



Five Teens Stranded in "The Grotto"

April 18-19, 2010
Strawberry Creek Drainage
2010-007

Written by Chad Marler

On Sunday, April 18, 2010, at approximately 7:00pm, RMRU was notified by the Riverside County Sheriff that a group of five teenagers were stranded and needed help. The location of the teenagers, determined by cell phone contact with the Sheriff, was in one of the most beautiful and dangerous places in the San Jacinto Mountains called, "The Grotto". Starting just behind the campus of the Idyllwild Arts Academy, "The Grotto" is where Strawberry Creek funnels down a steep rock gorge and creates many natural pools with steep rock faces on either side. Some of the rock faces have been sculpted smooth by the countless years of passing water and prove challenging to climb, especially when wet.

According to the missing teenagers, they were approximately two miles west (downstream) from the Idyllwild Arts campus and were not able to hike out the same route they hiked in due the river gorge becoming steeper and narrower. The plan was to hike two teams into the Grotto the same way the subjects went in while another team drove down the adjacent control roads to start its search at lower elevation. As teams scoured the area in the dark, it was apparent that voice contact would prove to be difficult because of the roar of the creek/river. Rain also started to fall, which created a stronger sense of urgency to find our missing subjects, knowing that they only were clothed in bathing suits.

After three hours of searching the Grotto drainage with no results, the Sheriff received a call from the subjects that they were hiking out an alternative way. Our rescue teams reached the cold teenagers and provided them hot chocolate and warm clothing. The concerned parents of the teenagers were waiting at the campus of Idyllwild Arts and welcomed their kids home with open arms. As a rescuer, receiving a warm handshake at 1:00am from one of the parents was rewarding enough.

RMRU members present: Paul Caraher, Mike Herman, Ralph Hoetger , Grace Manues, Jim Manues, Chad Marler, Chuck Springer, Les Walker, Randy Yates, and

running base were Glen Henderson and Gwenda Yates.

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.