

## **CAREN Supports 7<sup>th</sup> Little Rock Marathon**

### **Early pedestrian accident underscores need for preparedness**

By Danny Straessle (KE5WLR)

Little Rock – Members of the Central Arkansas Radio Emergency Net ([CAREN](#)) provided communications support for the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Little Rock Marathon on Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>. More than 6,000 runners participated in the event, which included a 5K, a half-marathon, a marathon relay and the Little Rock Marathon itself.

Twenty-Eight Amateur Radio (Ham Radio) enthusiasts donated their time, resources and equipment to staff the 26-mile route that began on Clinton Avenue in the Little Rock River Market District, traversed Downtown areas of Little Rock & North Little Rock, Central High School, the historic Hillcrest neighborhood, and Murray Park before concluding at Riverfront Park in Little Rock.

While several CAREN members were stationed at each of the 17 water stops, other members were positioned among aid stations, the race finish line, with the race director, and even behind the very last marathon runner in a position known as “Tailgate Charlie.” Net control was rotated among several CAREN members who were located in the City of Little Rock tactical communications vehicle amid other net controls for LRPD special events, MEMS, LRFD and other city services.

In direct support of race officials, CAREN members tracked the three lead marathon runners for both men’s and women’s categories as they progressed through the course. Additional tracks were requested for leaders of the half-marathon. Of special note were the five wheelchair racers who were each tracked the entire length of the course.

“Tracking the lead runners is not always easy but the CAREN team works very hard in getting me that information,” explains Little Rock Marathon Race Director Bill Torrey. “This helps build excitement in the finish area for both race organizers and the spectators waiting on their family members. Keeping pace with the last runner is a practice in patience. These people are working hard to finish and it has been a long day for them and the volunteers. I have been associated with CAREN for well over 10 years and it is my pleasure and good fortune to work with such a dedicated and professional group.”

Additional radio traffic requests included those for medical supplies, water and emergency assistance- which came early, hours before the race was to begin. Around 6:00 a.m. as water stop 3 was setting up, one of the volunteers was hit by a passing car. Fortunately CAREN member Ian Campbell (WA5OFT) was already in position to radio help from net control for a medical team as well as provide a description of the vehicle, which was pulled over by LRPD a few blocks later. The volunteer only suffered a few scrapes & bruises and was able to work the entire race.

Although this early-morning emergency could have been much more serious, the fact that it occurred during setup of a water station before the race started illustrates that Ham Radio operators should be prepared at all times.

“One of the reasons we work these events is to learn from them,” explains CAREN President Mark Barnhard (KD5AIV). “Every event we work makes us a better response group. So while we provide a public service by assisting organizations with their events, we also help ourselves prepare by training and learning.”

Little Rock Marathon is the first of approximately 10 scheduled public service events that CAREN members will support in 2009. It’s a win-win situation for non-profit organizations and Ham Radio operators alike. While the non-profit groups receive valuable communications support for their fundraising events at no cost, CAREN members are exposed to real-time, in-the-field training that will no doubt enhance their individual preparedness efforts.

“We really appreciate the opportunity to work with the organizers of Little Rock Marathon and look forward to continuing our relationship with them in future races,” says CAREN Public Service Committee Chairman Jerry Dixon (N5WVI). “It is important for our members to be involved in these types of exercises, especially ones with rapidly changing conditions that simulate an actual emergency. Everyone gets a chance to participate. All they have to do is step up and volunteer. And that gives our new people an opportunity to learn from those that have been doing this for a while.”

Established in the late 1950s, the Central Arkansas Radio Emergency Net is one of the oldest Ham Radio clubs in Arkansas and remains a state leader in public service and emergency communications. In 2008 the organization participated in 11 public service events resulting in some 2,928 total man-hours of service to the community. This equates to a monetary value of \$60,202 based on American Radio Relay League averages for dollars per hour for radio operator time. Participation in public service events supported by CAREN is open to all licensed amateur radio operators, regardless of club affiliation.