

Wednesday, May 12, 2010

## Emergency bike team begins in Glen Echo

### Bikers will patrol portions of the Capital Crescent Trail, C&O Canal towpath

by Andrew Ujifusa | Staff Writer

*This story was corrected Friday, May 14, 2010.  
An explanation follows the story.*

Shortly after members of the Glen Echo Fire Department rolled out a bicycle emergency response squad, its services were needed.

The bike team helped a girl who had fallen and suffered minor scrapes at Saturday morning's Jogfest 5K race at Wood Acres Elementary School.

The department hopes the Bicycle Emergency Response Team will provide additional medical support on the Capital Crescent Trail in Bethesda and the C&O Canal towpath. Quickly getting to some areas of the trails can be difficult and the bikes will give emergency staff better access, said Jane Callen, a member of the patrol and vice president of the Glen Echo Fire Department's board of directors, the Conduit Road Fire Board.

"It's about that person being able to stabilize, triage, and provide initial treatment, until supporting apparatus can reach the scene," Callen said.

The bike patrol members will monitor the two pathways within an approximate border of Western Avenue and Bradley Boulevard, said the department's volunteer chief, Herbert Leusch. The department plans to send the two bikers on patrol in tandem on the Capital Crescent Trail and the towpath during summer weekends to respond to emergency medical situations.

"There is not a weekend that goes by in the summer that a call doesn't come in from the Capital Crescent Trail," Leusch said.

The emergency medical technicians who comprise the bike patrol will carry medical equipment such as splints and gauze, oxygen supplies and a stethoscope. Leusch said the department is also looking to provide automatic external defibrillators to patrol members.



Tin Nguyen/The Gazette  
Glen Echo Fire Department volunteer emergency medical technician Jane Callen provides support in the Woodacres Elementary School's annual 5K run Saturday as part of the department's new bike squad.

There are 12 men and women from the department, which includes volunteer and paid firefighters, who have passed the necessary training and are patrol members, Leusch said.

In addition to ambulance units, an all-terrain vehicle kept at the Glen Echo Fire Department's station on Massachusetts Avenue in Bethesda is deployed to reach patients on the trail. Leusch said there is no guarantee that the ATV can be staffed by Fire and Rescue if they are responding to other emergency calls.

Sport utility vehicles can also respond to the trails or nearby areas when necessary, said Fire and Rescue spokesman Capt. Oscar Garcia, in addition to ambulances and the ATV. Fire and Rescue can deploy boats when necessary to evacuate people from the towpath.

"We welcome any new service," Garcia said of the bike patrols.

County Fire and Rescue workers with emergency medical training can deploy members on bicycles, but these deployments are limited to patrolling special events, such as the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair in Gaithersburg. The personnel on bikes also have a full complement of emergency medical equipment, Garcia said. Up to four bikes are available for Fire and Rescue's special operations division for such occasions, he said.

To qualify for the bike patrol, members of the department went through a training course with REI, an outdoor supply and equipment company. This included riding an obstacle course and demonstrating knowledge of bike safety and repairs. So far, the program has cost the department about \$2,500 for bikes and equipment.

Callen said bike patrol members will also be present to provide support at community events and activities, so that they can become a well-known presence outside of emergency situations and learn more about emergency medical services in the area.

"It's really a wonderful opportunity for people in the community to ask us questions," she said.

*Correction: A previous version of this story should have said that the all-terrain vehicle is housed at the Glen Echo Fire Department's station.*