



**NEW LEADER** — Stephen Pettit (left) is now cadet leader of the local Civil Air Patrol squadron, succeeding Kevin Stopinski.

## Civil Air Patrol Lets Teens Serve Country

Stephen Pettit of Hampton, a cadet first lieutenant, is now cadet commander of the Civil Air Patrol Delaware Valley Composite Squadron. He is a senior at North Hunterdon High School.

The group, which meets at the Acorn Montessori School in Clinton Township, is an official Air Force auxiliary. Nationally the volunteer service organization members perform more than 85% of inland search and rescue missions as assigned by the Air Force Rescue and Coordination Center.

Stephen's duties include coordinating squadron activities, running the cadet portion of the squadron and serving as a liaison between cadet and senior members. He took the position when his predecessor, Cadet 2nd Lt. Kevin Stopinski, departed for Air Force basic training. He is from Milford and graduated from Delaware Valley High School in June.

Stephen is also a volunteer firefighter with the Annandale Hose Company. He joined the Civil Air Patrol in 2004.

The local squadron has been busy lately. On Sept. 24, it was activated to help search for a missing Readington Township woman with Alzheimer's disease.

A ground team was assembled at the local command post within the hour. Township Police put the team on standby as others completed a road scan and prepared for a formal grid search.

As the team prepared for the night-time grid search of the area, the woman was found in a rocky creek along a township road. Wet and suffering from exposure, she was treated by the rescue squad before being taken to Hunterdon Medical Center.

The local squadron had a busy

time the weekend of Sept. 15-16. They were dispatched when an emergency transmitter locator (ELT) distress signal went off in western New Jersey. The cadets finished their weekend by participating in CAP orientation flights at Somerset Airport in Bedminster.

The ground team consisted of members Bill Pittenger, Christopher Casey, Nick Biondo and Robert Regan, all of Readington Township; and Patrick Brennan and Friedo Meyer of Clinton.

Using their training in tracking down ELT signals, they quickly found the plane at a local airport. The device was not triggered due to a downed aircraft, but was activated accidentally during some plane maintenance.

First Lt. Pittenger led the ground team. "We were certainly happy to determine that this was not a distress signal and no one was hurt. I am proud of our team's ability to assemble quickly, locate the transmitter and complete the mission efficiently. Our cadet and senior (adult) members are always practicing and training to ensure that we can continue to be of service to our community."

The following day, the cadets took orientation flights, designed to give them hands-on flying experience in a single-engine plane, part of the curriculum of the aerospace training program. They take control of the plane under the supervision of an experienced CAP pilot. Cadets Donald Conway, Pettit, Brennan, Biondo and Regan participated in the flights.

For information, visit the squadron Web site at [delval.njwg.cap.gov](http://delval.njwg.cap.gov) or contact the squadron commander, Capt. Shannon Bingert, at [shnin6@msn.com](mailto:shnin6@msn.com).