

# Civil Air Patrol and Aerospace Medicine

Valerie E. Martindale, Ph.D., CAsP, FAsMA

This month I have the pleasure of introducing you to Civil Air Patrol, a unique civil-service organization that is the official civilian auxiliary of the United States Air Force. Lt. Col. Paul Cianciolo has been kind enough to write the introduction below. I highlight this topic for you as one of the many ways that aerospace medical professionals can become more engaged in their local communities and share their expertise maybe in new ways. Civil Air Patrol (CAP) is always grateful to receive help from medical and other aerospace professionals as volunteer members and as speakers for cadet education. CAP is credited with saving 110 lives last fiscal year, through its search and rescue contributions, making it an important part of our aerospace medical community. While this article emphasizes the U.S. program, I understand that there are at least 18 countries with similar air cadet programs. I would love to hear the experiences of members who may have participated in something similar in another country.

In the U.S., CAP comprises members from all walks of life, including educators, pilots, medical personnel, military personnel, emergency service professionals, and moms and dads. These volunteers work to assist their communities, the Red Cross, FEMA, and the military in emergency situations. Additionally, their education efforts both in schools and in the community offer a chance for all citizens to become more familiar with the many facets of aviation.

## Civil Air Patrol Volunteers Serve Local Communities by Lt. Col. Paul Cianciolo

*Supporting America's communities with emergency response, diverse aviation and ground services, youth development, and promotion of air, space, and cyberpower.*

— Civil Air Patrol Mission Statement

Civil Air Patrol (CAP) is congressionally chartered under Title 36 of the United States Code as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, and is organized into eight geographic regions consisting of 52 wings (the 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia).<sup>1</sup> CAP performs services for the federal government as the official civilian auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, and performs services for states and local communities as a nonprofit organization.

Civil Air Patrol is there to search for and find the lost, provide comfort in times of disaster, and contribute to keeping the homeland safe. Members selflessly devote time, energy, and expertise toward the well-being of their communities, while also promoting aviation and related fields through aerospace and STEM

education and helping shape future leaders through CAP's cadet program.

Since Civil Air Patrol's formation during the earliest days of World War II, this organization of citizen airmen has been committed to service. Founded on Dec. 1, 1941, to mobilize the nation's civilian aviation resources for national defense service, CAP has evolved into a premier public service organization that still carries out emergency service missions when needed, in the air and on the ground.

CAP operates a fleet of 560 aircraft and performs about 90% of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions. The Air Force Rescue Coordination Center credits CAP with saving an average of 80 lives annually. CAP's 58,000 members also perform homeland security, disaster relief, and drug interdiction missions at the request of federal, state, and local agencies.

Civil Air Patrol's cadet program serves about 24,000 young people, ages 12 to 20. The organization transforms these cadets into aerospace leaders through a curriculum that focuses on the four core elements of leadership, aerospace, fitness, and character. As cadets participate, they advance through a series of achievements, earning honors and increased responsibilities along the way. Many of the nation's astronauts, pilots, engineers, and scientists first explored their careers through CAP.



**Tsunami Warning**—An aircrew member checks out an airborne speaker used to communicate tsunami warnings to Pacific area residents. Photo courtesy of Civil Air Patrol.

<sup>1</sup> Several CAP units also exist in Europe and Asia. These units only offer the cadet programs at U.S. military installations, as their purpose is to allow cadets in military families to continue learning and advancing while they live overseas.

### CONTACT DETAILS:

**Email:** President@asma.org • **Web site:** www.asma.org • **Facebook:** Aerospace Medical Association • **Twitter:** @Aero\_Med

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**Headed Home**—The Puerto Rico Wing's maintenance officer, 1st Lt. Alberto Torres, returns to Isla Grande Airport in San Juan after a communications relay flight during the Hurricane Maria response mission. Photo courtesy of Civil Air Patrol.

Civil Air Patrol's awarding-winning aerospace education program promotes aerospace, aviation, and STEM-related careers. Engaging, standards-based, hands-on curriculum and activities shape the experiences and aspirations of youth both in and outside of CAP's cadet program. These include not only aviation and rocketry activities, but also first aid, drill and ceremony, search and rescue, cyber robotics and programming, and aerial photography activities.

CAP's ranks also include health services personnel who play an important volunteer role. The overarching program goal is to assist the entire membership to become and/or remain optimally healthy and fit. Because of this important role, certain professional rank appointments are authorized after initial level-one CAP training — a licensed practical or vocational nurse, paramedic, or other health technician may be promoted to second lieutenant; a registered nurse, physician assistant, or other health professional with a bachelor's or master's degree may be promoted to first lieutenant; a licensed physician, dentist, or other health professional with an earned doctorate degree in a health care discipline may be promoted to captain; and a licensed physician appointed as a unit health service program officer who has served 1 yr time-in-grade as a captain may be promoted to major within Civil Air Patrol.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Please note that CAP is not a health care provider, and CAP members are not permitted to act in the role of health care providers during the performance of official CAP duties. Medical care within CAP is limited to emergency first aid and may be provided only by members with appropriate training and experience.



**Aerial Photography**—A trained CAP aerial photographer captures overhead images in the aftermath of a natural disaster. Government agencies and other emergency responders use CAP's aerial imagery to gauge the extent and location of damage and to plan how to respond most efficiently. Photo courtesy of Civil Air Patrol.

Military members who volunteer, regardless of specialty, may be promoted to their military rank within CAP upon completion of the level-one training.

Civil Air Patrol's missions for America are many, and today's members, both adults and cadets, perform their duties with the same vigilance as its founding members — preserving CAP's 75-yr legacy of service and maintaining its commitment to nearly 1,500 communities nationwide.

Visit [www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com](http://www.GoCivilAirPatrol.com) for more information.

#### Measuring Civil Air Patrol's Impact

- **110**—Saved 110 lives through search and rescue efforts in 2017, thanks in large part to the assistance of CAP's National Cell Phone Forensics and National Radar Analysis teams;
- **560**—Operates one of the largest fleets of single-engine piston aircraft in the world, with 560 planes currently in the fleet;
- **58,000**—Consists of 1,445 squadrons and approximately 58,000 volunteer youth and adult members nationwide;
- **100,352**—Flew more than 100,000 hours again in 2017, surpassing this milestone flying mark for the second straight year;
- **\$177,000,000**—CAP members contributed over \$177 million in volunteer man-hours in the past year, serving their communities, states, and the nation.