



6-4 Recovering hope

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By Cayla Smith/Times-Review Writer

Animal bones, clothing and jewelry will be scattered across Beaumont Ranch in Grandview on Saturday. The items will aid volunteers in an hourlong mock search on Sunday.

The activity is one event that the United Response Search and Rescue Team, a statewide nonprofit organization, will have at its inaugural trail ride.

"Searches are usually pretty intense, people are running on emotion and adrenaline," said Dana Ames, director of operations for the organization. "We want this to be fun."

Ames said the mock search will help train people how to conduct a search and lighten the atmosphere a little.

The trail ride will be from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. for riders and 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. for nonriders at the ranch. There will be a silent auction, raffle and barbecue lunch. All proceeds will benefit the organization. Other activities include volleyball, horseshoes, shuffle board, roller roper, playground and paddle boats. The cost is \$25 for riders and \$12.50 for nonriders. Sign-in will begin for riders at 7:30 a.m.

The organization was created in memory of Opal Jo Jennings, 6, who was abducted in 1999 from her grandmother's home in Saginaw while playing outside. Many volunteers helped search for her body, and Jennings was finally found in December 2003.

The organization began with about 40 people and has since nearly doubled its membership. It was created to aid in the search and rescue or recovery of missing people, including runaways and the elderly. Clay Sanderford, Jennings' uncle, serves on the board of directors.

The organization also aided in the recovery of Rachelle Tolleson of Farmersville and flood victims Rosa Guerrero and her sons Felipe and Jacob Abrego of Fort Worth.

"We do whatever is needed to assist the family unit to get them back together," Ames said.

For each search, the organization recruits community volunteers to help increase manpower. "We have familiar faces and beautiful new faces that show up and want to help," Ames said.

The group recently conducted a search for Joanne Rogers, 16, of Lubbock but was unsuccessful. It plans to return for another ground search when more leads surface, Ames said.

The searches use a lot of resources, such as pilots, divers, paramedics and dogs, she said. "It is expensive to pull off these searches," Ames said.

The organization's funding is low, and because of the surge in fuel prices, it has had an increase in expenses.

Ames said she hopes the trail ride will better prepare the organization for future searches and help fund its return to Lubbock to search for Rogers.

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