



# TEXSAR DISPATCH



Each issue of the DISPATCH is dedicated to sharing the mission and passion of TEXSAR, and insight into its people.

## December 2024

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## From the CEO



This is the season when gifts are on our minds. I would like to share some of the greatest gifts that TEXSAR receives.

**People:** People are the core of our purpose. We are privileged and humbled to be of service to people who are affected by disasters and emergencies; to people we assist in the various agencies and the critical infrastructure partners we work with; and to the members of the emergency responder community. We are gifted with the opportunity to connect to people across the state of Texas. We are blessed with people who support our mission, including donors, our board of directors, our staff team, and the hundreds of volunteers who are the heartbeat of TEXSAR.

**Partners:** TEXSAR never self-deploys, meaning we respond to requests from agencies, infrastructure partners and collaborators. These partners are a gift to the state and to TEXSAR due to their incredible work, commitment and courage in challenging times.

**Trust:** The mortar that holds together all the pieces that comprise TEXSAR's work is trust: trust between team members, trust in TEXSAR by its partners and our trust in our partners, trust of the public that we ultimately serve, and trust of our board of directors in our staff and volunteers to successfully achieve our mission and purpose.

**Family:** The TEXSAR family includes members, staff, donors, friends, and those we serve and those with whom we serve. And, of course, our own families that support TEXSAR family members as we commit time to training, missions and the various tasks that make TEXSAR successful. Supportive, loving families are foundational to what we do and why we do it.

From the TEXSAR family to yours, have a joyful, Merry Christmas, happy holidays and a great New Year.

- Justin McInnis



# News and Announcements

## Thank You for the Accolades

Thank you to Chief Medina of the Brownsboro Police Department for his kudos and appreciation for TEXSAR's efforts in a recent [search](#) for a missing man. He conveyed his thoughts in an interview with KLTV-7 Tyler.

## Combined Federal Campaign Season

Again this year, TEXSAR is part of the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) effort that provides opportunities for federal employees to support their charities of choice with paycheck deductions. Please consider supporting TEXSAR through this convenient program if you are a federal employee. Spread the word! Our CFC number is 35805.



## Invest in Others Foundation Recognizes Joe Huston

The Invest in Others Foundation provides a platform for financial professionals to make an impact on the causes they care about. They have an award program that provides support to nonprofits while honoring the work of those in the financial field. Long-time TEXSAR member Joe Huston was recently recognized for his commitment to TEXSAR with an Honorable Mention recognition from the Foundation for their 2024 award program. Along with the recognition for Joe, the Foundation also made a \$2,000 contribution to TEXSAR. Thank you to the Foundation and congratulations, Joe!

## McCoy's Building Supplies Chooses TEXSAR

McCoy's has selected TEXSAR as their nonprofit as part of a 2025 marketing tactic performance test, where the methodology includes PSA ads. Thank you, McCoy's!



## Join the crowd! New Peer-to-Peer Pilot in December

Many nonprofits utilize the power and enthusiasm of peer-to-peer fundraising when committed participants reach out to their friends, family and networks to garner support for their chosen cause. TEXSAR will be testing a pilot project this month. We look forward to sharing the outcome and its impact on future efforts at the annual membership meeting in January. Anyone who is interested in this program can contact Dion McInnis, Development Officer, at [Dion.McInnis@TEXSAR.org](mailto:Dion.McInnis@TEXSAR.org).



Click [here](#) if someone forwarded this newsletter to you and you'd like to subscribe! Or you can use the "Subscribe" QR code. We look forward to keeping you apprised of all the great things happening at TEXSAR. Please forward to your friends and network, too!

## Member Milestones

*The spirit of December is a good time to share the story of Laura and Ed Norman from our “20 Years, 20 Stories” collection that celebrates TEXSAR’s 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary through stories of people who stand out in TEXSAR’s history.*



“I believe God made us to be servants, not consumers. Our service with TEXSAR is part of that,” said Laura Norman as she discussed the involvement that she and her husband, Edward, had with TEXSAR from 2014 to 2022.

As a fireman/paramedic in 2014, Edward worked for Fort Bend County Emergency Management and knew about TEXSAR. He believed it was a match to Laura’s desire to serve others. TEXSAR also met his goals for their family to be trained in critical emergency skills. A lot of changes have occurred since they began, some personal and some professional, but it all fits into their innate service orientation.

Edward is now a Senior Liaison Officer for the Texas Division of Emergency Management and Laura is the Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator for Galveston County. “When we married,” Laura said, “Edward transitioned from a bachelor’s life to one with five kids. From the beginning he wanted to instill in them a sense of purpose.” Clearly, they see that sense in Laura and Edward.

“In my role, I am often asked by area officials, ‘Did you put TEXSAR on standby?’ when there is a possible emergency situation on the horizon,” Laura said. “You can’t underestimate how important it is that TEXSAR volunteers are consistent, reliable, and trustworthy. They are obedient in that they do what the requesting agencies ask of them. Texas a great resource in TEXSAR.”

Laura explained that when TEXSAR responds to support incidents on the Bolivar Peninsula, “They save lives. Every time.” TEXSAR also coordinates with the Coast Guard, supporting maritime operations in Galveston County and the region.

Laura and Edward know that every mission is challenging. “We’re both problem solvers. I’d say all TEXSAR volunteers are, too. You never know what you’ll encounter.” She then shared a story of TEXSAR volunteers stranded at an H-E-B during a flood event. Instead of waiting to be rescued, they set up a forward base of operation and began serving nearby residents, some of whom had to swim up to the store to get help. “Every day and every mission includes variables. I believe it is the core values of the TEXSAR volunteers that enables them to work so cohesively as a team.”

Laura believes that a lot of people hear the whisper that calls them to service, but they are not sure what to do with the message. “When I first inquired about TEXSAR, I was told ‘There is a place for everyone in this work. Whatever skills you have can be utilized by TEXSAR for the good of others.’ I believe that is true. Whether it is IT expertise or the heart to distribute water, or anything in between, there is a place for you in TEXSAR. Not everyone is called, but there is a place for those who are.”

Laura and Edward have responded to the call, personally and professionally. “We are hard-wired for service. It is something we simply have to do,” she said.



## Division Updates

### Central

The Division recently hosted a well-attended workshop for Swiftwater Rescue Technician. It is one of the most desired skill development sessions offered by TEXSAR for its members.

### Gulf Coast

Several Gulf Coast Division members were active on November 9-10, attending the Kemah Salute to Military and First Responders event. They staffed a booth and provided information and education about TEXSAR's mission, including insight into boat and K9 operations. K9s represented well on the second day, too.

### North



On October 23, TEXSAR members Doug and Meg presented TEXSAR's capabilities at the West Texas Emergency Management Conference in Abilene, where they also re-connected to some Texas A&M AgriLife friends who were also involved in the

Panhandle wildfire response, serving as a reminder of the family-like nature of the emergency response community.



Speaking of family, on November 2, a tornado hit the home of the father of an active North Texas Division member. Another member loaded up a chainsaw and other tools immediately and traveled to help with the cleanup, while other members contributed meals for the team member and her father. A couple of years ago, the TEXSAR supporter shirt read, "One team. One family. One mission. We are TEXSAR." The message's truth is shown in the actions of members.

### South Central

On November 13-14, the South Central Division hosted a statewide virtual orientation class for new applicants. It was well attended with 28 new applicants completing the course and taking an important step toward becoming deployable members.

Director of Field Operations, Jeff Conrad, attended a meeting in the Division that included emergency management personnel from four counties (Wilson, Atascosa, Karnes and McMullen). Jeff delivered a presentation on TEXSAR capabilities.





*Merry Christmas and Season's Greetings from TEXSAR*

## TEXSAR Fun

C	H	A	I	N	S	A	W
L	G	T	N	Z	O	L	O
U	T	V	V	O	D	M	T
X	H	X	E	U	M	T	T
A	R	R	R	T	N	V	R
B	O	A	T	B	A	A	A
J	W	D	E	O	R	K	I
Y	B	I	R	A	C	R	L
C	A	O	F	R	A	A	E
A	G	P	V	D	N	E	R

ATV  
Boat  
Chainsaw  
Inverter  
LMTV  
Narcan  
Outboard  
Radio  
Throwbag  
Trailer

You can help defray these costs by making a donation to our [annual appeal](#). Thank you!

## Spotlight on Supporters

'Tis the season of parties and events, which reminds us of the FUNdraisers we have in mind for 2025. Please put these on your calendar and plan to attend. We strive to give our sponsors great value for their support with visibility prior to, and at, the event. We also work to connect our sponsors to the network of TEXSAR members, partners and supporters. Please consider being a sponsor in 2025. Details are being updated at <http://www.TEXSAR.org>.

March 29, 2025 — **8th Annual Clay Shoot** in Dripping Springs, TX

April 27, 2025 — **Pickleball Tournament** in North Texas



Fall 2025—TEXSAR 10<sup>th</sup> **Annual Search Party**, TEXSAR's premier fundraising event. More details forthcoming.

For more information, contact Shannon Smith, Director of Communications and Marketing, at [Shannon.Smith@TEXSAR.org](mailto:Shannon.Smith@TEXSAR.org).

## Development Corner

### December...the month of much giving

Are you considering how best to make a difference by supporting TEXSAR? We appreciate your thinking of TEXSAR in that way. Many people make their key philanthropic decisions in December. As with all contribution options, check with your tax advisor as to what is best for your situation.

Here are several options that might help you align your interests with TEXSAR's needs:

**Support Training Expenses:** Most training costs are covered by the members themselves, so we are trying to help ease the burden with training scholarships. You can donate to this need [here](#).

**Monthly Giving:** Become a Service Above Self monthly donor, helping assure that TEXSAR volunteers can respond when called upon. Donate to the monthly program [here](#).

**One-time gift:** You can easily donate [here](#).

**Waypoint Initiative:** This unique program marks TEXSAR's progress and charts its future with contributions of \$50,000 each (payable over two years). 20% of the donation is for current needs with 80% for an invested fund to allow for acting on opportunities into the future. [Contact](#) us for more information about this special opportunity that is limited to 28 donors.

**Stock:** You can prevent capital gains tax issues by donating publicly traded directly to TEXSAR. [Contact](#) us for more information and related forms.

Please contact Dion if you would like to discuss any of these options, or other ways to support TEXSAR, such as named endowments, retirement distributions: [Dion.McInnis@TEXSAR.org](mailto:Dion.McInnis@TEXSAR.org) or 512-956-6727.

Thank you for your support that assures that TEXSAR never charges for its service. "Texans helping Texans."



## Partner Perspective



# Scott A. Freund Foundation

*Patrick Freund and Geoff Westmoreland share their thoughts as representatives of the [Scott A. Freund Foundation](#), which was formed in 2010 after the drowning death of Scott, who was Patrick's brother and Geoff's friend since high school. The Foundation has supported TEXSAR in various ways.*

February 28, 2010, is a day that the friends and family of Scott Freund will never forget. Scott, an avid fisherman, hunter, golfer and outdoorsman, decided to make a quick trip around Canyon Lake in his shallow-water fishing boat to test it out after being winterized. Tragically, he didn't return. Family and friends went to the boat ramp where he went missing each day, hoping for some news. It was 15 days of anxious waiting before his body surfaced.

From that ordeal came the commitment to create an organization that would create something good out of a terrible situation. Tom (Freund), Scott's cousin, declared that Scott's family and friends should make something positive out of the tragedy, and within a month or so after Scott's funeral, they created a foundation in his name.

The Freunds are in the contracting business. A professional association they are involved with already had a golf tournament scheduled that Scott was intending to play in. The organizers made it a memorial event in honor of Scott which helped with initial funding of the Foundation. There was also a fishing tournament already on the calendar and proceeds from that helped with funding, too. The Foundation now has its own golf tournament and fishing tournament that it uses to help support nonprofits, particularly those in the search-and-rescue and boating safety realms.



Some of the key agencies involved in the search had to stop a few days after Scott went missing due to having limited resources, training and equipment. One search-and-rescue organization was able to stay for the duration of the search, and they eventually found Scott. Because of that experience, the Foundation gained a clear view of the type of organizations that they wanted to support.

The incident with Scott brought attention to search-and-rescue. Additionally, the Foundation took a look backwards to Scott's interests. As a result, an additional area of focus of the Foundation's efforts is now hunting and fishing safety, which includes education, equipment, training and resources for prevention and response.



There are so many stories of loss due to boating or outdoor accidents. As a result one case when a woman fell overboard and was hit by her out-of-control boat, the Foundation supported programs that provide kill switch lanyards for boats. Educating people about all the unexpected things that can happen outdoors is important to the Foundation, so it supports safety



educational programs. The Foundation looks at both the prevention of, and the response to, accidents.

The Foundation learned about TEXSAR because of their work, particularly during the Wimberley flood event on Memorial Day in 2015, and their efforts during Harvey. The Foundation enjoys partnering with TEXSAR because it has proven itself to be a well-run, professional organization that uses its resources wisely. The Board of Directors trust TEXSAR to do what they say they are going to, and to use the funds provided in an effective way.



The founders of the Foundation had originally planned on maintaining it for ten years. Next year is its 15th anniversary. There continues to be important work to be done by nonprofits that need support like that of the Foundation.



## Mission Matters

Each year, TEXSAR leadership sets a goal for the number of missions. The goal of 100 for 2024 was set in February at the annual board retreat. As of the end of Q3 2024, TEXSAR had already exceeded the goal. Since TEXSAR never self-deploys, how does it happen that it is called upon for so many missions? There are two key factors: reputation and networking.

TEXSAR has achieved a strong reputation that is carried by word-of-mouth between agencies and critical infrastructure partners. Since its inception, TEXSAR has been committed to high levels of training of volunteers who have been background checked and are capable of skillfully using a variety of tools and assets. As word spreads, TEXSAR is called upon by an expanding range of partners. Although TEXSAR has not yet been called upon in each of the state's 254 counties, it is available for duty to them all.

TEXSAR leaders regularly network through conferences, events, workshops and meetings with current and potential partners. As attendees or presenters, TEXSAR representatives meet hundreds of people involved in the emergency response realm. Many are learning about TEXSAR for the first time, which presents a new opportunity for developing trusting relationships.

In a couple of months, TEXSAR leadership will again set a goal for the number of missions in 2025. The number doesn't just happen but is the result of the work and performance of everyone who is part of the TEXSAR family. The result is a range of missions, from those the public never hears about to those that capture attention.

TEXSAR was involved in many missions recently, including the highly visible case of the murder of Suzanne Simpson in San Antonio, whose husband was arrested and charged with her murder. Working in support of lead agencies, TEXSAR brings a variety of resources and talents to bear. Situations like the Simpson case are complicated and require high levels of trust. TEXSAR has earned a strong reputation for its capabilities and its commitment to confidentiality, which is particularly important in criminal cases and personal disasters.

## Gallery of the Month



As we wrap up 2024, we pause to say thank you to everyone – members, donors, partners and collaborators – who make it possible for TEXSAR to continue to serve. Stay safe.







2025 will certainly be another busy year of growth and service. Count on TEXSAR Dispatch to bring you images and insight into TEXSAR's work and the people that make it all happen.





# Important Links: Stay in Touch!

[Become a Member](#)

[Donate today!](#)

[Service Above Self Monthly Donor program](#)

[2023 Annual Report](#)

Social Media: [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [X](#), [YouTube](#)

[20 Years, 20 stories](#): TEXSAR's 20th Anniversary Celebrated  
Through Stories of Its Members

["TEXSAR Never Stops"](#) video

**[www.TEXSAR.org](http://www.TEXSAR.org)**

