

## Mother and Daughter Missing

**May 8th, 2005**  
**South Ridge Trail, Idyllwild**  
**2005-015**

by Erica Zastrow

As I read the call-out message, my heart began to thump a little faster; this was my first "real" mission now that I was a full-member of RMRU. I hurriedly grabbed my gear, ran to the car, and began to make my way to Mt. San Jacinto. Winding up the mountain roads, I suddenly broke above the cloud layer and it seemed the mountain was an island floating in a sea of clouds. The sun dipped below the horizon and I arrived just as the rescue van pulled up to the trail head.

Other members were already getting ready to head out: Kirk, Travis, Brad, John D., Dave, Patrick, and myself split up to become Teams 1 and 2. We began to hike up the trail as the darkness descended. Teams 3 and 4 were dispatched behind us and sent up the trail. We called and called as we hiked up the rocky switchbacks, but no one answered us but the wind. At Moon Rocks, Travis, Dave and I continued up the trail, making Team 1, while Patrick, John, Brad, and Kirk, as Team 2, shimmied through the portal of Moon Rocks to search down the drainage on the other side.

As we climbed higher on South Ridge, calling out for the two lost females, I began to wonder if there were any living soul on the mountain besides RMRU. It was dead quiet except for the surreptitious snapping of twigs, the thud of hiking boots, and the whoosh of our breath through our teeth. Amazingly, after we hiked about 10 more minutes, we heard over the radios that Team 4 had made voice contact. Team 4, a.k.a. Lee Arnson, was one of the fastest hikers on the team. He had powered up the trail and found the missing pair, who had made a small fire to keep warm. After hearing that they were going to hike out, we turned around to meet back with Team 2 as Lee helped them put out the fire. Once our Team 1 and Team 2 were back together, we started to descend back down to the trailhead we had left not an hour earlier!



Lee Arnson, with the happy mother and daughter.

When we made it back to base, everyone enjoyed some good-natured ribbing directed at Lee for trouncing us so thoroughly up the trail, 30 min. after we started. But the important thing was that the two women were alive and well. For my first mission, it was a bit of a whirlwind. Hiking in darkness is something I was not accustomed to, but it gave me a different perspective on what it must feel like to be lost on a mountain. In the end, we all were glad the mother and daughter were safe and sound, and I was happy my first mission was a success.

RMRU is a volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with search and rescue efforts in other counties. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions. Team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by [donations](#) from people like you.