

Battling cancer with a fly

When people are diagnosed with cancer, it's something that creates a lot of intense personal emotions.

Eighteen months ago, Russ Peterson, Annabella, found out he had a rare form of cancer that doctors said could take his life within half a year.

Peterson fought back against the cancer by having a bone marrow transplant early last summer. However, as he made a physical recovery, the emotional effects of the disease lingered.

That's where a fishing trip came into play.

Peterson became a beneficiary of Reel Recovery, a non-profit organization that was founded in 2003. The organization gives cancer sufferers a three-day fishing retreat at a lake resort.

"It came at a time when I needed a boost," Peterson said. "The three-day retreat gave all of us a chance to talk, laugh, cry, and find common ground with our disease."

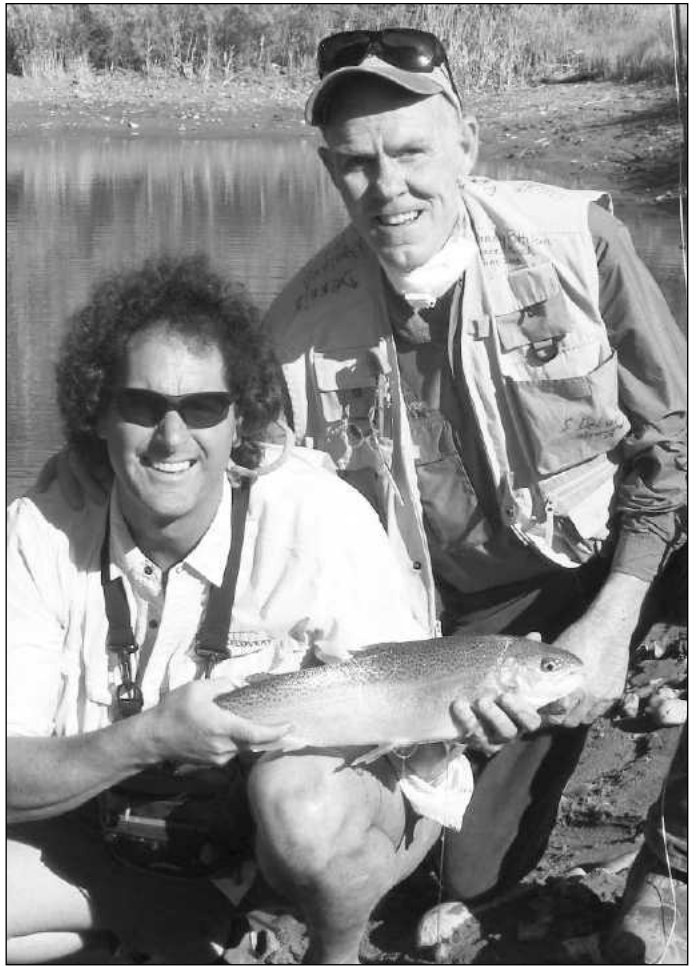
Reel Recovery was founded by a group of fly-fishers, inspired by their friend's ongoing battle with brain cancer. The group of fishers saw a therapeutic benefit provided through fishing to their friend.

"My time with it was pivotal," Peterson said. He said that sometimes men are hesitant to talk or share feelings. What Reel Recovery did was provide not only a fishing retreat, but several counseling sessions with other people going through similar things.

The experience was something Peterson said he found invaluable in his fight. He said it helped him to share his experience and hear what others were going through.

"You can't pay them a dime," Peterson said. When it came time for the Reel Recovery banquet, Peterson wanted to pay back the favor by bidding on an Amazon fishing trip. He also donated a pair of annual memberships to his Rooster Valley Pheasants ranch in Annabella to the banquet.

With help from corporate sponsors, Reel Recovery's



COURTESY

Reel Recovery Director Stan Golub, left, shows off a trout he and Russ Peterson caught at the Reel Recovery Retreat near Altamont in October 2008.

event in Salt Lake City raised more than \$20,000 — enough to conduct three Utah retreats this year. Reel Recovery is solely donor supported and plans to offer 14 retreats in 11 states in 2009, serving close to 200 men with cancer.

"He was giving it back, something I found was in his nature more ways than one," said Ben Nolte, a fishing and tour guide who is involved with Reel Recovery. "As the former principal at South Sevier High School he started a community service program called 'Giving It Back.'"

Peterson won the Amazon fishing trip, which is slated for September. Peterson and his wife are set to go on the fishing trip together, but the

trip is open to others who want to accompany the Petersons.

Nolte said he was touched by the impact that Reel Recovery had on Russ and other cancer survivors, and committed his Amazon outfitting business, Big Amazon Fish, to donating an extra \$250 to the Reel Recovery cause for each person who accompanies the Petersons on their trip.

Deposits should be received before Friday, July 10. More information about the trip is available by calling (801) 921-3311 or logging onto FishinWithAMission.com.

For more information about Reel Recovery, log onto reel-recovery.org.