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Harlan lake search still on

By GINGER JENSEN , Hub Regional Correspondent

HARLAN COUNTY LAKE — Because of unseasonably warm weather, two Franklin brothers decided to take a new boat to Harlan County Lake the afternoon of Feb. 13.

Jim J. Holland, 42, and his brother, David Holland, 41, both of Franklin, were reported missing about 11 p.m. Feb. 13. The capsized boat was found frozen in the ice about 4:30 a.m. Feb. 14, and David Holland's body was recovered about 8 a.m. that day about one-half mile north of Cedar Point.

Almost 45 people gathered Sunday at Cedar Point boat ramp on Harlan County Lake near the spot where the brothers were last known to be. Local and national search crews used specialized technology to look for Jim Holland, whose body has not yet been recovered.



Hub photo by Ginger Jensen

The yellow sonar equipment rests in the nose of a boat, the use of which was donated by North Shore Marina of Harlan County Lake.

No body was found

after nearly seven hours of searching Sunday, but crews returned to the lake today to continue the search.

Family, friends and local officials have been searching for Jim Holland for two weeks, but were hampered by freezing temperatures that covered Harlan County Lake with about 1½ inches of ice.

"I couldn't ask for more help," said Alan Wilson of Franklin, nephew of the men. "Harlan County Sheriff Chris Becker has been in constant contact telling us what is being done, and the (U.S. Army) Corps of Engineers has been unbelievable in their search."

Sunday, local searchers were out again. Now, however, the search was joined by the Seth Foundation of Columbus, Ga., and volunteers from the Fort Collins, Colo.-based International

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Association of Dive Rescue Specialists. They used the Seth Foundation's side-scan sonar and sonar camera.

An airboat from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission spent about two hours Sunday morning breaking a path through ice covering the lake before the high-technology search began.

Also joining in the search were volunteers from the Lincoln Fire Rescue team and a team from the Boone County (Ky.) Water Rescue.

The Seth Foundation was founded by Shelia Burluson in 2003 after her son, Seth, drowned in 2001. The foundation partnered with the dive rescue specialists association about 1½ years ago.

"We are strictly recovery," Burluson said. "The Seth Foundation is called in after time has passed without locating the drowned person and the local agencies have used all their resources. In this case, we brought technology to the table."

In the Harlan County Lake search, Burluson said the Seth Foundation was contacted by Brad Thavenet of the Lincoln Fire Rescue/Seth Foundation, who had learned of the search for Holland from a member of the Kearney Volunteer Fire Department Dive Rescue Unit that had helped search for Holland on Feb. 14.

This is the fourth search the Seth Foundation has conducted this year. Last year, the foundation conducted about 15 searches.

Burleson said the foundation has a roster of about 45 people who have been trained by the dive rescue specialists association, have been trained on Seth's sonar equipment, or have been trained by their employers. All but one are employees of police or fire departments.

"I can pick up the phone and call the people we need for a search," Burleson said. "All of the people conducting this search are using their employment vacation time."

Seth provides high technology equipment and trained specialists at no charge, but asks that all expenses be paid.

Although Seth volunteers always work under the local sheriff's jurisdiction, Burleson said there were no funds available for a search by outside organizations at Harlan County Lake, so the Holland family was contacted.

"We've had so many people donating things," Sally Wilson said. "The communities have been so helpful."

Lodging has been provided by Dave's Cabins at the lake's Patterson Harbor, and lunch was donated by Subway in Alma. However, Wilson said donations are also needed to pay for airline tickets for the Georgia volunteers, volunteers from Kentucky, and for gasoline for Lincoln and Fort Collins volunteers.

Any donated funds not needed for expenses will be given to the Seth Foundation for an electric cable winder. All equipment used by the foundation have been donated or comes from donated funds.

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How to Help

Donations to pay expenses of the volunteer searchers can be made to the Holland Trust Fund at South Central State Bank in Franklin at 600 15th Ave., Franklin, NE 68939, or sent to the Seth Foundation at 1900B Northside Industrial Blvd., Columbus, GA 31904, or through www.sethfoundation.com.