

The Rescue

SNOHOMISH COUNTY VOLUNTEER SEARCH & RESCUE | FALL 2023



Three Fingers Mountain Rescue

Press release from the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office:

On June 17 around 9:30 p.m., our on-call Search and Rescue (SAR) coordinator was paged for a mission in the area of Three Fingers. It was reported that three distressed hikers were stuck in thick fog and rain, about two miles from the lookout. There was a significant amount of snow on the ground, and the hikers were not equipped for overnight sheltering.

Cell service was sporadic but available enough for our SAR coordinator to call and talk to the reporting party. The three hikers were siblings in their 20's who traveled here from out of state. They were wet and very cold. They described almost sliding down a heavily snowed area with a steep slope and stated they could not make it back due to the conditions. They had sleeping bags with them, but no shelter to protect them.

Due to the damaged bridge and washout on FS-41, SAR ground teams had to use E-bikes and quads through the first 8 miles just to reach the trailhead. The ground teams then had to hike up 7 miles

to reach the three siblings who needed help. It took the first hasty team about 9 hours to reach them. Subsequent teams were shuttled in on quads and then hiked in with more gear and dry clothes to warm up the hikers, who were exhibiting signs of hypothermia. Our Helicopter Rescue Team made multiple attempts to get to the area, but the weather conditions prevented them from flying in.

After more than a day of rescue efforts by multiple SAR teams, the three hikers were helped down the mountain by ground teams and then brought back over the bridge via quads.

In all, the operation took about 32 hours. The initial two hasty teams were on the trail for over 27 hours each. Many other ground teams spent various hours on the trail as well. Over 500 SAR personnel hours were spent on this mission, a majority being expert volunteers from around the region.

A huge thank you to Snohomish County Volunteer Search and Rescue, Seattle Mountain Rescue, Everett Mountain Rescue, Olympic Mountain Rescue, King County Volunteer Search and Rescue,

Skagit County Volunteer Search and Rescue, Arlington Police Department and our own Snohomish County Sheriff's Office deputies. In all, seven quads, three E-bikes, the OSU Command vehicle and SnoHawk10 helicopter were utilized.

This was incredible work by all the Search and Rescue teams who ultimately saved the lives of these three siblings! This was a very difficult and stressful mission that SAR performed flawlessly.

BEFORE YOU GO HIKING:

Always check trail reports and weather conditions.

Have a plan and share it with someone who is not hiking with.

Always be well prepared: bring shelter, extra clothing, food and water for multiple days.

Pack the 10 essentials.

Be honest with yourself: are you fit enough, skilled enough, and properly equipped?

Rescue missions can take days to reach you: are you prepared?



2023 Terry Tibke Award Recipient

This award was created in honor of Terry Tibke, a dedicated SCVSAR volunteer in the 1960s and 70s, who set the bar very high, and was always there for every mission and all the training, mentoring, and equipment upkeep. While in his prime of life and SAR volunteering, Terry tragically was stricken with cancer

and passed away. At that time, SCVSAR created this award in his honor and memory for our volunteers to recognize a person, a team, or an organization, each year whom we honor for their outstanding contribution to SCVSAR. The 2023 Tibke Award recipient, with 23 years of service to SCVSAR, is Eric Lembke!

President's Letter

What would be your response if your life were saved, or the life of a loved one? For the three siblings rescued this summer from Three Fingers Mountain, it was pure joy (they most likely would not have survived if they had to wait another day). For the families of multiple Alzheimer's and Dementia walkaways found this year (and every year), relief and thankfulness. Nichole Doane's "thank you SCVSAR for saving my life" has been expressed in the hundreds of hours she and filmmaker Baylee Sinner have put into the recently released documentary film, *Where the Rope Ends*.

SCVSAR volunteers attend monthly meetings with their "home" Unit: Alderwood, Everett Mountain Rescue Unit (EMRU), Explorer (ages 14-18), Marysville, Operations Support Unit (OSU), or Snohomish. We need field qualified personnel to go on missions; one of our most common missions is a "pack out" of an injured hiker from any one of our very popular trails. We need motivated field qualified personnel to be trained for special operations units and teams, such as EMRU (technical & snow mountain rescue), the Swiftwater Rescue Team (SRT), the K-9, 4 x 4 and Tracking Teams, and the Helicopter Rescue Team (HRT). As the article talks about, we even have an Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) Team, operating state of the art drones to assist in rescues and recoveries.

There are plenty of opportunities for support roles in Search & Rescue. The Operations Support Unit (OSU) supplies the support personnel for the Command Vehicle (documentation, mapping, communications & planning), and for the Food Truck. Anyone with any skills at all, and with the right heart and attitude, can meaningfully support this wonderful organization. If you are interested in volunteering, please go to www.scvsar.org/volunteer.

While not everyone can put in the time to become a Search & Rescue Volunteer, many people who love the outdoors can financially support the people who will drop everything that they are doing to help others in need. Someday, the mission could very well be for you or for someone that you love. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to Snohomish County Volunteer Search & Rescue (www.scvsar.org/donate), a 501c3 organization, this year, and consider donating to SCVSAR every year. Know that your dollars are going to a great cause; know that your funds would be carefully and thoughtfully allocated to where they are most needed; and know that you're making a tremendous difference. Thank you very much.

Heidi McKeon

Snohomish County Volunteer Search and Rescue President



ADDRESS

Snohomish County Search and Rescue
5506 Old Machias Rd.
Snohomish, WA 98290

CONTACT INFORMATION

Office Phone: 425-388-3328

Email: info@scvsar.org

Online: scvsar.org

OFFICERS

Heidi McKeon, President
Mike Loney, Vice President
Tom Richards, Treasurer
Nikki Lembke, Secretary

THE RESCUE

John McKeon, Editor
Allison Paul, Contributing Writer
Sarah Kulfan, Design
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It is the mission of Snohomish County Volunteer Search and Rescue to search, rescue and/or recover those who become lost, missing, injured or killed while outdoors and to educate people on outdoor safety and wilderness recreation.

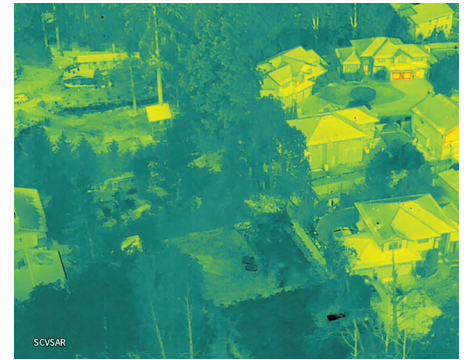
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Eric has always been a bit of an adrenaline junkie. In high school, he started in explorer search while residing in Virginia. After joining the Navy, he was transferred to Washington State in 1999 and joined SCVSAR in October of 2000. Eric is adaptable and always ready to learn new skills. He has participated in countless roles in SAR, from the rigging team and swift water rescue team to K9 Field Support. Eric is currently the

president of the SCVSAR Marysville Unit, and with experience having taught EMT's and Navy SAR Rescue Techs, he now manages all Ground SAR Training for SCVSAR. As if that weren't enough, Eric is currently working toward becoming a crew chief for the Helicopter Rescue Team.

Other than his 9-5 job as a Hearing Conservation Systems and Training

Specialist as a civilian contractor for the Navy, search and rescue consumes most of his time. Putting family first keeps things in perspective, but it helps that his wife is also a member of SCVSAR and is "in it up to her eyeballs" as well. When asked what drives him to be so dedicated to service in search and rescue, Eric said, "If I know we did a good job, even without acknowledgment, I'm happy".



Left: In-flight preparation for an urban search training scenario. Above: Thermal Imaging of an urban training scenario. This type of training is often simulation of a search for an autistic-mute child or elderly subject with dementia.

Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) Team

Uncrewed Aircraft Systems are integral to search and rescue missions. Becoming more prevalent in teams worldwide, UAS can search high consequence areas, where safety risks generally preclude searcher access. They also can maintain safety overwatch during higher risk evolutions, providing real time intelligence for multiple personnel to view at once.

The systems' stamina in extreme heat or cold also proves to be an asset as they can continue to search in conditions

that fatigue or decrease human ability to maintain a high level of searching. Sometimes just changing the visual perspective in a search, a UAS can be the difference between life or death.

These devices are more than just a bird's eye view from a 400 foot altitude. They provide visual and thermal imaging, loudspeaker capabilities for voice checks with a missing subject, illuminate dark areas with intense spotlights and can fly in just about any circumstance. UAS have also become essential with

their ability to deliver communication devices and safety equipment; and they have the added capacity to run safety lines across ravines/canyons to help set up a rope rescue system.

UAS require licensed pilots and operate within the FAA regulations, guidelines, and permissions. With their high demand, these systems and qualifications are continually evolving and expanding. SCVSAR is proud to be able to provide this service in Snohomish County and in support of SAR teams in counties across Washington.

Flowing Lake Weekend

On the first weekend in October, that one that felt more like summer than summer, SCVSAR had the opportunity to host several out-of-county teams for a weekend of training.

Oftentimes, search and rescue teams do not get the chance to practice working together or sharing resources unless it is during a mass emergency that requires this level of participation. What an advantage to have spent three days in an enriched learning environment with the ability to focus on this collaborative goal.

New skill sets were developed, enhanced understanding of team capabilities could be acknowledged, questions were presented so that problems could be solved, and some epic storytelling by the fire also took place. We hope to build on this type of training for an annual event, as we learned far more than we imagined.





Snohomish County Volunteer
Search & Rescue
5506 Old Machias Rd.
Snohomish, WA 98290

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THE RESCUE | SNOHOMISH COUNTY VOLUNTEER SEARCH & RESCUE

Fall 2023

Unpaid Professionals

It's not what we do; it's WHY we do it!

Why spend hours equivalent to a part time job without the pay? Why spend untold amounts of money on your own equipment, training, vehicle wear-and-tear, and missed work (shhh... don't tell the boss). Why skip out on family events? Let's not forget about the lost sleep from being called out at 2 a.m. Or from lying awake in bed when you're unable to respond and praying for a successful outcome. Why would someone volunteer to put themselves, their families, career, and friendships through this?

Simply put, it's in the SAR motto: **That Others May Live**. It's on our patches, vehicles, and part of our logo. It's even tattooed on more than a few volunteers! Those four words encapsulate enough to write a book. It's the volunteer who shows up for the missing Alzheimer's subject because, at one time, they experienced it for themselves with a family member. It's the volunteer who is a parent, who responds to missions for a missing child. The hiker who went up the same trail the day before and now is carrying out a patient with a broken leg on a dark, rainy night. It's the



mountaineer flying out on the helicopter rescue team to a remote peak to rescue someone they might know, or with the memory of a lost loved one who lost their life in a similarly perilous situation.

That Others May Live: four words that mean so much to so many. It's personal for each of us, and even without a connection, we show up and do the work we've trained hard to do.

Where the Rope Ends Film Premier

The first weekend in October also kicked-off the premier of *Where The Rope Ends*, a documentary film about Nichole Doane's life and her lifesaving rescue by SCVSAR.

Where The Rope Ends is now officially launched and will be viewed at upcoming film festivals and, most importantly, at local SAR organizations as a community fundraising event. SCVSAR will be sharing the documentary with our community in the Spring of 2024 in a nationwide event! We look forward to gathering to view this inspirational story and to celebrate the hard work of the volunteers who dedicate their lives to search and rescue.

Support SCVSAR

Your donation supports the work we do and helps assure that our volunteers are always "mission ready"! You can also provide support through your company giving or matching gift program. Donate online at scvsar.org/donate.