



**5 Year  
Strategic  
Plan**

**2014**





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# Message from the Chief Executive Officer

The volunteer emergency responders of the Cannon County Rescue Squad, Inc. are responsible for saving countless lives in Cannon County every year. As part of the organization's long term success we must constantly improve our funding plans as well as prepare for the future growth of the organization and our communities through the strategic planning process.

Strategic planning and funding goals are required to meet our community's needs. An understanding of our organizational need led us to develop our first strategic plan in 2007. This updated plan is expected to provide a foundation of support over the next 5 years beginning in January 2014.



Our dedicated volunteer responders are on-call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Our responders are compelled to provide emergency care and community support. They provide rescue services during local emergencies, man-made or natural disasters, or when a coordinated regional response is required. Our responders spend a tremendous amount of time training in emergency care and rescue. This training is a benefit to the entire community and region as a whole. A well trained team that is adequately funded and equipped will make a difference.

This plan is designed to connect our organization with the communities we serve, our donors, local and state funding agencies, private foundations, federal funding sources, local and state governmental officials, county and city government agencies, and our dedicated team of volunteer responders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Underhill".

**Michael Underhill, Captain  
Chief Executive Officer**

## **Introduction**

**We support many different emergency programs in our communities. One of our most important activities is our vehicle rescue response program. The greatest obligation of the Cannon County Rescue Squad, Inc. is emergency preparedness and response, disaster relief, and providing community support during times of natural or man-made disasters. This strategic long-range plan represents an organizational compass to guide the leadership team and responders over the next five years.**

**This plan is not intended as a substitute for daily operations planning. It does not detail all of the programs, initiatives, and activities of the organization. Although an overview of emergency responses and community activities are described within the plan, a complete detailed description of organizational activities can be found in other sources such as, but not limited too; to CCRS Annual Reports, CCRS website and social media listings, and through other documents such as our fundraising plan.**

**This strategic plan identifies challenges faced by the organization such as equipment procurement, training, and retention of volunteers. This plan will allow the organization to have a forward thinking approach, including stretch goals, which will add to resource development and implementation to better the communities that we serve.**

**The leadership team and responders are dedicated to setting and achieving goals for organizational growth. We have set goals for ourselves that uplift the organization, goals that inspire those doing the work, and goals that are key to the ongoing phase change for the communities we serve. These stretch goals will be hard to achieve; however, they are essential for the health and prosperity of the organization and will add to the emergency preparedness infrastructure for the entire county.**

**Our goals to resolve these funding problems are designed to maximize the utilization of our budget and funding resources. In 2007, we realized that the organization must prepare annual expense and revenue projections in order for the department to have sustained forward moving and positive growth. Beginning with fiscal year 2008, the organization personnel adopted both strategic and fundraising plans. Not all of the funding and strategic goals have been met; however, planning for the future has allowed the organization to enhance and expand services and programs.**

## **Organizational Goals and Activities**

- 1. Provide emergency response to victims of motor vehicle collisions**
- 2. Provide land based search and rescue response**
- 3. Provide disaster response and relief within Cannon and surrounding counties**
- 4. Provide specialized equipment and personnel to respond to emergencies where specific rescue techniques are required**
- 5. Provide community support through the utilization of personnel and equipment**
- 6. Be part of the National, State, Regional, and Local agendas for homeland security and integrated response**

### **Mission Statement**

**Our primary mission is to deliver Rescue Services to the citizens of Cannon County. The secondary mission of our organization is to provide disaster relief and support operations to our mutual partners in emergency services in Cannon, surrounding counties, and throughout the great State of Tennessee.**

### **Vision**

**Our vision is to provide coordinated multi-agency teamwork and response to the citizens of Cannon County and the residents of the State of Tennessee.**

### **Values**

**We value human life. Our values reach deep inside our beliefs. These beliefs were rooted in a strong foundation and are governed by the Constitution and By-Laws of the organization. We appreciate the same values from other emergency service agencies with whom we have a partnership.**

### **Goals**

**Our primary goal is to save lives by providing optimal rescue services. Our goals are focused first and foremost on the citizens of Cannon County. However, we will extend our services to any agency, or persons, in need of rescue services or assistance. We will serve these goals to the best of our ability both locally and throughout the State of Tennessee.**

### **Goals for Strategic Planning**

- 1. Provide direction and guidance for the leadership team and responders. This plan is designed for the continued fulfillment of the mission, goals, programs, and initiatives of the organization.**
- 2. Provide direction for organizational development through sound financial and strategic planning.**

3. Enable the leadership team to focus energies on programs and projects that fit within the goals outlined by the plan and the needs within the communities we serve.
4. Provide direction for future equipment purchases and organizational development.
5. Develop a systematic approach for future equipment procurement needs.
6. Provide an opportunity which will showcase transparency while maintaining fiscal responsibility.
7. Ensure that the organization's services and programs remain sustainable into the future.
8. Ensure the organization maintains its status as part of the network of Local Regional, and State Response Plans and teams.
9. Enable the leadership team to ensure that the organization delivers quality training for the volunteer responders.
10. Ensure the leadership team and responders deliver quality rescue services and community support.

### **Accomplishment Goals of Strategic Planning**

1. This is a long-range plan by which the organization strategically thinks about its vision, direction, and goals for the future.
2. The plan shall remain flexible throughout its lifespan. The plan may need to be readjusted as necessary based on organizational development and financial abilities.
3. The plan will help to unify the leadership team, responders, donors, local government, and the general public.
4. The plan will be a guiding document for organizational direction and priorities.
5. The plan will assist the organization by looking beyond the day-to-day management of operations to the essential vision for strengthening the organization.

### **Benefits of the Strategic Planning**

1. Clearly define the purpose of the organization and establish realistic goals and objectives consistent with the Rescue Squad's mission of saving lives. The Plan will have a defined lifespan within the organization's capacity for implementation.
2. Communicate the goals and objectives to the leadership team, responders, donors, local government, and the general public in the communities where we serve.
3. Develop a sense of ownership for the organization at all levels of support.
4. Develop a sense of ownership of the Squad by the community.
5. Ensure the most effective use of the Rescue Squad's financial resources by focusing those resources on the key priorities.

6. Provide a clear focus for the organization which will produce more efficiency and will allow for effective utilization of resources.
7. Provide a base from which progress can be measured and establish a mechanism for informed change when needed.
8. Bring together stakeholders in building a consensus about future development of the organization.
9. Increase productivity by increasing efficiency and effectiveness of efforts on behalf of all major stakeholders.
10. Plan for future development of the organization, the services provided, and plan for community growth.
11. Provide leadership, teamwork, and a sense of pride within the Rescue Squad.
12. Solve major problems.

### Strategic Planning

A great deal of effort has gone into writing, editing, reviewing, developing, producing, and distributing this strategic plan. Although this has been a comprehensive process to ensure accuracy, this process may have allowed errors to go unnoticed and goals may change over time. The leadership team should review the plan at least annually throughout its lifespan to ensure that the operational goals for this plan are being accomplished.

### Demographics

The State of Tennessee has a land mass of approximately 41,217 square miles and a population of approximately 6,456,243 residents. The median household income is \$43,989. The State is comprised of 95 counties. Cannon County ranks 79<sup>th</sup> out of 95 counties in population.

14.3% of the U.S. population lives below the poverty level. In comparison, 16.9% of Tennessee residents lives below the poverty level, and 17.6% of the population of Cannon County lives below the poverty level.

Cannon County covers an area of 266 square miles with a population of approximately 13,811. The median household income for Cannon County is \$36,742.



\*\*\* Figures from the U.S. Census Bureau 2010 estimate\*\*\*

## **S.W.O.T. Analysis**

**The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis is a common business strategy that has been utilized for many years for both for-profit and non-profit organizations alike.**

### **Strengths**

- 1. 35 year track record of community services**
- 2. Stable management structure and leadership team**
- 3. Well organized with By-Laws, Policies, Procedures, and operational support**
- 4. Equipped to handle daily operations, disaster response, and community support**
- 5. Adequate volunteer staffing**

### **Weakness**

**Providing for rescue services and funding of those services are of the greatest concerns for continued operations and organizational development of the Rescue Squad. Traditionally, the organization has been primarily funded through donations and fundraising.**

**In 2007, the Rescue Squad received an Internal Revenue Service determination as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Although the organization had always been organized as a non-profit, this federal designation allowed the organization to pursue grant funding opportunities with private foundations that had previously been unavailable.**

**Funding support through local government only provides for about ¼ of our operating revenue, which is a small portion of our total budget. The majority of the financial burden for equipment purchases, operating expenses, and training comes through fundraising, donations, grants from private and public foundations, and grants from federal funding sources.**

**Although the local county government realizes a need for funding of equipment, every need cannot be met solely through tax support. Even though the need for equipment funding is realized by the local city government, they do not routinely financially support the organization for many reasons, but primarily due to limited industry and revenue opportunities.**

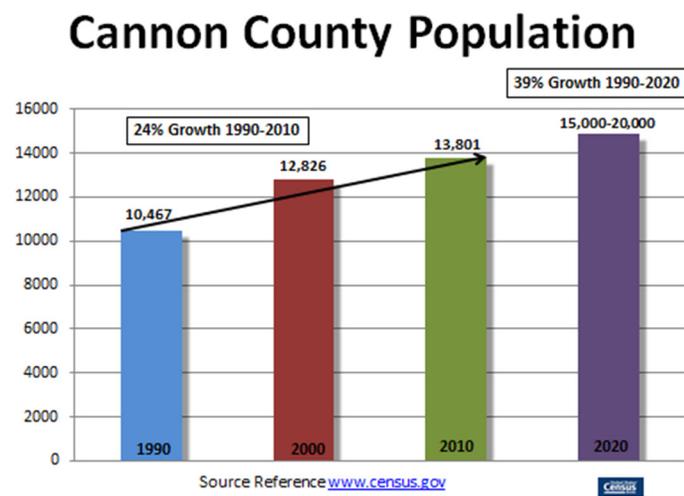
**Our ability to raise sufficient funds locally cannot keep up with our needs to update our rescue programs. This is due largely in part to our community having a lower economic characteristic than that of the national average. A majority of our citizens are well below the national average for median household income. This problem is furthermore compounded by the county having limited local industry**

opportunities. Most of the local workforce travels to adjacent counties for employment.

### Opportunity

Cannon County is geographically and demographically ideal for the expansion of emergency services. There has been a 24% growth in population from 1990-2010. The population is expected to grow an additional 10-15% from 2010-2020.

Cannon County has experienced a population growth due in part to families moving into the County from neighboring Rutherford County. Rutherford County has been one of the fastest growing counties in the country and has been the fastest growing county in Tennessee for several years.



In the 1990s, the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) constructed a new four lane highway from Woodbury west to Murfreesboro. In 2013, TDOT began a four-lane roadway expansion project from McMinnville, East to Woodbury, which will eventually link the two four-lane highways together, providing a by-pass around the Town of Woodbury.

Once these highway connections have been made, it

is predicted that the community will again grow in population as families move from the neighboring counties to be closer to the Murfreesboro metropolitan area. At that time, we will experience an increase in the driving public and will undoubtedly see an increase in commerce and trucking. It is expected that when the roadway project is completed that industry will grow within the community as a more modern method of transportation will link our county to the economical and industry giants of the Middle Tennessee Region.

As the population increases, a need for a well-equipped and trained team of responders will need to develop at the same rate of community growth. Expansion of rescue and emergency services will only add to the positive growth of infrastructure for the community. Without adequate local healthcare and public safety agencies, communities cannot grow.

Our secondary response area, which includes the contiguous counties of Rutherford, Wilson, DeKalb, Warren and Coffee, has a collective land mass of approximately 2,972 square miles. This area also has an approximate population of 505,377 (figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 estimation).

## **Threats**

There are two major threats to the long term stability of the organization.

1. A commitment of community responders to volunteer with the Rescue Squad.
2. The lack of financial commitment from local government and the general public.

Volunteerism is on a decline across the United States. Organizations, such as the Rescue Squad, must focus on teambuilding and must be willing to build partnerships with other organizations in order to retain volunteers. Currently, we have a policy for volunteer recruitment and retention. Additional plans for volunteerism within the organization must be developed in order to maximize recruitment and decrease attrition. When someone volunteers for an organization or community cause, they want to ensure that their time is well spent. For this reason, the leadership team must continue with a successful plan to retain volunteer responders.

For the foreseeable future, the Rescue Squad will remain an all-volunteer workforce of emergency responders. For the past 20 years, we have maintained a volunteer base of at least 20 responders. During the last 5 years we have averaged approximately 25 active responders. Although we have had as many as 35 responders, we average 20-25 responders on the roll at any given time. To offer a healthy work-live-balance, our Squad is comfortable with 20 active responders. A partnership with local fire departments has worked well for the organization, as most of our Rescue Squad personnel are also local volunteer fire department personnel.

The greatest threat to the organization is a lack of adequate funding. Although we are a 501(c)(3) organization and provide services over a large area, we only receive a small annual budget from the local County Government. In the past, when we have demonstrated a need for program funding and have received committed grant funding, our local governments have contributed to our programs. We cannot raise sufficient funds solely through donations, or solely through tax support, or solely through grant funding. Multiple funding sources are required to support operations. However, we have successfully used the above model to upgrade and purchase equipment to support our live saving programs and mission.

Continued local support is a must for the organization to survive, financially thrive, and be successful in our commitment to protect our communities. Stability within the leadership team has had positive success with local government funding, grant funding, and with donors over the past 10 years. Continued forward affirmative momentum will better the organization and add value to the communities that we serve.

## **Demonstrated Success**

**In 2012, we instituted a method of more accurate record keeping with our call volume. Every Rescue Squad call (“run”) is recorded in detail for patient care purposes, accountability, accuracy in response to emergencies, and for legal documentation. These records are maintained indefinitely. Each year the Chief Executive Officer compiles a report to include the number of emergency and non-emergency responses, and total man-hours served.**

**We have modified our call volume reporting system to better allow us to study the effectiveness of equipment positioning throughout our response area. In 2010, we sub-stationed equipment in a remote area of our county which has allowed us to service an area of remote population and mountainous terrain more resourcefully. This has also allowed us to assist neighboring DeKalb County, TN more efficiently. We are seeing the benefits of this equipment positioning. The methods that have been put into place will allow us to better serve our communities by positioning emergency equipment where the greatest needs are known, and where the response times are extended.**

**In 2008, we added to our fleet of primary rescue response vehicles. Prior to 2008, we covered an area of 266 square miles with only one rescue truck and one support vehicle. Through community support, donations, private and public funding, private and public foundation funding and grants, we purchased our first new rescue response vehicle. Since 2008, we have purchased a mobile command center, received a grant for a Polaris Ranger, and have added to our assortment of rescue equipment. Since 2006, we have expanded and/or enhanced our services/programs to include providing services for vehicle rescue, water rescue, land search and rescue, animal rescue, vertical rescue, cave rescue, confined space rescue, disaster response, adverse weather response, and law enforcement and EMS assistance.**

**All of our local elected officials are acquainted with our leadership team and most of our volunteer responders. They are also familiar with our operations, mission, and programs. In August and September of 2013, all three legislative branches of local government unanimously passed resolutions recognizing the continued operations of our Rescue Squad. We are recognized by all three cities and county government bodies as the primary unit responsible for providing rescue services in their jurisdictions.**

**We respond to all districts within our county, including the City of Auburntown, and the Town of Woodbury. The Mayors and Aldermen from both municipalities along with the County Commissioners celebrated our 35 years of continuous service with the passage of these resolutions in the summer of 2013.**

## Need for Funding, and Community Impact

Our Rescue Squad needs to purchase additional and more modern vehicle rescue equipment. The addition of this equipment will allow the Rescue Squad to prepare to handle major events now and well into the future. This funding will also allow our Squad to certainly decrease the amount of death and disability which may be suffered by citizens of Cannon County and Middle Tennessee. The addition of this equipment in the region will greatly assist multiple agencies operating in our State. Our response capabilities will be enhanced in ways that are currently unavailable. We will become one of the final links in a multi-agency interoperability response capability in the Middle Tennessee Region.



In a 2011 Tennessee Department of Transportation Crash Study, Cannon County ranked 71<sup>st</sup> out of 95 counties in overall injury crash rates. The enhanced capabilities of this program will allow our Rescue Squad to prepare and handle major events now and well into the future. The leadership team continuously re-evaluates our capabilities throughout the year. Re-evaluating our programs with measurable outcome is directly related to our ability to get the necessary team and equipment to the scene of the motor vehicle collisions.

The American College of Surgeons has concluded that a well-equipped EMS and rescue system, adequate training, rapid response, and quick treatment/transportation of trauma victims to a Level One Trauma Center within 60 minutes following a traumatic event, has proven to decrease death and disability in all areas of the population, but especially in the rural environment.

According to studies published by both the Tennessee and the U.S. Department of Transportation, people living in rural area of the country are twice as likely to die in an automobile collision as those having accidents in urban areas. Studies also have shown that individuals involved in trauma are three times as likely to die in rural areas as those with the same injuries living in urban settings.

It is our desire to be able to decrease the ranking of our county to below 50% in the next five years. We cannot predict with 100% certainty that our program enhancement will obtain this goal. However, in communities where adequate resources are available, Department of Transportation studies would indicate that this equipment would decrease the amount of lives lost each year from automobile related traffic deaths in rural areas.

## **Need of Equipment Procurement**

As described above, the need for additional equipment, vehicles, and facilities has been well established. The following outlines specific equipment needs and anticipated costs of completion.

- **Response Vehicle**
  - **4 Wheel Drive primary response vehicle**
    - **Vehicle Purpose**
      - **Replace a high mileage 1988 Ford F350 4X4**
        - **Estimated cost of construction**
          - **\$135,000**
- **Rescue Equipment**
  - **Next generation of hydraulic and cordless hydraulic rescue equipment**
    - **Equipment Purpose**
      - **System for quicker deployment of rescue tools with newer technology equipment**
        - **Estimated cost \$18,000**
        -
  - **Water rescue equipment**
    - **Equipment Purpose**
      - **Replace outdated rescue equipment and enhance water rescue capabilities**
        - **Estimated cost**
          - **\$72,000**
- **Equipment enclosure/facilities**
  - **Facilities Purpose**
    - **Protection of equipment and Substation resources throughout the response area**
      - **Estimated cost**
        - **\$125,000**
- **Total funding required for projects and programs**
  - **\$350,000**
- **Total anticipated revenue during the timeframe that could be committed to projects and programs**
  - **\$50,000**
- **Uncommitted funds**
  - **\$300,000**

## **Project and Program Funding**

The leadership team and responders of the Cannon County Rescue Squad, Inc. are committed to the success of this plan. It is estimated that the organization could foreseeably commit \$50,000 over five years toward equipment procurement. However, additional funding in the amount of \$300,000 would be required for successful implementation of this plan.

The mathematical calculations are an estimate and can only be utilized as a guideline. Cost of construction and equipment inflation has been factored into this estimate. Due to insufficient funding, these problems cannot be solved locally. Additional funding would have to come through sources previously identified.

A potential source of state funding from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program would allow for up to \$300,000 of funding for projects such as outlined. Applying for CDBG funding would have to be approved by the local city and county governments. Additionally, federal funding sources such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development could help to augment local and state funding for these projects.

## **Objective of Equipment Procurement**

The purpose and objectives of our expanded programs is to save lives by allowing our volunteer staff to have access to the most modern vehicle rescue equipment available on the market today. Currently, we carry an assortment of traditional hydraulic rescue tools to the scene of automobile accidents. The setting up of these tools takes several minutes to complete before a victim can be freed from wreckage. Time to a trauma victim is precious. It is time that most vehicle accident victims cannot spare.

The victim of a traumatic event has an 80% chance of survival if they are transported to a Level One Trauma Center within 60 minutes after the event occurs; this is considered the “Golden Hour” of trauma care. For each hour after the initial 60 minutes following an injury, a trauma victim’s survival rate drops dramatically. Trauma victims in our community stand an even greater chance of not surviving injuries sustained in automobile collisions because they are so far from a Trauma Center. Decreasing the treatment and transportation times are the two proven ways to improve a trauma victim’s odds of survival.

With the addition of more modern rescue tools, automobile accident victims in our response area stand a better chance of surviving. The next generation of rescue tools are battery powered. This rescue equipment is being built with the latest in cordless technology. Without the hassle of hydraulic pumps and hoses, emergency responders only have to get the tool off of the rescue truck, touch a button, and the tool is activated and ready to operate. This technology will

decrease scene time by allowing us to remove victims more efficiently for transport to the Trauma Center. We expect to decrease extrication time by as much as 15-20% with this equipment.

Objectively, this will decrease transport time. Based on proven evidence based medical practices, and best practice in training and operations, more lives will be saved with newer technology.

### **Accountability**

Our organization is devoted to the continued development of our operations, expansion and enhancement of our program, and implementation of our fundraising and strategic plans. Transparency and accountability are values at the heart of our organization.

Although our organization is not large enough to require and/or afford an independent annual audit, we contract with a local certified public accountant to file our 990 Internal Revenue forms. Annual filing of our 990 ensures that our status as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization remains active. Our leadership team and responders are committed to financial responsibility to the organization, to our donors, and to the communities that we serve.

In 2007, the leadership team realized the importance of beginning a Squad-level annual budget. The first ever organizational budget was developed in 2007 for FY08. Each year thereafter, the Squad has presented a budget to the responders/general membership for approval. These budgets track annual expenses and revenue. The addition of this reporting and tracking system has allowed us to better predict our annual expenses and revenue, and to predict future needs and funding requirements for the organization.

Our internal budget is prepared by our Chief Financial Officer and our Chief Operating Officer. Our internal budget must be approved on two reading. The responders/general membership is presented with the expense and revenue projections for a first reading/approval in November each year. Recommendations are taken from the leadership team and responders during that meeting, and the budget is approved in December each year.

Preparing budgets has not only allowed us to track expenses and revenue, it has also allowed the organization to better predict equipment and capital improvement needs. It has allowed us to decrease expenses with fundraising and operations, which has allowed us to more efficiently utilize donations and improve services. We can now predict our needs with mathematical and historical confidence.

## **Additional Funding Justification**

Through donations, fundraising events, local tax support, federal and state funding, and funding from private and public foundations, over the past five years we have been able to upgrade, enhance, and expand our services over the past five years. This is evident in the fact that we have doubled our fleet of response units and have been able to upgrade existing equipment.

Utilizing the model of funding as previously described, we were able to purchase a brand new rescue response vehicle in 2008. This was the first new vehicle that our organization had ever purchased. It was also the first new rescue response unit that our communities have ever had in operation. We successfully demonstrated a need for the vehicle in the community and received public and private support. A \$60,000.00 purchase was paid for in less than two years. This was a monumental accomplishment for our rural community and one that has saved many lives in the past five years. An investment in the organization will pay for itself in the long run.

## **Future Growth**

We plan to expand operations throughout which are currently unavailable. We also plan to expand operations bases throughout the service area. We have looked at the southern end of the county as a place to position rescue equipment. Three key elements will have to transpire before this future growth becomes a reality.

1. Additional rescue equipment will have to be purchased
2. An additional rescue response vehicle will have to be purchased
3. A facility will have to be built to house the equipment.

A location for an expanded base of operations has been identified in the southern end of the county. The Rescue Squad currently owns a parcel of land adjacent to the Mooretown Volunteer Fire Department. This will be an ideal location to place equipment as this area is expanding in population as evident by the growth within the local elementary school in that community.

## **Summary**

The Cannon County Rescue Squad is proud to provide a vital community service. We are also proud to be part of a regional response team.

Equipment is what the Rescue Squad has, responders are the ones that save lives, and our responders are what makes our Squad great...

## Plan Adoption Date

This plan was designed to begin on January 1, 2014 and run through end of calendar year 2018. It was approved on January 13, 2014.

## Contact Information

For more information on supporting the Cannon County Rescue Squad, Inc., contact Chief Executive Officer Michael Underhill at [MUnderhill@CannonCountyRescue.com](mailto:MUnderhill@CannonCountyRescue.com) or by calling 615.904.5002

For gift giving, donations, and grant opportunities, please contact Chief Operating Officer Tim Bell at [TBell@CannonCountyRescue.com](mailto:TBell@CannonCountyRescue.com) or by calling 615.849.2730



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