

And of course it also requires...

A Special Canine. STAR 1 assesses each dog before starting its training to help determine if it has the drives, temperament and intelligence to participate safely and productively in search training and operational search work.

SAR dogs are not selected by breed but by temperament. A SAR dog needs to be highly driven for some kind of reward system (toy, food, social contact), be non-aggressive towards people and other canines, be agile and confident in stressful environments, and be able to work through distractions. They must be tuned in to cues from their handlers, and still possess the ability to work on their own.

Each handler owns and trains their search canine. If the dog you currently own isn't a good fit, would you be willing to get another dog for SAR training? Do you have the option of getting another dog that could be specifically selected for SAR?

Extensive Canine Training. STAR 1 has canine search team certifications available in area search, wilderness and urban trailing, water search, wilderness cadaver search, human remains detection (HRD), disaster (collapsed structure) live search, disaster (collapsed structure) cadaver search, and evidence/article search.

STAR 1 helps a new handler choose the search specialty which best suits their canine and themselves. Training to certification level takes approximately 1 to 2 years. Handlers typically train their dogs two to four times a week, constantly working on building and maintaining the canine's reward system, alert, search skills, obedience, agility, and socialization.

This is not a weekend endeavor; training must be consistent and well planned.

Are you still interested?

For someone who really wants to contribute to their community, being a search canine handler allows for numerous opportunities to do so. It is very satisfying to build a close working relationship with your canine partner and become a useful search tool. Knowing that you and your dog can make the difference between life and death for a missing person is very rewarding.

But there are no financial rewards. Appreciation and thanks can be few and far between, so a handler must dig deep and find the higher purpose that keeps them going.

STAR 1 seeks those special people who have the inherent ability and strong desire to help others in emergency search situations. This is serious business —*it's not a hobby*. And it isn't simply another dog activity. It's a part-time job as a professional search volunteer.

The decision to become a SAR dog handler is a difficult one. That's a fact. If you are you in the process of such a decision, your answers will only come from a combination of research and careful contemplation.

If you'd like to investigate further, please contact us. We will provide you with more information on becoming a search canine handler, a full description of STAR 1's requirements, and arrange an opportunity for you to observe our training. We truly appreciate your interest in search work!



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**ARE YOU INTERESTED
IN BECOMING A
SEARCH DOG
HANDLER?**

Here's what it takes . . .



Lots of Time. Being a volunteer search dog handler will take as much time as a part time job. Countless evenings, weekends, holidays, and vacations will be spent training for and responding to emergency missions.

A Solid Support System. A handler must juggle the obligations of SAR, spending quality time with loved ones, and keeping the boss happy at work. Having the full support of your family and employer is crucial.

Money to Invest. All STAR 1 members are volunteers. The individual absorbs nearly all costs of participation, from traveling expenses to equipment. On average, STAR 1 handlers spend \$1,000 to \$2,000 per year on equipment, travel and training.

Reliable Transportation. A dependable vehicle is important. You will often travel up to 200 miles round trip for monthly trainings, to other states for seminars, and all over the state for missions.

Mental & Emotional Toughness. A handler must be able to handle a crisis and still think clearly. Some searches turn into body recoveries. Some searches end with no one found. Would you be able to cope with a stressful search?

Physical Toughness. Missions often happen in the worst weather, in the middle of the night, and in rough terrain. Are you comfortable in wilderness settings? Are you physically capable to participate? No need to be a marathon runner, but good physical fitness is required. You will be working many hours in extreme weather and terrain.

Team Consciousness. Are you comfortable working as part of a larger team? A successful handler has good communication and people skills, works well in a team environment, can take and share constructive criticism in a positive way, and is able to confidently assume responsibility for the well being and safety of themselves and other team members.

Dedication to the Lost Person. A search dog handler must have perseverance, determination and dedication toward the goal of becoming the best resource they can be for the lost person. Someone's life may very well depend upon your training and performance.



Extensive Handler Training. STAR 1's handlers are required to have the knowledge and skills needed to perform ground search and support tasks. The foundation of a solid canine search team is a well-trained handler who has learned the skills and understands the strategies needed to carry out an efficient search, with or without their canine partner.

In addition to becoming a skilled ground searcher, a canine handler must learn how to train a search canine to an effective, reliable level. Whether or not you're new to dog training, lots of study and practice are needed to learn and utilize basic canine learning theory in order to effectively move your dog through a search training progression.



A Sampling of Handler Requirements

- Aerobic fitness test
- Written and practical exams which cover vital topics such as:
 - Land Navigation & Orienteering
 - Search Operations & Tactics
 - Clue Consciousness & Handling Evidence
 - Visual Tracking
 - Legal Aspects of the Searcher
- First Aid and CPR Certification
- Canine First Aid training