Write-up for MCCA Fire Pan Grants and/or Donations

Objective: The Madison County CERT Association (MCCA) is asking for funds to enable us to purchase a new Fire Pan system.

Who are we and why do we need this? It all starts with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) who in 1984 established a program for training citizens with some basic skills to enable them to respond to and provide aid to their fellow citizens in the event of a large scale disaster (severe weather, earthquake, etc.) that temporarily overwhelms the area’s First Responder capabilities. That program is the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program and is administered through the Emergency Management Agency (EMA) at the county level. Here in the Huntsville / Madison County Alabama area CERT training has been ongoing since 2003 and since then there has been 69 classes and over 2,000 people trained.

In 2008, several of the earliest CERT trained folks approached the Madison County Alabama CERT Point of Contact asking if he would like some assistance managing the CERT program. He said he would and we formed the MCCA. Several years later the MCCA applied for and received our 501(c)(3) status on July 17, 2014. The MCCA has taken the lead on tracking people interested in receiving CERT training, scheduling CERT classes, coordinating for instructors for the classes, conducting CERT training classes, and hosting bi-monthly meetings where we do some refresher training. Our “usual” MCCA expenses include maintaining a web page, maintaining a PO Box mailing address, and purchasing various expendable items that are used during class instructions.

One of the modules in the CERT training is Fire Safety. In that module we cover fire safety, types of fires, and what to do in case of a fire. The “what to do” involves Fire Extinguisher information and also a practical exercise in which every student has an opportunity to use a Fire Extinguisher to put out a fire. To do this we currently use a Fire Pan system which creates a fire using propane gas and people put it out using CO2 fire extinguishers. Our Fire Pan system is over 16 years old and has two issues. One – The ignition system that “lights” the fire is on its last legs and sometimes doesn’t work causing us to have to pause several minutes to allow the propane gas to dissipate before trying to light a fire again. Two – We currently blast a substantial amount of CO2 into the atmosphere from the extinguishers during each class and would like to not do that anymore.

We have identified a replacement Fire Pan system that addresses both of these issues plus provides an additional training benefit. In a new system the fire ignition system would reliably function. The extinguishers use air pressurized water instead of CO2 and sensors along the side of the fire pan detect that blast of fog water and turns off the fire, so no more releasing CO2 into the atmosphere. And the added benefit is that those same sensors can tell if the trainee is sweeping the extinguisher exhaust across the base of the fire like they are supposed to and if not, does not turn off the fire. The quote from the vendor for this fire pan system is in the $9,000+ range. We have some funds available but need more to enable us to make this purchase. We are asking for $5,000 to reach this goal. Any additional funds received would be used to establish a community training program for people that may want to just get some hands on fire extinguisher training without doing the full CERT training.