



Missing Youth

June 27, 2014
Wildomar
2014-027

Written by Kevin Kearn.

RMRU alerted members at 10:37 am, after the Riverside Sheriff's Department requested RMRU assist in the search for David Soto, a developmentally challenged 19 year old that had gone missing at 07:30 am. Authorities suspected David had taken off into the vicinity of foothills south of Wildomar, CA. The young man had a history of wandering off and was the subject of a widely publicized search in the same region that had lasted 4-days only eight months ago.

<http://rmru.org/missions/2013/2013-034.html>

Although he normally wore a tracking device, his mother had removed it to recharge it. By 1:30 pm, Gwenda, Patrick, and I had arrived. Riverside Sheriff's and RMRU established their initial command post in the athletic field parking lot of the middle school near Grand Ave and Pasadena Ave. The weather was in the high 90s and the subject was reported to be wearing just pajama bottoms, possibly a T-shirt, and flip-flops, if any foot wear at all. He frequently ran off towards the foothills and evaded searchers as part of a "game" he imagined. Sheriffs briefed that search dogs had tracked his scent up a road to house at the base of the hills above Wildomar. Helicopter assets (Star-9) were in route to lift RMRU to the summit of the hill and to search down the hill towards the house. The intent was to flush the subject out; the extremely thick terrain, coupled with the high heat and subject's flimsy footwear, made it unlikely that he had scaled the hills yet.

Soon after Star-9 arrived, Cameron joined the search and was also lifted up with Patrick and me. On the ridge, I was able to question a shirtless male in 40's that was likely under the influence of some substance. He hadn't seen anyone all day and warned the team to watch out for a "giant black panther" in the brush. The three-man team spread out about 1 mile, from west to east, and searched down the hills over the next two hours while Star-9 searched from above. Gwenda coordinated their movement from the command post. By 3:00 pm, Kirk arrived and linked up with Patrick. Patrick and Kirk searched east of the house while Cameron and I searched the west. I fell on an old, rusty barbed-wire fence

hidden within the brush. Fortunately, I had recently received a tetanus booster only two weeks earlier – underscoring the importance for all team RMRU team members to keep their immunizations up to date.

Two search dogs arrived at 3:30 pm and tried to pick up the subject's scent again while RMRU cut for sign. The dog teams and RMRU found no sign of the missing youth. Around 5 pm all the teams reconsolidated at a nearby middle school. Riverside Sheriff's Emergency Response Team (SERT) was establishing a larger command post at the middle school and deputies with quads were preparing to join the search. Gwenda was making plans to coordinate the next day's search effort and prepare to receive 100+ searchers from outside the county who were being called out as part of the mutual assist effort. At approximately 5:30 pm, local law enforcement received a report of a prowler in a resident's bushes in a densely residential section of Wildomar. The prowler turned out to be the subject. He was brought back to the command center where he would receive a medical evaluation and be reunited with his mother.

RMRU Members Involved: Kirk Cloyd, Cameron Dickinson, Kevin Kearn, Patrick McCurdy 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.