



SIERRA REGIONAL SKI FOR LIGHT NEWSLETTER

Summer 2014

Volume 11, 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



President Dave is for a day of skiing

Boy - oh - boy, that was a close one!! We almost cancelled the event. We barely had enough snow. We largely had a great and fantastic three-day event thanks to our incredible board,

committee chairs, volunteers and of course the amazing guides and participants. A huge ovation goes out to Royal Gorge who stepped up and accommodated us. And the chocolate banana muffins were as awesome as ever.

The SRSFL three-day event, held this past March was my first such event as president and I could not be any more thankful for everyone's involvement. The snow held up, the rain stayed away and we may have had three of the best cross country skiing and snowshoeing days all winter. This event saw some great firsts, and shows SRSFL is moving in the right direction. We had four new participants, new guides, returning guides who missed us terribly, and returning guides who have been with us from the beginning. We had a pair of guides drive almost through the night from Denver to be with us, another who flew from Denver on their own dime to guide for us. We loved to see an eager and enthusiastic teenager out there learning to guide and promising to bring her friends next year.

For those who missed it, we missed you as well but fear not. We have a great set of events planned for the summer, including a return of the very popular 3-day hiking event. Remember that our summer events usually fill up fast and we are limited on the number of participants, so sign up early. We will be planning to make day hikes, some aquatic events and rumor has it, perhaps some tandem bike outings.

Stay tuned to your email and our website. For baseball fans out there, watch your email as well, for special prices on three Oakland A's games this summer, Friday June 13, against the New York Yankees. This is Derek Jeter's farewell season and that evening also features a fireworks show after the game. Saturday June 21 against the Boston Red Sox, an afternoon game and then Monday July 7 in the evening against the SF Giants. We sold out for the home opener so get your tickets when they are available. Prices to follow.

Have a great spring and remember to keep up the outdoor activity so you are ready for a great summer and another winter less than a year away.

REFLECTIONS FROM A FIRST TIMER

**by
Sue Mangis
Carmichael, CA**



Sue is off for a ski lesson with instructor guide John

For several years I had heard about the Ski for Light program, but due to my schedule, I was unable to attend either the day trips or the three-day trip. In

June I retired from teaching, so now I have more flexibility with my time. When I talked to Betsy Rowell I decided to sign up for the three-day ski trip since Monday was all mine to schedule.

Although I lived for several years in the Midwest where there was plenty of snow, I'd never skied or snowshoed. Having moved back to California over twenty-five years ago all snow boots and paraphernalia had left my house. Fortunately I had some friends who had the proper ski clothing so I was set for my first ski trip.

I knew two of the people who were going on the trip one of whom was my roommate at the hotel. We were able to get caught up and have a great visit in our spare time. Many of us spent Friday evening at a local hotel getting acquainted. We were all ready to head for the snow bright and early Saturday morning. We went to Royal Gorge where we actually had enough snow for skiing and snow shoeing. I decided to begin with snow shoeing on Saturday. I had an excellent guide, Bruce Johnson, and I found that it was good exercise and work. It's just like walking but the snow shoes stay on top of the snow. They grip the snow so falling is rare. Getting up on snow shoes is much easier than on skis as I discovered on Sunday and Monday.

Th That's right, I decided to try my hand at skiing on Sunday morning. The snow was better for skiing in the morning than in the afternoon. Doris Gorin was my guide and we worked on basic how-to-move the skis, turning etc. Knowing where the tips of my skis were was difficult. Are they parallel, or pointing? Sometimes I could tell but other times it felt parallel, and I was a bit off. Having that long ski is certainly different from

shoes and boots. Skiing was definitely harder than snow shoeing. I enjoyed cross country skiing when we were on flat ground or going uphill. Going downhill sounded fun when I heard skiers whizzing past, but I didn't feel in control going downhill. When I went downhill I usually fell so I had plenty of practice getting up on the skis. Since I used a few new muscles skiing, I decided to snow shoe Sunday afternoon.

I tried skiing again on Monday morning. John Eaton was my guide. We had new snow which was good for skiing. Each of the guides was extremely patient and I learned some of the basics for cross country skiing.

To have such a wonderful program takes a lot of planning and hard work before we go. I'd like to thank all of those who helped make the weekend such a success for everyone. The guides were excellent and knew how to help the beginners as well as the very experienced. The food at both dinners was also excellent Everything ran smoothly as far as I could tell.

All too soon it was time to go home. I returned home with a few sore muscles and a sense of accomplishment. I look forward to going back again next year for more snow shoeing, and my third lesson on skis



MY RETURN TO SRSFL **by** **Carol Herrington,** **Truckee, CA**



I'm back!

Aloha, dear Nordic Ski For Light peeps. After a few years away from the High Sierra and the Ski For Light program, it was a pure joy to return full time, and to immerse myself back into the delightful wonders of stepping and gliding with SFL.

The Program has evolved and grown under the direction and leadership of excellent people who have enriched many lives through their volunteerism and dedication to SFL. Countless hours are devoted, months in advance and year around, to bring to you the amazing Regional event, and the monthly events. A warm Mahalo to all of those who help to make the Program so successful, and so enjoyable for both our participant skiers, and the guides!

It is an honor to be back and guiding our enthusiastic skiers on the open trails. It has been such a treat to see so many smiling and laughing faces from over the past two decades. I look forward to many more years sharing the wonders of nordic skiing in our beautiful High Sierra . See you on the snow.

MY EXPERIENCE AS A FIRST TIME GUIDE

**by
Katie Plexico
Olympic Valley, CA**



Katie on the left, skier Angel and trained guide R C

My name is Katie Plexico. I am 13 years old and this year, 2014, was my first time with SRSFL. I got to shadow many different guides and I cannot put into words how amazing an experience it was for me. There was a limited amount of snow to ski on, but we made do. I think that it made me become a better guide than I would have been otherwise. There were more obstacles in the trail making me have to give more precise directions. On the first day there, I came knowing virtually nothing. Guide training had to be canceled earlier in the year due to the aforementioned lack of snow. By the end, I was able to guide some of the skiers. Thank you so much for having the program because I really enjoyed it and I'll see you next year



AN OUTING MORE THAN I HOPED FOR

**by
Everett Black
Sacramento, CA**

From the reception greeting at the Fairfield Inn, to the farewell times at the hotel in Truckee, this year's SRSFL ski outing was all and more than I'd hoped for. Besides meeting up with three other good friends from the Sacramento area, it was my great fortune to make many new friends, both blind and sighted, from all over the western states.

Since this was my first time skiing or snowshoeing, I was a bit of a 'klutz' on the snow. However, my instructors made me feel like I was a potential Olympic contender. And given their raw material ... me ... that was quite an accomplishment. I was prepared to use my ripe old age of 63 as an excuse if I was overworked. That was, until I learned that my instructor was going to be celebrating his 80th birthday! So, I just sucked it up and enjoyed myself.

There were so many helpful people and attitudes, I never felt that my total blindness was anything more than just a small part of who I am.



Everett and guide Shawna

I won't even take the time to mention the wonderful catered meals or the hours of, laugh-filled conversations, let alone the comfortable chartered bus that was our mode of transportation to and from the mountain sites.

Thanks to all the dozens of caring and responsible souls that spent their funds and time to provide such a great time for me and my fellow blind friends.

WHY DO I KEEP COMING BACK?

**by
Kathy Masters
Lincoln, CA**



My name is Kathy Masters, and I have been a ski guide for SRSFL for thirteen years, and now also, a hiking guide beginning last year. I am married to Graham, who is from England, and we have two adopted daughters: Annesha from India who is now 13, and Sarah from China, who is now 10. Before we adopted Annesha, Graham and I were avid downhill skiers. We switched to cross-country skiing after we brought Annesha home at five months old, as we could take her along in a Polk sled. We just happened to be at Tahoe

Donner on one of the SRSFL days, and I knew one of the guides.

It didn't take much to convince me to become a guide. I fell in love with cross-country skiing, and have never even considered going back to downhill.

I wanted to share my passion for this sport, and what better way than to guide someone who would not normally have the opportunity to know the feeling of cross-country skiing.

I have guided many skiers of various levels over the years. Their skills, attitudes and determination amaze me to the point that I believe that I am rewarded just as much as they are for their accomplishments. Some of my skiers have become good friends, and we get together throughout the year. I miss the ones that I don't get to see during the rest of the year, and therefore, really look forward to seeing and spending time with them at the next SRSFL event.

From skier, Vicki Post:

From the moment she joined SRSFL, Kathy has been a fun, loyal and committed guide. I've had the pleasure of skiing with her on a number of occasions, and I have been fortunate enough to room with her at many an SRSFL event. She rarely misses an event, and even began showing up for Board meetings when few of the rest of us attended them.

As a guide, she has a very easy and natural way of being with her skiers. She is always quick with laughter and something magical.

She always seems genuinely happy to do whatever her skiers wish on the snow (skiing or snowshoeing) and she is

always very affirming and encouraging. Whether we were negotiating a tough hill, watching a bear cub just feet away or just cruising along, Kathy always brings a sense of magic and fun, and real love for the snow and cross country skiing. I couldn't imagine an SRSFL event without her. Thank you, Kathy, for those 13 years of service, and we look forward to many more.

**ON THE WATER WITH
SRSFL
by
Sylvia Reese
Sacramento, CA**



Sylvia checks out a kayak

In June we spent a day at Lake Natoma, just above the Nimbus Dam, east of Sacramento, on the American River. My friend, Rosie, and I were looking forward to this day since we knew that with SRSFL we were in good hands. My friend was raised in Fiji. She was well acquainted with canoes, but had not been in one for several years and had not spent time on the water since losing her eyesight. While living in Sacramento all my adult life, I had not been kayaking.

Our morning started with Pat Slason picking us up, then off to Betsy and Monte Rowell's house to load kayaks and life jackets. We met with the rest of SRSFL at Natoma Lake. I was guided by Bruce Johnson and Rosie was guided by R C. Wow, what a nice time!

Rosie and I both found our experience so very relaxing. We loved the gentle water sounds against the boat, the distant sounds of children playing, and the songs of birds from nearby trees. We found ourselves just as relaxed as from an hour of massage. Fresh air, welcoming water, good friends... PERFECT! Thank you SRSFL Guides and Volunteers.

**CLAIR TAPPAAN
A WEEKEND OF
MANY SEASONS
by
Vicki Post
San Francisco, CA**



Guide Jim and hiker Vicki with guide dog Admiral

Snow in September? Lunch before breakfast? Dorms and bunk beds? For those who were there, the "Clair Tappaan" weekend of September 20-22, 2013 was anything but ordinary.

It began as a spontaneous idea -- Let's do a weekend of hiking in the Sierra and stay at the Clair Tappaan Lodge! For Betsy Rowell and me, the official Clair Tappaan team, the lodge itself held many great memories, and we wanted to share the experience with other SRSFL folks. We chose mid-September, thinking that the lodge would have more room for our group, and that the weather in the mountains would still be good! So, we set about putting it all together with great excitement. Guides Edie and Denny Lott and Laura Wood. helped us identify a number of possible trails for good hiking options. Betsy, our transportation guru, organized drivers and guides. I communicated with the lodge and the visually impaired participants. We even trained three new guides for the occasion, one of them being my own husband, who was experiencing SRSFL for the first time. I was thrilled.

On a sunny Friday afternoon, eleven visually impaired hikers, three guide dogs and some nine guide/volunteers arrived at the Clair Tappaan Lodge, eagerly anticipating two glorious days in the mountains! Additional guides would be joining us the next day.

We were warmly greeted by friendly staff, and welcomed into the organized chaos that is Clair Tappaan. Clair Tappaan is the Sierra Club's flagship lodge. It is rustic and casual, it was built back in the 1930's, and is located at the top of Donner Pass, not far from our winter ski area. Its mission is to increase environmental awareness, foster community and promote eco-consciousness. This means that we all joined in for family-style meals, and helped out with all the various chores. This is all part of that organized chaos I mentioned.

For me, its split-level curving stairs were a bit of a brain-teaser when I first encountered them, but this was all part of the adventure. We all made ourselves as much at home as we could; some stayed in two-person cubicles, others in six or eight-person rooms with bunk beds, The staff could not have been more helpful. We met that evening to go over the possible hiking options, and we were off to a great start.

Then came Saturday! I awoke all excited, opened the door to take my dog out, and discovered that it was raining -- and I mean raining! I think my dog was as unhappy about this as I! Well, I think, this could be interesting! Then came the second interesting moment: according to the schedule, lunch was at 7:30 and breakfast was at 8. Actually, in addition to the two family-style meals, the lodge provided fixings for sack lunches, which we gathered at 7:30 to assemble. This was definitely organized chaos. Over breakfast, the rain increased. Some folks decided right away that they would wait it out in the lodge. Others chose to do whatever they had planned and head out. Two guides drove up that morning from Auburn to meet us, and were soaked through before we even saw them. While some of us sipped hot



chocolate in the lodge's library, others went out for a jaunt and came back completely waterlogged but happy. So here we were, all settling in for a day in the Clair Tappaan library, where, I am sure, very little reading got done.

We made the best of it in true SRSFL fashion. People reconnected, hiker Barney Jones got some good lessons in using his I-pad, some took naps, and we all hoped the weather would change. Some of us went into town to do some shopping. And just when we were all getting really tired of the rain, to our great surprise, snowflakes came tumbling out of the sky, creating a magical afternoon. We suddenly didn't need a refrigerator for our beverages, as the snow did the trick, and the dogs thought



Guide Laura and hiker Steve are off for a hike in the snow

they had just found Heaven. I think we had some six inches or more of the white stuff in a very short time. Now, I know that not every hiker thought it as magical as I, but we all came alive when it happened.

In our optimism, we assumed we would be hiking the next day, and so we

planned. As the snow fell, we reviewed the trails and ate as if we had hiked that day. We celebrated two birthdays with two delicious cakes, one of which had to be rescued after being unceremoniously knocked to the floor by one of the sighted guides. And yes, cake still tastes great even after it's lost all its shape.



Sing along with Vicki

Many of us capped off the evening by singing to the accompaniment of Pat Slauson' ukulele. Somehow, community gatherings and mountains always seem to spawn a sing-along of some kind. It took some of us back to the days of our youth, but then, so did the bunk beds.

Sunday morning dawned bright and clear, and I knew we were about to reach the top of the mountain, so to speak. We all separated into small groups and set out on our various hikes. The one thing all our hikes had in common is that we were, indeed, hiking in snow. A couple of folks managed it in sneakers, and we joked about renting snowshoes. For me, as we made our way up the snowy trail, I knew this is what I had come for, and it was sweet!

As we hiked, the sun and the snow were an amazing contrast, and I heard a number of people exclaim over the

beauty of the scene. I was thrilled to be guided on this day by my dear friend and new guide, Vans Koller, who guided me up Mount Shasta and was enjoying his introduction to SRSFL. Meanwhile, my husband, a new guide was guiding another hiker right behind me. I could not have been happier! We ate a picnic lunch sitting on a log in the snow, and thanks to technology, checked in with one of the other groups hiking a more adventurous trail. All was going well, and the views and sounds were spectacular! Coming back down from our ridge, the snow began to melt, and I was very grateful for my water-proof boots, and my guide dog just couldn't figure out how to get me around the puddles, since everything was one big puddle.

A third group did a little guide training while out and about, as we welcomed a new junior guide, Katie Plexico. I am told she did quite well, and she signed up to guide for winter, the winter we did not have.

When it was all said and done, I felt closer to this group than I had to any SRSFL group previously, had fabulously muddy boots, and vowed then and there to do it all again in 2014. As we prepared to return home, we continued to comment on the snow and my friend, Vans, summed it up simply: "Well, you are, after all, Sierra Regional Ski for Light!"

My thanks to all who made this such a great weekend, including hikers, guides, drivers, the staff at the Clair Tappaan Lodge and my teammate, Betsy Rowell. It took me back in time in so many ways, while moving SRSFL forward with what just might be a new annual tradition! Visit www.ctl.sierraclub.org for more information about Clair Tappaan lodge,

For more information on the 2014 outing, visit our web site: www.srsfl.org.

Now, for those who attended that "Clair Tappaan" weekend, the question remains: Was this a summer outing in winter? A winter event in the fall? One thing is clear: it was an absolutely magical weekend

FUND RAISING



The 2014 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 charter 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



Starting in Mid-July SRSFL will be selling the new improved 2015 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 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 them how much you appreciate their support by patronizing their business and supporting their other activities.

MANY THANKS

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

Active 20/30 Club No.1 of Sacramento
Adams Vending, Gold River, CA
Auburn Host Lions, Auburn, CA
Commerce Printing, Sacramento, CA
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(530) 9484 www.tdxc.com
Treat Box Bakery, Truckee, CA
(530) 587-6554

SUMMER ACTIVITIES



Check the SRSFL web page: www.srsfl.org to see what is happening throughout the summer

FALL OUTING

September 20-22, 2014

Hiking retreat weekend @ Zephyr Point, Zephyr Cove NV
Contact Vicki Post:
Phone: (415) 928-2711
E-mail: VickiPost@earthlink.net
or
Phone: 916 362-5557
E-mail: betsy.rowell2@gmail.com

2015 SRSFL SKI CALENDAR



SKI GUIDE TRAINING

Thursday, January 22, 2015

Evening guide training in Sacramento

Saturday, January 24, 2015

Evening guide training in Truckee

Sunday, January 25, 2015

On the snow training in Truckee

Contact Edie Lott, Guide Coordinator

Phone: (530) 582-5362

E-mail: thelotts@gmail.com

or

Phone: Vicki Post,

Guide Training coordinator

Phone: (415)-928-2711

E-mail: VickiPost@earthlink.net

SINGLE DAY SKI TGRIPS FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Saturday, January 24, 2015

Saturday, February 7, 2015

Saturday, March 21, 2015

Contact Betsy Rowell:

Phone: (916)-362-5557

E-mail: betssy.rowell2@gmail.com

23rd ANNUAL 3-DAY EVENT

February 28 to March 2, 2015

Contact Cindy Quintana:

Phone: (510)-483-2946

E-mail: CindyQ12345@sbcglobal.net

SRSFL BOARD

PRESIDENT David Hoffman
DavidHoffman1965@gmail.com

VICE PRESIDENT Pat Slauson
expsyscho0602@yahoo.com

TREASURER Jim Mrazek
banananote@aol.com

SECRETARY Mike Bittner
MPBittner@sbcglobal.net

MEMBER AT LARGE 1 Sylvia Reese
SylReese@gmail.com

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

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Bruce Johnson
ahoyskpr@aol.com



KEEP IN TOUCH.

SIERRA REGIONAL SKI FOR LIGHT

C/o Edie Lott

10435 Royal Crest

Truckee, CA 96161

Phone: 530 528-6392

E-mail: thelotts@tlpc.org

WE RE ON THE WEB
WWW.srsfl.org



WHO WE ARE

Sierra Regional Ski For Light (SRSFL) is an all volunteer, non-profit cross-country ski program for blind and visually impaired children and adults. Donations are tax-exempt under section (501)(c)(3) of the IRS code.

The program is a way for blind and visually impaired individuals to promote good health by being involved in a winter cross-country ski program and a summer program including hiking and water activities.

