

PRIEST LAKE

Annual fundraiser to benefit
Search and Rescue

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Huckleberry festival to

benefit Search and Rescue

PRIEST LAKE NEWS

The Priest Lake Huckleberry Festival, which for many years was sponsored by the Senior Center, has changed sponsors and become the primary annual fundraising event for Priest Lake Search and Rescue.

The Huck Fest, as PLSAR volunteers have named it, will change the event's location from mile marker 27 on Highway 57 to the Priest Lake Golf Course. This entertaining family event will have its arts and crafts fair, food booths and great bluegrass music from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For this year, a new feature has been added: a golf tournament, which will help support the goals and objectives of this organization.

PLSAR was created in 2001 with fewer than 30 members. Most of them still belong to this volunteer group, which now numbers 88. More than 30 of them have various skill certifications in rappelling and other technical rescue capabilities such as swift water, ice and dive rescue/recovery.

The all-volunteer organization operates primarily



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as well as their own ATVs and snowmobiles.

The first few months of 2008 have been one of its busiest periods with four missions and 11 persons rescued or assisted.

One of the major goals for the festival is to raise enough funds to purchase a GPS radio tracking system to allow the group to keep positive location of their field staff during rescue missions.

A few days ago, I was invited to witness and take pictures of a 36th Rescue Flight water training exercise at Priest Lake that was assisted by PLSAR. The weather was terrible with the water at 41 degrees. We were cruising over the designated area, trying to shoot pictures with frozen hands splashed by

on grants, donations and small state reimbursement for search missions. Members provide their own personal gear such as packs and boots

white-capped waters. I realized what it takes to volunteer for these kind of operations, and I could only imagine what a real situation would be like. It is comforting to know that there are people like these who are ready, willing and able to help in emergencies.

PLSAR has assisted 36RQF the last two summers with water operations. This includes providing boat support in the immediate vicinity where they are operating, securing the area from other boats.

PLSAR has worked to establish and maintain a close working relationship with both the USAF 336 Training (Survival) Group and the 36th RQF. They are among the finest in the Air Force and most valuable partner to help PLSAR complete its missions. For several years, according to Mike Nielsen, President of PLSAR, the Air Force has provided winter-survival instructors and the helicopter to help train their members during winter learning exercises.

During my visit with PLSAR team at Cavanaugh Bay I