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LEAC Helicopters Played Part in Suspect Search

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By Ryan Cummings & Dani Maxwell 13 News ROCK COUNTY, WI - Police think a robbery suspect may be hiding out in Rockford. The Rock County Sheriff's Department is still looking for Matthew Evans, 36. Police say he and five others allegedly robbed the Mid-American Bank in Footville, Wisconsin Friday. Then the group led police on a chase that ended here in Winnebago County. Police caught everyone except Evans. He's from Rockford, so he may be in this area. If you know anything call police at 608-757-7923. When the manhunt for Evans started Friday, a Rockford-based helicopter was on the scene of the search. LEAC, the Law Enforcement Aviation Coalition, a non-profit agency, operates helicopters for police and fire to use in Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin. Rob Humphries is a pilot for LEAC. On Friday his crew was in Chicago when it got called to assist Rock County officers. "When we completed our mission in the Chicago area we responded up there as well to Janesville and assisted in the searching of the suspect." LEAC's Kenosha-based chopper was the primary aircraft for the suspect search and Humphries says that extra eye really helps officers on the ground. "We're about a 15:1 ratio it takes 15 officers on the ground to do what we can do as one in the air." LEAC has responded to a number of calls this year, including an incident where a Kenosha County Sheriff's deputy was shot and killed. "We've had children that we've looked for, adults that we've looked for people that are either mentally incapable or something as, they needed assistance in finding them." LEAC is a non-profit group that runs on donations. It takes about \$70,000 a year just to maintain one helicopter. But the cost isn't what's important. "If it saves one officers life one child's life on the ground, gets one bad guy in custody quicker so he doesn't have a chance to hurt somebody else, how can you put a dollar value against the life that it saved." LEAC's headquarters is in Winthrop Harbor, Illinois, but it has one ship based at the Chicago Rockford International Airport. Thursday, the organization invites police and fire from our area to the airport's fire station on Falcon Drive to learn more about how LEAC can help them. Check out airsupport.org for more information.



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