

Ridgewood Girl Scouts lost in woods all night

Go astray carrying supplies to cabin

By **LESLIE KOREN**

Staff Writer

MAHWAH — Six Ridgewood Girl Scouts and their two leaders spent Friday night walking through the Ramapo Mountains after getting lost on their way back to their cabin.

A volunteer rescue team found the group about 5:15 a.m. Saturday, after searching through the night. No one was injured.

The Scouts, members of a troop from the Benjamin Franklin Middle School, were spending the night at the Yaw Paw Boy Scout Camp in Mahwah, which is in the Ramapo Mountains — above the Ramapo River and west of Route 202.

They left their cabin about 5 p.m. to go to a water pump to get water and then to their car to get supplies and did not return, as expected, by 7 p.m. Another parent, who was waiting at the camp, notified the camp ranger, and after a few hours of searching by themselves, the two men called the Mahwah police.

Volunteers from the New Jersey Search and Rescue team found the group in the area of Ringwood and Wanaque, on the Cannonball Trail, about a quarter-mile north of Skyline Drive.

They had walked more than two

miles with their supplies before stopping, Camp Ranger Ray Banta said. Police said they walked a total of five miles through the night.

"They went on a pretty good hike," said Raymond Roe, director of the Mahwah Office of Emergency Management, which coordinated the search.

"I'm sure when they get to school on Monday, they'll have a pretty good story to tell," he said.

It became pitch dark and they stopped and waited for the night.

Police did not release the Scouts names, and efforts to reach the Scouts were unsuccessful.

In the beginning, authorities were reluctant to put too many people into the woods because they didn't want to obscure the Scouts' tracks, Roe said. They were preparing to bring in helicopters and additional resources when daylight broke.

Mahwah police, the Bergen County Police Canine Unit, and the New Jersey State Parks Commission were also involved in the search.

Camp Yaw Paw is a 400-acre tract in the mountain range.

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