

Announcing the creation of the fledgling Whale Foundation  
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Everyone who knew the Whaler loved him. Many of us also depended on the Whale as a sounding board. He was our counselor, our advisor, the non-judgmental ear we needed to listen to our problems. He was always there no matter the hour or situation. Whale was never too busy. He is the inspiration behind this idea. It bears his name as a lasting tribute to a beautiful human being, not because he was a martyr or a bad example.

The Whaler took his own life. I often wonder if he would still be here if the situation were different. He was a proud man who lived life as he pleased. Through all the years I knew him he never asked me for anything, even though he knew I would have done anything for him and I am sure the same applies to most of us. Could the same thing happen again to another of our pards? Whale did not feel comfortable relating his fears and insecurities to his friends. Would he be here today if he had someone to hear him out? It is pure speculation, but I think maybe the answer is yes. Was the Whaler trying to tell us something or make a point? Probably not in a conscious way, but perhaps in a metaphoric way. Think about it: the expectation level of today's boatmen is extremely high and going higher everyday. We need a system to help address some of the problems we face now, and to anticipate future problems.

The Issue: We have an aging population in the Grand Canyon boating community. Those who have paved the way (been in the industry for 15 years or more) are facing the possibility of physically reaching the end of the line and not being able to work on the river. Perhaps we have not prepared for the future (financially, scholastically, mentally). Being a guide is a very powerful occupation as long as we are on the river. Yet every year the season ends and suddenly, rather than being heroes and inspirations to others, we are just people. What happens when the options seemingly disappear? Where can we go to talk to someone who is not one of our peers?

An initial solution? Provide services for our community. Immediately implement a system to provide information pertaining to mental health and counseling services for boatmen in need. We all have down moments, we all experience depression, but what happens when it won't go away? What can we do about it?

We have an anonymous donor who has contributed \$1,000 to get this program off the ground. In addition, there are 3 local mental health professionals who have offered their services at a greatly reduced rate. Our goal is to use this money (and more when we raise it) to assist anyone who wants to utilize this program but cannot afford the costs. Obviously, this is only the tongue of the rapid. There are many other issues that we need to address. Eventually this program would ideally

include other pertinent services for the boating community.

Eventual services may include;

1. A financial planning network.
2. A career planning network.

Our community is very diverse in expertise. One of the goals of this program is to attempt to document and organize a system so we can assist each other in our various endeavors.

The time has come for us to look at our occupation as a real job. We should set up the needed services to take care of those of us who have been around and for those who will follow. Your comments are greatly appreciated and valued. If you have any ideas of ways to implement, or raise funds for this program, please let us know. Take an active role in your community It will make a huge difference.