



Rescued rafters (back, from left) Nicole Hamilton, Danny Coward, Andrew Coombes, Nick Paterson, Callum Chin, Jordon Boorer, Kellie Walton, Regan Aitkenhead, and Chris Gray, all of Dunedin, with rescue volunteers (front, from left) Dermot Mayock, with dog Fin, Emma Milburn, with dog Dart (obscured), Nick Sleeman (whose dog Gus was absent), Senior Sergeant Brian Benn, and Barry Dougherty, with dog Yip. Photo by Craig Baxter.

A group of grateful rafters have thanked Dunedin search and rescue volunteers for rescuing three of their number after a rafting trip down Lee Stream went awry last Thursday night.

The group, aged between 19 and 23, all of Dunedin, gave about \$1200, as well as dog biscuits and treats, to Dunedin land and marine search and rescue yesterday.

Search and rescue co-ordinator Senior Sergeant Brian Benn led a short debriefing of the rescue, in which he suggested the group should not have split in three.

Groups in trouble should always stick together. Six members of the group had walked out.

Their main mistake was a lack of planning and thinking ahead.

However, the debriefing was good-natured and jovial, Snr Sgt Benn encouraging the rafters to sign up as search and rescue volunteers.

The donation was welcome, as funding had become harder to secure from community sources, he said.

The rafter who raised the alarm at 6pm on Thursday, Jordon Boorer, agreed to take part in a marine rescue operation last night after the debriefing, in which he was plucked to safety from the sea by the Otago Regional Rescue Helicopter.

After the debriefing, Snr Sgt Benn told the Otago Daily Times he was "blown away" by the group's generous gesture. He joked that it was only fair Mr Boorer had the chance to be rescued, since he had helped save his friends.

The group had intended to float down Lee Stream and into the Taieri River, but struck problems with the flotation devices, which included lilos and an inflatable chair. The marine rescue operation in which Mr Boorer was a volunteer started at St Clair Beach shortly after the 5.30pm debriefing.

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