

Special athletes ride the fire boat

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Staff Writer

The Rim Special Athletes Foundation (RSA), a group of volunteers dedicated to providing activities for individuals with special needs and veterans, held a day at the lake recently for its members and their families at their new beach location on Lake Arrowhead, next to Peninsula Park.

For many years, the RSA has been providing summer water sports activities as a part of their year-round offerings of sports for individuals. Activities have recently been limited to family groups only, for social distancing safety reasons.

RSA offers golfing, skiing and snowboarding, water sports, fishing and year-round virtual yoga classes, plus they participate in the holiday parades in Crestline and Blue Jay. Each activity offers a chance for socialization and the opportunity to learn new skills and to get the opportunity to practice them as often as possible, as everyone knows a person won't learn new skills without repetition.

This summer a large party was held celebrating their new dock location near the Peninsula Park for 30 of the athletes and their families enabling the participants to enjoy the RSA water toys on the lake, such as kayaks, aqua cycles, a lily pad, stand-up paddle boards (SUP) and pedal boats. They also had the opportunity to swim. However, it seems the most important water toys was the water squirters, as the kids, parents and everyone else loves to squirt each other in fun.

RSA director Jack Cooperman, who has spent the spring and summer working with the Arrowhead Lake Association getting the new beach and staging area ready with storage for the water toys for

the athletes, said the best part was “seeing them have the opportunity to get together and socialize with each other again.”

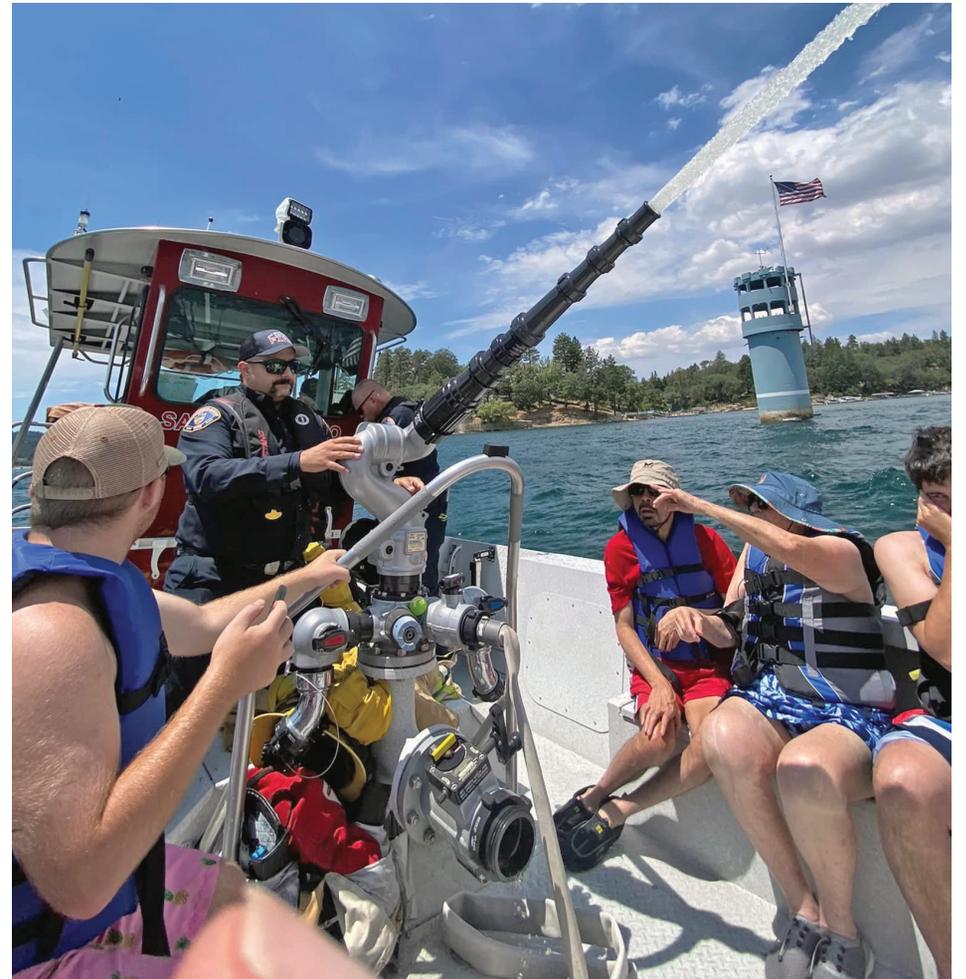
Fun was the operative word, as the athletes, ranging in age from 10 to older adults, played in the water on the beach, rode the toys and had lunch together on the beach as they have been unable to do for such a long while. Each family brought lunches and RSA provided snacks and drinks, as they played in the water until the San Bernardino County Fire boat arrived at the new site.

“They were really enjoying being at the lake with their friends again,” said Cooperman.

The firefighting boat took them on two tours of the lake, allowing everyone to ride who wished to, to go out to the center of the lake and to get the opportunity to shoot the water monitor, which is basically a fire water hose nozzle attached to the boat, designed to shoot water and to fight fires.

Big smiles were evident as they exited the boat, having had a wonderful ride and getting to experience every child's dream of being a fireman and aiming and shooting water from a real firehose. “I am glad we have a great relationship with the San Bernardino County Fire Department and that they have continually brought their fire boat out for these kids to ride on and enjoy,” added Cooperman. “Riding the fire boat is a special experience.”

The Mountain of Promise students will be joining the RSA participants on Tuesdays and Wednesdays in September at the beach and into October if the hot weather holds, to enjoy the water activities using their water equipment. RSA provides life vests for all participants for safety and coordinates the activities. They use volunteer adult supervisors to be with the students when kayaking or using SUPs for safety.



The fire boat was a highlight of the afternoon.



Some of the athletes enjoyed a cool dip in Lake Arrowhead while others used the water toys.



One of the special athletes getting ready to launch a stand-up paddle board.

Their goal is to provide a recreational experience that is safe and positive for veterans and adaptive individuals at no charge to the participants. They achieve this through donations and fundraising. They have been unable to hold a fundraiser for two years, due to restrictions from the COVID epidemic and the fragile nature of their participants.

The Rim Special Athletes Foundation serves individuals of all ages with visual

and hearing impairments, amputations, spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Down syndrome, autism, as well as many other cognitive and physical disabilities. For more information on the Rim Special Athletes Foundation, or to get involved in their activities, see their website <https://rim-specialathletes.org>. Contact them directly by email at RimSpecialAthletes@gmail.com.