



STEAMBOAT PILOT & TODAY

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2018 | Vol. 30, No. 250 | STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO | STEAMBOATPILOT.COM | FREE



ROD HANNA/COURTESY

Steamboat Springs photographer Rod Hanna documented the 1978 plane crash on Buffalo Pass.

50 years of Search & Rescue

Local organization celebrates milestone of helping save lives

Matt Stensland
Steamboat Pilot & Today

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS — 50 years later, and Routt County Search and Rescue is still saving lives and rescuing adventurous souls.

It took a lot of volunteer time to

build the organization into what it is today.

“At the time, we were just a bunch of volunteers trying to help the sheriff,” Chuck Vale said. “This group up here had nothing but a wing and prayer.”

Vale is one of the founding members of the organization, which has about 50 missions each year, and Vale has a storied career both professionally and as a volunteer rescuer.

Search and Rescue has grown organically.

It started in 1969 when 25-year-old Marc Satre was snowmobiling with two friends on Rabbit Ears Pass and one of his friends crashed.

Badly injured, it took 11 hours to get to the parking lot, where the rescue party had finally assembled with snowshoes, skis and gear.

The young men then realized something more had to be done, and Search and Rescue was formed with six original members. Since then, there have been many epic rescues that have helped shape Search and Rescue.

A MIRACLE

Forty years ago, there was an incident that led to the writing of the book, “The Miracle on Buffalo Pass” by Harrison Jones.

Rocky Mountain Airways Flight 217 left Steamboat Springs Airport Dec. 5, 1978, with 22 people on board including the pilot and co-pilot. The plane crashed an hour after takeoff as its pilots tried to return to Steamboat Springs because of snowstorms.

A heavy downdraft from a storm caused them to clip power lines

and crash.

The young Search and Rescue team, with the help of others, was able to save all but one person in the crash.

Rod Hanna documented the rescue with photography, and the images made national news.

The country paid attention, and donations started pouring in that allowed Search and Rescue to buy the first ambulance snowcat in Colorado.

RESCUERS, 2

LONGEVITY PROJECT



View a photo gallery of the Longevity Project event held Friday at Colorado Mountain College's Allbright Auditorium

PAGE 4

RESTAURATEURS HONORED



Mark Stanford and Tod “JJ” Johnson were recognized last week with statewide awards at the Colorado Restaurant Show.

PAGE 9

#STEAMBOATSNAPS



Tag recent Instagram photos with hashtag #SteamboatSnaps for a chance to be published in print

PAGE 14

8th Street
STEAKHOUSE
STEAMBOAT COLORADO

BEST OF THE BOAT

BEST STEAK

BEST RIBS

BEST BBQ

BEST BURGER

Dinner begins at 5pm • www.8thStreetSteakhouse.com
50 Eighth Street, Downtown Steamboat • 970-879-3131

NewsTalk
**100.5
KKSB**

REAL ROCK
98.9FM

KTYV
105.7FM

HERE IS WHERE YOU WILL FIND YOUR FAVORITE RADIO STATIONS:
KTYV (Sports on FM) moves to 105.7
FMKCOQ (The River) moves to 98.9 FM
KKSB (News/Talk) moves to 1230 AM and 100.5 FM



COURTESY PHOTO

Rescuers work at the 1978 plane crash on Buffalo Mountain.



COURTESY PHOTO

The snowcat acquired by Routt County Search and Rescue after the 1978 plane crash on Buffalo Pass.

RESCUERS

From page 1

“It really turned the big page,” Vale said. “It gave us resources from the donations we got to get the equipment.”

Vale said funding Search and Rescue remains a challenge.

“Routt County Search and Rescue needs funding,” Vale said. “Any equipment that they get, they have to beg for money.”

The organization today has an annual operating budget of about \$80,000, and they rely primarily on donations.

For their 50th anniversary, Search and Rescue is not asking for money. Instead, they are throwing a party from 2 to 6 p.m. Saturday at the base of Steamboat Resort. At a discounted rate for \$20, those who attend will get two mountain coaster rides and one other activity.

“We thought, let’s not do a fundraiser,” current Search and Rescue President Darrel Levingston said. “Let’s do something to give back. We’re hoping it will be an opportunity for a lot of families to come up that really wouldn’t have been able to afford it otherwise.”

GETTING INVOLVED

Search and Rescue recruits new members annually.

Levingston got involved 25 years ago when a friend of his was guiding a back-country skiing trip, and someone had a medical issue.

“I went down to help with the search,” Levingston said. “They made it out.”

STEAMBOAT
24/7 EMERGENCY CENTER

Dr. Mason Dr. Freeman Dr. Sandhu Dr. Bailes

Locally Owned by ER Board Certified Physicians
Patient Care Is Our Purpose.
We Accept ALL Commercial Insurance.

970-846-6230 | steamboatemergency.com | HWY 40 Across from Walgreens

Help your local community and businesses thrive.

He has been on the team ever since.

"At the time, I was a Boy Scout leader," Livingston said. "They thought that Boy Scout skills would come in handy."

High-profile missions have helped tell the story of Search and Rescue, and every mission is unique.

Kirby Duncan, who co-founded Search and Rescue, recalled a fatal plane crash near Hayden. He remembers putting the pilot in a body bag and then looking down at his own arms.

"I looked at my hand, and it was all white," Duncan said. "I was like, 'What the heck are they doing with a bunch of flour in here?'"

It turned out the plane was being used to smuggle a large amount of cocaine.

"Us rednecks didn't know what cocaine was," Duncan said.

Steamboat resident Charles Horton, now 69, spent nine days in the woods after breaking his leg while backcountry skiing on Dunckley Pass in 2005.

When he was found by Search and Rescue volunteers, he was suffering from dehydration, hypothermia and frostbite, but he was still alive.

He said he is forever grateful for Search and Rescue.

"There are going to be times when people get into trouble," Horton said. "What they do is needed, especially in a community like this."

That mission stands out

IF YOU GO

What: Routt County Search and Rescue's 50th anniversary celebration

When: 2 to 6 p.m. Saturday

Where: Base of Steamboat Resort, 2305 Mount Werner Circle

to Kristia Check-Hill, who has been on Search and Rescue for 20 years.

"We weren't sure what we were going to find, and to find a subject talking to us was awesome," Check-Hill said.

CHANGING TIMES

Before cellphones, Search and Rescue would go on about 80 missions each year.

They now respond annually to about 50 missions and are able to accomplish a lot without sending out a rescue team.

"Just being able to communicate with people out in the middle of nowhere has really changed Search and Rescue," Check-Hill said.

Recently, a hunter in the Flat Tops Wilderness Area used a satellite communicator to ask for help when he became dangerously sick in the backcountry.

Search and Rescue can track cellphones, and they have used social media to help identify missing people.

Classic Air Medical in Steamboat uses night vision goggles to help them fly and search for people at night.

"They are a great resource to have, should we need them," Check-Hill said.



MATT STENSLAND/FILE

Routt County Search and Rescue trains at King Solomon Falls.



JOHN F. RUSSELL/FILE

Charles Horton is loaded into an ambulance after being rescued from the Flat Tops Wilderness Area in 2005.



COURTESY PHOTO

Rescuers ride horses to search for a missing money bag at the 1978 plane crash.

Yampa Valley Health

We've expanded our health and fitness coverage to bring you a 4-page special section every Monday in Steamboat Today!

INCLUDING

- Weekly healthy recipes
- Health briefs
- Allergy count graph

You can find these features and more online at YampaValleyHealth.com

CINEMA Sunday!

THIS WEEK SHOWING "Bloodsport"

Drink Specials & Complimentary Popcorn During the Show

MOVIE STARTS AT 8:30

Kitchen open until 11pm nightly • Open until midnight • dudeanddans.com • 1106 Lincoln Ave • 970.879.1577

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY BAND

Academy Winds

FREE CONCERTS!

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 10TH
7:00 PM
CHIEF THEATER
STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, CO

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12TH
7:00 PM
THE HISTORIC HAYDEN GRANARY
HAYDEN, CO

***FREE TICKETS AVAILABLE AT ALL THAT (601 LINCOLN AVE, SUITE 103)**

***FREE TICKETS AVAILABLE AT WILD GOOSE COFFEE AT THE HISTORIC HAYDEN GRANARY STARTING SEPTEMBER 24TH**

WWW.USAFACADEMYBAND.AF.MIL