

Alton Volunteer Emergency Corps (AVEC) to host an "Open House" event to boost volunteer recruitment and educate the public

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ALTON - AVEC Commander Ed Drach and his members are eagerly looking forward to playing host to the river bend community in an effort to recruit volunteer rescue workers and educate the public about the equipment they use and the valuable services they provide to the community.

All of AVEC's resources will be on hand at their headquarters for the public to look over, boats, rescue trucks, an ambulance and many other specialized items/equipment. People will also be invited to take photos, and let the kids explore, there will be plenty of handouts and safety literature available as well. Members will also be on hand to

speak with people interested in volunteering with their agency performing rescue work or emergency service support. There will also be pumpkin decorating and lots of treats for the kids!

AVEC Treasurer Tracy Drach states: *"We always enjoy getting a chance to meet the community and to show them what our organization does."*

AVEC has been providing a critical service the river bend community (*and even assisting in Missouri agencies*) since 1948. They provide Search and Rescue services on land and water, Water Rescue, EMS and first aid details at special events, livery/body transport details, and assistance to local police and fire departments. They also provide emergency service support to local governments, for instance: like the MOU they have established with the Village of Godfrey for disaster response/recovery assistance.

Chris Sichra, Godfrey's Public Safety Administrator, vouches for AVEC's reliability:

"AVEC has been such a valuable asset to our community year after year, assisting our fire protection district with Search and Rescue resources, they're ready to assist us during disasters and have proved their worth participating with us during our disaster drills, like our full scale tornado exercise last spring. They also regularly help at our Parks and Recreation events by providing first aid/EMS service support details at major annual functions, we know we can always count on them."

A troubling national trend has been observed over the past several years as volunteer agencies of all types have seen their numbers declining due to the economy, many people who used to get involved in volunteering now find it necessary to get a second or even third job just to make ends meet, in certain disciplines for instance; agencies who need rescue workers and firefighters are often hit the hardest as the community also suffers as those positions that go unfilled are critical to a community's safety and well-being.

The goal is to get more of the younger generation involved, as that volunteer experience and networking opportunity (regularly assisting and working around career fire, police and EMS) often leads directly to job experience that looks great on a resume and may potentially direct that young volunteer to a career as a first responder later in life.

"Those years of experience working with AVEC and GFPD while in my late teens and early 20's had a huge positive impact on my career", says Sichra who works both as a full time St Louis City Firefighter since the 90's and also serves as Godfreys Public Safety Administrator and Deputy ESDA Director (Emergency Management) *"I wouldn't be where I am now without that experience."*

For those interested in becoming a Search & Rescue (SAR)/Water Rescue volunteer you can contact Commander Ed Drach by phone at: **(618) 462-2202**, by email at: [**eddrach@yahoo.com**](mailto:eddrach@yahoo.com) or stop by the open house event at the AVEC headquarters, 2400 Bloomer Drive, Alton, Il. 62002 on October 22nd from 11AM-4PM