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Gastonia Civil Air Patrol Members Serve State & Community During Busy September

GASTONIA, NC — The local squadron of the U.S. Air Force auxiliary, Civil Air Patrol, sent 15 volunteer members ranging in age from 14 to 70 for relief efforts in eastern North Carolina due to Hurricane Florence, and another 14 as part of the search operations around Rankin Lake Park that discovered the body of Maddox Ritch.

From September 12 - 25, members served in a variety of critical response and support positions to prepare for and assist with recovery from Hurricane Florence. Local cadets (youth) and adult members were deployed to the Civil Air Patrol NC Wing Incident Command Post (ICP) in Burlington to coordinate air and ground team missions; to the North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM) Regional Coordination Centers in Kinston and Butner; and to Wilmington to set up, operate, and ultimately phase out the city's north Point of Distribution (POD).

On Thursday, September 27, 14 local ground team members — along with CAP members from Hickory and Concord — reported to Rankin Lake Park at the request of the NCEM to assist in the search for Maddox Ritch, a 7 year-old autistic child missing for six days. Roland B. Hamrick of NCEM and Planning Section for Thursday's operational period said, "I've got you guys here today because you're the best in the business." It was ultimately two adult CAP members that were responsible for locating and reporting the child's remains.

In all, members from the Gastonia Composite Squadron gave over 1,000 hours of volunteer service in September to emergency services missions. Squadron Commander 1st Lt Derk Beutler said of his unit, "These volunteers spend their valuable time, energy, and money every month to train and prepare for exactly these kinds of missions. I'm deeply proud of our squadron for their sacrifice and professionalism in serving our state and our community."

Civil Air Patrol, the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, is a nonprofit organization with 61,000 members nationwide, operating a fleet of 550 aircraft. CAP, in its Air Force auxiliary role, performs 90 percent of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center and is credited by the AFRCC with saving an average of 80 lives annually. Its volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief and drug interdiction missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. The members play a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to more than 26,000 young people currently participating in the CAP cadet programs. CAP received the World Peace Prize in 2011 and has been performing missions for America for 77 years. Visit www.gocivilairpatrol.com or www.capvolunteernow.com for more information.

CONTACT: 1st Lt Sue Beutler, Public Affairs Officer | sbeutler@jahlaw.com | 704-747-9999