



Water ski group gathers on Christmas for the first time due to record warmth



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For the first time in five decades, a water skiing group in Northern Wisconsin has taken to the shores of Lake Noquebay in Crivitz on Christmas.

"I've been here 58 years and I've never seen the lake entirely open for Christmas," said Marge Banazak, daughter of the founders of the Crivitz Ski Cats.

After discovering that the record December warmth has melted ice on the lake, Jamie Nolan the wife of a skier says The Crivitz Ski Cats gathered on Dec. 25 to help show their support for the Crivitz food pantry.

Green Bay broke a record on Dec. 23 with a reported high temperature of 53 degrees. The old record was 48 degrees set back in 1888.

“Our lake ice has melted due to warm temperatures,” Nolan said, noting that the organization was raising money to help the community.

The ski group, which was founded in the 1960s by Peter and Dorthy Bugarsky, has played an integral role in giving back to the communities in Northeastern Wisconsin.

Banazak said she and all of the others involved in running the Crivitz Area Food Pantry aren’t paid and completely volunteer their time, without any government assistance.

Friday’s event brought in around \$300 in cash donations and two tote bags filled with food that will serve the Northeastern Wisconsin community.

Although about 75 percent of the food pantries clients are the elderly, Banazak said she believes the demographics are shifting.

“I’ve seen the demand increase recently from a number of children and younger families,” Banazak said noting that recent [cuts to the state’s food assistance program \(http://wbay.com/2015/11/01/wisconsin-assembly-to-pass-measures-targeting-food-assistance/\)](http://wbay.com/2015/11/01/wisconsin-assembly-to-pass-measures-targeting-food-assistance/) has prompted an increased demand on food pantries across the state.

In 2014, the Crivitz Area Food Pantry served more than 2144 families in Northeastern Wisconsin. In 2015, it’s expected that number to be even higher.

Banazak said more recently, donations have also been able to serve local schools.

“The teachers are given food for the students in need. If a teacher sees a hungry child, the teacher can then give the food to the student. It’s just wonderful,” Banazak said.

As for the Crivitz Ski Cats, the group has a tradition of philanthropy, Banazak said noting that her parents placed a strong value on paying it forward.

“My parents taught me that you gotta give back. You have to help people,” she said.

The Crivitz Ski Cats have performed traveling water ski shows across the state performing from Sturgeon Bay to a private show near the Buck Hollow Ranch in Western Wisconsin.

During the off season, the team also has traveled to Florida for training. During the summer months, those lessons have been passed on to local Wisconsinites who want to learn how to water ski — and give back to the community.

“It’s a good thing to do in the summertime. It keeps kids busy and out of trouble,” Banazak said.

Jason Ducane, the Club’s President, agreed and said it’s great to see so many families participate.

“It’s an outstanding family. We have skiers that are only two years old and their grandparents that are well into their 70’s,” he added.

Banazak is optimistic that her family’s tradition of giving back to the community will continue.

She said that dads, moms, and kids are participating.

“You can see it being passed on to the next generation,” she said.

Banazak said her pantry doesn’t just give handouts to anyone.

“Unlike the government run food banks, we check each recipient’s income lives and residency,” she said.

The food bank always welcomes food and cash donations from the community, whether it’s from businesses or individuals.

The local Lions Club and local churches have had a rich history in helping the organization, and currently food drop off sites are available at places such as the Piggy Wiggly in Crivitz.

State Representative Jeffrey Mursau (R-Crivitz) has also played an integral role in volunteering Banazak said, noting that three generations of the Mursau family are a part of the ski team.

“Jeff has been with the club for 40 years. He’s a real asset to us,” said Ducane, who noted that Ducane often drives the boat carrying the skiers.

Mursau was not available for comment.

According to Ducane, the Crivitz Ski Cats also bring a great deal of revenue back into the community.

“From an entertainment standpoint, the club is a tourist draw to the community,” he said.

The ski shows draw in hundreds which is an added revenue bonus for area bars, restaurants, shops, and resorts, Ducane added.

The group which has shows throughout Wisconsin from June to August at no cost to the public, is always looking for new members to join, he said.

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