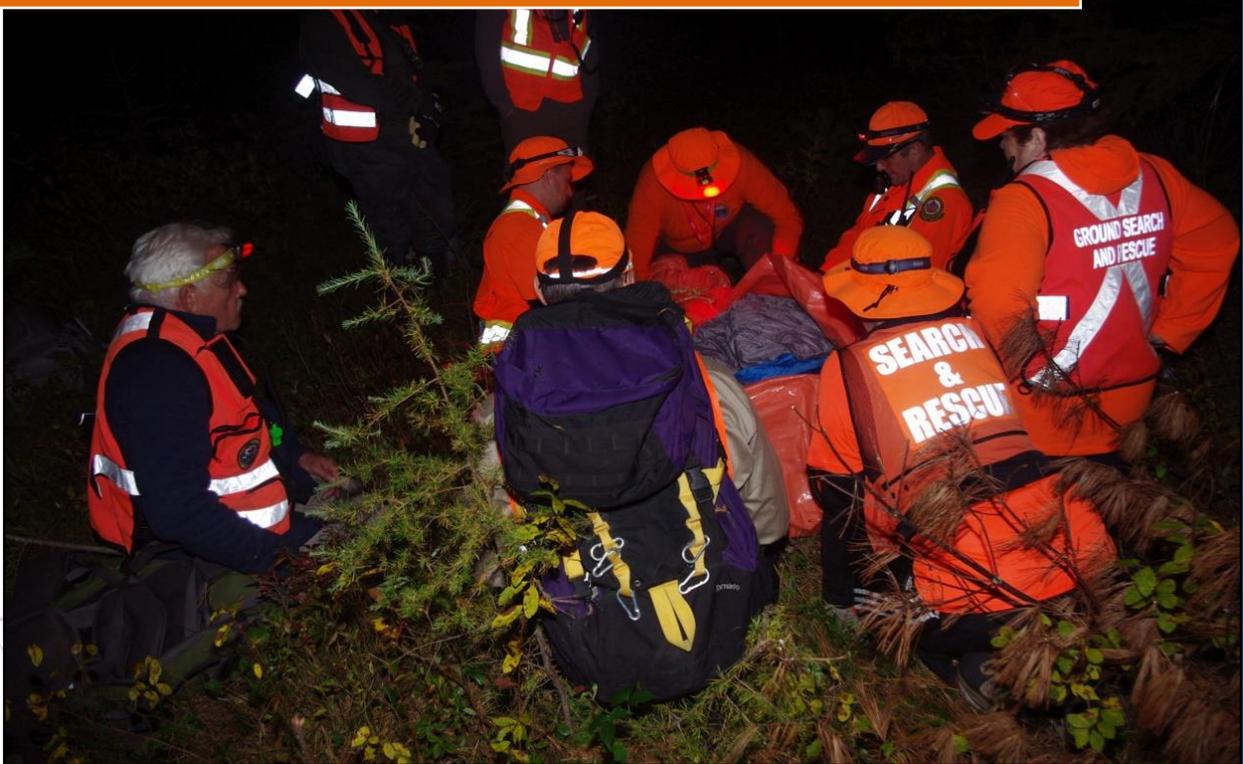
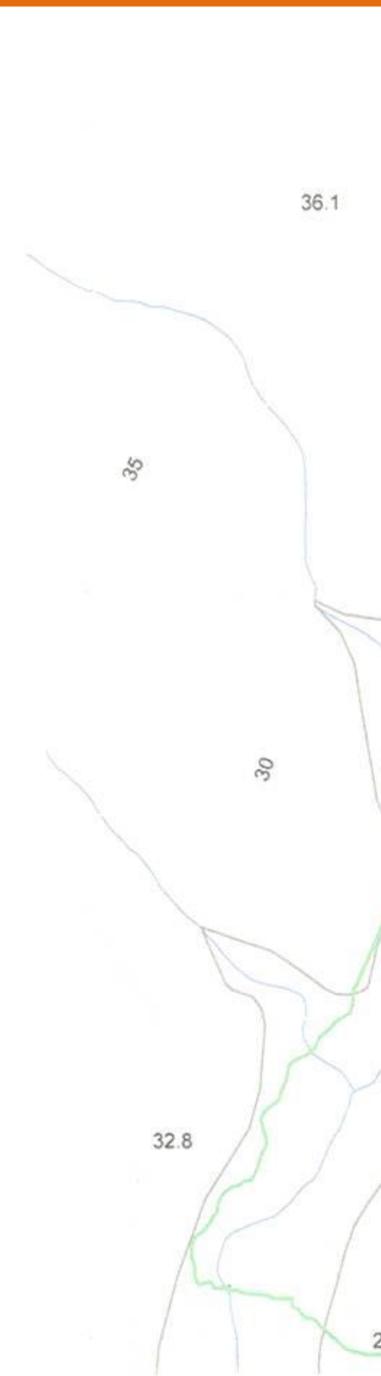




2021

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue Annual Report



So
Others
May
Live

Tom Fitzpatrick MMM, CD

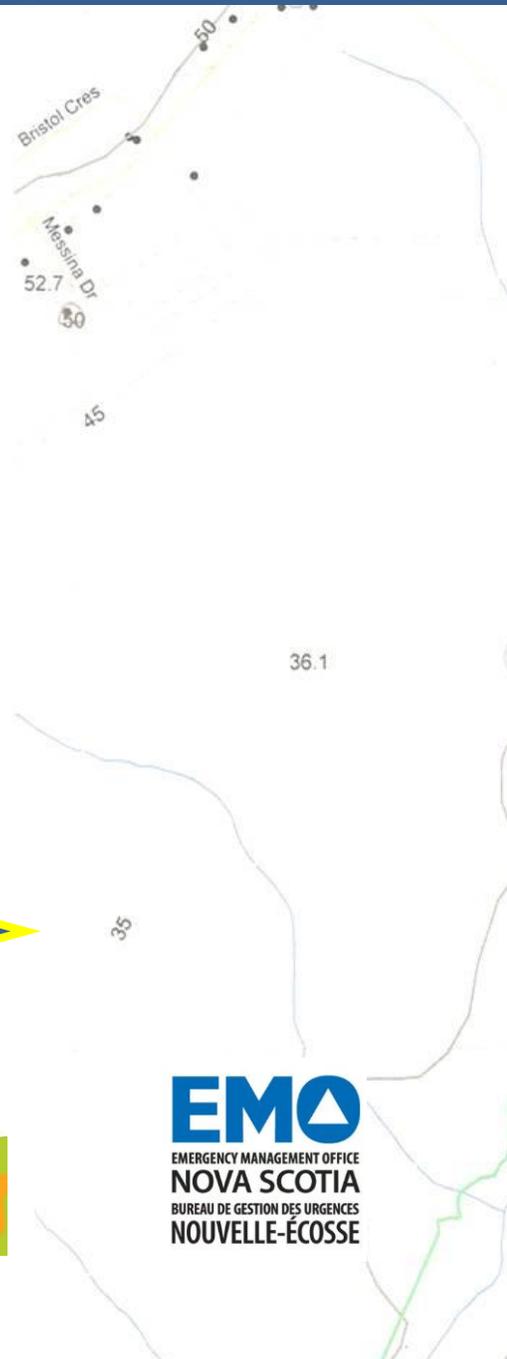
President Colchester Ground Search and
Rescue Association

1/1/2021

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Serving our Communities



Our Mission



73 Ventura Drive Debert

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue's mission is to maintain a constant state of readiness of personnel and equipment for search, rescue and incident response.



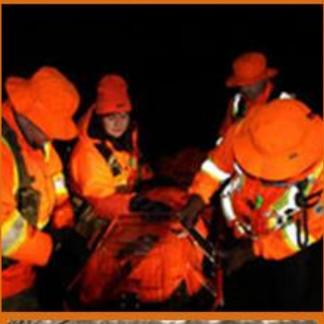
"So Others May Live"



Our Greatest Resource; Our Members

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue is committed to the lost or injured person in our County and all parts of the Province of Nova Scotia. Our dedicated volunteers all have one thing in common: they unselfishly donate their time and energies in order to help others in time of need. Each member of our team brings their own special talents to the task of enabling the Association to continue to locate, access, stabilize and transport lost and injured persons from the wilderness areas of Colchester County and Nova Scotia. We continue to assist Emergency Officials and Area of Jurisdiction authorities when called upon in times of crises. All volunteers are a precious resource to their communities. Those who are willing to help in adverse conditions make personal sacrifices and risk injury while doing so are especially rare. This is the reality of Ground Search and Rescue, and never more obvious as seen in the members of CGSARA. Whatever the time of year, whatever the weather, whatever the time of day... We do what must be done.

"SO OTHERS MAY LIVE"



Message from CGSARA President



Colchester Ground Search and Rescue has a long and rich history of service to Colchester County and the Province of Nova Scotia. As the team celebrated 46 years of service in February 2021, many of our members also reached personal milestones in Service to their communities.

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue Association is very fortunate to have the continued support from the County of Colchester and the Towns of Stewiacke and Truro, as well as Millbrook First Nations. Without their continued support we would be unable to provide the professional level of service and quality of equipment that we bring to bear on any request for assistance in our Communities and Province.

The teams focus in 2021 was to increase team footprint in our communities, by more public awareness and increased team size. Upgrade of team facilities to increase washroom, training facilities and equipment storage. Additionally focus to improve team financial stability, with less reliance on fundraising for operations.

The team received our replacement vehicle in early January, which required additional modifications to bring it up to operational readiness. Because of increased building costs from the Covid 19 Pandemic, we were unable to move forward with the construction of our new addition as planned.



With increased operations this year, more than double the activations, the team focused on reducing response time. This was complicated by equipment failures and needed equipment not being deployed mainly due to outside storage. The team made the decision to move forward with just a shell to house our vehicles during winter months, in order to sustain reduced response time. We hosted an open house and

ground breaking ceremony on November 13th to commemorate this important step.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tom Fitzpatrick".

Tom Fitzpatrick MMM, CD

President

32.8

27.8

Our Team Beginnings



CGSARA was founded in 1975 after two small children were lost, with one of the children dying of exposure. At the time the children were lost there was no organized search teams to look for them. Untrained volunteers were used to look for them and were not successful. In fact, one of the volunteers died during the search effort. The fatality was mainly due to lack of proper equipment and training. The team was incorporated in 1975 and is now registered with the Registry of Joint Stocks, registry ID#1257016.

CGSARA's home base is located at 73 Ventura Drive, Debert Nova Scotia. This building houses vehicles, equipment storage, offices, kitchen and training classroom. With permission of the owner, the team also takes full advantage of the surrounding wilderness areas to conduct valuable



training. CGSARA is one of the larger teams in the Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Association's central zone, with its primary area of responsibility being Colchester County. This team has been continually deployed upon request to all parts of the province, assisting in all functions at larger search operations.

CGSARA is a group of volunteers that form a Ground Search and Rescue Team, which is a self-directed and managed community organization. The team is organized, trained, and equipped, to locate, access, stabilize, and transport to safety a person or persons lost and/or injured in wilderness or wilderness interface areas of the Province of Nova Scotia.



Our Team

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue is one of 23 teams in the province, and one of five in Central Zone North. The team saw the necessity in 2016 to change the team structure and by-laws to better reflect the Incident Command System (ICS) which is utilized operationally.

The team is managed logistically by the Executive, which represents and ICS management team, with the addition of an Associate Member Chief to represent the Associate Members of the team.

Operationally the team is activated through the provincial Everbridge system, managed at Shubie Radio. The team deployment is managed by the team Duty Search

Manager, who coordinates a team Everbridge callout and deployment of team resources as appropriate. The team is activated as either mutual aid, or primary role which requires all team resources, including command and logistics functions. The Command Post Trailer acts as the Incident Command Post (ICP). Command Staff and the Incident Commander manage the search from this location. The Food Unit provides for the nutritional needs of search personnel.



Team Resources

- 1 X ICP Trailer
- 4 Station Network Computer Management System
- 1 X A Repeater mounted
- 1 X Satellite Phone System
- 22 X Real Time Tracking Radios
- 1 X Trunk Mobile Radio (Provincial System)
- 1 X ICOM Provincial Repeater Sites
- 1 X Marine Radio

Team Personnel

- 5 x Search Managers (MLPI, Lost Person Behavior)
- 14 x Team Leaders (GSAR CSA Standard)
- 10 x Electronic Search Specialist
- 4 x Medical First Responders
- 14 x Wilder First Aid
- 17 x Helicopter Operations
- 4 x Life Flight Landing Officers
- 5 x UTV Operators

Vehicles & Critical equipment

- 1 x 26ft Remote Rescue Trailer
- 1 x 24ft Food Unit (24 hours Meals for 24 Pers.)
- 2 x 1 Ton Dodge trucks with sliding Trays
- 1 x Expedition Transport Vehicle (8 Passenger)
- 1 x 8 wheel Argo Remote Rescue vehicle
- 3 x Litters with Mule litter wheels
- 1 x Winter evacuation toboggan
- 2 x two part Wilderness Trauma bags
- 2 x low angle rope rescue systems
- 5 x hypothermia management kits



Scope of Operations



Lost Person Searches Colchester Ground Search and Rescue has the highly trained personnel and modern equipment to enable them to search for lost, missing, despondent and/or injured individuals and groups of all ages in all terrain and weather that Nova Scotia has to offer.

Remote Rescue Operations Colchester Ground Search and Rescue performs and/or assists in the evacuation of injured or in peril persons in remote and difficult terrain where specialized training and equipment are required to safely bring the individual to the medical help they require.



Evidence Searches When called upon Colchester Ground Search and Rescue assists the RCMP or other police services with evidence searches throughout the province of Nova Scotia.

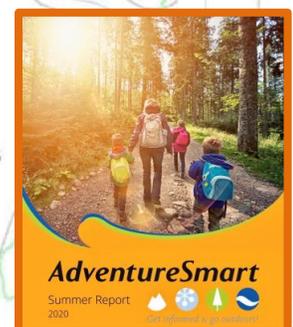
Civil Response In emergencies Colchester Ground Search and Rescue can be called upon to assist in Civil Response incidents such as, flood evacuations, sandbagging, traffic control, and mass casualty incidents.



Project Lifesaver Project Lifesaver is a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting and responding to the challenge to caregivers of finding wandering or bolting loved ones who may suffer from Alzheimer's disease, Autism or any other special needs requirements. Clients registered with Project Lifesaver wear a personalized bracelet. It is a one-ounce battery operated radio wrist transmitter that emits a unique automatic tracking signal every second, 24 hours a day.

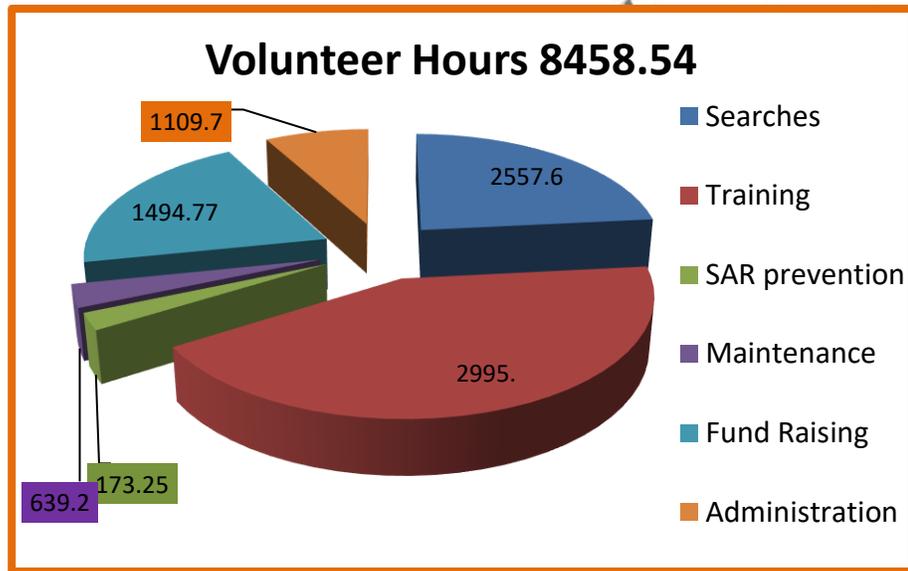
Public Education Colchester Ground Search and Rescue at times provides public education opportunities to promote safe wilderness activities. This includes Hug-A-Tree, Adventure Smart, Map & Compass & GPS, and Wilderness First Aid.

Public Event Services Colchester Ground Search and Rescue offers various public event Services such as First Aid, Medical First Response, traffic control and parade marshaling.



Our impact

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue 2021 volunteer hours were up in comparison to previous years due to an above average number of call outs. 2021 saw the team being activated 25 times, doubling previous years, and also within Covid restrictions.



Tuesday evenings are the designated training nights for the team. During these evenings two levels of training are offered, searcher training and advanced search tactics. Additionally the team ran two Searcher courses, with a continuous influx of new members. We also conducted one Project Lifesaver electronic sensor specialist course and assisted EHGSAR with another. Due to a busy operational tempo we were unable to conduct much out of area training. Additionally a Lost Person Behaviour course had to be cancelled due to operational search requirements. The team was able to conduct ice rescue training and conducted additional training for other zone teams. Water rescue was also conducted during the spring season. Tuesday night training was pivotal in carrying out continued training in rope access and culminated in a weekend of rescue litter handling including advanced handling assisted by rope systems.



SAR Prevention encompasses both Public Education and Project LifeSaver, the team presently has seven (7) Clients that they provide service to on a monthly basis. The team also has six (6) AdventureSmart presenters and were able to provide an information session for local guiding group. The team was also requested to do a presentation to the local cadet organization, but this was cancelled due to Covid.

Our impact continued

Team members also utilize hours for vehicle maintenance and modifications in an effort to reduce costs. Most building maintenance and grounds keeping are also conducted by volunteers except for snow removal which is contracted out. In 2021 members in conjunction with contractors installed two new washrooms, one being wheel chair accessible, and moved the entrance to the building. They also created a new building foyer and painted the inside walls of the vehicle bay. This was conducted in preparations for the construction of our new addition, which will provide much needed training and storage rooms as well as being able to store all vehicles inside which will increase operational readiness



Fundraising normally accounts for over 35 percent of volunteer hours, during this period due to Covid these hours were reduced. The team depends on two major fundraisers parking at Riverside Speedway, and Chase the Ace with other Debert organizations. This year we were able to complete a Chase the Ace fundraiser carried over from the previous year, although due to Covid it was not as successful as previous events.

Administration includes, purchasing, meetings, arranging fundraising, administering team accounts, by-laws, and team correspondences. During 2022 these were conducted utilizing the team vehicle bay to provide adequate compliance with public health requirements.



Cost of Doing Business

Colchester Ground Search and Rescues fiscal year, 2021, was an above average year. Sustainable funding commitments from the Municipality of Colchester and the Town of Stewiacke, along with an increased GST rebate, search reimbursements and a generous private donation offset the poor returns on fundraising throughout the year.



Interior upgrades to our Food Unit mobile food service trailer were completed, and an Add-A-Room was purchased to make for a full-service kitchen on search site. Also, a new 48' telescopic communications mast was purchased and installed on the Command Trailer. New lighting packages and radio systems were installed in some of our trucks also.

New washroom facilities were added to the building and the entry way relocated in anticipation of building expansion that started in December.

The team also successfully applied for and was awarded a \$20,000 grant through the Emergency Service Providers Fund. This money is being applied towards new personal protective clothing and gear for our searcher and logistics members.



Our building fund topped \$200,000 by late fall, a combination of our two GIC investments, a private donation of over \$50,000 and our accumulating cash fund from fundraising and annual funding allocations. This benchmark led to the decision to start phase one of the new building

expansion, the weather tight shell to house our equipment.

Year at a Glance

Activations

- 🌀 Jan 2nd, with the first real snowstorm of the season and dark coming on, we received an urgent call from Warwick Mountain. An autistic 11 year-old was missing from a family outing up the mountain. Fortunately the child was found before the team mustered to start the treacherous trip in the storm.
- 🌀 March 21st, received a rescue call in Five Islands Provincial Park. Mother and son stranded on a cliff ledge after the tide came in and caught them unaware. GSAR and fire converged on scene and the 2 were brought to safety via an upper trail after some bushwhacking.
- 🌀 April 23rd the team was activated to assist Pictou GSAR with locating an elderly lady with dementia that was missing come nightfall. We searched through the night only for her to be found at sunrise in a neighboring backyard.
- 🌀 Saturday, April 24th, the team was requested to assist with the search for a teen in Halifax, the team had to decline as we were just demobilizing from a search in Pictou.
- 🌀 Halifax SAR called the team in on Sunday, April 25th, to aid in the continued search for a missing teen that went out in a canoe late at night 5 days prior. The ARGO was put to use on some difficult trail leading to the breakdown of equipment. After the days search he team was informed that the subject had been found by side scan sonar in the lake he had been on.
- 🌀 Friday, Jun 4th, the team was called to search for 2 missing children in Lower Onslow. As the team was rolling to site a responding member spotted the children and informed the RCMP. We were stood down before arriving on site.
- 🌀 June 26th saw the team gather at the request of Truro Police in Clifton to continue combing one more section of the Cobequid Bay in our continued effort for find clues in the Dylan Ehler case.
- 🌀 On the evening of July 19, the team received a call for boots on the ground at sunrise the following day to look for an elderly, dementia gentleman who had drove off from home up the mountain roads 2 days prior. After a day of ATV searching trails, the vehicle was found. With a little more trail walking the subject was found successfully and airlifted out by DNR chopper.
- 🌀 August 1st the team was called to Cape Breton to aid in the search for a young man missing with his watercraft on the Bras D'Or Lakes. The subject was found before we got rolling and the team was stood down.
- 🌀 August 4th saw the team called to Mutual Aid Halifax in Beaverbank for a missing gentleman. He was quickly found while enroute and the team was turned back.
- 🌀 Aug 18th we were activated for a Rescue at Cape Chignecto Provincial Park in Cumberland County. A lady in medical distress halfway around the 50k trail. She was airlifted out by Parks Staff and DNR prior to our arrival.

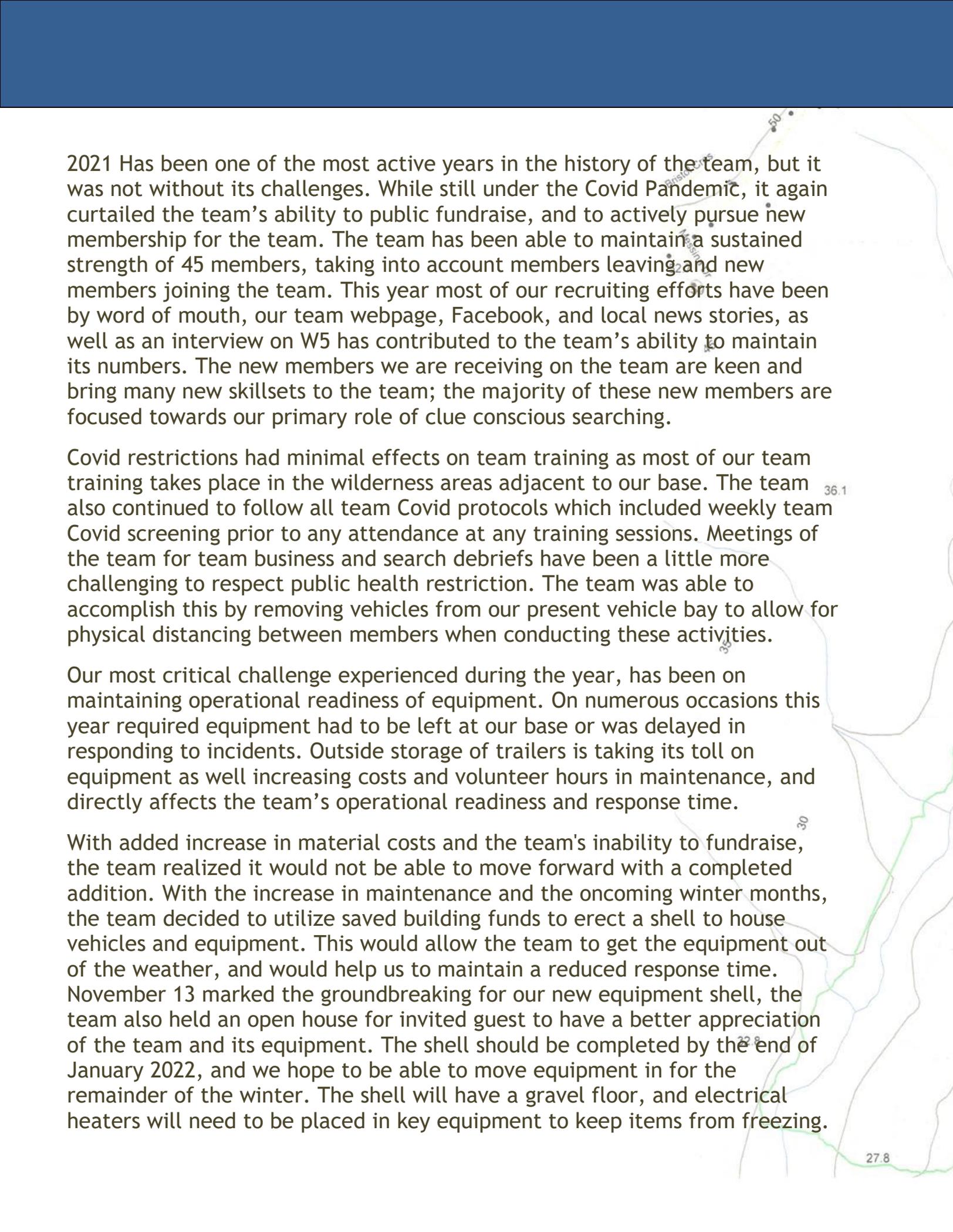
Year at a Glance continued

- Sept 14th, after an evening of training CGSAR was contacted to search for a despondent lady in Greenfield. After an all-night search she was found safe by a member heading home to go to work.
- 8 am, October 4th, the team was activated to Hammonds Plains to aid in the second day of Halifax GSAR looking for a dementia patient that wandered away from her care home. She was found caught up in brambles in the woods shortly after the team arrived on scene.
- Suppertime on the 13th of October, we were activated with great urgency to Tatamagouche to locate a teen missing from school, believing they were wanting to do themselves harm. After a couple hours they were found and convinced to go the Truro hospital for a mental health check.
- Oct 22nd the team performed an evidence search for the Truro Police in regard to an ongoing case.
- On Oct 27th we were activated to assist with a search for a lost child in North Preston. We sent a team up early in the morning that aided in the search all day. A second team was sent up for an evening shift, luckily the child was found shortly after dark.
- Dec 4th, the team was requested to travel to Middle River, Cape Breton, to take over the search for a missing lady with onset dementia. Searching all Saturday, we were put up in accommodations for the night and then resumed searching at sun-up. Unfortunately, the subject was never found.

Operational Overview

2021 was the busiest year on record for CGSARA, with 25 Operational periods and 2557.6 hours of actual search operations. During 2021 the teams focus has been on reducing response time to incidents with the team being able to reduce average response times by 15 minutes, this was an excellent achievement. Unfortunately, winter conditions do not make this possible due to the current vehicle storage situation, thus necessitating the team to move forward with construction of our new vehicle bay.

One key observation from 2021 was the increase in search incidents with mental health components, 72 percent of all search events. This has identified an area to the team worth further considerations, on how to search for people who do not wish to be found or do not realize they are lost. The team is working to better identify ways to improve these searches, especially during dark hours, to better ensure the safety of the individuals and the safety of our search resources.



2021 Has been one of the most active years in the history of the team, but it was not without its challenges. While still under the Covid Pandemic, it again curtailed the team's ability to public fundraise, and to actively pursue new membership for the team. The team has been able to maintain a sustained strength of 45 members, taking into account members leaving and new members joining the team. This year most of our recruiting efforts have been by word of mouth, our team webpage, Facebook, and local news stories, as well as an interview on W5 has contributed to the team's ability to maintain its numbers. The new members we are receiving on the team are keen and bring many new skillsets to the team; the majority of these new members are focused towards our primary role of clue conscious searching.

Covid restrictions had minimal effects on team training as most of our team training takes place in the wilderness areas adjacent to our base. The team also continued to follow all team Covid protocols which included weekly team Covid screening prior to any attendance at any training sessions. Meetings of the team for team business and search debriefs have been a little more challenging to respect public health restriction. The team was able to accomplish this by removing vehicles from our present vehicle bay to allow for physical distancing between members when conducting these activities.

Our most critical challenge experienced during the year, has been on maintaining operational readiness of equipment. On numerous occasions this year required equipment had to be left at our base or was delayed in responding to incidents. Outside storage of trailers is taking its toll on equipment as well increasing costs and volunteer hours in maintenance, and directly affects the team's operational readiness and response time.

With added increase in material costs and the team's inability to fundraise, the team realized it would not be able to move forward with a completed addition. With the increase in maintenance and the oncoming winter months, the team decided to utilize saved building funds to erect a shell to house vehicles and equipment. This would allow the team to get the equipment out of the weather, and would help us to maintain a reduced response time. November 13 marked the groundbreaking for our new equipment shell, the team also held an open house for invited guest to have a better appreciation of the team and its equipment. The shell should be completed by the end of January 2022, and we hope to be able to move equipment in for the remainder of the winter. The shell will have a gravel floor, and electrical heaters will need to be placed in key equipment to keep items from freezing.

Mapping our Future

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue Association looks forward to a bright future in service to our communities. With three major goals, increasing the number of volunteers, moving forward with the addition to our facilities, and focusing on continuous training for our members.

Priority #1 Volunteerism in Nova Scotia has changed, compounded with the ongoing pandemic restrictions, it has been very difficult for organizations such as ours to find new members.

- The team must increase recruitment activities and public exposure to increase new membership
- Word of mouth within current members social circles has proven instrumental in attracting new members
- The team must reduce wherever possible non-core related uses of precious volunteer hours
- Team must increase recognition both internally and within the communities of volunteer service

Priority #2 Team facilities upgrades need to be completed to better store valuable equipment and increase training facilities.

- New addition must be completed to increase operational readiness, and response time
- Provide proper storage of team equipment, and sufficient spaces to conduct proper equipment and vehicle care and maintenance
- Increased classroom space to allow for concurrent training to be carried out during valued training periods.
- To increase member Esprit de corps, and public image

Priority #3 A tiered training program needs to be implemented to cover all levels of required skills for all members.

- New member Searcher training to be rolled out bi-annually for newly joined members to acquire basic search skills
- Extended rescue and patient care training ongoing for members having completed their Searcher training
- Potential Team Leaders identified, and Team Leader Course run for advanced leadership skills
- Current Team Leaders to participate in teaching Searcher course modules to gain confidence in their leadership skills

Member Milestones

30 Years Service

Leonard Brandstad

20 Years Service

Gwen Brandstad

Doug McNutt

Edward Leblanc



15 Years Service

Amy Hansen

10 Years Service

George Trenholm

Malcolm Magee

Stephen Parker

5 Years Service

Graham Long

Darlene Colpitts

Tom Fitzpatrick

Deanna Hatfield

Nancy Adams

Jackie Waugh

Jeff Winters

