

Texas EquuSearch Quarterly Newsletter

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P. O. Box 395

Dickinson, Texas 77539

Office: (281) 309-9500

Fax: (281) 534-6719

www.texasequusearch.org



Texas EquuSearch will be putting out a quarterly newsletter to keep our members more informed of what is happening in the organization. Each newsletter will contain a Search Tip, case summary of a few of our recent cases, special announcements, training schedules and a statement from our Director, Tim Miller. Whether your resource is searching on foot, ATV, horse, boat or “Special Operations” ... you are a very important part of this organization. And we thank you for you for what you do.

Newsletter Search Tip: Water searches can sometimes be very difficult, but with proper training, they can also be made much easier and successful. If you are searching near a shoreline or the banks of a river, creek, bayou or lake – stop about every 30 – 40 feet and closely look at the water. A body might be trying to surface, but still slightly underneath the water’s surface, with only a faint image ... and can’t be seen all that clearly by a searcher from the shoreline. Over-the-counter sunglasses are not recommended when searching for a body ... that might only be slightly visible. Also pay very close attention to accumulation of trash and debris in one particular area (sometimes called strainers). If there is a lot of trash and debris in a specific concentrated area, the body might have been drawn to that debris area. But you might have to look very closely to see it because it might be somewhat camouflaged by debris.

Included in our newsletter are brief summaries of some recent case searches we have worked. Many details can not be revealed because some of the cases are still under investigation and we do not want to damage any part of the investigation. But we will attempt to keep you informed on what we can.

Owen Castle Celebrates his 3rd Birthday: 2 1/2 year-old Owen Castle disappeared on the evening of February 2nd 2009 in Llano, Texas. Owen had wandered away in sub-freezing temperatures. Frantic family members, neighbors and law enforcement officers from several different agencies searched for Owen for a period of time before calling Texas EquuSearch and requesting our help to finding him. Then on February 4th about 8:30 a.m., Owen was spotted by a

Texas DPS helicopter that was searching for him. The helicopter crew observed Owen lying motionless on the ground about two miles away from where he had disappeared. The helicopter crew directed Texas EquuSearch members and law enforcement officers to Owen's exact location. Owen was un-conscious and very cold. TES members took off their own jackets and gloves to put on Owen to warm his body temperature. The DPS helicopter landed and rushed Owen to the hospital where his body temperature was 74 degrees. He was in a coma, but miraculously regained consciousness and released to go home few days later. Doctors don't feel there are going to be any long-lasting effects from his traumatic ordeal.

Below, Owen celebrates his recent 3rd birthday with a festive party in his honor.



Below, Owen sits in the helicopter that found him lying un-conscious.



Below, the helicopter crew that played such a big part in Owen's rescue are presented with the "Aircrew of the Year" Award from the Airborne Law Enforcement Association for their part in the February rescue of a 2-year-old Owen Castle. Pilot **Nick Granelli**, based in Austin, and Tactical

Flight Officer **Benjamin Muller**, typically based in West Texas, received their much deserved award in Savannah, Georgia.



Pilot Nick Granelli receives his award above.



Benjamin Muller receives his award above.

Recent Case Summaries:

Bobby Alexander: On Tuesday – May 19th 2009, as we were posting our first newsletter on the Texas EquuSearch website, our office received a call from a desperate female asking for our help in finding 38 year-old Bobby Alexander that had drown about 10:30 p.m. on Sunday – May 17th 2009 while on a fishing trip offshore of Matagorda, Texas. Bobby had gone fishing offshore with his 15 and 17 year-old sons. Problems developed with the boat and it started taking on water. Bobby was able to drop one of his sons off at a nearby oil rig as the boat took on more water. The boat cap-sized a short while later. Oil rig workers threw a rope and life ring to Bobby and his other son, but unfortunately, Bobby's son was the only one of the two that was able to hold onto the rope. Bobby started drifting away and everyone lost sight of him. The two

surviving boys were taken ashore a day later by the U. S. Coast Guard to their station in Port O'Connor. The U.S. Coast Guard suspended its search on Tuesday – May 19th 2009. Tim Miller started sending searchers towards Matagorda, where they were deployed along beaches on foot and ATV. One of our biggest supporters, Roy Moffitt, owner of “Moffitt Customized Fueling” offered the use of his nearby beach home for searchers to stay. Several TES members combed over several miles of beaches over a two-day period. Then on Thursday morning – May 21st 2009, wildlife workers were walking the along the South Padre Island National Seashore and Wildlife Preserve when they spotted Bobby’s remains washed-up on the beach. The wildlife workers were there looking for sea turtles. The next day, (Friday), the remains were positively identified as being those of Bobby Alexander.

Tracy Ocasio: The father of Tracy Ocasio contacted Texas EquuSearch on Wednesday – June 10th 2009 and asked for our help in finding his missing daughter, 27 year-old Tracy Ocasio. Tracy was last seen after leaving an Orlando, Florida tavern on May 26th 2009. Video surveillance cameras revealed that Tracy had left the tavern with a male, later identified as James Hataway. Tracy’s car was found the next day about 15 miles from where she was last seen. The vehicle was found near Hataway’s home ... an area that he is very familiar with. Hataway quickly became a “person of interest” in Tracy’s disappearance and was arrested a few days later on un-related charges. Investigators quickly tied Hataway to other missing person cases and assaults. Texas EquuSearch members in Florida met Tim when he arrived on Orlando on Friday – June 12th 2009. An immediate search was planned out. The Florida members had undergone intense search training in the Ocala National Forest just a week earlier. The Florida team members had already surveyed several areas of concern and had them mapped out prior to Tim Miller’s arrival on Friday – June 12th 2009. The search for Tracy started on Saturday – June 13th 2009 with about fifty TES members from Florida, battling the searing heat, rough terrain and swarms of huge, blood-sucking, stinging mosquitoes. Nothing was found on the Saturday search, but because the areas of concern involved wooded areas that encompassed hundreds of acres, a call for additional volunteers from the public was issued for Sunday – June 14th 2009. As of Tuesday evening – June 16th 2009, the hard-working dedicated searchers had meticulously covered well over 1,000 acres. The extensive search lasted more than a week, but was suspended after all reasonable areas had been searched and there was no information to put searchers looking into any specific area.

Jesse Hollins: Former Chicago Cubs baseball player, 39 year-old Jessie Hollins, disappeared on the Trinity River on July 9th 2009. Jesse had accidentally fallen overboard from his boat while trying to help another fisherman un-tangle his fishing line. After receiving a desperate call from Jessie’s family, search crews from Texas EquuSearch quickly loaded-up and headed to the river to search for Jessie. It was feared that the recovery might be stalled because the flood gates at the dam had been opened soon after Jessie disappeared. But ... TES crews found Jessie the next day on July 10th 2009. Jessie was the 100th deceased individual that Texas EquuSearch has recovered since the Texas EquuSearch organization was formed.

Julia Madsen: Seventy-two year-old Julia “Julie” Madsen disappeared on June 25th 2009 after she decided to take a walk on the beach in South Seaside Park, New Jersey. Even though Julia had recently been diagnosed with the early stages of Alzheimer’s disease and sometimes became forgetful, she still knew her name and was mostly aware of her surroundings. Texas EquuSeach combed through every reasonably possible place that Julia could be. Tim Miller even arranged for Gene Robinson and his un-manned drone to be brought in. They searched for

several days, along with other volunteers and the New Jersey State Police. Unfortunately, Julia has not yet been found.

Dean Hodgson: Dean apparently walked away from a mental health facility in Southwest Houston on July 29th 2009. For three days, his family searched for Dean, but couldn't find him. They contacted Texas EquuSearch on August 1st 2009 and asked for our help to find him. Besides having mental health issues, Dean also had some respiratory problems. There was a concern because Dean would have difficulty breathing in such humid conditions. Dean had no history of walking away. A search alert was activated for Sunday – August 2nd 2009. TES members battled high temperatures and humidity to search and clear over 58 acres of fields, drainage canals and thick wooded areas for Dean. Later that afternoon, shortly after the search was suspended, Dean was located several miles away near the Texas Medical Center area. A citizen had recognized him from a flyer that was posted earlier in the afternoon. Dean had injuries consistent with an assault, severe dehydration and confusion. He had no memory of what happen to him ... or who he was. Family members quickly arrived and transported Dean to the hospital. He was admitted and remained there several days undergoing tests and evaluations.

Horses: It is the responsibility of any person that brings a horse to a search, or any other Texas EquuSearch event where other horses might be, to provide up-dated paperwork indicating that your horse(s) are negative for Coggins disease.

Reminders:

If you should get a call-out on your phone and didn't understand or receive the complete message, you can call **1-877-698-3261** ... and press 1 to hear the latest call-out message. You will be prompted to enter the phone number you currently have listed on our call-out roster. The message will then be played back to you. When a search call-out is activated, the call-out information will also be posted on the website as soon as possible.

Special Announcements:

On July 13th 2009, **Shane Detwiler**, the 31 year-old son of **Texas EquuSearch member Cheryl Railsback**, was killed in the line of duty while serving his community as a deputy with the Chambers County, Texas Sheriff's Department. Shane was killed as he responded to the report of a utility worker being shot at ... for turning off the water at a residence. Nearly 100 extremely dangerous explosive devices were later found in the killer's home. Shane was a decorated Iraq war veteran, and had previously worked for six years as a Texas Parks & Wildlife officer before becoming a deputy with Chambers County Sheriff's Department. In a final salute to honor Shane's dedicated service, hundreds of police officers, veterans, citizens, firefighters tearfully lined the roadway leading to the cemetery. Shane's mother, Cheryl Railsback, is a long-time member of Texas EquuSearch. Cheryl and her lovable bloodhound scent dog, "Ellie Mae" have

been some of our most devoted searchers. Unfortunately, Ellie Mae had to be put down last Thanksgiving because of a serious illness. Our deepest sympathy goes out to all of Shane's family, his friends and his buddies in the law enforcement community. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of you.

We were saddened to learn that the grand-father of Texas EquuSearch member Lori Yates passed away in Inverness, Florida on July 18th 2009. Lindley Shipley was 92 years-old, and would have been 93 on July 27th. Lori and her husband Phillip have been long-time dedicated members of Texas EquuSearch. Our deepest sympathy, thoughts and our prayers are with Lori and her family.

Training:



On Sunday, June 7, 2009 several Texas EquuSearch members in Florida conducted aggressive field training in the Ocala National Forest which lasted nearly all day. This training was planned by an advance team comprised of Lynn Hinkel, Bill Fitzgerald, Brian Fallon and Rich Giles. Special thanks go to Rich Giles' son for playing the role of victim in one of the searches.

Many hours were spent preparing for this training to include the placement of evidence, designating persons to play the role of media, family members, and victims. Scenario # 1 was to search in a large grid pattern for a squirrel hunter who had been missing for two days. Scenario #2 was to search using a three grid pattern to recover a six year old child who had disappeared six years ago. Scenario #3 was to search in a one grid pattern form for a homeless man who had been missing from his last known location for two days. Team leaders were selected and briefed on each of the scenarios. Teams of five were dispatched to the designated areas to search. A through, critical and constructive critique was done following each search. These exercises proved to be very beneficial to all who participated and there have been many requests for more of this type training. Kudos to all who participated for a job well done!



On August 1st 2009, thirteen members of Texas EquuSearch attended a “Search Reconnaissance” training class at the Bass Pro Shop in Pearland, Texas. Reconnaissance is a very important ingredient in a search and it is essential in finding your missing person - and making the search **successful**.

Pay close attention to our website for the times, dates and locations of upcoming classes in Boat Navigation / Safety, ATV Safety & Training, Equine Safety & Training, Command Management (ICS), CPR / First Aid, Case Management and Radio Communications.

Final Thought: Texas EquuSearch receives several calls a week from frantic family members needing our help finding their missing loved one. If we can help, we start trying to find out what we can do to find the person. If a person is lost or missing, and we can help find them, we will search for a person regardless of their age, race, gender, political affiliation, religious beliefs, economic status or sexual orientation. When a call-out is issued for the missing person, Texas EquuSearch volunteers start pulling into the staging area from all directions; ready to go search for someone they’ve never met before. This gives the family of a missing person hope and a feeling that somebody really cares. Hopefully your search will result in a joyous reunion between the missing person and their family members. But sometimes, you recover a deceased individual and you bring some type of closure to the family. Whatever the ending might be, you’ve done a good job and you can be proud of yourselves. Thanks to all of you for what you do.