

MIDWEST SEARCH DOGS
"In service to our community"
Call (317) 254-FIND (3463)



Midwest Search Dogs (MSD) is a non-profit organization comprised of dog handlers and their K-9 partners.

MSD currently has multiple teams that train exclusively for wilderness rescues. Our handlers are not paid for their service, but gladly give their time, training and dogs as a service to our local, state, and national community as may be requested.

MSD is always looking for dog handlers who are truly interested in pursuing search and rescue work. We also have a real need for support personnel to help in many areas of our organization. We need help on many committees, like Public Relations, Fund Raising, and Training, as well as support for other areas within our organization.

If you are interested in further information, please contact our Director of Operations:

Danielle Zimmerman
317-319-5532
info@midwestsearchdogs.org.

Midwest Search Dogs

1. Introduction

It takes 2 to 3 years of intensive training to get a dog and handler ready to do search and rescue work. This kind of dedication is characteristic of the core members of MSD. We have dog/handler teams that are mission-ready level and several more that are at various stages of their training. We are a team that believes in keeping training groups small enough to maintain quality. However, we do take applications from time to time.

2. Start with a Good Dog

To be a successful team, it helps to have the right dog. This section is intended for the interested person who does not yet own a dog and is wondering what sort of dog he/she should have.

Ideally the dog should be *friendly* and *outgoing*, anxious to *play with a ball or toy*. The dog should **not** be afraid of strangers, strange places or strange sounds. It should be *eager to please*, and also eager to chase after a ball. It should display a relatively *high energy level* when played with, and yet be able to become *calm* when stroked and soothed.

The dog should weigh between 35 and 85 pounds. Small dogs do not have the endurance to withstand several days of searching over extended terrain. Large dogs do not “pack well”, i.e. they take up too much room in places where space is a premium such as helicopters, small tents, etc. Also, large dogs usually do not have the agility required to negotiate obstacles and rough terrain.

The dog should be able to get along with other people and other dogs. Often on a search mission, dogs are grouped together and cared for by a stranger while their handlers are being briefed or perhaps being treated for an injury.

There is no perfect breed for this work, although some breeds – retrievers such as Golden Retrievers or Labs, German Shepherds, Australian Shepherds, Border Collies, and Airedale Terriers are among the more popular and successful dogs in this work. These breeds all have in common a high energy level, a friendly, outgoing character and a strong desire to play and chase a ball.

The breed is not so important as the individual dog. When buying a dog, once you have decided on the breed, go out and get the best dog from a working background that you can find. Do not rely on what the breeder tells you. Ask to see records of awards earned by the parents. If this is not possible, ask to see the parents perform. Character and temperament are genetic traits as much as appearance. If the parents do not have it, you are fighting genetic odds if you take a puppy from this breeding.

3. If you already have a dog...

We at MSD are aware that the success of our program depends on the dog and handler working as a *team*. We have a standard procedure for evaluating a candidate's dog. We will tell you our prognosis concerning what is entailed for you to achieve mission-ready status with this particular dog. We test the dog and handler as a potential team.

Our test is designed to answer the following questions:

A. Will your dog retrieve?

A dog that will retrieve shows two things:

1. The confidence to complete a task away from his handler
2. The awareness from a distance that the handler is there.

B. Will your dog hunt for a lost article?

A dog must be able to remember its work. This is a natural extension of desire to retrieve and shows the ability of the dog to remember what we have asked it to do.

C. Will your dog chase a person running away into the woods?

Search dogs must have fun doing what they do; otherwise they will break under stress. A dog that will chase a person shows high "prey" drive. That dog is having fun. A dog having fun is not stressed.

D. Is your dog resilient towards sounds or unpleasant terrain?

Search dogs must traverse all sorts of terrain and noise situations. A good search dog does not let himself be disoriented or distracted from his task under such conditions.

E. Does your dog get along with other dogs?

At camp time, several dogs must be in the same quarters. A dog fight would be disastrous.

F. Is your dog friendly and outgoing towards strangers?

There may be times when someone else must take care of your dog. Your dog must be trusting with other people. Also, when your dog encounters a stranger – e.g. the victim – the dog must be confident. If the dog is not confident, it will not alert correctly. A bad alert wastes time and jeopardizes the victim's condition.

G. Can you control your dog?

If you are asked to search an area, Incident Command wants to know whether they can cross off that area or not. The dog/handler team must search the area systematically and thoroughly so that they can definitely say "yes" or "no." that requires that you be able to confine your dog to the area being searched and communicate to the dog what you want searched.

Remember! Even if you do not have the greatest dog (who does??) you can still learn by trying to make that dog as good as you can. Then you will know what you want from your next dog! And everybody makes mistakes with their first dog. So...

4. We don't look just at your dog – WE LOOK AT YOU!

The key to mission-ready status with your dog is *teamwork*. Most people have never trained a dog to do instinctive work. They have trained obedience by physically molding their dog into

a sit, down or a stand. Search and rescue requires this kind of control but it requires much more.

The *rapport between dog and handler* is very important. The dog must have the confidence to work out away from you and yet be willing to come when you call from 300 feet away. You must be able to call your dog off game. You must be able to control your dog enough to make sweeps through an area so that you can say with confidence that your dog has thoroughly searched the assigned area.

Here is a list of some of the skills and characteristics needed by a handler in order to become mission-ready:

A. Be able to ‘read your dog.’

You must be able to infer what is going on in your dog’s mind. You are a team. You must be able to sense when your dog is “hot” on a scent or perhaps confused and why.

B. Be willing to help other people train their dogs.

Training a search dog requires the cooperation of several people: a “victim”, a spotter, the training director, and the handler.

C. Understand the basics of scent propagation.

You must understand how scent is generated, what the dog’s scenting capabilities are, how scent travels and what factors influence how scent travels.

D. Be trained to help the injured.

MSD team members have achieved medical certifications to aid the team. We require that every team member be trained at least in First Aid and CPR.

E. Be in good physical condition.

Searching is demanding work. You should be able to carry 50 pounds for 100 feet or more. You should be able to walk 8 miles without feeling fatigue.

F. Be knowledgeable with map and compass.

When Incident Command assigns you to search an area, they want to be confident that you know what area you are searching. You must learn to be good enough with a map and compass to be able to locate that area and report any finds in terms of the Mercator Coordinates.

G. Have an understanding of the Incident Command System or other similar agencies.

Any searches that we do are under the jurisdiction of the agency that has called us. We are not “loose cannons,” and we only participate where we have been invited.

5. Additional considerations.

You will need the outdoor equipment to train year round, and will need additional equipment when you become mission-ready.

You will need to attend additional trainings, usually 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. every other Sunday, and every Tuesday evening from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Members should plan on attending the entire session regardless of the weather. Optional training is often available many times between scheduled trainings. Also, members are responsible for their own

obedience trainings as well as behavioral training. (i.e. socialization, neutralization, confidence building, etc.)

Some additional disciplines (i.e., Collapsed Structure Search, etc.), will require you to double your scheduled training time.

You will need the job flexibility to go on missions and attend specialized trainings.

You have to be dedicated to search and rescue work due to the vast number of hours required. However, it is rewarding work, which allows you to find out a great deal about yourself and your dog.

You may wish to attend one of our Sunday trainings, to see first hand the work involved and to allow us to answer your questions.

When you wish to apply for membership, there is a \$25.00 application fee due with the signed application. From that point on, there is an annual membership fee of \$100.00, payable in increments every quarter.

Thank you for your interest,

Midwest Search Dogs, Inc.

Midwest Search Dogs
Request to attend trainings

Date: _____

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ M.I. _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone
Home _____ Work _____

Cell _____ Pager _____

Emergency contact:

Name _____ *Relationship* _____

Phone:

Home _____ Work _____

Cell _____ Pager _____

Info:

How did you here about us? _____

What Previous Search training or dog training experience do you have?

Dog's Information: (Dogs are only allowed after your first visit)

Dog's Call Name: _____ Breed: _____ Age: _____

Prior training

Dog's Call Name: _____ Breed: _____ Age: _____

Prior training

AGREEMENT OF INDEMNIFICATION

I, the undersigned, for the purpose of canine search and rescue training, while participating in any Midwest Search Dogs activity, hereby indemnify Midwest Search Dogs, its officers and members, from and against any and all claims, demands, suits, causes of action in law or in equity expenses (including reasonable attorney fees), and liability of any nature whatsoever on account of any damage or destruction of property, injury or death of persons or animals, or action of any federal, state, or local governmental agency arising out of my training with Midwest Search Dogs, Inc.

I further indemnify Midwest Search Dogs, its officers and members, from any against any and all claims, demands, suits, causes of action in law or in equity, expenses (including reasonable attorney fees), and liability of any nature whatsoever on account of any damage or destruction of property, injury, or death of any minor children under my legal care, or action of any federal, state, or local governmental agency arising out of my training with Midwest Search Dogs, Inc.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I, the undersigned, have caused this Agreement of Indemnification to be signed and executed this _____ day of _____, 20__.

Written Signature

Printed Signature

Date

Witness Signature

Date