

Civil Air Patrol may become local reality

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Group performs missions as branch of Air Force.

Seven people showed up at an organizational meeting at the Gothenburg Airport last Friday for Civil Air Patrol.

Airport manager Dennis Brown described the patrol as a volunteer search-and-rescue organization that also encourages people to learn to fly.

Brown said he hopes to see a CAP plane at the airport when a local organization is formed in conjunction with the Lee Bird Composite Squadron of North Platte.

“North Platte has more people but we have the enthusiasm,” Brown said, noting that CAP is a branch of the U.S. Air Force that pays a good part of the bills.

Two CAP majors—John Hall of Lincoln and David Bratton of North Platte—attended the organizational meeting.

Bratton said CAP members train on military bases or in the field.



He said he participated in a mission when an emergency locator transmitter sounded from a plane that had a rough landing near Ogallala.

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The transmitter beeped after the pilot had parked the plane in a hangar. However CAP members searched the area until they located the aircraft.

Hall, an aerial photographer and computer repairman, is familiar with Gothenburg. He's shot aerial photographs of Wild Horse Golf Club and of a couple of businesses.

In June, Hall photographed flooding along the Platte River—from North Platte to Plattsmouth—as part of a CAP mission.

He also shot photos of Missouri River flooding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Hall said the Lincoln group meets monthly and also has flying exercises once a month.

There are several CAP squadrons throughout the state.

Another benefit of CAP is learning to fly, he said, noting that the Air Force buys a plane for an organization.

"It's a cheaper alternative to renting planes from a public airport," Hall said.

Typically, he said a CAP plane rents for \$36 an hour—plus \$75 for gas—compared to renting a public plane for \$160 an hour, including gas.

CAP also offers cadet programs from youth aged 12 through 20 and educates them in leadership, aerospace, fitness and character development.

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Former Gothenburg resident Daniel Hult was a member of North Platte's CAP cadet program.

CAP was founded in 1941, one week before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, by citizens concerned about the defense of America's coastline.

In 1946, CAP was established as a federally chartered benevolent civilian corporation that offers aerospace education, cadet programs and emergency services.

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