



02/28/2006

Family: We want to help those helping us

By GINGER JENSEN , Hub Regional Correspondent

HARLAN COUNTY LAKE — It was as though time stood still at Harlan County Lake's Cedar Point boat ramp Monday afternoon.

The family of Jim Holland watched two boats move slowly back and forth, pulling the sonar equipment of the Georgia-based Seth Foundation. Another boat was on the lake, pushing and breaking up what remained of ice covering the lake's surface.

The search continued for Jim Holland, 42, of Franklin, presumed to have drowned with his brother, David Holland, 41, also of Franklin, when the men decided to take a new boat to Harlan County Lake the afternoon of Feb. 13. They were reported missing about 11 that night.

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. about one-half mile north of Cedar Point.

Divers and boaters searched for several hours Sunday and Monday but didn't find Jim Holland's body.

There was a development Sunday night when Steve Hedrick of Franklin, a friend who donated the use of his boat for the search, told family members he had seen the two men at the Pit Stop in Franklin later the afternoon of Feb. 13 than previously thought.



Hub photo by Ginger Jensen
Alan, left, and Sally Wilson of Franklin are among family members awaiting word on Alan's uncle, Jim Holland, 42, of Franklin, who presumably drowned Feb. 13 while boating at Harlan County Lake.

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"We knew someone had seen them that afternoon," Sally Wilson said Monday afternoon. "We just didn't know who or when until we talked about it last night, and Steve said he had seen them in Franklin. That meant they didn't get the boat in the water until about sunset, so today the boats are looking in a little different area."

Wilson and her husband, Alan, moved to Franklin in August. Alan is a nephew of the missing man.

It appeared Monday afternoon that the search boats were a little closer to shore and a little farther west than where they were in Sunday's search.

The family is not discouraged, Sally said, although the team from the Seth Foundation, including men from Boone County, Ky., Water Rescue, have to fly out of Omaha today and will not be on the lake.

While at Harlan County, Sally said, the foundation had received two more calls for search assistance.

"They will spend tonight going over the pictures and information they gather with the equipment today," Sally said Monday.

"The Seth Foundation and divers are using the finest technology available," Alan said, "but they are the finest people, too. They make us feel like they have been where we are right now and they understand what we are going through."

The divers are from Lincoln Fire Rescue, also associated with the Seth Foundation, and the Fort Collins, Colo.-based International Association of Dive Rescue Specialists that partnered with the Seth Foundation almost two years ago.

Bob Pyle, another nephew who is from Colorado, said everyone on the boats has a specific job to do, and they know what they are doing.

“We (Alan and Bob) went out on the boats yesterday and helped a little,” Alan said. “I helped the guys pushing ice, and that is hard work. I don’t know how they did that all day yesterday.”

Seth Foundation and IADRS searches are done by volunteers. Searchers use their vacation time and ask only that expenses be paid, if possible, foundation founder Shelia Burleson said Sunday.

“When they contacted us about helping in the search here, there was no question they would come, whether we could pick up their expenses or not,” Sally said. “They were coming anyway.”

The Holland family, Alan said, is determined to reimburse the searchers’ expenses and if there are additional funds, to donate the excess to the Seth Foundation for an electric cable winder it needs.

Donations can be made to the Holland Trust Fund at South Central State Bank in Franklin or sent directly to the Seth Foundation.

“We really want to get the information out about the Seth Foundation and what they do,” Sally said. “These are hard, hard workers who are taking their time to help us.”

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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, 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.