescue situations.

CERT operates solely on donations generated by volunteer members who each throw a few bucks into a kitty at monthly meetings. They meet at 6:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of every month at Fire Station No. 2, 2065 North Kiowa Blvd.

Interested individuals are encouraged to attend three meetings as a guest prior to enlisting in FEMA's 20-hour training course for county certification. Members are also subject to a limited background check.

For more information contact Havasu CERT team leader Bob MacMillan at 855-5450.

...

You may contact the reporter at jhanston@havasunews.com.



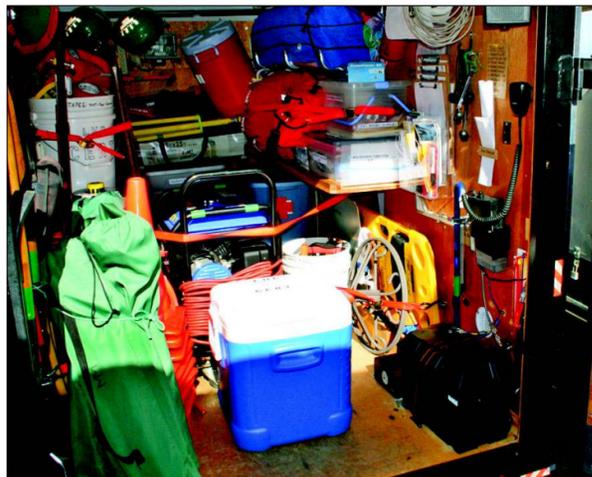
Jayne Hanson/News-Herald Photo

A Lake Havasu City firefighter is assisted as a fellow off-duty firefighter and a fellow on-duty firefighter switch out an exhausted air-pack Aug. 16, 2009 at the scene of a large structure fire in the 3200 block of Aztec Drive.



Lake Havasu City CERT assistant team leader Jim Thill is pictured Jan. 12 at Fire Station No. 5 with the fire department's Rehab Unit. Thill is demonstrating the air pack filler and explained its ability to re-fill almost 40 air bottles.

Jillian Danielson
Photo/Special to the News-Herald



CERT's Mohave County Disaster Team trailer is stored at Lake Havasu City Fire Station No. 5 and is geared for search and rescue situations.

Jillian Danielson
Photo/Special to the News-Herald

Desert ostrich ranch is a shadow of owner's dreams

By NICOLE SANTA CRUZ
LOS ANGELES TIMES

PICACHO, Ariz. - Perched at a picnic table in jean overalls, D.C.

"Rooster" Cogburn nodded in and out of a nap under the mid-afternoon sun, his chin resting on his chest.

Nearby were gigantic beige ostrich eggs, ostrich feathers and cotton T-shirts featuring the words "Rooster Cogburn Ostrich Ranch," souvenirs for the tourists.

But not today. Hundreds of feet away, semi-trailers and cars buzzed on Interstate 10. Cogburn's son-in-law, Craig Barrett, silently stood behind the wooden counter, the entry to the ranch.

Cogburn once had a dream right out of frontier days, but with a modern twist. He wanted to create one of the grandest ranches in the West - a ranch for ostriches. To Cogburn, Arizona's dry climate and abundance of alfalfa translated into the ostrich capital of the nation.

But after an unpredictable accident, the ranch has been reduced to a roadside attraction. For \$5, visitors can feed the

ostriches. An extra feature? They can also see deer, donkeys and rainbow lorikeets up close.

Cogburn, a polite gentleman with traces of his native Oklahoma in his accent, was raised to be diligent. His father always told him, "If your work's no good, then you're no good as a person." It's the credo that he lives by, and it's what he has preached to his two children.

By 29, Cogburn owned an amusement park in Arkansas. Over the next 20 years, he performed and trained animal acts in major rodeos in the United States and Canada. People said he had a sixth sense for training animals. By 40, he was retired and looking for something new, so he bought a couple of ostriches.

"I had no intentions of getting in the ostrich business," he said. "I was just playing."

He came to see the ostrich industry as an untapped gem, a way to feed the world and leave a legacy. He envisioned exporting ostrich chicks, eggs, feathers and leather, and compared his pioneering venture to the

turkey industry. In 1920, no one would produce commercial turkeys, he said, and now there's turkey ham, turkey sausage - you name it.

The same thing could be done with ostriches, he thought.

For years Cogburn perused Arizona for the perfect plot to raise South African ostriches. Under clear skies, in the midst of the tumbleweeds and prickly jumping cactuses that separate Phoenix and Tucson, Cogburn thought he had found it. He purchased a 600-acre farm at the base of Picacho Peak, dotted with tall lime-green saguaros and palo verde trees.

Cogburn did his homework. He researched the animal's breeding patterns and made multiple trips to Israel, South Africa and Namibia to observe ostrich farms and learn about the various bloodlines.

He helped form the American Ostrich Association, and said he invested close to \$1 million on top-of-the-line breeding facilities. Vendors were interested in his exports, he said. Before long, the association says, the ranch

was one of the largest ostrich outfits in North America, boasting 1,600 birds.

The Cogburns felt they were on the verge of something new, and were excited about the future. Until Feb. 3, 2002, Cogburn's 63rd birthday.

Around 7 a.m., he sat down for a cup of black coffee, while his wife, Lucille, readied for church. Suddenly, a ranch hand was banging on the door, screaming. Spooked ostriches were stampeding the fences, running in circles.

"When you've got hundreds of ostriches running 35 mph, they will kill you - they'll hit you so hard," Cogburn said.

He later learned that two hot-air balloons had launched near the ranch, frightening the birds. For Cogburn, the minutes-long incident was like an Oklahoma tornado. About 7,000 feet of fence was stomped into the ground. Four birds died the next day.

Over the next nine months, he had to have more than 800 ostriches slaughtered at a processing plant in Utah because of

injuries and declining health. The remaining birds refused to breed, and today 400 remain.

In 2003, the family sued the balloonists and lost. Cogburn unsuccessfully asked for a new trial and has been appealing to various public officials for help.

Recently, as the sunlight turned golden on a late afternoon, Cogburn drove his white truck around the back of the ranch and explained all that he'd been through.

Besides the emotional torment, he's now a full-blown diabetic and his blood pressure is too high. His face turned a vibrant pink.

"Where do you go from here?" he said, his blue eyes clear and pure. "You don't."

He drove past the empty outdoor chick pens and four barren large-scale barns built to keep chicks at night. He walked through the family's 5,000-egg incubation facility, now dusty and cold.

"All the infrastructure that we built here just trickled between our fingers," he said.

The family survives on

the revenue from the roadside attraction. Danna Cogburn-Barrett, Cogburn's daughter and the right-hand woman of the ranch, takes care of the day-to-day responsibilities of the farm, including a tour of the spread on a monster truck.

On a recent afternoon, visitors included college students decked out in flannel pajama pants chuckling at the silly birds. Children nearby frolicked with feed in their tiny hands, ascending to a wooden platform to feed the 8-foot-tall birds over a fence.

Zoe Cook, 6, eyed a bird suspiciously before pouring feed into a bin. In school, she learned about the ostrich's powerful big toe.

Cogburn-Barrett stood nearby smiling, watching the children play. "There's nothing more rewarding to me than seeing families having wholesome fun."

Cogburn-Barrett, who calls her father a genius, still has hope. She said the roadside attraction was drawing more tourists.

"I do want to rebuild," she said. "The difference is, my dad's 70 and I'm 44."