

FIRST RESPONDER FUNDRAISER

Life Support’s mission given a \$425K nod of support at annual auction



A SURPRISE \$70,000 GIFT to Life Support was presented in honor of Rick Hermanson’s 70th Birthday from his family, friends and colleagues. Another fun presentation moment was revealed that Laura Cresto baked Rick’s favorite dessert of carrot cake and cupcakes for event attendees.

Photo courtesy of Jack Robbins

CLE ELUM – Life Support’s 26th annual Dinner & Auction on July 18 drew a sold-out crowd of high energy and plenty of good times. The evening’s array of silent and live auction items drew enthusiastic bidding and stood as “a tribute to the community and individuals in their support for the work we do,” said Life Support trustee Bob McLean.

A few highlights from the night
PSE Foundation representative Rachel Banner and Diane Tasker, PSE Community Affairs, presented a \$10,000 check towards funding a pump-pit test system for pump-pit fire training. A hands-on drafting pit training that teaches Apparatus Operators and Fire Engineers to pull water from a static underground source, create the vacuum with a centrifugal pump, and deliver high-pressure water to suppress fires. **Why it matters:** rural and wildland readiness. This

training teaches firefighters how to secure a water supply in areas lacking hydrants by drafting from lakes, pools, or portable tanks.
Kim Martin, executive director of the Medic One Foundation, presented \$65,000 to purchase a new Holmatro Phenthon Series extrication and rescue tool set to improve capabilities north toward Blewett Pass, to be located at KCFD 7 Station 72.
A surprise birthday recognition, family, friends, and colleagues raised \$70,000 to honor **Rick Hermanson’s** 70th birthday. Donors **Roger** and **Cindy Jobs** then stepped forward with an additional \$30,000, bringing the tribute total to \$100,000, which then gave way to a dollar-for-dollar match, which was a huge success, with four \$25,000 major gifts within minutes, followed by more generosity in a spirited raise-the-paddle pledge from all the attendees.
The event program also included sponsor recognition, Fire Training Tower Found-

ing donors recognition, a tribute to the military, upbeat, toe-tapping music by performer **Mel Peterson**, and the presentation of the 2026 *Life Support Award* to **Sharon Risdon** for 22 years of unwavering service to the organization; she was honored with the group’s love and prayers as she recovers from a serious health issue.
Also acknowledged were last-minute “*Helping Hands*” – **Dawn Cameron** and **Burt** and **Dawn Abourzek** for stepping in when needed. A surprise gift for a well-deserved getaway was presented to **Rob** and **Cheri Marusa** from a collective group of friends in appreciation for their time, energy, and service to Life Support and beyond. **Dave Sandona’s** custom-made charcuterie board was auctioned in honor of Rob and Cheri, with proceeds benefiting Life Support.
As the last raised paddle of the evening settled back to the tables, the crowd waited in anticipation as a runner brought back the grand total to Marusa, who became overwhelmed with emotional gratitude as she read that figure – \$425,000 – to a rowdy round of applause and cheers.
“Life Support’s accomplishments continue because of the community’s unwavering commitment to building out the fire and EMS system that serves the I-90 corridor and surrounding areas,” said Cheri. “Our generous donors and partners make this possible. The demand on our Fire/EMS resources will only grow, and Life Support will be there to help every step of the way.”



PUGET SOUND ENERGY Foundation Director Rachel Benner and Diane Tasker (PSE Community Affairs) present a check for \$10,000 to Life Support on Saturday, July 18 at Swiftwater Cellars Winery.

Photo courtesy of Jack Robbins



LUCKY DRAWING WINNER! Alaska-Hawaiian Round-Trip Tickets for two brought excitement when prizewinner Mike Loya’s name was announced.

Photo courtesy of Jack Robbins



SPECIAL RECOGNITION. The Upper Kittitas County Fire Training Tower Founding Donors (left to right) Wes Ward, Dave Ewing, Roger Jobs, and George Reece received USA 250th Commemorative Coins and recognition for their generous support of the tower project.

N.K.C. TRIBUNE/Jana Stoner photo - 2026



AUDREY HILL ACCEPTS a sponsorship award on behalf of Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway.

N.K.C. TRIBUNE/Jana Stoner photo - 2026



MEDIC ONE FOUNDATION’S Kim Martin (at left) presents a \$65,000 check to Cheri Marusa for a Holmatro Extrication and Rescue Tool Unit set for KCFD 7 Station 72 to improve capabilities north toward Blewett Pass.

Photo courtesy of Jack Robbins



MUSICAL PERFORMANCE by Mel Peterson wow’s the crowd.

N.K.C. TRIBUNE/Jana Stoner photo - 2026



VFW POST 1371 members Rick Hunt and Brian Brunner presenting the Flags during the opening program.

Photo courtesy of Jack Robbins