



# SIERRA REGIONAL SKI FOR LIGHT NEWSLETTER

Summer 2013

Volume 10, Issue 1

## A CROSS-COUNTRY SKI PROGRAM

This newsletter is published annually, to provide information about the people and activities of Sierra Regional Ski For Light (SRSFL). Editor:, Betsy Rowell.

### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT By David Hoffman Fremont, CA



Past president Bruce Johnson  
and new president elect Dave Hoffman

Hello, Ola and Bonjour to all friends and those whom have not yet become a friend of sierra Regional Ski for Light. or, as we like to call it, a small but growing family. My name is David Hoffman, the President elect of this band of happy folks. I would like to

welcome you to our website. I am very excited to be part of the SRSFL board and hope to see everyone out at one of our very exciting events over the next 12 months. A little about myself, to help break the ice. As of four years ago I am a low vision business professional, I am still not sure what I want to be when I grow up though. Born in Canada about, sorry a oot, 47 years ago, I came to the US 15 years ago and am now a naturalized US citizen. I live and work in the San Jose area. I have a wonderful guide dog from Guide Dogs for the Blind and most people remember him before they do me. I am really ok with that. I have great plans and expectations for our little band of adventurers and really hope that you will drop by one of our summer or winter events and get to know us a bit better. Any of our board members would be happy to answer questions you may have about us, our organization or our events. The opportunity for me, as a low vision person who was quite used to many activities, really appreciates the chance to get out on the ski trails and the summer hiking trails. I am sure that you will find it an equally rewarding adventure no matter the level of your ability or availability to participate. See you out there.

## **KISSING THE SNOW**

**By  
Rosie Polo  
Fremont, CA**



**Rosie and guide Susan head out  
for a day on the snow**

My time at Tahoe Donner was amazing, and it was an experience that I will always cherish. From the first moment that my friend Sylvia, who's also blind, told me about skiing, I thought she was crazy.

Walking on solid ground is hard enough as it is! I was unsure at first if I should go; the thought of blizzards, avalanches, and just the thought of the entire new experience were all intimidating for me. It was especially nerve-racking that it was my first time seeing and feeling snow, let alone try to ski! But I said, why not?

I was still a little nervous as I was arriving at Tahoe, but socializing with all of the experienced skiers and the volunteers made me feel much more comfortable. I could tell right away that I was going to have a good time with good company. My inexperience showed immediately; I was wearing four layers of clothes, and at the

end of the day was down to one. It was much warmer than I thought, almost like being back at my home country Fiji, except that the ground is ice instead of sand! The first lesson was about balancing on the skis, and it was very challenging, and I fell down a lot. I've hit my head on all sorts of things in my life, like doors, tables, chairs, but now I can say that I've kissed the snow! Soon enough though, I learned how to do it, and felt like my one-year-old granddaughter who's currently learning how to walk. Everything else that happened on the trip—the lodge, the food, the snowshoeing, the dogs, the environment—all became intimate memories for me forever.

I want to extend my thanks to everyone that participated--the helpfulness, patience, and compassion really enabled me to succeed.

I'm happy to say that I've made lasting friends with the volunteers and skiers alike. Through this experience, they all helped me realize one sacred lesson: when someone has the courage and support, anything is possible. I thought that skiing would be impossible and frightening for me, but now I'm counting the days until I get a chance to go back to Tahoe Donner again.

**SKI FOR LIGHT  
THREE DAY EVENT, 2013  
by  
Barney Jones  
Folsom, CA**

“Oh, my dear lady, you're running me into a tree!”

That was not the skier speaking, that was the guide. Her skier was having way to much fun. Because fun is what we do with Ski For Light at Tahoe Donner XC, isn't it?



**Barney enjoyed a day of skiing  
With guide coordinator Edie**

This year was my first as a skier rather than a guide, so I've come full circle. When I first volunteered as a guide, I was apprehensive. What if I ran some poor blind soul into a tree--or over a cliff or a bridge? This would be an awesome responsibility.

Then I met some of the skiers I would be guiding. They were so easy to be around, so friendly, and even though they couldn't see, they had more guts than I did. They didn't seem worried, just glad to have the chance to get out. So I relaxed and pledged to do my best.

I needn't have worried so much. They don't just turn you loose with a poor trusting skier, they train you. And the trainers know what they're doing. Sighted people don't know what it feels like to ski without seeing, so let the fun(?) begin: put on this blindfold and find out. Man, It's eerie when suddenly your balance is shot.

Then you can try various blinder devices that simulate different degrees and types of blindness.

I was also impressed with the trainers' philosophy of getting to know each visually impaired skier individually by talking with them, finding out their capabilities and their preferences. The skiers can also provide insights and suggestions for better guiding. Potential guides can learn the appropriate verbal instructions to use for varied circumstances and they're ready to guide their first skier.... Kind of. But first the new guide can "shadow," tagging along with an experienced guide and skier. The new guide can now take over with the trainer observing and advising when necessary. These people are thorough.

This year was my first time at the three day event as a skier rather than a guide. Being there was exciting but also out of my comfort zone: away from home, two nights in a hotel room without my visual aids. Could I keep my meds straight? And those frozen, groomed trails were not my favorite venue for skiing. How would my heart and lungs do in the altitude?

But these anxieties dissipated quickly amidst all the camaraderie, helpfulness and positive energy that flowed from all sides. Betsy and Edie went to great lengths to make me feel included and even arranged my old back country ski buddy, Dave, to guide me.

It's clear why skiers from all over the country flock to take part in this well run, vibrant event. As for me, after I moved down to the valley, with various medical issues and poor vision--I thought I'd never be able to ski again. Last weekend with Ski For Light changed all that.

**HOOKING UP ON  
LIGHT RAIL**  
by  
**Sylvia Reese,  
Sacramento, Ca**



**Sylvia and guide Lynn chill after  
a day on the snow**

Last Fall I had never met a neighbor of mine, Betsy Rowell, nor had I ever heard of a group called Ski For Light, let alone the Sierra Regional chapter. That all changed one day, while I was waiting for the light rail train at the station closest to my home. A seemingly nice lady asked me if I lived in the neighborhood. Oh my, I thought. Is she from the neighborhood watch or perhaps someone looking for directions? Either way I belonged in the neighborhood and she asked politely. So I answered, “Yes, I live on Mira Del Rio Drive.”

The lady responded, “I live on Mira Del Rio.” While she sounded friendly, her voice seemed to reflect question since we did not know each other.

“I have lived here for 27 years.” I said as I faced her. It seemed to me that she

straightened and squared toward me, “Well, I have lived here for 28 years,” she shot back confidently.

I smiled thinking that this lady found her match, for I too am a sassy one. I am aware of my approaching ‘senior’ status. For in my household I am the oldest, and my peers and I are all aging. I look directly at her, lower my voice and say with years of success, confidence, pride, and boldness, “I am fifty-three years old.”

Just as confident, and with a little bit of smirk, she answered, “I am seventy.” Then we both laughed.

That nice lady at the light rail station introduced herself as Betsy Rowell and asked me if I liked skiing.

Two months later I joined SRSFL for my first day in the snow at Tahoe Donner. I started off by walking timidly across the frozen parking lot. The frozen ground and ice required my footing to be more deliberate. I imagine that from my overly careful manner of walking to ensure that I would not slip looked concerning. My previous snow activities simply included walking between casinos, or a short rest stop while driving to Tahoe/Reno. I had not been one to enjoy cold weather activities.

But now I do! I have now experienced cross-country skiing and snow shoeing. I have now spent 5-days in the snow, and enjoyed each one of them. And I have SRSFL to thank for it.

I have been blind for 3-years and found myself doing less and less. It seems that everything takes so much more effort and time to accomplish. Being blind, sometimes just figuring out how to get somewhere can be exhausting. The

folks at SRSFL relieved me of that. You freed my mind from the worry of logistics and allowed me to focus on the activity. Thank You! Thank you Carry Butler for picking me up at my home. Thank you guides RJ, John, Toni, and Doris. And thank you Betsy for “picking me up” on light rail.

As a new elected Board Member I look forward to sharing my positive experiences in the recruitment of new members and volunteers, both sighted and blind. I also am excited to get to know the art of fundraising, and being mentored by our more experienced members and learning the established ways of success.

## **FIRST TIME GUIDE**

**by**  
**David Huggins**  
**Truckee, CA**

This year I had the good fortune to be a first-time guide for blind skiers at Sierra Regional Ski For Light. The blind skiers I worked with this year are inspirational to me. They have helped me to count my blessings.

Denny and Edie asked me to come out and help. I have the highest respect for Denny and Edie, due to their selfless devotion to helping others. Not only do they guide and organize for SRSFL, they also give huge amounts of their time to other causes to help our community and world. I am thankful to all of the people who volunteer at SRSFL for providing me with this fulfilling opportunity to give a little to others.

My first day on skis with SRSFL I was guided ☺ by Cindy. She is a blind skier who is very helpful in teaching guides to

do their jobs safely and effectively. She has to be very brave to place her trust in first time guides like me.

My second trip I skied with Mike. Mike knows no limits, skiing aggressively throughout a full day. He loves being outdoors so much that he wears short sleeve shirts even when it is cold out, savoring the feeling of being out in nature.

My third trip was skiing the Great Race with Marilyn. She was able to ski the entire 30 km race with only two short breaks, winning her age group. Marilyn, who is 74 and visually impaired, and Walter, another blind skier, were each awarded a metal sculpture that says “No Excuses”.



**Marilyn shows off her winner's plaque  
NO EXCUSES!**

Many other racers have commented to me that they noticed these blind skiers and were amazed at their accomplishments.

My fourth trip was climbing up the mountains and telemarking off piste with Barney. He is visually impaired, but you

would not know it watching him ski. I have had the pleasure of skiing with



**Barney can still telemark down the steepest hill. GO BARNEY!**

Barney for the last ten years. His skiing is as fluid and beautiful to watch as ever, though a little slower, as he has advanced to 83 years old. It is still wonderful to get out and enjoy the mountains with Barney.

All of these skiers are an inspiration to me. Just being with them reminds me to “quit sniveling”, because they are able to go out and live fully despite their handicaps. It is a pleasure for me to go out and help them do an activity that brings them joy. I look forward to skiing with my friends at SRSFL again next year.

**Tusen Tak**  
**By**  
**Larry Showalter and**  
**Wendy David**  
**Seattle, WA**

Those of you who know us would understand when we say that Ski For Light and skiing in general is a big part of our lives. We have attended the International Ski for Light for more than twenty years, the Ridderrenn in Norway

six times, the Puget Sound Regional Ski for Light nearly every year, and other regional programs around the country, such as Montana and Colorado. Even though we had discussed attending the SRSFL many times in the past, we were finally able to align timing and responsibilities in order to travel south from Seattle for a fun-filled weekend with SRSFL in early March. What we discovered, and thoroughly enjoyed, were 3 days of outstanding tracks, excellent guides, delicious food, incredible sun, fantastic participants, and a whole lot more.

From great fellowship to sore muscles, goody bags to musical entertainment, dog walkers to bus transportation, vegetarian entrees to birthday cake, we loved it all and left feeling so impressed with the entire Sierra Regional program. We felt so welcome, loved the positive energy, and, in summary, had a fabulous time, thanks to your great handling of all of the details from start to finish. Your collective efforts have accomplished a top-notch program and for that you should all feel very proud.

We were also thoroughly impressed with Tahoe-Donner. What a great facility with wonderful tracks, friendly staff, not to mention delicious pumpkin chocolate chip muffins.



**Wendy and guide Jake are off!**

We're quite hopeful that once the new Nordic Center is completed, we can bring the entire International SFL there for a full week of fantastic cross-country skiing. If everything works out as hoped, that could be as early as 2016.

Once again, thanks to everyone "Tusen Tak" for the great weekend and for all of your efforts to make your regional program so very special. We will definitely be back.

**THE DAY JAKE EARNED 3  
MERIT BADGES GUIDING  
THE BLIND GUY  
By  
Walter Raineri  
San Francisco, CA**



Walter and Jake are off for a day  
in the blowing snow

As Jake organizes himself for college, I wanted to share a memory of one of my blind skiing experiences with him to help send him off. I think Jake earned no less than three merit badges during one eventful day and those memories are worth sharing.

It was Sunday morning, March 2012, of the three day SRSFL event. Poor snow all season long had left the trails at

Tahoe Donner thin and slushy but this particular morning, my only day to ski with Jake, it was snowing with that big, fat, pillowy like snowflakes falling. The temps were hovering right at zero so I pulled out my Zero Skis and we took off for the farthest points in the trail system for a long workout. Nothing like feeling the soft, floating, snowflakes hitting my face, as we headed up that first right hand turn.

Jake was just getting used to my sophisticated 24 GHz, dual frequency head set system as we took off.

"You can hear a whisper with these" I told Jake. "So, just know that I can hear everything, even what you are thinking" I added, knowing that he would need a second to process that joke.

Jake was skating, and was side by side with me on the left as I struggled with the tracks, or lack thereof. My first substantive comment in the head set was: "So, are there any tracks at all now?" as we worked our way through what I think was a grove of trees on either side of the trail leading up to Moon Dance Hut.

Jake apologized for the snow conditions, but I just laughed and said: "yes, I hold you personally responsible for the slow, slushy, nontracked trail conditions," but the laugh in my voice let him know I was just making light of a bad season, and a particularly tough condition day.

As we worked our way down to the end of Euer Valley, the snow started falling faster, and now there was a couple of inches of accumulation on the trails. Nothing like fresh, ungroomed, sharp snow crystals at 32 F degrees to create a icing up scenario with my Zeros. By the time we had reached the farthest

turn around point, we were basically snow shoeing on skis through the ungroomed trails and given the need for a workout, I ran most of the way. Jake gets his first merit badge for this effort as it was not what he had signed up for, of that I m sure. Luckily, I had a scraper with me and after a good kick zone clearing, we were off with some glide back to the lodge for lunch.

Now for the second merit badge for Jake, as we ate lunch, the conditions worsened, with the wind picking up and the snow turning into freezing rain. Yeah, lovely conditions to go out again. I told Jake that I was up for an afternoon session if he was as I was training for a race in Alaska two weeks later. . With no hesitation, Jake joined me for a crazy workout, this time up to the top of Hawk's Peak. The tracks were not good, but such as they were, they were the best up the hill, at least half of the way.

We ended up creating our own 4km loop race course, of sorts and got three laps in with the horizontal freezing rain falling. At the bottom of the third lap, we stopped at the point at which we needed to decide to go back up, or call it a day. I am sure Jake thought about the warmth of the lodge right at that moment, but I never knew any of these thoughts when I asked him if he had one more lap in him. He said "Sure." And we raced up the hill one more time. Jake's third merit badge for that final effort, with him yelling guide instructions from behind. While skating is usually faster than striding, not in those conditions.

No doubt, Jakes determination and skill will serve him well while at college. I can only hope that if the going gets tough, he remembers that cold, wet,

freezing rain afternoon on which he guided me around that loop course until the it was time to leave. Knowing that without his help, I could not do any of it, I thanked him for all his efforts. I bet he will never know how important moments like those are for a blind person like me, but maybe the fact that this memory is still so vivid in my mind two years later will help demonstrate how important his contribution was.

Good luck with all that may come your way, Jake.

Walt Raineri

**We'll Miss Our  
College Bound Guides!  
by Edie Lott, SRSFL  
Guide Coordinator**

For the past three ski seasons we have been privileged to have had Jake Kamenetsky and Sam Castro as guides. I hesitate to call them junior guides. Every season they performed their guiding duties with professionalism and dedication beyond what one would expect of an adult guide. I wish Jake and Sam the very best as they go off to college. We'll miss them very much.

**Congratulations**



Sam Castro



Jake Kamenetsky



**JUNIOR SKIERS ARE THE  
LIGHT IN  
SIERRA REGIONAL SKI  
FOR LIGHT**



Jacob, age 8, with guide Charlie experiences his first day on skis.



Destiny, 17, and her guide Catherine smile after a fun day on the snow.

They are looking forward to skiing with SRSFL next year.

**SRSFL SUMMER PROGRAMS**



June 22 and Aug 17: CSUS Aquatic Center. Paddle on Lake Natoma. For more details, contact Bruce Johnson at 916 858-8020.



Aug. 18: day hike on the Tahoe Rim Trail. Another hike is also planned. For more details contact: Jim Mrazek at 916-939-9442.

September 20-22: A weekend in the Sierra at Clair Tappaan Lodge. Tappaan Lodge. For details contact: Vicki Post at 415-928-2711 or Betsy Rowell at 916-362-5557.

## FUNDRAISING

The 2013 SRSFL ski season has come to a close, BUT fundraising goes on year round. Fundraising may seem like a bit of a mystery to many of us, but it is one of the most vital elements to ensure SRSFL's bright future. And now that we are adding summer activities to the Program, extra funds are more critical than ever! So, anything you can do to help will be greatly appreciated.

We are seeking supporters, donors, grants and cash. All money raised goes directly into the program for transportation, scholarships and other expenses, and to keep the cost down for all.

As you talk with people, feel free to share what moves you most about the program. For instance, you may be passionate about the bus we rent for the three-day Event; you may want to raise money for youth scholarships; you could choose transportation for day trips; trail pass costs in honor of your favorite trail, just to name a few.

If you have questions, ideas and/or contacts, please contact Betsy Rowell, chair of the fund-raising committee.  
Phone: (916) 362-5557  
Email: [betsyrowell2@gmail.com](mailto:betsyrowell2@gmail.com)



Starting in Mid-July SRSFL will be selling the 2014 Entertainment book. You can help SRSFL by purchasing a Sacramento book or book for your area. To order your Sacramento book for only \$30, contact Betsy @ 916-362-5557. To order an out-of-area book go to [entertainment.com](http://entertainment.com) and type in the SRSFL ID #161163, this will give SRSFL the credit.

SRSFL would like to take this opportunity to thank the many organizations and businesses for their support of our cross-country ski program. Please show them how much you appreciate their support by patronizing their businesses and supporting their other activities.

## MANY THANKS

Also to the individual donors who have supported SRSFL this past year.

Adams Vending, Gold River, CA  
Auburn Host Lions, Auburn, CA  
Commerce Printing, Sacramento, CA  
Folsom Lake Lions Club, Folsom, CA  
Eddie Bauer, Vacaville, CA  
Embarcadero Lions, Sacramento, CA  
49er Ski Club [www.49erskiclub.com](http://www.49erskiclub.com)  
Land Park Lions Club, Sacramento, CA  
Lions Education Foundation  
North Tahoe Catering, Kings Beach CA  
[www.Norhtahoecatering.com](http://www.Norhtahoecatering.com)  
Papa Murphy's Pizza, Gold River, CA  
Sacramento Valley Sertoma Club  
Sacramento Turn Verein Actives  
Safeway, Truckee, CA  
Save Mart, Truckee, CA  
Sunrise/Citrus Heights Kiwanis Club  
Tahoe X/C, Tahoe City, CA  
[www.tahoex/c.org](http://www.tahoex/c.org)  
Tahoe Donner Cross Country, Truckee, CA  
[www.tdxc.com](http://www.tdxc.com)  
The Treat Box Bakery, Truckee, CA  
Truckee Donner Nordic Skis Club

## **SRSFL BOARD**

**PRESIDENT**  
David Hoffman  
DavidHoffman1965@gmail.com

**VIVE-PRESIDENT**  
Pat Slauson  
Exphysco0602@yahoo.com

**TREASSURER**  
Jim Mrazek  
banananote@aol.com

**SECRETARY**  
Mike Bittner  
MPBittner@sbcglobal.net

**MEMBER AT LARGE 1**  
Sylvia Reese  
SylReese@g,aol.com

**MEMBER AT LARGE 2**  
Betsy Rowell  
Betsy.rowell2@gmail.com

**IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT**  
Bruce Johnson  
ahoyskpr@aol.comgggg

## **KEEP INTOUCH.**

SRSFL  
C/o Edie Lott  
10435 Royal Crest  
Truckee, CA 96161  
Home: 530 528-6392  
E-mail: [thelotts@tlpc.org](mailto:thelotts@tlpc.org)



**WE ARE ON THE WEB**  
[WWW.srsfl.org](http://WWW.srsfl.org)



**SRSFL March 2013**