

Dear SBCSAR Team,

Many thanks of appreciation from me, my wife Susan and our family for the rescue that was carried out in behalf of my son Joel Degner and his friend Nathan Krier on Tuesday, January 4. I know that Joel will also be sending you his thanks and a written account of what happened.

I have always stood in awe of what your volunteer group has done for our county and for its people. Your many hours of training and attending meetings are much appreciated. What you do for people has been legendary and has now become more personal because it involved the rescue of my son Joel from the danger of death from hypothermia.

I want to assure you that Joel, an experienced backpacker and familiar with SBC backcountry, did not take foolish risks that would require people such as yourself to risk their lives to save him. Joel was hiking with good shoes, multiple layers of clothing (heavy t-shirt, flannel shirt and windbreaker), hat, maps, Petzl light, water and food. Nathan was better equipped with woolen sweater, shirt, jacket, thermal underwear, heavy cap, gloves and long pants. Both had no intention of hiking in snow and the weather was favorable for hiking the entire day. The route was carefully mapped out but Joel did not realize the last leg (one steep mile) of their hike would take them through a hidden snowfield on the backside of ridge.

Such hidden dangers as this unexpected deep snowfield underscore the need to be prepared for every circumstance. Joel made a mistake by not taking long pants with him to protect himself from such hidden dangers. Your web page aptly stresses how important it is for hikers to be prepared for the unexpected.

Thanks again for going out into the night into the backcountry to come to the aid of my son. We will keep you and your volunteer organization in our prayers as it ably performs its rescues for Santa Barbara County.

Steve Degner