

The Whale Foundation
By Bill Karls.
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Word on the street has it that some folks are confused about what the Whale Foundation is all about. It has been suggested that the Whale Foundation's repeated "statements of purpose" in the bqr suggests that drug and alcohol problems (or mental health problems) are epidemic in the boating community. Certainly such a message would be both inaccurate and damaging.

The Whale Foundation does not believe that the people who make their living in the Grand Canyon more heavily abuse alcohol or drugs, nor do we believe that they suffer from mental illnesses (such as depression) more than the general population. Indeed, we would all likely agree that the individuals who have spent long periods in the Canyon are some of the most enlightened and happy people we know. The Canyon helps us down that path—that is what brings us back and brings our passengers back. However, this same group of individuals also is strikingly lacking in health insurance.

In honor of a man who was so loved by those who knew him, the Whale Foundation was formed to offer help to those who might need a hand, to find their way back to a happier life. We would like to suggest to anyone reading, that the formation of the Whale Foundation is not an indication that the boating community is a bunch of lost substance abusers, but rather a group of people who care enough about each other to make sure our pards are covered if they need help—like catching an eddy in the Gorge to make sure everyone's through. We hope that everyone can recognize that this is a worthwhile goal.

A group of us (who have been communicating in some fashion for a few years) recently met and discussed the immediate future of the Whale Foundation. The group consists of Sandy Nevills Reiff, Bill Karls, Bob Grusy, Robby Pitagora and Nancy Nelson—who is the group's attorney.

We, once again, agreed that the Whale Foundation is about serving the Grand Canyon boating community. Our first priority is to provide anonymous assistance. Anyone who wants to talk about a personal issue has a place to go where they will not be judged or criticized, just helped. In addition we want to back that up with any needed follow up. And we want to subsidize those who don't have the money to pay for such programs.

Let's face it. We all have to make our own decisions and we're accountable for our actions. The Whale Foundation is here to help in making a decision or just to provide a neutral ear.

Check out the Whale web site at www.thewhaler.org, or use the phone and call (520) 773-0773. Any donations can be sent to The Whale Foundation at 7890 S. Avenida Bonito, Tucson, az 85747 or call (520) 661-8739.

Do you have any ideas for the Whale? Would you like to add your spice to the mix? We want your energy and insight. Until then, happy boating.