



Students attend the first day of school
Page 9



Aketzalli recounts time thru-hiking
Page 10-11



Ute bands sign treaties
Page 19-20

www.leadvilleherald.com



Leadville, Colorado

Thursday, September 10, 2020

Vol. 141, No. 37 • \$1

Search and rescue sees call increase

by Sean Summers
Herald Staff Writer

Despite the cancellation of events and restricted travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Lake County Search and Rescue (LCSAR) saw an abnormally busy summer with an increased number of calls compared to past seasons.

As of last week, LCSAR had responded to 42 calls in 2020, Chris Yeager, president of LCSAR, said. The agency also experienced a 300% increase in activity this July.

The agency was anticipating a high-volume year, though all expectations were surpassed. In preparation for the busy season, LCSAR began to prepare early in the summer.

Yeager said he started communication with the team in May in hopes of mentally and physically preparing the all-volunteer outfit for a busy season.

Throughout the season the agency, which is made up of approximately 30 members, maintained its monthly training schedule and was able to respond to each call received. LCSAR coordinates or pays volunteers to attend trainings

such as: wilderness first responder, swift-water rescue and avalanche rescue.

Much of LCSAR's call response was concentrated around the 14ers in the region, including Mount Elbert and Mount Massive, which Yeager said is consistent with his 11 years of work with the agency. The nature of the calls were similar to years past, and the majority of calls LCSAR respond to on popular trails were resolved with food, water and moral support.

Though backcountry calls remained similar in nature this summer, the lack of local events changed LCSAR's routine.

LCSAR usually maintains a presence at events such as Leadville Boom Days and the Leadville Race Series races that were cancelled this year. The lack of events meant less long-standing obligations and a lack of donations from typical contributors. The agency, however, has still received sufficient funding this year as it often receives donations from rescued individuals, Yeager said.

LCSAR regularly collaborated with Mountain

Rescue Aspen and Chaffee County Search and Rescue North, as well as other local agencies, throughout the season.

Some emergency response agencies, such as fire departments and the U.S. Forest Service, have faced complications in finding outside help due to pandemic restrictions and the need for interstate travel. LCSAR's close proximity with the agencies most utilized in mutual aid efforts made it easier to coordinate, Yeager said.

The increased volume of calls has taken a toll on the LCSAR volunteers who offer their time and labor at their own expense, Yeager said. As an example of the toll, he cited six consecutive days of calls with volunteer response this summer.

The increased toll may lead to volunteer burnout, and adds to the fatigue of those involved with the agency, he said.

Lake County has not been an outlier in its busyness this season, and other search and rescue outfits in the region, and across the state, have had an active year, Yeager said.



Contributed photo
Volunteers with Lake County Search and Rescue and Chaffee County Search and Rescue, North and South, carry a hiker off of Mount Elbert at the beginning of August.

LCSO opens homicide investigation

by Sean Summers
Herald Staff Writer

Randy Flores, 55, of Leadville, was found deceased in a local residence in Stringtown by the Lake County Sheriff's Office on Thursday, Sept. 3. Flores was the owner of Pro-Electric, a local electrical repair company.

Lake County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) was first dispatched to 1734 U.S. 24 around 8:30 a.m. on Sept. 3.



Lake County Sheriff's Office
Eric Gurule, 27, of Leadville is facing a first degree murder charge in connection with the death of Randy Flores.

Deputies found a deceased Latino male, later deemed to be Flores. The Colorado Bureau of Investigation and the Fifth Judicial District Attorney's Office joined the scene shortly after.

After finding evidence of a struggle inside the home, the investigating parties opened a homicide investigation into Flores' death.

Eric Gurule, 27, of Leadville was arrested the next day on a warrant for first degree murder in connection to Flores' death. Gurule was an employee at Pro-Electric and was

thought to have been at the residence for an after-work gathering.

Gurule appeared in Lake County District Court on Sept. 8. The court, citing Gurule's lack of past criminal convictions, set bond at \$500,000 with the conditions of GPS and alcohol monitoring.

Gurule is scheduled to appear in court to be informed of his charges on Sept. 25.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call LCSO at (719) 486-1249.

