



For hours, a steady procession of Spotted Bear Ranger District employees appeared before me. They came to find help in processing the accidental, violent death of a seasonal employee, their coworker and friend. They sought personal grief assistance, information on helping one another, and ideas of how to move forward.

Prior to the summer season, Mark Slovich, a returning seasonal worker, fell off of an 80-foot cliff while on a rafting trip in Utah. He survived for a few hours, but he died during the night with his friend at his side. A third member of their rafting party went for help, traveling all night long through a treacherous wilderness to civilization. The young adventurer's sudden death sent shock waves through the ranger district's staff. This prompted the U. S. Forest Service to enlist me to help their crew in coping with the grievous accident.

Another tragedy brought more people seeking a listening ear, comfort and guidance. Jakson Kreiser, a 19-year-old summer employee in Glacier National Park, was attempting a day-long, solo hike from Logan Pass to Avalanche Lake on July 28. Upon failing to return, an all-out search was undertaken to locate him but each passing day represented diminishing hope of finding him. In the midst of these days, I was summoned to meet with a life-long friend and summer roommate, Kreiser's parents, and two co-workers. Each shared a unique love for Jakson and a common pain. His remains were discovered September 13 southwest of Hidden Lake.

Tragedy in the Montana wilderness continued. In 2010, Noah Pippin went missing in the Bob Marshall wilderness. His remains were located this summer. I joined the coroner in sharing this news with his parents and aided them as they processed this news. These initial contacts with the Forest Service and Glacier Park bolster my belief that additional chaplains are needed to provide adequate services for local agencies.

Back in Kalispell, I was able to be involved in a few more uplifting endeavors. I participated in the "Hike for Heroes" fundraiser as a part of the Kalispell Fire Department team. The funds support survivors of line of duty deaths amidst the law enforcement community. Our local event and the one in Bozeman together raised \$4,000.

I also joined Kalispell firefighters in their "Fill the Boot" fundraiser that raised \$10,000 for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Being a part of these endeavors builds camaraderie and unity.

Finally, it was exciting to be a part of the lives of Kalispell Police officers Joel Bartholomew and Shane Lidstrom as they graduated from the Montana Law Enforcement Academy. This monumental occasion represented the beginning of careers in providing community service and safety. Because of your support, I am able to be a part of emergency responder's lives, their families and the community throughout Flathead County and beyond. I am thankful for all that you do to make Braveheart possible.

Drew

