

org, when it is possible to place reservations for their use. Social distancing will still be required.

Curbside services for retrieval of hold items and wireless printing

will continue. Hours of service will be 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 10 a.m. through 5 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. The library is closed on Sunday.

We look forward to greeting you at the library.

Please note at all Pikes Peak Library District facilities will be closed on May 31 in observance of

Memorial Day.

Harriet Halbig can be reached at harriethalbig@ocn.me.

On the Trail (in memory of Tim Watkins)

County Search and Rescue



Above: Keith Lonnquist, county Search and Rescue team volunteer, with his certified search dog Baily. Photo by Steve Pate.

By Steve Pate

With the stresses we've all faced during the last year, many of us have sought relief through outdoor experiences. Unfortunately for those who relish getting away from crowds, taking a hike or mountain bike on our local trails has not provided much solitude. Thousands more people than usual out hiking or riding have resulted in overflowing trailhead parking lots, and social distancing is not easy on a single-track.

Another side effect of many more inexperienced hikers testing their knowledge and skill on unfamiliar trails is that some find themselves over-extended and lost or injured. Our all-volunteer El Paso County Search and Rescue team (EPCSAR) has been called upon more often than normal to find and help people who have become lost or hurt using our local trail systems. Some use hiking apps such as AllTrails to find a trailhead and go in unprepared for the challenges of specific areas.

I talked with Keith Lonnquist, of the local EPCSAR team, to get an idea of how the team operates during an emergency. Here is his description of how the SAR team is set up and responds to some typical situations that have occurred near the Tri-Lakes area. Keith is also a certified K9 search dog handler. We'll meet Bailey, his Labrador search dog, later.

Most of our (SAR team) calls originate directly via the 9-1-1 system. County Dispatch includes our team when a call 1) is in the county and 2) appears to require our expertise (searches, injuries in backcountry, etc.) Out-of-county requests originate from the CSAR (Colorado Search and Rescue Association). That organization coordinates all

multi-county requests for SAR assistance throughout the state. We also occasionally assist CSPD (the Colorado Springs Police Department) for searches (usually with K9s) in Colorado Springs.

We get a lot of missions in our county's most popular hiking/biking areas, such as Barr Trail, the Manitou Incline, and North Cheyenne Canyon. As trails have gotten busier near Colorado Springs and more information has become available about our Monument/Palmer Lake area (e.g., AllTrails) in the past couple years, our local area is now busier than ever, hence more SAR calls.

A typical 9-1-1 call was received on April 2. County Dispatch received a call from a lost hiker somewhere above the Palmer Lake Reservoirs. The Palmer Lake Fire Department (PLFD) responded first and began its search. EPCSAR was then requested to assist. Our On Duty Coordinator (ODC) spoke with Dispatch and confirmed the situation and our need. With that, our ODC sent a page out to all 70 members of the team. Those that can respond, do. Often our ODC can speak directly with the reporting party, confirming the status of the subject (injuries, hypothermia), name, clothing, and location information. Dispatch is usually able to acquire the phone's GPS location coordinates (latitude and longitude) data. These data can be within feet of the subject's actual location or sometimes miles away.

Over a dozen EPCSAR members arrived at the planned "staging" location (we parked at the water plant at the end of Glen Street). We towed our off-road vehicle (ORV) with tracks (snow travel) to staging. After a review of maps and trails, three team members (one an EMT) continued in the ORV to the first reservoir and then north, parallel to Ice Cave Creek. When no longer able to drive on the trail, the team went on foot and met the PLFD team, which had located the hiker. The exhausted, rattled, but uninjured hiker was walked down to the ORV and transported back to staging and to the AMR ambulance for a checkout. She refused the ambulance ride and was taken to her vehicle, parked in town. This was an easy search.

Typically, it takes one to 1½ hours to get the first SAR team into the field, with more members streaming into the staging area. In this case, being relatively confident of the subject's general location meant that we could send just the tracked ORV and

we did not have to deploy the dozen other SAR team members on a foot search in the deep snow. It was also

fortunate that the subject was located just before dusk—all too often the lost hiker does not realize they

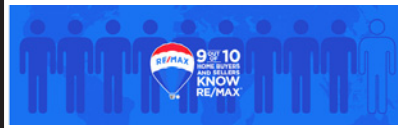
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