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Russell County has a new Dive Rescue and Recovery Team. But what comes as a great benefit to our community came at a great price to a Cincinnati, Ohio family.

Lake Cumberland continues to be a growing tourist destination for vacationers throughout the East Coast.

In some years the lake will see upwards of 5 million visitors and the economic impact results in \$150 to \$200 million annually throughout the counties that are lucky enough to have the lake in it.

With that many visitors, there's always bound to be some tragedies. Luckily they are relatively few but with a lake the size of Lake Cumberland there's a real need for a well trained dive team.

Carl and Doris Marotzke are unfortunately very familiar with our need for a dive team. While vacationing on the lake in June, 2009, their teenage son was enjoying a regular weekend trip with his family at Lake Cumberland when he slipped on a concrete portion of the dock, hitting his head and falling into the water.

He would not be found for many hours and then it was by a volunteer fireman and diver. At the time Russell County had no comprehensive dive team. Until recently, Fireman Michael Rush was for a long time the only certified diver on staff.

The Marotzke's saw a need and after talking with Jamestown Fire Chief Tony Wright they decided to start the Wesley Watkins Foundation named after their ill fated son. This Foundation is working closely with the Jamestown Fire Department in putting together a professional dive team, well equipped and trained to perform rescue and recovery operations.

The team has adopted the name "Team Wesley" in memory of Watkins. The team consists of Dive Team Captain Martin Wesley, a 16 year veteran in emergency services and a Trooper with the Kentucky State Police Special Operations K9 Division, along with Asst. Fire Chief Michael Rush, Asst. Fire Chief Jeff Landers, Chris Knifley, who is also a Trooper with the Kentucky State Police Special Operations K9 Division, and Firefighters Zach Burton, Billy Bunch, Michael Clark and Michael Reynolds. Wright, while not acting as a diver himself, is in the unique position of also being a Sgt. In the Dept. of Fish and Wildlife and will act as Incident Commander. He is in charge of all fire and dive operations.

For the past months the new dive team has been purchasing much needed equipment and receiving equipment advice from Dean's Diver Den in Somerset and getting dive training from Master Diver Instructor Steve Ritchey, West Milton Fire Chief, West Milton, Ohio.

We sat down with Fire Chief Tony Wright and Dive Team Captain Martin Wesley to find out more about their training and what Russell County can expect from them in the future. Both men showed a certain pride and enthusiasm in having a dive team and were happy with the progress in the team and the prospects at both rescue and recovery.

"We have a number of fatal accidents every year. One of the things our dive teams will be able to provide is, you have a "golden hour" where you have a chance to have a rescue," said Wright, "our dive team will be able to provide a rapid response capability so that if there's any way possible to get divers on the scene and get that person up to start CPR within that golden hour, there is the chance of saving a life."

In all reality, most missions will be recovery; where there is not the expectation of being able to save a victim, but a quick recovery can mean a lot; from less anguish of loved ones to the difference in possibility of an open or closed casket burial. "Getting someone recovered in a few hours versus a few days can make the difference between an open casket service and a closed casket service; and I think that means a lot to a family." Said Wright.

Recently the team has already been put to the test. They had not received full equipment and were in the middle of training when they received a call to respond to a missing person off a small dock off Lilly Creek. "From the time we got the call until the time we had two divers on the bottom of the lake was 30 minutes," said Wesley. Though they were not able to save a drown victim the daunting circumstances show that the new team is well on their way. "With little equipment to no equipment we were able to go down there in dark water during a thunderstorm with no flash lights to attempt to find someone." Said Wesley.

"Lightening was flashing, it was right in the middle of a thunderstorm, it was dark, it was raining, they didn't have dive lights, they didn't even have wet suits. Zach went down in blue jeans and t-shirt," said Wright.

Since that time they've gotten extensive equipment and have gone on numerous training missions. Five members have received certification in Wreck Diving, Night Diving, Underwater Navigation, Dry Suit Specialty and Deep Dive Specialty.

More training is to come, including evidence search and recovery in cases of a potential crime when a dive team is needed and public safety training.

"Right now we're in the process of writing our Standard Operating Procedures and Policies," said Wesley, "we're in the process of getting our affiliation with the state of Kentucky. We were here until two in the morning last night working on that."

Team Wesley, in conjunction with the Wesley Watkins Foundation has a few things on a future wish list: soon to come will be a Side Scan Sonar Device which divers use to quickly locate objects underwater.

This device alone can make a location job of tens or hundreds of hours take mere minutes.

Another item the Foundation is looking forward to getting for our dive team is a dedicated dive truck in which all equipment can be stored and able to mobilize at a moments notice to any needed location.

"A big goal of mine to inform the public of is that, number one, we are a volunteer dive team. We are not paid, we do not receive compensation for the dangers for which we face. Everybody at this fire department is a volunteer. They are very courageous men and women who put forth their time and effort for the benefit of others. At no cost." Wesley said, "But we are accepting donations. That's what we're founded upon, completely, solely, is donations made to the Wesley Watkins Foundation."

If you are interested in learning more about Russell County's newest dive team or would be willing to make a donation, you can go to their excellent new website at

<http://www.jamestowndiverescueteam.com>, a website itself donated by the internet technology services of Sogeti USA LLC. Everyone is encouraged to take a look at the well crafted site.

Late on Tuesday we were able to get in touch with Carl Marotzke who had this to say about the founding of the Wesley Watkins Foundation:

"Team Wesley was formed to give boaters at Lake Cumberland a chance for a water rescue should the need arise. Previous to this team, Russell County had absolutely no form of dive rescue team. Sadly, most boaters have no clue that should trouble arise, there was no one to respond to a water rescue emergency. We found out after we lost our 17 year old son at Jamestown Marina 20 foot from shore. We called 911, but the closest rescue dive team was Pulaski County. This is not acceptable to my wife and I, as well as any boater we have talked with since the accident. This team was formed by my wife and I to honor our son Wesley's life and to save others from experiencing a tragedy such as this. Our team is an extension of the Jamestown Volunteer Fire Department fire fighters. All divers are volunteer and very dedicated to public safety. Although we only have 30% of the total gear necessary and 50% of the complete training needed, we are ready to run rescue missions now. We are in desperate need of donations from boaters as well as the local community. In due time, Team Wesley will make a huge impact on Russell County. Visit <http://www.jamestowndiverescueteam.com> for more information on the team and upcoming events."