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Matthew Benson,
Executive Director,
Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group

Dear Mr. Benson:

Fellowship Nominations

I am writing to propose two people for Fellowship under the proposed new AMRG Fellowship program.

First, Heather Houlahan.

Ms. Houlahan has been with AMRG since soon after its inception in the mid-1980s. She soon became a Field Team Leader and has a record of sustained response to missions and participation at training sessions that. Both in frequency and length, this record is unparalleled in AMRG's history, and in the history of the Appalachian Search and Rescue Conference as well.

Over these decades, she has also served as a teacher, giving lectures as well as planning and supervising numerous field training sessions, for AMRG and in the wider search and rescue world as well. Perhaps even more important has been her informal mentoring of other members.

She has also served in multiple administrative positions with the Group, most notable being a tenure of many years at Canine Officer. With her husband, Ken Chiacchia, she brought with her from New England experience and expertise in canine search and rescue that was lacking in AMRG at the time. She and Ken built up an airscent dog program that is second to none, and is viewed as a model for Pennsylvania and the ASRC.

Next, Ken Chiacchia.

With the the entire list of accomplishments for Ken's wife Heather listed above, we can say "Dr. Chiacchia, too." Ken has been an AMRG FTL for decades, responded to operations frequently, participated in training on a frequent basis, taught both locally and nationally, and served in multiple administrative positions with the Group.

Ken is also a leader in academic search and rescue. One of the few published authors in search theory, he is helping to lead a national and international effort to develop the theory and practice of backcountry search. Specifically, he is developing and applying the concept of *search width* to improve our ability to find those lost in the backcountry. His academic work is not only theoretical; as an experimentalist, he has led the effort to study sweep width in different environments. This led to the publication of this paper:

Chiacchia, K. B., & Houlahan, H. E. (2010). Effectors of visual search efficacy on the Allegheny Plateau. Wilderness Environ Med, 21(3), 188-201. doi: S1080-6032(10)00196-1 [pii] 10.1016/j.wem.2010.06.002

This effort continues, with additional experiments planned.

For all of these reasons, and others I am sure I have left out, I strongly believe that Heather and Ken are richly deserving of AMRG's first two Fellowships.

Thank you.

Yours aye,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KEC', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Keith Conover, M.D., FACEP

cc: AMRG BOD

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