Family escapes inferno

Blaze levels Lake Keowee home, kills pet

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BY BRETT MCLAUGHLIN
THE JOURNAL

SALEM — Six members of the David Lasier family escaped with their lives moments before fire consumed their Lake Keowee home early Sunday morning.

Lasier, his wife, her parents and two adult children fled from the home after alarms awakened them at 12:15 a.m., according to Keowee Fire Department Assistant Chief Brandon Shirley.

"They barely got out," Shirley said. "If the three who were upstairs hadn't gotten out in the next two to three minutes they could have perished."

Shirley said family members told him they heard what sounded like rushing wind and thought there was a storm outside. Within minutes, they realized what they heard was a wall of flames coming toward them from the other end of the house.

Shirley said three volunteers were the first to arrive at 16 Dingy Court six minutes after the alarm sounded. He said they reported the home 35 percent involved with flames shooting 30 feet high through the roof.

One occupant of the home was transported to Oconee Medical Center

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CLEMSON — The heat summer didn't keep duates and their fami away from Littlejohn iseum on Saturday as

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for smoke inhalation but was released quickly. One firefighter was also taken by EMS to the hospital for evaluation and released.

"The decision to make this a defensive operation and protect homes on either side and three cars in the driveway was made as soon as fire crews determined all occupants had vacated the structure," he said.

Shirley acknowledged that family members did express concerns about the department's response time.

He noted that the nearest fire hydrant was 900 feet up a hill from the home and that pumpers did have to travel over three miles on winding and steep roads to reach the location. However, he defended the amount of time it took to get water on the fire.

"We began flowing water within approximately 10 minutes of being dispatched. The long, narrow and steep driveway along with the advanced progression of the fire upon arrival presented obstacles throughout the fire," Shirley said. "I arrived on scene at 12:32 a.m. and multiple lines were already flowing water onto the fire," he said. "We never had an issue with water."

The Keowee Fire Department along with the automatic aid stations of Keowee-Ebenezer FD, Corinth-Shiloh Fire Department and Oconee Emergency Services were dispatched immediately. Assistance came from the Salem and Keowee Vineyards Fire Departments, the latter responding with a fire boat, which assisted in supplying water from Lake Keowee to fire hoses at the rear of the home.

Rescue 4 and Rescue 22 provided medical monitoring and rehab on the scene, and The American Red Cross provided drinks and food for emergency workers and also provided assistance to the family.

At this time the exact cause of the fire is undetermined but based on interviews and an on-going investigation, it is believed to be accidental. The loss has been estimated at just over $1 million. Shirley confirmed that one of two family dogs died in the blaze. The family is believed to be staying with Lasier's parents, who live two doors away on Dinghy Court