

according to Reel Recovery's website. The men saw how fly fishing relaxed Brown and took his focus off the disease. The thought then occurred that it could possibly help other men in a similar situation.

The first retreat was held in Loveland, Colo. While on the retreat, the men combined fly-fishing instructions with "courageous conversations," a time to share their stories and open up about their disease.

As Brown left that first retreat, he wrote "Be well! Fish on!" with his finger in the dirt that was caked on a car, according to Ted Larrison, a facilitator of courageous conversations. The quote has been the organization's motto ever since.

Before Brown passed away, he was able to meet with cyclist and cancer survivor Lance Armstrong to speak about the future of Reel Recovery. The meeting was successful and the Lance Armstrong Foundation provided a start-up grant to ensure the organization would survive.

Through donations, many volunteers and with little organizational overhead, Reel Recovery continues to provide retreats at no cost to its participants.

'It's been a gift'

Larrison has been a facilitator of Reel Recovery's courageous conversations since 2011. With a background in management in community mental health centers, and skill sets that include individual and group therapy and counseling, Larrison knew being a facilitator would be a good fit for him.

But that wasn't the only reason Larrison joined Reel Recovery.

In 2008, Larrison was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He was invited to attend a retreat that year, but it was before a surgery and he could not attend. In 2009, he attended his first retreat. In 2010, he attended again; only this time as a buddy, or guide to show others how to fly fish.

Larrison has continued to be part of the organization because "it's been a gift to me to be able to be a facilitator," he said.

Like the colorful tied flies Reel Recovery participants use to lure their catch, the "opportunity to get away and learn a new sport" is how the organization lures men to come to the retreat but then open up about their experiences with cancer, said Reg Tidball, Reel Recovery Michigan co-chair.

Like Larrison, Tidball had his first experience with the organization as a participant five years ago. Being a part of the courageous conversations and listening to other men tell their stories and transform during the retreat made it hard for him to quit the organization, he said.

While the group fishes during the afternoon on the second day and early morning of the third day, most of the retreat centers around conducting five courageous conversations. The conversations are meant to have the men share stories from the heart and support one another. Although, that isn't always easy for men, Larrison said.

"The gift to me is to be present to other guys really getting past the social shallowness of normal male conversation ... speaking really deeply and personally," Larrison said.

While support groups and



LEARNING SOMETHING NEW: A Reel Recovery participant casts while his teacher looks on. Reel Recovery pairs the teaching of fly fishing and supportive conversation to help men through their experience with cancer. The most recent Michigan retreat was held in Walhalla. (Star photo/Kyle Leppek)

retreats similar to Reel Recovery exist for women battling cancer, there are few for men, he added.

During the retreat, the men all sign a vest to symbolize that they are not alone in their experience with cancer. When the retreat comes to an end, a closing ceremony is held and the men leave, but they continue to stay in touch, Tidball said.

Larrison believes the first Michigan retreat was held in 2006, and continued for a few years before disappearing. However, organizers in Michigan are hoping to keep local retreats continuing.

The initial Michigan retreats occurred at Ranch Rudolf near Traverse City, which organizers hope to patron again, but Reel Recovery plans to be back to Barothy Lodge, Tidball said.

'It's a monster'

Sitting on the porch of Barothy Lodge's log cabin, Randy Herlein, of Twin Lake, describes himself as an "outdoors guy" – he hunts, used to fish, likes to climb.

"(As a child) my mom would holler at me because I wouldn't come in to eat," Herlein said. "I wouldn't come in for anything. I would be outside 'till after dark."

His wife also had a way of describing the 55 year old: The most healthiest person she knew.

That changed while Herlein was running up his son's staircase in 2009 and broke his tibia.

While in the emergency room, doctors told Herlein he had a hole in his bone. He asked if it was bone cancer. The doctors told him to talk to the surgeon. The surgeon said he didn't think so.

After being in a cast for six months, Herlein visited a radiologist because of his concern the break could have been due to cancer. The radiologist told him it looked like cancer.

After visiting different doctors without feeling a sense of urgency from them, Herlein went to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

"They told me, 'We'd like to save your leg, Randy, but we would rather save your life. Our suggestion is amputation,'" Herlein said.

Twenty-three hours later, his leg was gone.

Herlein now wears a prosthetic leg. He went through approximately a year of chemotherapy, but he is working at rebuilding his health to what it once was.

Cancer, "it's a monster," but chemotherapy is a bigger one, Herlein said.

Now, in a sign of his rebuilt health, Herlein is going to do something he has always wanted to: Backpack the Grand Canyon. The trip will take five days and four nights, and he will be accompanied by friends and family.

"I said, 'Listen, this is some-

thing I have to do; it's a finish line I've got to cross,'" he said.

Herlein's 43-pound backpack also will symbolize more than his rejuvenated health. As of the retreat, 229 colored ribbons adorned his backpack. Each ribbon color represents a different form of cancer, and each ribbon represents a \$10 donation to the American Cancer Society.

"It's cool and it's neat to see the pack, but there is a lot of pain and a lot of sickness behind it," he said. "Then it's cool again; it's honoring those people that have been through (cancer)."

Once he returns from the trip, Herlein plans to send each ribbon back to the donors.

Herlein leaves for his trip Oct. 1, and donations to his fundraiser can be made by searching "Grand Canyon Cancer Walk - 2013" on

Facebook.

'Only think about the river'

Most of the nine participants who joined Reel Recovery this month had never been fly fishing.

That wasn't a problem though, because the organization provides all the gear needed to fly fish, and expert guides, or "buddies," volunteer their time to teach the participants.

Eric Johnson volunteered as a buddy for the most recent trip. As a retiree and member of Schrems West Michigan Trout Unlimited – a local chapter of a national group seeking to reestablish and maintain cold water habitats and environments – he volunteered because "what would be a better use of my time than to help these gentlemen in their mission?"

As a buddy, Johnson's goal

was to introduce the participants to fly fishing – learn how to cast, rig a rod, approach the water and introduce them to a hobby that can be shared with other friends.

As the courageous conversations help participants work through their experience with cancer, Johnson knows firsthand how fly fishing can be soothing.

"When I was working, one of the best relaxing things I could do – something that took my focus away from the day-to-day grind – was to be in the river and only think about the river," Johnson said.

For Herlein – who Johnson called "inspirational" – the tranquility of the river is akin to how he now lives life.

"I don't have one second to be depressed," Herlein said. "I don't have one second to worry. I don't have one second to waste."

Herlein describes his experience with cancer as a "minor irritation" – he only remembers it when he has a doctor's appointment on the horizon. He hopes by being a participant in Reel Recovery and joining the retreat, he can encourage other men, because unlike most organizations he's encountered, Reel Recovery is about paying attention to those in need and not promoting itself, he said.

Reel Recovery Michigan organizers will hold a fundraiser from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Oct. 19 at the Holly Lanes Bowling Center, located at 2430 Grange Hall Road in Holly. More information can be found at bowlhollylanes.com.

For more information on Reel Recovery and its fundraising efforts, visit reelrecovery.org.

Proper Medication Disposal



Yellow Jug Old Drugs Program

For more information on the Yellow Jug Old Drugs Program please visit www.greatlakescleanwater.org

Local Pharmacies participating in the Yellow Jug Program that are accepting non-controlled unused and unwanted drugs:

| Name of Pharmacy (Yellow Jug) | Location | Contact Number |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Lake County | Pattie Drug | Baldwin (231) 745-4697 |
| Manistee County | Richmond Drug | Bear Lake (231) 864-3114 |
| | Glen's Pharmacy | Manistee (231) 398-3202 |
| | Rite Aid Pharmacy | Manistee (231) 723-9438 |
| Mason County | Rite Aid Pharmacy | Ludington (231) 845-7332 |
| Oceana County | Bob's Drugs | Hesperia (231) 854-6605 |
| | Oceana Pharmacy | Hart (231) 873-3540 |
| | SHOPKO Pharmacy | Hart (231) 873-1843 |

Unused or unwanted drugs that are controlled or non-controlled substances can be brought to the following locations:

| Law Enforcement Disposal Site | Location | Contact Number |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Lake County | Sheriff Department | Baldwin (231) 745-2712 |
| Manistee County | Sheriff Department | Manistee (231) 723-8393 |
| Mason County | City of Ludington Police | Ludington (231) 843-3425 |
| | City of Scottville Police | Scottville (231) 757-4729 |
| | Sheriff Department | Ludington (231) 843-3475 |
| Oceana County | MSP Post | Hart (231) 873-2171 |
| | Sheriff Department | Hart (231) 873-2121 |