

# MERIDIAN

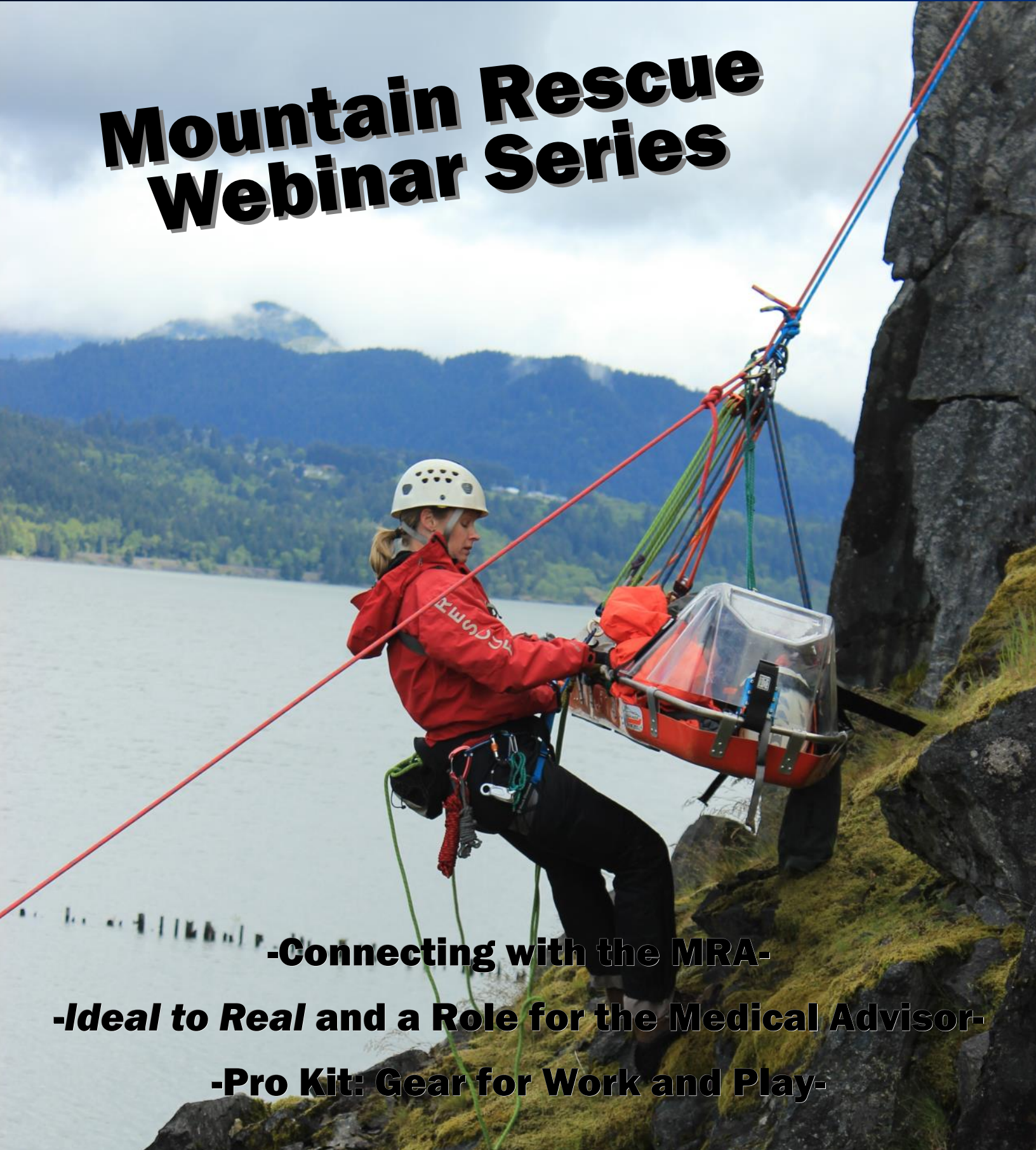
Summer 2014



The Quarterly Publication of the Mountain Rescue Association

mra.org

## Mountain Rescue Webinar Series



**-Connecting with the MRA-**

**-Ideal to Real and a Role for the Medical Advisor-**

**-Pro Kit: Gear for Work and Play-**



MOUNTAIN  
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ASSOCIATION

Summer 2014

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Cover photo by Laurie Clarke. Portland Mountain Rescue Member, Tracie Mahon, rescues a fallen climber using a tagline offset.

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# MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION Webinar Series



## Ongoing Monthly Webinars to Participate In!

By Shaun Roundy, WTC Chair, MRA Intermountain Region Vice Chair, Utah County SAR

The MRA Webinar Training Committee has organized monthly online trainings for all members on a variety of useful and interesting topics for volunteer SAR teams. These webinars are presented by MRA members as well as others who are experts in their fields.

The series started in June, and the topics thus far have included:

- *Social Media for SAR: How to Turn Your Mission Reports Into a Fundraising Machine*, by Richard Solosky
- *Death Notification: Doing your best when the news is the worst*, by Tim Durkin
- *Unmanned Aerial Drone Rescue: an overview of UAV utility, tech specs, and legal threats*, by Ron Zeeman

Webinars are peer-reviewed by the committee, and attendees may type in questions to be answered at the end of the presentation. Committee member, Tom Wood coordinated a partnership with Pigeon Mountain Industries (PMI), who operates the webinars. You can find these and future webinars archived at <http://www.mra.org/training-education/webinar-training>.

The concept was hatched at the Winter Business Meeting primarily as a way to provide additional value to MRA team members who may have minimal participation in national or regional activities.

Future trainings will be announced on the MRA lister. The committee requests that you forward invitations on to teammates who may not subscribe to the lister, as we especially hope to reach them. Please also invite them to subscribe to the lister at <http://lister.mra.org/mailman/listinfo/mra>. Your invitation may bring us a future region chair or MRA president!

If you are willing to offer your expertise as a webinar presenter or to join the Webinar Training Committee, please contact me at [shaunroundy@space@gmail.com](mailto:shaunroundy@space@gmail.com), [sic].

A big thanks goes to PMI and all those who have volunteered so far and who have otherwise supported this effort!

Editor's note: As an aside, please check out the following book by Shaun Roundy, *75 Search and Rescue Stories* <http://bit.ly/rescuestories>

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## Connecting with the MRA

By Dave Clarke, MRA President

With all of the social media options available these days it's difficult to know how to best communicate important information to our members. Many of you use the [MRA Blog](#) or [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) feed to get updates and we certainly encourage that. For several years now the MRA has utilized two email lists to attempt to share pertinent information without overloading your inbox with unwanted email.

- ◆ There is an **Admin Lister** that goes to every email address that we have on file. Only the President, Executive Secretary, and Fundraising Chair have access to post to this list. We use it very judiciously to disseminate important information to all members. The individual addresses on this list come from the lists your team submits each year with your dues packet. Some teams prefer to just submit one email address for the team and then that person shares pertinent info with their team. However, these addresses and names are also used for access to our prodeal program. So if your team does not submit your name and email you will not have access to those prodeals. We encourage all teams to submit everyone's address so that all of you can receive these benefits.
- ◆ The **General lister** is available for any member to post and receive email on. This is the place to ask other members your question about any SAR related issue. Historically, it's been a great discussion platform and a great source of information and opinion sharing. You have several options for how you receive these emails and you can remove yourself from this list at any time.

To enroll in the general lister and set your preferences go to <http://www.mra.org/> and log into the Members Only section. You can get the username and password to the Members Only section from your teams representative.



**Don't miss your chance to attend the world's premier gathering of mountain rescue professionals, sharing information on technical rescue in the four sub commissions: avalanche, terrestrial, air rescue, and medical.**

**The MRA is hosting the 2014 ICAR-CISA Congress.**

**October 5-10, 2014, Lake Tahoe, Nevada, USA**

**It's not too late to register!**

Registration fees will increase by 10% September 1, 2014. Registration will close September 21, 2014.

[IKAR Conference Website](#)

[Registration and Cost](#)

[Schedule of Events](#)

## Ideal to Real and a Role for the Medical Advisor

By Jeff Isaac, PA-C, Crested Butte Search and Rescue, CO

During a recent SAR training, the instructor used the term unconscious incompetence to describe someone, usually in a leadership role, who doesn't know what they don't know (with predictable results). I thought the term was brilliant and immediately generated three corollaries including my personal favorite, conscious incompetence. I think many SAR medics are guilty of this.

We don't choose the right response to a medical problem in a difficult situation, often because of fear of violating some conventional practice or protocol. The result, sometimes, is a perfectly competent medic doing something silly or dangerous when the known alternative would have been so much better. Examples are numerous, including my team's overnight carryout of a back pain patient who, we all acknowledged, could have walked out with little assistance. The medic in charge was afraid to deviate from the spine protocol he used on the street, committing the patient and rescuers to a long carry including a dangerous mile of switchbacks down a crumbling cliff face in the dark. The risks to all of us, including the patient, vastly exceeded any presumed benefit.

A training principle called *Ideal to Real* recognizes that there may be an ideal treatment for a medical problem, but it allows you to forgive yourself for not being able to provide it. You must be able and *willing* to adapt and improvise something realistic for the situation at hand. The goal, of course, is the reduction of the risk to the entire rescue effort as well as the patient. The medic on scene must be free to combine clinical skills and experience with knowledge of the environment and hazards to get *Real* and get on with it, without fear of violating some unrealistic expectation or standard.

We understand that even a highly trained paramedic needs authorization in the form of standing or verbal orders and protocols. An understanding of some of these "off protocol" deviations could be discussed prior to, or perhaps during the mission. This is where a knowledgeable and open minded medical advisor who is willing to supervise SAR personnel can be of real value. Protocol and practice should focus on minimizing the risk in both the medical care and the rescue operation, with the latter usually taking precedence. Post rescue documentation to review and justify the decision making process is important. Authorization to act should enable and encourage field medical personnel to make the right decision even if the medicine is far from ideal.

All medical articles for the Meridian are reviewed and endorsed by the MRA Medical Committee; however, this article is for general information only. The MedCom makes no representation regarding the medical or legal information provided, and the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the MRA.

As always, your suggestions and comments are encouraged—either directly to the author, to me, or via the ListServ to the MedCom.

Skeet Glatterer, MD, FAWM, Alpine Rescue Team, Evergreen, Colorado, Chairman, MRA Medical Committee, At-Large Member, MRA.

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## Rescuer Spotlight

With Tracie Mahon, Portland Mountain Rescue, Portland, OR

**Can you tell me what it was that attracted you to mountain rescue in the first place?**

When I was in the third grade, I wrote a paper about what I wanted to be when I grew up: an avalanche patrol or a forest ranger. It was rather odd, coming from a family that camped once my whole life, skied one day a year at the most, and went hiking once (during which I complained so bitterly, that my father never took me hiking again). Athleticism was not encouraged, particularly not for girls, and I was pretty much a bored overweight couch potato by high school. Nonetheless, if mountaineering or ice climbing was ever on TV, I was absolutely transfixed. I studied nursing in college and became an RN, and fell in love with the mountains working a summer job in Colorado at the base of some of the 14'ers.

In a long, slow process, I began to get in shape, going from being proud that I could actually run a mile to loving the feeling when you've just pushed your body to the utter end of exhaustion then asked it to give some more.

To me, there's nothing else that holds a candle to climbing—I don't want to move on to white-water rafting or scuba diving or caving. I love (just about) everything to do with climbing (although I really hate being cold). A high-alpine sunrise is the standard of beauty against which I compare all things of beauty. It's just a part of who I am.

Mountain rescue for me initially was just "cool", a dream come true and a way to get involved with people who loved to have fun in the mountains and did so safely. But it has come to mean so much more to me as I see the people and the families we help either by rescue or recovery efforts. It has become a way to give back to the community, and as a bonus, it's a way to give back doing something I love.

I've made stupid mistakes that could have gotten me into trouble, so I hope to give grace to others who also make mistakes.

**What do you wish you had known when you started, that you know now?**

I have learned that even if you've been doing this for years, you never have it all down. You are always learning. There are some lessons that I've had to learn more than once—for example, never really believe that the helicopter that is supposed to be here in 20 minutes is really going to make it.

I've learned what a heel you feel like when you've gone out in several search "laps" throughout the night, eaten most of your food



Photo by Laurie Clarke.

and drunk most of your water and not restocked between laps, then on the 4<sup>th</sup> time out, you find the tracks you've been looking for. Or just because it was good powder skiing yesterday doesn't mean you shouldn't bring your crampons today.

There are so many variables in SAR and things are always changing. Often I think, "This should be a straightforward rescue" and yet I find myself surprised by some new variable.

I have learned to do my best to keep an open mind about how things will go from start to finish, and to do my best to be prepared for lots of variables.

**Can you tell us a bit about what you do when you are not on a mission, or training for one?**

Well, at one time I had time to go on nearly all of the missions, but that is not the case anymore. As a wife and mother of two beautiful children living on a farm that always has work to be done, I barely have time to eek out one mission a year. Now I ride the fine line of trying to attend enough training that I don't get rusty, spend a little time in the mountains so I don't get grumpy and work out a balance between work, family and mountain rescue.

**I understand you contribute a lot to your local team through the Medical Committee. Can you elaborate?**

I have had the privilege of serving on the Medical Committee when it started in our unit around 2003 and watching it grow. Initially, it seemed we had 10 different ways to package and immobilize a patient, and it was confusing to find the best option. The medical committee did a lot of testing on our various devices and came up with a "gold standard" for our most common missions (low-to-moderate angle snow evacuation). We wrote medical chapters for our manuals so the information from our testing would be communicated to future members. We developed standardized first aid kits, organized WFR courses and recertification classes, developed WFR protocols, created in-house CPR certification and continue to review medical care given on missions. We have a solid and knowledgeable group of MD's, PA's, EMT's, paramedics, WFR's and nurses on the committee now and I truly feel honored to be a part of it.

**Can you share a story about a SAR event that was a game changer for you?**

I can remember one mission in which I knew I was upsetting the harmony of my marriage by going on the day of my husband's annual corporate party. We began searching early in the morning and came across a body fairly quickly. My first thought was "Oh good, I'll make it back in time for the party." Upon seeing the body (there was about 15 feet of visibility), the team member behind me yelled "F\*\*K". I was instantly humbled and ashamed. These people that we search for are all somebody's son, daughter, brother, sister, husband, father, etc. I had lost sight of that. When I have 20 things to do when a mission call-out comes, I do my best to remember that. I imagine that if one of my kids was injured or missing, I'd want everybody to drop everything to help.

When people ask me why I would risk my life to do a body recovery, I think about those family members. First of all, I don't believe I'm really risking my life in the way that they imagine I am. All of us who do mountain rescue understand the risks we're taking on and work hard to mitigate them, many times refusing search assignments that are too dangerous. However, bringing home a body for a grieving family is truly an act of mercy.

**Of all the SAR missions you have been on, what one mission taught you the most?**

Although it's common SAR knowledge to start with the LKP (last known point) of the subject, the first mission in which I saw that really work will always stick out in my mind. We had to hike for 5 miles to get to the LKP and decided to all go as a group and then split to our search assignments from there. I was anxious to get going and it felt like a waste of time, but as soon as we were at the top, we found a set of tracks that eventually led to a clue and the body.



## Pro Kit: Gear for Work and Play

*By Christopher Van Tilburg, MD, FAWM, CTH*

Water purification is a vital survival tool for adventure travel, humanitarian relief, and urban junkets to the developing world. On recent trips to Everest Base Camp in Nepal, Asia Pacific Travel Health Conference in Ho Chi Minh City, and Haiti, I had plenty of opportunity to test the latest techniques. Here are three options for efficient disinfection.

Chlorine dioxide tablets such as Potable Aqua (Wisconsin Pharmacal, 30 tablets, \$12.95) are light, compact and inexpensive. One tablet purifies a liter of water in 4 hours including the hard-to-kill giardia and cryptosporidium cysts. Chlorine dioxide kills parasite cysts a bit better than iodine tablets, and chlorine doesn't taste as bad as iodine.

Ultraviolet C light is a great option. For use in clear water, SteriPEN (SteriPEN Ultra, \$99.95) purifies a liter in 60 seconds. Depending on the model, it uses AA batteries or a battery rechargeable with USB cable. Using USB cable, the batteries get 40 treatments per charge. Although a bit heavy and bulky compared to tablets, the SteriPEN is instant.

A filter is a third option, such as the portable Katadyn My Bottle (Katadyn, \$59.95). The My Bottle has three stages: a pleated filter for bacteria and protozoa cysts, a iodine impregnated cartridge to kill viruses and a charcoal canister to improve taste. I used this on a trip to Haiti and found that because the filter sits inside a one-liter water bottle, there's only 750 cc of drinking water. And, it is bit hard to suck water through the filter.



*Photo by Christopher Van Tilburg, MD, FAWM, CTH.*

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## 2014 Joint MRA/NASAR Conference Report

*By Bryan Enberg, MRA Vice President, New Jersey Search and Rescue*

On behalf of New Jersey Search and Rescue, I would like to thank the Mountain Rescue Association and NASAR for the honor of hosting the 2014 Conference. I hope that the attendees had half the fun attending the conference that our members had running this event.

The Mountain Rescue Track was fantastic thanks to the crew from Peak Rescue Institute and several MRA regulars. Our partnership with NASAR also enabled us to offer some great training opportunities that are not always possible to feature, such as full, multi-day Management, Swiftwater, K9 and Technology tracks. We were able to offer sessions on Twin Tension Lines, Snow Anchors, Initial Actions, Rigging for K9, Medical Considerations for the vertical environment, Man Tracking field work, Terrain Assessment, Rope End Pickoff, and ESRI training on the MRA's new mission reporting system.

The presentation by Alpine Near Miss Survey and the MRA Safety Committee of Near Miss Accidents is sure to have a significant impact on our community. Peak Rescue Institute joined the discussion, presenting on Heuristics, as well as several close calls of their own. This event hopefully opened many eyes and prompted excellent discussion on what we do and how we can do it with an even higher degree of safety. Another installment is already being planned for the 2015 conference and we hope this becomes an annual event.

The Saturday activities for MRA attendees featured the SAR Games. Attendees were transported to High Point State Park, and were faced with a series of SAR challenges and obstacles. The event started with a timed crosscut saw station where each team had to cut a "cookie" from a log. This comes from our team's history as a section of the NJ Forest Fire Service. From there, they moved to a rappel and ascension station, then on to a grid search, a navigation problem, a patient assessment station and a haul system building station. The final station was a one hundred foot, traditional Boy Scout monkey bridge built by members of our local counsel's Backwoods Engineering Program, using all natural materials. Once on the other side of the ravine, participants made their way to a zip line built with brand new Sterling Super Statics. The event's finish line was at the summit of NJ's highest peak (at a staggering 1803') where participants could see the New York City skyline to the east, and the Catskills to the north.

Sincerest thanks to all of the vendors, sponsors, presenters, participants and management staff without whom SARCON 2014 would not have been such a success. Hosting this event was truly a high point in my SAR career.

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## President's Message

*By Dave Clarke, MRA President*

Now that we are in the middle of summer I hope you are all enjoying the weather and getting into the mountains with family and friends. If your "getting out" is on SAR missions I hope you have been successful.

Meanwhile your MRA Officers and committee members have been hard at work on a variety of projects to keep our association functioning smoothly and to provide you, our members, with excellent value. Some of our big projects are:

- The IKAR conference this October 5-10 in South Lake Tahoe, NV
- Achieving full implementation of the ESRI statistics reporting program
- Educating teams on the additional functionality that comes with the ESRI/ARC GIS software
- Planning for the 2015 summer conference in Estes Park, CO
- Managing our ongoing efforts on fundraising, education and marketing
- Preparing to update our strategic plan at the 2015 winter meeting
- Reinvigorating our small stores with new offerings and improved marketing

Fortunately we have a great team of talented folks working on these tasks. Your new slate of Officers is listed on page 2 in the Leadership side bar. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of them for their contributions, particularly Doug Wessen who just completed his term as President. I would also to welcome Art Fortini, our most recent addition to the Officer's Committee.

Backing up our Officers is a cadre of committee members who keep various programs moving behind the scenes. You'll be hearing more about their work in future editions of the Meridian so I won't be redundant here. However there is one program that I would like to mention. Our monthly Webinar series focuses on various SAR topics. It's a great opportunity to hear the latest on a pertinent topic and have the chance to ask the presenter your questions. Shaun Roundy and Tom Wood have been doing a great job of implementing this series with the support of **Pigeon Mountain Industries (PMI)**. Information about upcoming webinars will be announced on the general lister (see the article on [page 4](#) of this issue to learn more about our listers).

In closing I hope you enjoy this issue of the Meridian. There are several opportunities for you to contribute to future issues: You can contribute an article or a report on your team's activities. You can suggest someone for the Rescuer Spotlight, or submit a photograph to the Photo Gallery.

*Dave Clarke*



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*Photo Gallery*

Photo by Shaun Roundy. Olin Johnson of Utah County SAR gets air lifted to the Hidden Lakes area of Mount Timpanogos for an avalanche victim recovery search.

*Note from the editor—*

We are at the peak of the summer climbing season and some people are already checking the prodeals vendors for potential purchases of new gear and clothing replacements that will get them through the cold weather seasons. Thank goodness for prodeals!

Please consider volunteering your favorite SAR team member to be interviewed by the Meridian for **Rescuer Spotlight**. Another thing to consider contributing is one or more of your marvelous photos to the **Photo Gallery**. What a great way to show your pride in the job we do, or to impress all of us with your artistic abilities!

All submissions can be made to the [Meridian editor](#).

**Content Deadlines for Submission to the Meridian:**

Wednesday, Oct. 1, 2014

Thursday, Jan. 1, 2015

Wednesday, April 1, 2015

Wednesday, July 1, 2015

Thursday, Oct. 1, 2015

Friday, Jan. 1, 2016

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