



VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH
October 2010
Annie Thomas
Douglas County Sheriff's
Office Search and Rescue
Team



How long have you lived here in Douglas County?

I moved to South Lake Tahoe in 1976. My husband and I moved into Douglas County in 1981 and lived at the Lake until 2004 at which time we moved to Gardnerville.

Town of residence

Gardnerville

Where did you live before moving here to Douglas County?

My husband Shaun and I lived in Santa Cruz. We were having a hard time buying a home because of the high housing costs, ended up coming to Tahoe for a small vacation and purchased a home. The next month we were moving here and we didn't have any jobs. It was a big leap of faith, but we felt good about our future.

Are you currently working or retired?

My husband and I own Kingsbury Automotive and work together with our three children. I don't have any plans to retire, but am looking forward to taking a few days off here and there and let the kids run the business. I don't think I could retire; I'm having too much fun.

Family

I have three children: Shaun Jr, Elise, and Spencer; all born at Barton Hospital.

Where do you currently volunteer?

Douglas County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue Team

How long have you been a volunteer there?

Officially, I have been a member of Douglas County Sheriff's Search and Rescue for 6 years. Unofficially about 30 years. Shaun, my husband, has been doing Search and Rescue for 30 plus years. I would run the business when there was a callout and he left. Now the tables are turned, and he gets to stay at the shop.

What are your duties?

I am the K9 Team Leader, and am presently training a new shepherd puppy for search and rescue work. My previous dog, Shadow was retired after a brief illness. I have also been the logistics officer for the past 2 years. When not working in the field, I assist in the command unit.

How much time do you volunteer per month?

Training a search dog is a big time commitment. I spend anywhere from 8 to 10 hours a week dog training. The other time spent during the month for regular meetings, logistics, and search training amounts to about 20 hours per month.

Why and how did you become a volunteer?

I used to call myself a dog handler by default because Shaun had gotten a dog (Shadow) donated to Search and Rescue. He thought that if he got a dog, one of the SAR members would surely want to take her home and become a handler. After taking her to the meetings a couple times and no one held up their hand to take her home, I decided to join and complete the task. There were times I thought "what am I getting myself into?" but not anymore. Now, that Shadow has passed on, and I have gotten another puppy to train, I can't claim the "default" status. I truly made this decision on my own and am very happy for it.

Favorite aspects of volunteering?

I enjoy helping the community. I feel a sense of pride knowing that I can assist with bringing someone home that is in need of our help. Finding a lost person is just following clues and I love mysteries. We have a great group of people in the search and rescue organization. It is like having an extended family.

What would you say to others to encourage others to volunteer?

Volunteering helps build confidence. It feels good to lend a helping hand to those that need it. I was taught to do unto others as you would have done unto you, and someday, I might be in need. There are many places to volunteer your time, even going to the schools and reading to children. I would hope everyone could find something they could do to help their community, it would make difference.