



Alive!



LACERS Offers Courses for Those Looking to Retire

Wanting to manage your money better? Here's how.

LACERS — Are you looking toward retirement, but not yet there? LACERS (Los Angeles City Employees Retirement System), the City department that manages the retirement funds of most of the City Employees — is offering two one-session courses for your financial health.

The first course, titled "Financial Management Basics," will help you develop money management skills; get out of debt; increase savings; gain control of credit cards; and improve credit scores. The course also covers retirement planning and information about: the LACERS defined retirement plan; LACERS larger annuity program; and the City's deferred compensation plan.

The second course, titled "Investing Basics: Increasing Retirement Income," teaches about making the right long-term investment choices. Participants will learn how to research the right investments for themselves, to decipher mutual fund statements, and get a better grasp of their own personal investment style.

Both courses are scheduled for March 5, May 14 and July 16. Courses are free to active LACERS members, but space is limited.

The two courses are part of LACERS' "Personal Finance Series." More information can be found on pages 40-41, or go to www.lacers.org

Club Helps You To Get Fit — It's Not Too Late!

Great Club benefit:
24 Hour Fitness annual pass at one-third regular price!

THE CLUB — Get fit in 2010! And the Club is here to help you!

The Club is going to help you keep that New Year's resolution and get in shape for the New Year. Take advantage of a great Club benefit: annual passes to 24 Hour Fitness for just \$199 with Club membership. That's a discount of nearly two-thirds off 24 Hour Fitness' regular fee of \$533.97 annually. That's an amazing deal.

"Keeping City Employees healthy and happy has always been what the Club's services have been about," said John Hawkins, Club CEO. "I encourage everyone to take advantage of this."

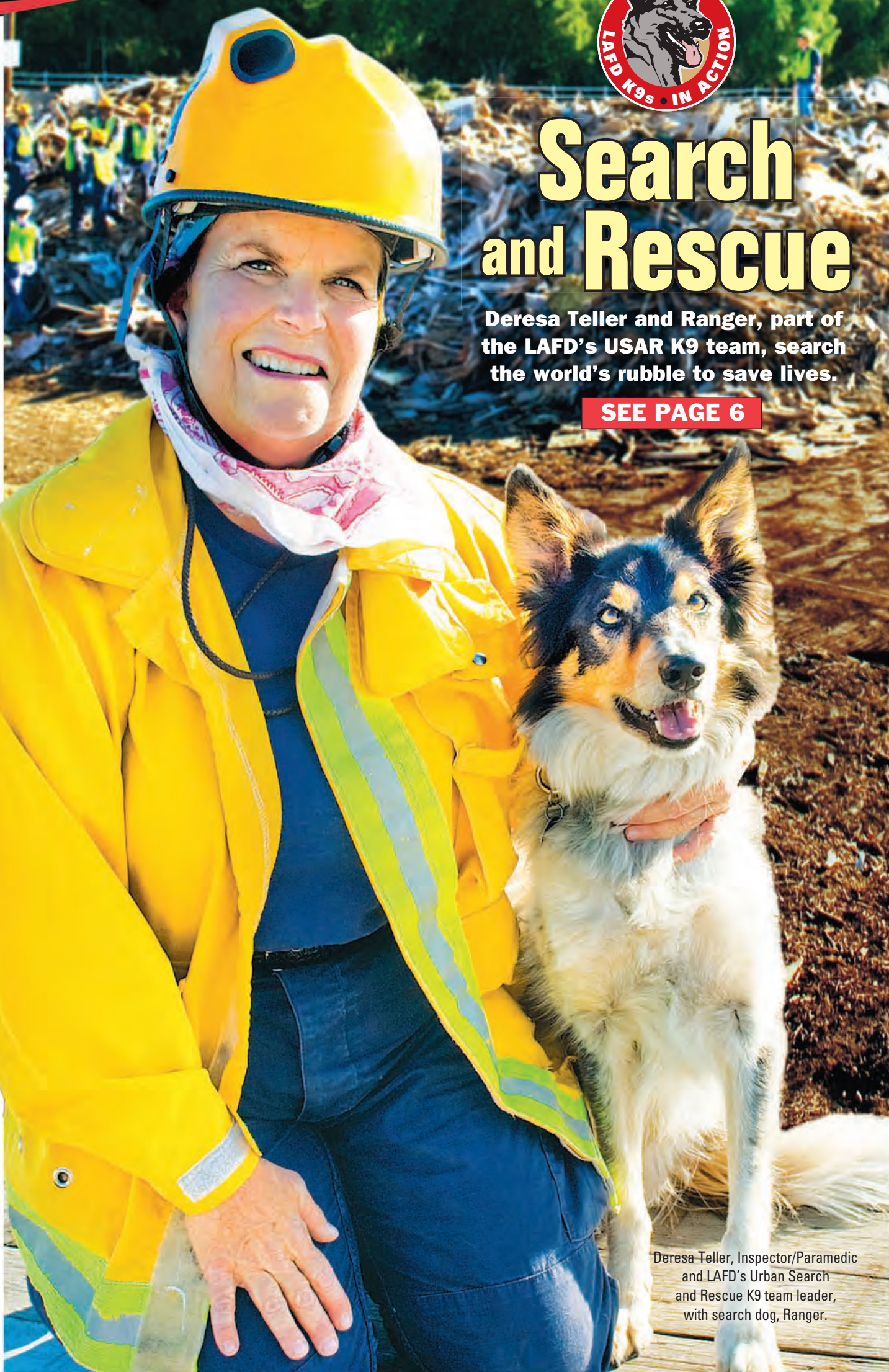
Purchase your 24 Hour Fitness annual pass at the Club Store online (www.cityemployees-club.com) or at the Club Store and Service Center, 120 W. Second Ave., 90012 downtown. Specific rules apply.

Details of the Club's fitness benefit are on page 52.

Search and Rescue

Deresa Teller and Ranger, part of the LAFD's USAR K9 team, search the world's rubble to save lives.

SEE PAGE 6



Deresa Teller, Inspector/Paramedic and LAFD's Urban Search and Rescue K9 team leader, with search dog, Ranger.

Alive! photo by Tom Hawkins



City Employees Club of Los Angeles
311 S. Spring St., Suite 1300
Los Angeles, CA 90013

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
LOS ANGELES, CA
PERMIT NO. 447



Be My Club Valentine!

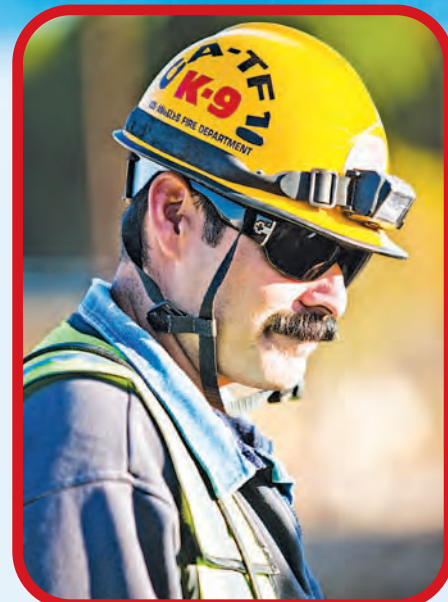
See all the great Club Valentines ...
right here in Alive!

See page 16



Search dog Freitag goes through an exercise during a recent LAFD USAR K9 Team training day.





Capt. Marcues Toledo, part of the LAFD USAR Team.

Search and Rescue

Saving lives is the job of the
**LAFD's Urban Search
and Rescue K9 Team**



LAFD

Life Amidst the

LAFD's Urban Search and Rescue K9 Team helps keep
Los Angeles—and the world—
safer during disasters big and small.

Jason Chapman, Firefighter/Paramedic, with Boogie, during a training exercise.



Photos by Tom Hawkins, Club Photographer

Climbing atop and then through the rough, ragged and loose wood, Ranger searches confidently and thoroughly. Ranger, a border collie and part of the LAFD's Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) K9 Team, is both agile and deft over the rough terrain.

So is the team. It's designed to be highly portable to get to the City's – and the world's – disasters as quickly as possible. And they do.

Keeping the team ready is the job of the LAFD's Deresa Teller, Inspector/Paramedic, with 30 years of City service. High atop the pile of rubble during a recent training day, she followed her live-scent search dog Ranger, as he sniffed and looked intently for a "victim," in this case, an LAFD firefighter "buried" in the rubble for training purposes.

Three "victims" were buried in the rubble, and on this training day, every single LAFD search dog found every single victim, every single time.

How the Squad Works

The members of the team are Deresa Teller, Inspector/Paramedic and Canine Coordinator; Margaret Stewart, Firefighter; Scott Zins, Firefighter/Paramedic; Jason Chapman, Firefighter/Paramedic; Tommy Haus, Capt. 1; and Marcues Toledo, Capt. Most have regular fire department duties, although some are permanently assigned to the USAR K9 Team. The rest volunteered for K9 duty and train with their dogs at least monthly, officially; all have additional training sessions on their own, at their own expense. (Others members: Athena Robbins-Haus, wife of Capt. Tommy Haus, is a lieutenant with the Bellbrook Fire Dept. in Ohio; and Gary Smith, who was a member of the team for years, is now semi-retired but takes part in some operations.)

Most of the team members bring their dogs to work with them.

At any one time, three California USAR Search and Rescue squads are on rotation, meaning, if there is a local, national or international crisis, three California teams keep themselves ready for instant deployment. Readiness lasts for 10 days, after which three more teams rotate into the ready position. For example, the LAFD USAR CATF 1 and K9 Team were on active readiness when 9/11 hit. When the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City was bombed,



Alive! Feature

Jason Chapman, Firefighter/Paramedic (top), assists a Waste Management volunteer, who's playing the "victim" during the training exercise, to be "buried" in the rubble.

Rubble

Deresa Teller and her then-search dog Bella deployed with the Orange County USAR Team; the team also saw duty in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in Mississippi (see *Alive!*, November 2005). The LAFD's USAR K9 Team was not in the rotation position for the earthquake in Haiti, so they did not deploy. But they were told to be ready, so they were. (See sidebar, "Disasters.")

The City provides some funding, and, despite tight budgets, "they're making an effort to be more supportive," Deresa says. The dogs are owned either by their handler or by the Search Dog Foundation (see below). Typically, the team deploys for between two weeks and a month.

The LAFD's USAR K9 Team volunteers for the K9 service and registers with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Half of the team pays for their dogs out of their own pockets, and the team pays for 95 percent of their equipment, veterinary care, dog food, vehicles, gas, deployment gear and kennel expenses, according to Deresa Teller.

History

Deresa, a 30-year LAFD veteran, became interested in search dogs after seeing search dogs being used in the aftermath of the Mexico City earthquake in the mid-1980s. She already had a history of training dogs (not for search and rescue). In the late 1990s, she joined with three others – Howard Orr, of the Santa Barbara Fire Dept.; Ron Weckbacher, at press time in Haiti as part of the L.A. County USAR K9 Team; and Deborah Tosch, now the Director of the Search Dog Foundation – to form the first Southern California USAR K9 Team.

That team, which was mostly self-funded, disbanded, and the City put out a recruiting call to form a new one two-and-a-half years ago. "We received 60 to 70 replies, everyone from firefighters to chiefs," Deresa remembers. "But when they saw how much work it was, the numbers went down."

From those applicants, the current team was formed.

Typical Situations

The LAFD's USAR K9 Team specializes in live search, meaning, it's used in situations where victims might still be alive. Only one of the squad's dogs – Charlotte, trained and owned by Deresa – is trained to search for cadavers and/or body parts, a more difficult challenge.

A partial list of the kind of situations in which the team excels includes:

- Earthquakes
- Tsunamis
- Floods
- Train/automobile/trucking/airline accidents
- Building collapses
- Fires
- Runaways
- Bodies thought to be abandoned in the wilderness
- Etc.

The Search Dog Foundation

A big part of the story of the LAFD's USAR K9 Team is the Search Dog Foundation, which supplies animals, fundraising and organizational support for the squad.

Its mission is to strengthen disaster response in America. For much more information on the foundation, which is based in Ojai, go to:

www.searchdogfoundation.org



Search dog Belle proves that agility is a very important skill for search dogs to have.



Scott Zins, Firefighter/Paramedic, with Callie.

A Special Thank You

Special thanks to Waste Management, which allows the LAFD's Urban Search and Rescue K9 Team to train at their Sunland landfill. Waste Management assists the team by piling up wood to simulate rubble; by digging holes for the "victims" to be "buried," and other functions. The *Alive!* photos in this feature were taken during an LAFD USAR K9 Team training day Dec. 4 at the Waste Management yard.



In this type of search, the handler commands the dog into or onto the rubble with the word “search” or “seek.” Usually a team of handlers monitors the K9 as it makes its way through the rubble, sniffing for the telltale signs of a live body. Since a handler must watch (carefully) where they’re going, they cannot keep their eyes trained on the dog 100 percent of the time. That’s why usually there are extra handlers following the dog and main handler, to make sure no K9 signal is missed.

When a K9 smells something of interest, the dog will bark a “excited bark,” according to Deresa Teller. Some might use their paws, too, although the dogs are not supposed to enter the hole with the victim.

In a real search situation, there would be a confirmation K9 brought in after the first search dog signaled a scent, to confirm a scent

has been detected before serious manpower is dedicated to the location.

In both training and real situations, the K9 is rewarded with a toy, usually a tug-of-war toy. In training, the “victim” usually rewards the dog, to keep the dog loyal to the victim.

“In real searches, sometimes we hide our own people as ‘victims,’ just to keep the dogs interested,” Deresa explains. “The dogs are used to finding people during their training. When they don’t find anything in a real situation, it can be confusing and disappointing.”



Margaret Stewart, Firefighter, uses smoke to determine wind direction, which aids in scent detection.

Live Search



Freitag signals a “find” by barking at handler Capt. Tommy Haus.



Deresa Teller, Inspector/Paramedic and Canine Coordinator, rewards Ranger with a tug-of-war toy.



Ranger is on duty during the training exercise.



Burying the “Victim” Tube

Burying the “Victim”

1



Margaret Stewart, Firefighter, “buries” Capt. Tommy Haus, who portrays the “victim” for the exercise.

2



3



Cadaver Search

Cadaver searches are not that different than a live search, except that the scent would be different; body parts might be much smaller and therefore harder to locate; and the lack of a live victim can be a deterrent to keeping the dog motivated – it's just not as much fun for them. So, fewer dogs can maintain sufficient interest. Also, in these cases, the handler would provide the reward instead of the live victim.



Deresa Teller, Inspector/Paramedic and Canine Coordinator, puts Charlotte through her paces during a training exercise. Charlotte is the only dog on the LAFD's USAR team with the training to search for cadavers.



LAFD K9 Team in Action

The LAFD's USAR K9 team performs two kinds of searches:

- **LIVE SEARCH**, in which victims are still expected to be found alive; and
- **CADAVER SEARCH**, in which victims are expected to be dead, and sometimes for a long period of time.

All but one of the unit's K9s are trained as live subject search dogs; only one (Charlotte, one of Deresa Teller's dogs) is trained to search out cadavers.

On pages 10 and 11 are photos of both types of searches. These were part of a training day Dec. 4, held at the Waste Management facility in Sunland.

The "Victim"

"Victims," in this case, fellow Fire Dept. employees, act as the test during training exercises. Before the training begins, tubes were buried underneath the rubble. Once a tube was stabilized, a "victim" slid inside. Three "victims" were used during this training exercise; each spot was marked by a flag for safety, and each "victim" remained in the hole for several hours.

After the exercises were completed, they surfaced safely.

Margaret Stewart, Firefighter, helps a volunteer from Waste Management pose as a "victim" during the search and rescue training session.



The "Victim" Emerges



LAFD's Urban Search and Rescue K9 Team

On Duty

Deresa Teller and her previous and legendary live scent and cadaver search dog Bella, were called to duty in some of our nation's worst disasters.

At any given time, there are always three California USAR teams at the ready – one is in first rotation, one in second, and one in third. The rotations change every month.

The LAFD team was number one on the readiness rotation for two of our nation's most recent emergencies happened: the massive loss of life in the World Trade Center in New York City, and Hurricane Katrina in Florida, Mississippi and Louisiana. In addition, Deresa and Bella searched in the aftermath of the bombing of the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, and they were sent to Salt Lake City as a preventative measure during the 2002 Winter Olympics, but that incident went without incident.

2001

9/11, New York City

Nearly 3,000 people were killed when terrorists flew fully fueled airplanes into New York City's World Trade Center. The total includes those who died in related attacks in Virginia and Pennsylvania.

"We got the call and left that night," Deresa remembers. "We landed [in New York] the next morning, and it took us about half a day before getting to Ground Zero.

"I thought we were in a Terminator movie," she says, not trying to sound trivial. "I had never seen anything like it. After my experiences in Oklahoma City, I thought that the chances that anyone had survived this were zilch. In Oklahoma City, I had seen things intact. But [at Ground Zero] I didn't see a single filing cabinet, not a computer, not a telephone. If those didn't survive, how could a human? It's just amazing that someone survived in a stairway, because several did."

"On Wednesday, we were on the second shift, 5 p.m. until it started raining. I can't recall the exact area where we were searching."

She and Bella were on some dangerous ground. Authorities were wary for a secondary event – sometimes terrorists/criminals wait for the safety personnel to appear before detonating a second device or killing action. That didn't happen at the World Trade Center, but there were other fears.

"We had to evacuate twice, once when someone



Bella, strapped to the back of another firefighter, was brought down more than 35 feet to the foundation of one of the towers to search for victims.



Deresa and a sooty Bella, under the scaffolding, take a much-needed break while searching for victims of the 9/11 terrorist action that destroyed the Twin Towers.

thought they saw a building move [other buildings near Ground Zero were seriously damaged, and some ended up collapsing – Ed.], and once when a fire shot up about 30 feet. Fires were burning down there for six months."

The loss of human life was massive.

In an area of about 12 feet of rubble, Bella alerted to a scent. When that area was cleared and searched again, a crushed car was found. Bella searched and alerted again, and a body was found crushed in that car.

But that was minor compared to another day. Authorities had asked her to search a certain area where they thought some firefighters had perished. "One night, we went looking for firefighters," she said. "Bella just kept alerting and alerting, over and over. Later, I found out that nearly every place she alerted was a find. She alerted at least 25 times.

The LAFD USAR K9 Team

Here are the members of the Fire Dept.'s Urban Search and Rescue K9 Team (California 1). All but one are employees of the LAFD.



Margaret Stewart, Firefighter, with Bo.



Scott Zins, Firefighter/Paramedic, with Callie.



Jason Chapman, Firefighter/Paramedic, with Boogie.



Deresa Teller, Inspector/Paramedic and Team Supervisor, with Ranger (left) and Charlotte.



The LAFD USAR K9 Team, from left: Deresa Teller, Inspector/Paramedic, Canine Coordinator, with Charlotte and Ranger; Scott Zins, Firefighter/Paramedic, with Callie; Tom Haus, Captain, and Athena Robbins-Haus, Lieutenant, Bellbrook Fire Dept. (Ohio), with Freitag; Marcues Toledo, Captain, with Belle; Jason Chapman, Firefighter/Paramedic, with Boogie; and Margaret Stewart, Firefighter, with Bo.

2005

Katrina, Gulf Shore

By the time of Hurricane Katrina, Deresa was now paired with Ranger (seen on the cover of this month's *Alive!*). While Bella was a live scent and cadaver dog, Ranger is a live-search dog. So, Deresa and Ranger – and the entire LAFD USAR K9 Team – went to Mississippi searching for live victims.

Deresa's experiences were detailed in a special section of the November 2005 issue of *Alive!*

In that interview, she says: "I have been to several disasters, and I have seen the Oklahoma City bombing and the New York World Trade Center ... I thought the New York World Trade Center was huge, but his was even larger. It just went on for

miles and miles. And, of course, it was a different kind of rubble, more survivable rubble for people as opposed to New York. What really amazed me were those humongous floating casinos that were on those big barges that were just brought up on shore by the big wave, or whatever. I mean, those things must weigh hundreds of tons. I cannot imagine what it was like first looking out there, because when we were there at least the streets we cleared so that we could walk down the street. But, you know, there is no way that was like that when the rescuers first got there."

For more information, refer back to that issue.



Deresa Teller with Bella (left) and Ranger, having just returned from Mississippi in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Bella was retired at the time and did not deploy to Mississippi.

1995

Murrah Building, Oklahoma City

On April 19, 1995, Timothy McVeigh, an American who has since been convicted and executed for his crime, blew up the federal Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people and injuring more than 650.

Deresa and Bella were flown to Oklahoma City about ten days after the event and began searching for victims.

Bella found four victims in the rubble, and became a hero of the children of the families who had lost loved ones.



Bella searches for victims amidst the rubble of the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City.



Bella and Deresa (right) pose in front of a thank-you sign made in honor of the other search teams. With them is a search team from Missouri.



Athena Robbins-Haus, Lieutenant, Bellbrook Fire Dept. (Ohio), with Freitag.



Marcues Toledo, Captain, with Belle.



Tom Haus, Captain, also with Freitag.



Gary Smith, LAFD, and Cappy. Smith, mostly retired, sometimes participates with the K9 team.