

## Nomination Letter

Christian County would like to nominate Trish Huelga for the Most Valuable CERT Volunteer. Trish and her husband Rob deployed with us to Joplin, MO after the 2011 Tornado and assisted with S&R, Damage Assessments and Recovery.

Upon returning home Trish raised many questions in regards to our County's plans for Pet and Animal Recovery. We pretty much had the generic SOP's in our plans that were required. But that was not enough for Trish. She needed to know if the same thing happened to our county that we were prepared for caring for animals lost and injured in a tornado.

After Congress enacted the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act, we all were charged with coming up with plans and procedures. Trish agreed to lead this new venture. She started with nothing and has ended with a well-organized plan and group of individuals to deal with pets in disaster.

For me, over the years it has been really hard to delegate tasks such as writing procedures and plans. Most volunteers do not really have the concept down and do not have enough experience to enable them to take on this task. But Trish has done the research, attending trainings, met with subject matter experts and has come up with a professional program that is leading the way in our region.

Every year Trish puts together the event "Paws for DART", a benefit to raise money for the DART program. The first year she had the event they raised over \$2,000! The money goes for equipment and supplies for the animals.

Trish usually spends a few hours a week on "administration" with the DART program all while working full time. Keeping up with members, keeping them up to date on events, trainings, meetings etc. The DART program meets regularly and often meets and trains with Greene County. She meets with Vets, animal shelters to update MOU's and keep resource lists up to date. We're not exactly sure how many hours she devotes to this...she tells us that she's not in it for the recognition and documenting all the hours is not necessary.

Along with her DART responsibilities, she is also active with CERT, FireCorps and Volunteers in Police Service. She is trained in Search and Rescue and responds with

the department to missing / lost persons. She helps out VIPS with traffic control at special events all around the community, helps out with DWI checkpoints and various other VIPS activities.

I think just the fact that she started this from nothing and made a good program out of it is enough to inspire others. Take something that you love, find a need or a gap that relates to that something that you love, and make it happen.

I think the fact that she took an idea and made that idea come to life and be a viable program that will benefit many would be the main reason.

When she started, there were no plans, no procedures, no MOU's and no equipment. Now, we have a reputable program, a storage unit full of response equipment for animals and the people trained to respond in a disaster. We have animal cages to house animals, all the items to feed and water the animals, stuff to rescue and transport animals and the trained personnel to run an animal shelter if we need to.

Her commitment to this program is over and above what most people would have done.

Granted she has had a lot of help, but without her leadership and hard work, this program would have never flourished. It's kind of interesting to watch her because she is somewhat quiet. She's not a loud, boisterous, know it all person. She manages people well with compassion and understanding and the people listen to her and they are glad to help out when she needs them.

This program was probably the most innovative program that we have taken on. With all the other Citizen Corps programs (CERT, VIPS, FireCorps) we had examples and sample procedures, policies and best practices that we could draw from. This program was drafted from the ground up with little outside help.

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