

New mounted volunteer group ready to help



Ontario Mounted Special Services members Cindy Fuerth and Darilyn Campney along with Limerick Township fire chief Jason Post pay a visit to Limerick Township Canada 150 celebrations at the Limerick Community Centre. / JIM EADIE Special to This Week

By Jim Eadie

A Wollaston Township woman is spearheading a new public service for the province that combines a love of horse trail riding and the desire to give back to your community. Cindy Fuerth, owner and operator of Brookston Horse Park near Coe Hill, has been riding horses since she was a child. She is known for her equine confidence, mountain trail, and horse de-spooking clinics offered all over the province.

Each September for the past few years Fuerth has attended the Kentucky Horse Park Mounted Police Colloquium, presented by the Lexington Police Department, providing five days of training for police and civilian search and rescue, tactics and crowd control. She noted that in the U.S., there is more organized volunteer supports for emergency services ? such as search and rescue ? than we have in Canada. This planted a seed.

Returning home, she began the process of designing a provincewide volunteer group disciplined, trained and certified. The group is now known as the Ontario Mounted Special Services Unit.

?We are now a not-for-profit group made up of volunteers only,? said Fuerth. ?We do accept donations only to cover our cost of fuel and equipment.?

Currently the roster is 20 members made up mostly of professional or retired professional service providers.

?There are retired police officers, a lawyer, veterinarian, paramedics, firefighters, correctional officers and a nurse,? she said. ?The riders and horses are required to pass a certification process.?

This past July OMSSU conducted their Civilian Service Horse Sensory clinic and certification at the Service Horse School in Clinton, Ont., the first of this type of clinic for Ontario. Assisted by Toronto Mounted Police officers and a retired RCMP officer, participants were required to pass equitation and obstacle/sensory testing. Next spring Fuerth is arranging for Search and Rescue certification.

OMSSU offers wilderness, rural and urban search assistance for missing or lost persons, disaster response, large animal rescue assistance, mounted perimeter patrols, community relations and safety events, wilderness educational programs, honour guard and funeral ceremonies, emergency response and trail patrols.

?We also have a local pilot project here with fire chief Jason Post and the Limerick Township and Wollaston Township fire departments, and have done some training together,? said Fuerth. ?We plan some classroom training during the winter. Other fire departments across the province are interested, and are looking at this too.?

Fuerth is currently the fire prevention officer for Wollaston Township Fire Department.

?Horses are an asset to searching,? said Fuerth. ?You can cover a lot of very rough ground faster, and go places that are hard for

people or motorized vehicles to go.?

Next step will be to arrange agreements or protocol with other emergency services. Further information is available at www.omssu.com.