



# The Rescue

SNOHOMISH COUNTY VOLUNTEER SEARCH & RESCUE | FALL 2024

## Cognitive Impairment Searches

By Nikki Lembke and Amie Northagen

On a cool March afternoon, our dedicated Search and Rescue volunteers sprang into action to search for an elderly man with dementia who had gone missing during a walk. Living with family, he had stepped out but did not return, raising immediate concerns due to his cognitive impairment and age. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, the family called 911 and we mobilized our volunteers to begin the search.

The search effort was comprehensive and multifaceted. K9 teams, drones, and ground searchers were deployed, along with volunteers scouring the area in vehicles. Teams went door to door, checking with neighbors about whether they had seen the man, while flyers were posted online to broaden our reach. A drone was sent up to survey the landscape from above, and K9 units began searching outward from his last known location.

As the search progressed, a keen-eyed K9 handler noticed a subtle change in the dog's behavior near the edge of a steep, wooded slope. This observation prompted the team to investigate further, leading them down the slope where, nestled in the bushes, they discovered the missing man. His condition could have been dire had it not been for the handler's astute awareness and the team's determination to search thoroughly.

Once located, our volunteers assessed the man's condition and provided immediate care. Due to the challenging terrain, a rigging team was summoned to ensure a safe extraction. With the support of North County Fire, we successfully retrieved the man and reunited him with his relieved family.

This mission is one of many this past year in which our personnel have located individuals in difficult-to-access areas. While our dedicated members

continue to respond to wilderness search, rescue, and recovery missions throughout Snohomish County, the growing number of missions for those with cognitive impairment, such as dementia or autism, underscores the need for enhanced urban search and rescue training for our volunteers. As we continue to prepare for future challenges, we remain committed to equipping our teams with the skills necessary to navigate these increasingly common situations.

Community involvement and training are vital as we strive to keep our neighbors safe.

We are grateful to our volunteers, first responders, and the community for their unwavering support during such critical missions. Together, we can make a difference and ensure the safety of those in need.

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# President's Letter

**"That Others May Live."** It's a powerful statement spelled out across our logo and shoulder patch. But it's more than that. It's what we do. It's what drives us as we regularly "go in harm's way" to find and assist those in need.

We are a 100% volunteer organization of over 400 members, all of whom stand ready to drop everything, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, to trek into the wilderness or urban settings. Our missions are often dangerous, but people desperately need our help, and we respond. Even as I write this, we have team members deep in the backcountry, likely traversing some of the season's first snow cover to help a stranded hiker caught by the first bad weather of the season.

Try as we might, we can't do what we do without your help. With your donation and support, you join us as "we go together into harm's way so that others may live." Your financial gifts help bring our teams home safely by ensuring they are well trained and properly equipped to do what is necessary to bring our loved ones home. As volunteers, we assure you that none of your donations pay anyone's salary. Our time is our gift to the community and to those in need on what is probably the worst day of their lives. What we need is your gift to pay for our ongoing training, our critical and horribly expensive rescue equipment and vehicles, and the ongoing costs of maintaining and operating our home base facility.

When we "go into harm's way", we don't just recklessly charge into the wilderness. We always extensively prepare and formulate a mission plan to enhance our chances of successfully locating and extracting our lost, injured, or deceased community member(s). While we are very careful, we operate in harsh conditions that often damage our equipment. Damaged equipment frequently must be repaired or replaced to ensure the safety of our team. And some of our rescued equipment, including ropes, harnesses, and medical equipment, have expiration dates after which we can no longer use them. Consumables, such as batteries for our GPS units, headlamps and flashlights, simply wear out and need to be replaced regularly.

Larger equipment needs include our fleet of aging rescue vehicles. We recently retired a 1990 three quarter ton Chevy Suburban after almost 35 years of service. While we are thoughtful and intentional, and we certainly get our money's worth out of our vehicles, they eventually need to be replaced. We have two other mid-90's vintage trucks and two rescue hovercraft that will need to be replaced soon. The hovercraft manufacturer tells us that we have two of the oldest rescue hovercraft still in service in the entire country! While we're flattered to know we take good care of our stuff, it's clearly time for us to upgrade our hovercraft!

The last element of our need for donations is for the infrastructure upkeep and operating costs of our Search and Rescue base, known as Taylor's Landing, which our

volunteers fondly refer to as "TL" for short. Over a quarter century ago, we acquired a property at 5506 Old Machias Road to become our base of operations. The volunteers at that time also acquired some old, decommissioned metal buildings at Paine Field. They literally moved the disassembled buildings from Paine Field to the Machias Road property, and painstakingly reassembled the buildings on the site, to become TL.

The original age of these buildings is unknown to us, but a reasonable guess would be in the decades. For the last several years, what began as minor roof leaks became increasingly severe. Thanks to our Capital Campaign that started a year ago, combined with our Capital Improvement funds we've been able to set aside over the past decade, we finally were able to replace the aging original metal roofs on all our buildings. That was a good start, but we are not quite finished. In addition to the roof replacement on our 6,500 square foot helicopter hanger, we replaced the wall insulation and sealed the floor. We still need to replace the wall insulation and seal the floors in our 5,000 square foot rescue trucks storage bay and classrooms/offices building and in a smaller utility storage building. To finish those repairs, we need your help.

Our needs may be great, but lucky for us, so is the generosity of our many financial supporters. Some of you are able to make cash donations. Others donate appreciated shares of stock, choosing to support us rather than pay significant capital gains taxes. And some of you choose Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs), donating your annual required minimum distributions (RMDs) directly from your IRA(s) to us, avoiding income taxes on these distributions in the process. All your financial gifts, whether large or not so large, are important to us, and we assure you we will deploy your gifts prudently in our mission, so "that others may live."

**Mike Loney**

Snohomish County Volunteer Search and Rescue President



## Tips for Caregivers: What You Can Do

Being a caregiver for someone with cognitive impairment comes with unique challenges, but there are steps you can take to reduce the risk of wandering and ensure a swift response in the event of an emergency.

### Preventative Measures

- **Enhance Home Safety:** Consider installing high door locks, window and door alarms, and adding video surveillance systems to prevent wandering. These safety measures can act as deterrents and be critical in keeping your loved one safe.
- **Use Tracking Devices:** Place tracking devices in frequently worn clothing or footwear. This technology can provide real-time location data, offering peace of mind and aiding in quick recovery should they go missing.

### In Case of Emergency

If someone goes missing, quick action is critical. Here is what you can do to aid in the emergency response:

- 1. Call 911 Immediately:** The moment you realize your loved one is missing, call 911 and inform dispatch that this person has a cognitive impairment. The sooner we are alerted, the sooner we can deploy appropriate resources, and the better our chances of a successful search are.
- 2. Provide Key Information:** When speaking with 911 dispatchers, share as much information as possible to aid the search. Consider the following:
  - Do they take the bus or public transportation?
  - Where were they last seen?
  - What were they wearing?
  - Do they have any distinguishing characteristics? (tattoos, hair color, use a walker, etc.)
- 3. Have they wandered before?** If so, where were they found?

- **Keep a Current Photograph:** Ensure you have an up-to-date photograph readily available. This is crucial for quickly disseminating information through media outlets to aid in the search efforts.
- **Preserve Scent Sources for K9 Teams:** Avoid handling your loved one's pillow or dirty clothing if they go missing. These items can serve as vital scent sources for tracking dogs, significantly enhancing search efforts.
- **Notify neighbors and check security camera footage:** Check any security cameras and doorbell cameras and ask neighbors if they have any security footage they can share. This could help provide information about where they were headed, what they were wearing, and if they were on foot or took a vehicle.
- **Have someone remain at the home:** It's crucial to have someone remain at the place of residence in case the individual returns. Keeping a familiar person at home can be reassuring if they make their way back.

### A Collaborative Effort

As Snohomish County Volunteer Search and Rescue adapts to these challenges, we are committed to fostering a collaborative relationship with families in our community. We believe that by empowering caregivers with knowledge and resources, we can enhance our response capabilities and ensure the safety of those we serve. These services are free to the public. Please don't wait to call.

If you have questions or would like more information on how to best prepare for the unexpected, please don't hesitate to reach out. Together, we can work towards a safer community for everyone. Thank you for your continued support and dedication to keeping our neighbors safe.



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**Snohomish County Volunteer Search and Rescue's mission is to search for - and to rescue or recover - those who become lost, missing, or injured while outdoors, and to educate people on outdoor safety and wilderness recreation.**





# SCVSAR Celebrates Dedication at Annual Tibke Awards Picnic

By Nikki Lembke and Peter Teske

On August 17th, 2024, Snohomish County Volunteer Search and Rescue, Inc. hosted its annual Volunteer Recognition and Awards Picnic at our headquarters, Taylor's Landing, a cherished tradition that brings together our steadfast volunteers, their families, and associated members of the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office. This year's event was particularly special because it honored the hard work and unwavering dedication of our volunteers, both past and present.

The picnic provided a warm atmosphere, filled with camaraderie and appreciation. Families gathered to celebrate their loved ones' contributions, and special guests joined in to recognize the vital role these volunteers play in our community.

As part of the celebration, SCVSAR presented their annual Tibke Award to this year's recipient, but rather than an individual, the award this year went to the hard-working SAR Food Truck crew. These devoted members feed everyone on rescue and recovery missions that can sometimes extend for multiple days. The Tibke Award is SCVSAR's highest award, established in memory of Terry Tibke, a dedicated volunteer of SCVSAR and is an annual award that honors exceptional contributions to SCVSAR.

From injured hikers, to dementia walkaways, to rescue/recovery missions, the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office would not be able to operate at its current capacity without the wonderful volunteers of SCVSAR. The organization is made up of over 400 extremely skilled volunteers who have collectively donated 13,400 hours of their time to assist with



143 missions since August 2023. We are honored to work side by side with these individuals and to say that we are grateful for them is an understatement.

Alongside the Tibke award, a highlight of this year's event was the recognition of volunteers who reached significant milestones in their service anniversaries. These dedicated members have demonstrated exceptional commitment and resilience, often going above and beyond to support our mission. The honored volunteers included the following:

**10 Years:** Erin Renshaw, Bill Buck, Lucas Valentine, Teresia Saylor, Debra Draper, Wendy Whitmer, Brad Jaffke, Micah Nehring, Chad Henry, Joyce Wilson, and Peter Templin

**15 Years:** June Mansfield, Heidi McKeon, Richard Duncan, Yana Radenska, Joshua Warren, and Donald Campo

**Over 20 years:** Jennifer Stollwerck (1995), Danny Wikstrom (1996), Edwin Prada (1997), Randy Fay (1999), Curt Mills (1999), John Morton (1999), Eric Lembke (2000), Carl Johnson (2001), Nikki Lembke (2001), Mike Loney (2002), and Seth Stone (2002)

**Over 30 years:** Ken Ohlsen (1988), and Kevin Andringa (1991)

**Over 40 years:** Paul Moutray (1981)

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**Over 50 Years:** Stephen Klett (1974), Jon Wilson (1973), and Ken Lakey (1971)

**Over 60 Years:** Frank Dahlman (1964)

Each of these individuals embodies the core values of our organization, and their contributions have made a lasting impact on the lives of countless individuals in Snohomish County.

As we reflect on another successful year, we remain grateful for the commitment of our volunteers, whose efforts ensure the safety and well-being of our community. The annual picnic serves as a reminder of the strength and unity that comes from our collective mission. We look forward to another year of service, teamwork, and community engagement, "That Others May Live".



## Where the Rope Ends Update

By Nichole Doane and Baylee Sinner

*Where the Rope Ends* is a documentary film about Nichole Doane's life and her lifesaving/lifechanging rescue by SCVSAR. Since 2017, Nichole and Film Director Baylee Sinner have spent many hundreds of hours making this film, with the end goal to support not only SCVSAR, but Search and Rescue organizations nationwide. More than 30 SAR events were held across the country and into Canada, raising tens of thousands of dollars and attracting numerous new volunteers. 100% of the proceeds went directly to the SAR teams that participated.

Film festivals attended thus far include the following:

- Atlanta Documentary Film Festival
- WorldFest-Houston (Silver Remi Award Winner)
- Sun Valley Film Festival
- Utah Film Festival (nominated Best Documentary)
- No Man's Land Film Festival
- Spokane International Film Festival (Spiffy Award for Best Northwest Feature)
- Poppy Jasper International Film Festival (Best Documentary Feature Film)
- Las Vegas International Film Festival (nominated Best Documentary)
- Los Angeles Documentary Film Festival (Winner of Best Feature Film)

*Where the Rope Ends* has been approved for a National PBS broadcast: it could air for up to three years on 356 stations across the country, reaching millions of viewers. Visit the film's website and find them on Facebook and Instagram @wheretheropeends to stay informed.



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THE RESCUE | SNOHOMISH COUNTY VOLUNTEER SEARCH & RESCUE

Fall 2024

## Vesper Peak Trail/Sunrise Mine Trail Mission

On Sunday night, September 29th, Everett Mountain Rescue (EMR) responded to a call for a hiker who suffered severe injuries after falling off trail, sliding down a wet, slippery slope, and landing on hard rock in a cold pool of water. Fortunately, other hikers nearby heard cries for help and were able to pull the hiker from the water and call for emergency assistance.

EMR quickly responded alongside other SCVSAR units to the scene. The subject sustained multiple serious

injuries and was also suffering from hypothermia due to prolonged exposure from the cold water and dropping temperatures. Our teams immediately provided medical care to stabilize, administer first aid, and warm the subject.

Given the steep terrain, teams secured the subject in a litter and implemented a rigging system to safely lift the subject back up to the trail. From there, the subject was transported back to the trailhead to receive further medical care.



## Support SCVSAR

**JOIN:** Become a search and rescue volunteer. You can find out more information on our website at [scvsar.org/volunteer](https://scvsar.org/volunteer).

**DONATE:** 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](https://scvsar.org/donate) or use the QR code above.



This mission is a testament to the importance of ongoing training, teamwork, and preparation. We are incredibly grateful to all the volunteers who responded, the medical teams that took over the subject care once back at the trailhead, and the hikers who played a role in this successful rescue. It's through ongoing collaboration and dedication that we can navigate these complex missions and help bring people home.

Nature can be unpredictable - stay safe out there and always be prepared.