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## 'Semper Paddelis' races for injured Marines

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By Steve Moyer/Herald-Tribune

"It's probably the craziest thing I've ever tried," Lance Christie said. He was probably right, he and a friend are preparing for the MR340, an endurance race on the Missouri River from Kansas City to St. Charles slated to begin Aug. 24. The two have a good cause driving their attempt, they hope to raise money for the Semper Fi Fund, which helps injured U.S. Marine Corps personnel and Marine support workers.

Christie and John Flessner are both graduates of Nevada High School and both have served in the Marines. The two demonstrate their continuing support by their fund-raising efforts but also by what they named their team -- Semper Paddelis, always paddling -- which reflects the Marine Corps motto, Semper Fidelis, always faithful.

Christie said they started out with a goal of raising \$1,250 or approximately \$1 for every Marine or sailor killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. It wasn't long before the team decided to raise the bar. "We quickly met that number, so we decided to bump it up to \$5,000," Christie said. "That's a nice round number. We'd love to meet that goal. We'd love to double it."

Christie said that the duo is promoting their activity in many different types of media.

"I had an interview this morning on WIL 92.3 in St. Louis to get some promotional support," Christie said. "I've been on Facebook. There's actually a guy on LinkedIn ... he's going to get a bunch of Marines to meet us when we pull into St. Charles. So they're pulling for us and we're hoping to raise the money and have a good time doing it."

The race is definitely not for the out-of-shape. It is 340 miles from end to end. Racers have to check in at eight points along the way. Some have support teams to help them but Christie and Flessner are going to take advantage of food and water provided by race officials and go it alone until the finish line.

"We're thinking about spending a couple of hours at a couple of the check points," Christie said. "You do have to check in at each of the check points. You don't necessarily have to have a ground crew because at the check points you can get food and water. We have someone to pick us up in St. Louis. We're going to take what we need, what we think we need and plan on just sleeping on the beach." They hope to be able to steer and sleep in shifts for at least part of the course.

"We're in an 18-foot canoe so we're thinking that maybe we can go on through the night and maybe catch a little shut-eye on the water while the other person kind of steers us," Christie said. "We're going to push through as fast as we can."

In addition to raising the funds, Christie said that he hopes that people become aware of the plight of those who have been injured and what they can do to help.

"First of all, just an awareness that there are people out there helping Marines and Navy corpsmen coming back injured," Christie said.



John Flessner and Lance Christie are the team, "Semper Paddelis," and are preparing for an endurance race on the Missouri River, in an effort to raise funds for the Semper Fi Fund, which gives assistance to injured Marines.

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"Even though the economy is bubbling and no one knows if it's going to recover or not, there are people out there giving money. I know one of our donors gave \$1,000, just right off the bat. There are people out there to do that and any support we can get would be great and would help these guys out."

Although Christie and Flessner have set themselves a difficult task, Christie said it was nothing compared to the stress those in Iraq and Afghanistan endure.

"These guys and gals are out there, over in a foreign country, doing things that are very difficult," Christie said. "Anytime that I'm working out, trying to get ready for this and it gets hard, I have to remember -- these guys don't have a choice, they have to stay up 18-hour days; they've got to live in extreme heat. I kind of understand what they've been through, I was in the first Gulf War. It's long hours, it's hot. I went six months without having a cold drink. It sucks and they have to go through it. Any pain and discomfort I have to go through is nothing compared to what they're doing."

For more information, visit <http://www.active.com/donate/SemperFiFund10/SemperPaddelis> or search for Lance Christie on [facebook.com](http://facebook.com).

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