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### **IT Heroes: Technology becomes dog's best friend**

For the past two years, Ryerson associate professor Alexander Ferworn has been working with the Provincial Emergency Response Team of the Ontario Provincial Police on the project that has resulted in the development of the Canine Augmentation Technology (CAT) system  
By: ComputerWorld Canada staff  
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In the weeks ahead, ITWorldCanada will be using this space to applaud individuals and corporations who are using information technology to significantly improve the lives of Canadians by profiling nominees for the upcoming Information Technology Association of Canada (ITAC) IT Hero Awards presented by Intel. Winners in both corporate and community categories will be announced at the ITAC Chairs' Dinner in Toronto on June 26.

Name: Alexander Ferworn

Location: Toronto

Recent emergency situations and natural disasters like those in Myanmar and China have highlighted the global need for organized and efficient rescue operations.

To that end, a Toronto professor is working to enhance the performance of Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) dogs, trained to find people trapped in the debris and rubble of buildings that have collapsed.

The important work of these animals can mean the difference between life and death.

For the past two years, Ryerson associate professor Alexander Ferworn has been working with the Provincial Emergency Response Team of the Ontario Provincial Police on the project that has resulted in the development of the Canine Augmentation Technology (CAT) system. CAT fits durable low light-infrared fisheye cameras to search dogs, encodes the captured video and transmits it via a ruggedized WiFi network back to emergency workers who may not be able to safely follow the dog into the search area. CAT technology allows emergency first responders to assess the situation by being able to see areas that humans cannot reach because of structural damage or safety concerns.

An additional component of the project is the Canine Remote Deployment System (CRDS) that allows responders to drop a bag of supplies or a radio to the trapped person, using the dog to deliver the materials.

Since most trapped individuals who are hidden from view are actually found by USAR dogs, CAT and CRDS improves the performance of the dog teams and the survival rates of trapped people. This technology has been tested by the OPP and by four of the five Canadian USAR Task Forces.

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