

Training: 'My goal is to bring more fishermen home safely'

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On Wednesday, trainees boarded a flood simulator and pounded wooden wedges, neoprene bits and whatever they could get their hands on to plug holes in pipes, the hull and the propeller shaft.

Trainees learned to operate a dewatering pump, and to shoot off flares and smoke signals when they need assistance.

Taking a dip

Nearly a third of U.S. commercial fishing fatalities — 170 — happened after a fisherman fell overboard. More than half of those falls were not witnessed, and none of those who died were reported to be wearing a life jacket.

Trainees jumped in the East End Mooring Basin Wednesday, learning how to retrieve fallen co-workers, board the inflatable life rafts most boats are required to carry and how to survive in the open ocean through group work.

"Over the years, we've gotten fishers to change their ideas," Bill Hill, a commercial vessel inspector for the Coast Guard in Seattle, said, likening it to getting people



Dan Cary, a U.S. Coast Guard auxiliary and safety course instructor, reviews the operation of a handheld flare with a student Tuesday near the Hammond Marina.

to wear their seat belts in the '80s. "We're trying to make it second nature to these people."

Ryan Walters, captain of the Mar-C fishing vessel moored in Ilwaco, Washington, said he canceled a tuna trip to bring himself and two of his crew for training. He already held regular drills on his vessel, but new rules are com-

ing down the pike, whereby the skipper on a vessel needs to have certification as a drill conductor.

Bob Stephenson, a one-man salmon- and tuna-fishing operation from Lansing, Michigan, who came for the drill conductor course and first aid training Monday, said the requirements are getting tougher for fishermen.

"That shouldn't take away from what a good deal this is," he said of the free training.

"All fishermen, myself included, resent government intrusion. And this is not government intrusion."

Bringing seamen home

As of Oct. 15, the free, voluntary vessel safety ex-



Cyotee Bertsch, a commercial fisherman from Ilwaco, Washington, tries to plug a hole in a flood simulator with wooden wedges Wednesday during drill conductor training.

ams subsidized by the Coast Guard will become mandatory for any vessel operating more than 3 miles off the coast. Also in the offing, albeit without a timeline, is the requirement that at least one person aboard a fishing vessel must be a certified drill conductor to run the monthly emergency drills commercial fishing crews are required to go through.

Curt Farrell, who retired from the Coast Guard in 2010, coordinates the Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety

Program. Farrell said he used to get a cold welcome from fishermen when he would offer a voluntary inspection. But when he offered free training, he said, fishermen became more welcoming.

"My goal is to bring more fishermen home safely, and this class is the biggest factor in making that happen," he said.

The Alaska Marine Safety Education Association's website, www.amsea.org, lists upcoming classes, the next one in Astoria in November.

Hope: These days, police are fairly confident she didn't run away

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"There's not a day that goes by that we don't look at some aspect of it ... I consider it very active, and consider it something I hope to work on the rest of my career," Peterson said in early September.

In August, the sheriff's office began circulating an updated "missing" poster. They are hoping it will compel someone to provide new information.

Both Baum and Peterson still believe that at least one person in Pacific County or Grays Harbor County knows the truth, and isn't talking — yet.

"Those are the people that we're appealing to," Peterson said. "We're appealing to their conscience to come forward. They should know that we're not ever going to stop trying figure out the truth of what happened."

Melissa Baum says she knows all too well that very few missing children have been found alive years after they disappeared, but she is holding on to hope.

"I know she's going to come home. I just feel it in my soul," Baum told the Chinook Observer. "I always have. I believe my daughter is alive."

'A nice, quiet, safe town'

In the summer of 2009, Melissa Baum had just moved her two kids, Joshua and Lindsey, from Tennessee to Washington, and was trying to make a fresh start.

Baum says she felt "like a nervous wreck" while living in Lacey. When she passed through McCleary, she thought it "seemed like a nice, quiet, safe town," and decided to relocate.

At the time, Lindsey was "just a little bitty thing," but



National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

An age-progression image shows about how Lindsey Baum might look at age 14.

she was also "very smart, very mature, real with it," Baum said. "She was really wanting to establish some independence." So after the move, Baum began letting her have more freedom to rove around the neighborhood.

On the night of the disappearance, Lindsey left the house with a group of kids, and went to visit a nearby friend. Normally, when it was time to go home, Lindsey would call, or have her friend's parents bring her home. But for reasons no one can explain to this day, Lindsey set off on the 10-minute walk home by herself.

There was enough light left that people were still out working in their yards, and witnesses spotted the girl around 9:30. But by the time Baum called the police at about 10 p.m., Lindsey was gone.

Lindsey had just gotten a cell phone and she rarely even set it down, Baum said. But that night, she'd forgotten it at home, so police couldn't use cell phone records to track her movement. In fact, there were virtually no clues of any kind.

It was impossible for Baum to believe the child could have vanished so completely in a

\$35,000 REWARD

MISSING CHILD



On Friday June 26th, 2009 then 10 year old Lindsey Baum disappeared from the town of McCleary. She was last seen at 9:15 pm when she left a friend's house to walk home. The Grays Harbor County Sheriff's Office continues to follow-up on leads and is again asking the public for any information which might be useful with this case. The lead investigator is Detective Keith Peterson. His contact information is below.



At the time of her disappearance, Lindsey Baum was 4'9", 80 lbs, with brown hair and brown eyes.

She was last seen wearing a light blue hooded sweatshirt, blue jeans, and black slip-on shoes.

PHONE TIPS: 1-360-964-1731
 EMAIL TIPS: kpeterson@co.grays-harbor.wa.us
 MAIL TIPS: POB 630, Montesano, WA 98563

A reward of up to **\$35,000** dollars is being offered for information of the whereabouts of Lindsey Baum and for the arrest and charges filed for the person or persons responsible for her disappearance.

town of roughly 1,500 people. At first, she spent hours driving around aimlessly in search of her daughter.

"I just thought if I drove long enough, I'd be on some side-road, and Lindsey would just pop up," Baum recalled.

Hundreds of possibilities, no suspects

The Grays Harbor County Sheriff's Office quickly took over the investigation. The FBI supplied a team of experts who brought profiling expertise and access to high-powered databases.

Together, the agencies interviewed many of the town's residents, and checked out hundreds of known sex offenders around the region to see if they could have been involved. Peterson estimates that they've seriously investigated at least 20 people of interest in the region.

In July 2010, they searched the house of a 47-year-old McCleary man whose statements to police had proven inconsistent. In 2012, they took a hard look at a local store owner. In February 2014, tipsters said that a skull found in a crab pot near Grays Harbor bar belonged to Lindsey, but it didn't match her DNA. In November 2014, police arrested the head of an Aberdeen nonprofit children's organization on suspicion of child rape and molestation. He too was investigated, but in the end, no suspects have ever been named.

These days, police are fairly confident that Lindsey didn't run away, but they can't say for sure whether she was the victim of abduction, or an accident.

"There are just so many variables because there's no real evidence of what happened to her. The sky is the limit, as far as what could have

HAVE A TIP?

Call Det. Keith Peterson at 360-964-1731 or email him at KPeterson@co.grays-harbor.wa.us
 To report a crime tip anonymously, call CrimeStoppers: 800-748-6422

potentially happened to her," Peterson explained.

Peterson and his colleagues still have some working theories. They are still adding names to the list of people of interest, and there are several who have never been completely cleared.

One lead that emerged early in the case involves a group of people from the communities of Grayland, Tokeland, North Cove and Westport. Peterson won't provide any details that could compromise the investigation, but said that broadly, it involves "some type of conspiracy between those people that had to do with her disappearance."

"We have talked to several of these individuals. It continues to be a lead, if you will," Peterson said.

Hope for new leads

The constant ups and downs of the investigation, and the intense scrutiny and suspicion were "devastating" to Lindsey's family members, Baum said. To escape the pressure, Lindsey's big brother, Joshua returned to Tennessee to live with his father. Baum says she relocated to Thurston County for similar reasons.

For at least the first five years, she felt too paralyzed by grief to function.

"My memory from that period is very patchy. I didn't feel anything. I was numb. It was like a state of shock,"

Baum reflected. She's doing a bit better now. She has begun working again, in a garden center — something she really enjoys. She has sought counseling, and begun to connect with other parents of missing children — "the club nobody wants to belong to," as she puts it. The parents talk honestly in online forums. They exchange encouraging emails, and support each other at fundraising and awareness-building events. It helps a lot, Baum said, but it never alleviates the terrible feeling of losing a child.

"You know that feeling when you lose a kid in a grocery store?" Baum asks. "That split second where you're panicked and you can't find your kid? That feeling never goes away."

It's maddening to her to think someone probably knows the truth, and still hasn't found the courage to share it.

"I'm just trying to get through, trying to convince the world that my daughter is still out there and I need to find her," Baum said. "... I can't bear the thought of her suffering and wondering why her mother hasn't found her yet."

Peterson says people hold out critical information for a variety of reasons — they think it's none of their business, they don't realize that it could make a difference, or they fear retaliation or legal consequences.

Whatever is holding them back, Peterson says it's time for those who know something — anything — to speak up.

"If they're fearful, I would say to let their conscience be their guide and remember that this was a little girl who was taken, and remember her mother who has to live with this for the rest of her life," Peterson said. "Do the right thing. Come forward."



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