

# Our Communities



Submitted photo

Members of the Civil Air Patrol-Red Oak Detachment stand with the new Cessna 172P recently obtained by the group. The Civil Air Patrol, founded in 1941, provides assistance in emergency situations in addition to providing aerospace education and cadet programs.

## Red Oak's Civil Air Patrol work on land and air

MIKE BROWNLEE

Staff Writer

[mike.brownlee@nonpareilonline.com](mailto:mike.brownlee@nonpareilonline.com)  
(712) 325-5732

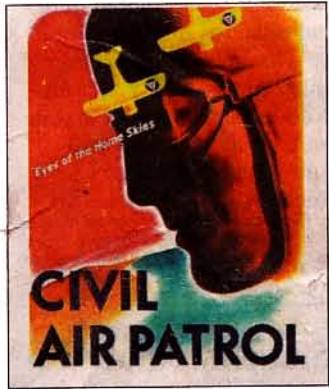
RED OAK – Its members work in the background, but they're there: Assisting during flood recovery, flying during search and rescue missions for missing hikers, mountain climbers, children and downed aircraft, and controlling the crowds in emergency situations.

The Civil Air Patrol, the civilian auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, is a congressionally chartered force that is called in to assist when emergencies occur, among other missions. The patrol's Red Oak detachment – established in June 2008 – works to carry on the tradition of an organization that has been around since World War II.

According to Jason Erickson, a first lieutenant in the patrol and deputy commander of the Red Oak detachment, Civil Air Patrol assists on 90 percent of the missing person searches in the United States.

"We work with local, state, and federal officials, dispatching teams to comb the area," Erickson said.

The patrol is organized like a military branch, with uniforms and ranks. The Red



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The Office of Civilian Defense commissioned this poster for the Civil Air Patrol in 1943 to build interest in the patrol during World War II.

Oak detachment falls under the Des Moines squadron of the Iowa wing of the Civil Air Patrol. Unlike the military, cadets and senior members in the patrol do not carry guns.

"Our job isn't to arrest people," Erickson said. "It's to keep people safe."

The Civil Air Patrol was established on Dec. 1, 1941, just days before the attack on Pearl Harbor. It saw its largest amount of combat action shortly thereafter during World War II. Unarmed

# Civil Air Patrol dates from 1941

**PATROL**/From Page 1A

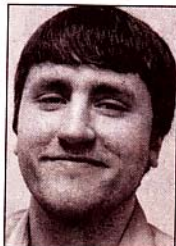
patrol pilots dived in mock attacks to force German subs to break and run, according to the detachment's Web site. Some planes carried bombs and depth charges during the war. The patrol flew 24 million miles, found 173 submarines, attacked 57, hit 10 and sunk two.

Erickson, 36, said the patrol has evolved and moved away from being directly involved in combat. When it's not providing emergency services, it's tasked with providing aerospace education and cadet programs.

Home base for the detachment is the Red Oak Municipal Airport, 1674 200th St., on the west central side of the city. Erickson and crew recently received its first plane, a single-engine Cessna 172P, which will be used for cadet orientation flights as well as search and rescue operations.

Cadets range in age from 12 to 21 years old, with senior

members age 18 and older. The ranks achievable begin at airman, then Sergeant and eventually officer. The Red Oak detachment has 12 cadets and eight seniors and has doubled its membership since January.



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includes aerospace education, including preparing cadets to receive a pilot's license; military history; training in emergency services teamwork; and moral leadership. Overall, it strives to prepare youth to positively contribute to society and lead successful adult lives, according to Jessa Brace, the public affairs officer for the

detachment. "We try to steer them toward being morally sound, doing the right thing," Brace said. "It's knowing right from wrong and being a good citizen and a good human being."

Cadet commander Kaleb White, who lives and is homeschooled in Red Oak, said he joined the patrol because it sounded like fun.

"Also, I got to get out of the house and meet people from all over Iowa," the 17-year-old said.

That was two years ago, and as he rises through the ranks the patrol is also giving him a solid foundation for his after-high school career goals: piloting in the Navy. He said the patrol has provided him with confidence and leadership skills he enjoys imparting on new cadets as they join.

"My favorite thing is seeing all the cadets under me succeed and do what they want to do," White said. "It's what helps me the most, being able to help these other cadets advance as far as possible."