**New Hamburg sisters stay strong during 30-hour ordeal**

**Girls bare their untanned stomachs to signal rescue helicopter**



*Sisters Emma (left) and Jenna Kip.*

ByPaige Desmond

NAPANEE — When they found four berries, they each ate two. They squeezed water from moss when they were thirsty and took turns crying.

When coyotes came around, they scared them off. They built a bed from logs and ferns and took turns sleeping through the night.

New Hamburg sisters Jenna and Emma Kip showed the woods what they're made of.

Grandparents Dave and Carol Schwartz went through "every emotion you can possibly imagine" awaiting the return of their granddaughters, who were lost in Bon Echo Provincial Park near Napanee for nearly 30 hours before being rescued by helicopter Friday.

"You have no idea how relieved we are," Carol said en route back from the campground Saturday. "You go through disbelief that they're gone and then you think they'll find them and then you think something happened, it's going to be bad news."

The New Hamburg sisters set out for a walk Thursday at 10 a.m. and didn't return, setting off a massive search of the park north of Napanee on Highway 41.

A provincial police helicopter and another from the Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre at Canadian Forces Base Trenton were involved in the extensive search for the girls.

Officers from the emergency response team, a canine unit and a helicopter searched for the girls on Thursday.

Officers with the OPP marine unit and others on all-terrain vehicles were searching along with Ministry of Natural Resources staff from the park.

Sixteen-year-old Jenna and 13-year-old Emma were camping with their mother Leanne, a family tradition.

Carol said the two became lost within 10 minutes of setting out for a walk. They were found about 5.3 kilometres from their campsite, but walked for many hours, circling and backtracking.

"They were totally disoriented," she said.

Dressed only in hiking clothes, the girls returned hungry and a little dirty with a few cuts, bruises and mosquito bites, but they're troupers.

"They're staying up there," said aunt Lisa Bartlett.

Bartlett said the girls showered, ate and were back at the campfire by 9 p.m. Friday.

It shows the kind of girls they are, Carol said.

"They're smart kids and they love being out in the woods, they sure showed that they are very resilient," she said.

When the girls realized they were lost, they knew they had to get to a clearing where helicopters could spot them. They walked 12 hours the first day, eventually finding a clear area.

Clad in dark clothes, they bared their white stomachs to the sky to help pilots spot them.

It worked.

"I don't think there was one police officer that wasn't shedding a tear and the gentleman that spotted them from the helicopter he cried, he was just so happy," Carol said.

Carol and Dave said thanks to everyone involved in the search and to fellow campers.

"People were just so understanding," she said. "We just can't thank them enough, that's for sure."

They also thanked the Waterloo Region community for so much support.

"The community was thinking of us, we had prayer circles going. We sure felt that people were thinking of us."

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