

Rescuers pull teens from icy Mt. Tom

By CATHERINE BAUM Staff Writer

[Originally published on: Friday, February 22, 2008]

EASTHAMPTON – Two teenagers who found themselves stuck at the top of an icy Mount Tom cliff Wednesday used a cell phone to summon help from rescuers who helped the teens off the mountain.

Kyle Luce, 18, of Easthampton, and Jessie Deloy, 16, of Chesterfield, both gloveless, clung on to trees as they waited for help around 2 p.m. The two are students at the Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School in Northampton, and on school vacation this week, they set off Wednesday morning to take a walk.

They got more walk than they bargained for.

"It was just supposed to be a small walk, and they didn't anticipate being gone for that long," said Barbara Simpson, Luce's mother, who was working in her Easthampton office at the time. "They got walking, then got off track."

The two were dressed in sneakers and light jackets when they became lost after sliding down the trail, which was covered in snow. They were stuck in a dip on the Easthampton side of the mountain near Bray Road, Easthampton Fire Chief Kevin Croake said.

"It gets pretty steep right there," Croake said. "It was icy and not easy to move around. It's very loose in a lot of places."

"It was really fortunate that they had a cell phone with them and that it worked," said Simpson. She noted that her son called 911 before she spoke with him.

"He couldn't carry on a conversation," Simpson said of her son, who told her he was "hanging from a tree on top of the cliff" over the phone.

Simpson left her office and waited at the bottom of the mountain until they came down at around 3 p.m.

"It's a very helpless feeling just to sit there," she said.

Both Holyoke and Easthampton police and fire departments responded to the call, which came in to the Easthampton Fire Department at 1:44 p.m. Easthampton Deputy Fire Chief David Mottor, Capt. Daniel Constantine and firefighter George E. Moszynski arrived at the mountain at 1:52 p.m., Croake said.

Meanwhile, the Holyoke Fire Department requested help from state police, State Trooper Eric Benson said. A state police helicopter located the hikers and guided the Holyoke department to their location.

"They flew around the mountain till they found them," Benson said.

"They have the ability to zoom in with instruments on the aircraft."

Rescue workers from the Holyoke Fire Department pulled the teens, who were slipping on the ice in their sneakers, up and away from the ice and then helped them down the Holyoke side of the mountain.

Luce, who is in the plumbing program, and Deloy, who is in the cosmetology program, left to go for a hike at around 10:30 Wednesday morning.

Simpson said Luce has hiked on Mount Tom many times before.

"Hiking is something that's good to do; I'd rather have them hiking than sitting home," said Simpson, whose son explained the story to her over soup and coffee at home Wednesday. "That mountain is not new to him, but the ice conditions are not what he was prepared for."

No injuries were reported, Croake said. The teens were cold, wet and shaken up, Simpson said.

On Thursday they stayed indoors, ate lunch at Nini's Restaurant in Easthampton, and relaxed as their winter vacation came to an end.

"It will be a vacation they won't forget," Simpson said.

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