



SIERRA REGIONAL SKI FOR LIGHT NEWSLETTER

Summer 2011

Volume 9, 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).

MEET THE SRSFL BOARD

PRESIDENT
Bruce Johnson
Gold River, CA



First things first...thanks for your vote of confidence by electing me your President for a second term.

Over the past two years I've tried to serve the *Sierra Regional Ski for Light* family well. Two years ago, I stepped forward, into my first term, with some basic ideas and went from there. Then, my goals were to increase youth skier participation, start re-building a cadre of youth guides, kick-start additional fundraising efforts (and results), revamp our website and keep you all well informed of our happenings. I'm pleased to report that all have been achieved but in many cases, not

by my own doing. Special thanks are needed to those who recruited our new, enthusiastic youth skiers...Margie Donovan and Betsy Rowell come to mind...I'm sure there are others. The addition of several excellent youth guides turned out to be a package deal...the sons brought their mothers along (or was it the other way around?) Fundraising has been very active and effective with Margie Donovan leading the individual contributor effort and Betsy leading the organization effort. Thanks to both, *Ski For Light* is indeed Politically Correct...we're GREEN! And then there's the website...Edie Lott's innovative wizardry, as our web guru, has achieved nothing short of marvelous results. Last year our guides were able to accomplish all their "paperwork" via the site; hopefully, our skiers will be able to do the same for the 2012 ski season. As for "happening awareness", I hope you have found my monthly writings during the ski season both informative and enjoyable. If all the above reflects the past, what do I see for the future?

As I write, there is a committee of your peers working on providing more clarity to our aging by-laws. As you read this, you may have already had the opportunity to vote on the proposed changes. If you did, thanks for participating in the doings of YOUR *Ski For Light*. Mentioning the By-law Committee leads me straight to one of my primary goals for this term. Don't be surprised if YOU are asked to chair or join a *Ski For Light* committee. True, "fun-on-the-snow" is, and should always be, at the top of our to-do list. However, it takes a lot of behind-the-scenes work to provide that fun. Stand back and take a critical look. Do you see what I see...the same names keep popping up as

the behind-the-scenes players? My goal is to change this by making **expanded member involvement** my goal number one. Simply stated, we need more cooks in the *Ski For Light* kitchen!

By necessity, many of my previous goals will need to be repeated. **Fundraising** is always ongoing and can be done by anyone reading this Newsletter. Without constant skier, guide and volunteer **recruitment** we would slowly melt away like Frosty. I'm personally going to concentrate on recruiting youth skiers and guides...but all are welcome. Contact Margie Donovan or me if you need some help in convincing a newbie to join us. My list could go on and on but you need to read the rest of this newsletter. Pay particular attention to YOUR new board members. There are some fresh faces there. Expanded member involvement? I'm on my way!

Please mark your calendars today so you don't miss any of our fun, fun, fun events.

One final thought: I've said it before and I'll say it again: Ski For Light is a great place to hang out! Thanks.

VICE PRESIDENT
Margie Donovan
Folsom, CA



To my SRSFL family, first of all, let me thank you for your vote of confidence in electing me as your Vice President. I am quite honored and I invite you to come to me with ideas that would help to grow and support this organization.

Now a bit about me—I have been skiing with SRSFL for about 12 years now. I have also attended the SFL international event four

times. I also do a lot of skiing and snowshoeing outside of the organization, as I have my own personal guide, RC Upham. In addition to skiing and snowshoeing, I enjoy tandem cycling and kayaking.

I graduated from San Francisco State with a Bachelor's in Recreation Therapy and a Master's in Rehabilitation Teaching and Special Education. Most of my career was with the Palo Alto and San Francisco VA Medical Centers in the field of blind rehabilitation. I have also done some college teaching and disability awareness consulting. I am very involved in advocacy work to make our world more accessible for people who are blind—just Google me.

In addition to serving on the SRSFL board, I also serve on the boards of the San Francisco Light House for the Blind, my home owner's association, and the Rolling Hills Blue Star Mothers of America. Yes, I have lots of energy and I believe in giving back to society. I am a hard worker who believes in fulfilling my commitments. Most importantly, I thoroughly enjoy playing and laughing.

Finally, my greatest pride of all is my 24 year old son, Jarrett, who is a sergeant in the United States Marine Corps.



TREASURER
Jim Mrazak
El Dorado Hills, CA



I grew up on the East Coast and came to California while in the Air Force and decided to stay! I went to Virginia Polytechnic Institute, (follow their football avidly). After college, I had a great military career. After that, worked for an oil company for seven years, did some bookkeeping for various entities, and got a real estate license. Now I own and manage some properties, do real estate, and work on staff for the Lake Tahoe Marathon. I hike, ski downhill, snowshoe, kayak, and run/jog.

SECRETARY
Mike Bittner
Sacramento, CA



My name is Mike Bittner. I have been an active (SRSFL) cross-country participant. I've been cross-country skiing since 1997 with SRSFL. Before this I downhill skied for 12 years starting in 1978. I live in Sacramento with my wife of 5 years, Pam, and work for the California State Teachers Retirement System as an analyst. When I'm not cross-country skiing I like to do other outdoor activities such as hiking and camping.



BOARD MEMBER # 1
Sharlene Wells
Las Angeles, CA



Hello, Everyone. I'm Sharlene, and I've been active in SRSFL for several years now, both as a beginning skier and snowshoer and as a member of the Board. I'm 63 and am looking forward to retiring from my position as a Legal Transcriber with the County of Los Angeles in March of 2012. I like "giving back" to organizations like SRSFL that have given me so much and I hope that, by participating on the Board, I can also thank that wonderful handful of people who have made this exciting, exhilarating and tremendous opportunity for blind and visually impaired folks to enjoy cross country-skiing and snowshoeing in such a beautiful setting. I hope to see all of you at Tahoe Donner in 2012.

BOARD MEMBER # 2
Betsy Rowell
Sacramento, CA



I'm Betsy. Some of you may have heard me referred to as the "MOTHER" of SRSFL. In 1993 when I ventured out in the rain to the office of the Secretary of State to apply for incorporation of SRSFL as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, I had no idea that it would become the program it is today. It is exciting to know we will soon be celebrating 20 years of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. All the hard work of

organizers, volunteers, and skiers has made my dream come true. It gives me great pleasure to see others enjoy what I have enjoyed for years.

When not shuffling applications for skiers, organizing transportation, fundraising and coordinating housing, I enjoy kayaking, hiking, camping and traveling.

Four years ago I joined the Sacramento Valley Sertoma Club. The club holds one BIG fundraiser a year and that happens to be an Oktoberfest. This will be my third year serving as the Oktoberfest chair. Sertoma has been a long time supporter of SRSFL.

I look forward to working with the new SRSFL Board and continuing to keep our organization moving forward.

PAST PRESIDENT
Vicki Post
San Francisco, CA



Hello to all of you. As immediate Past President, I have the pleasure of continuing to help guide SRSFL through all the twists and turns of its ongoing growth. In my current capacity, I love being

able to contribute my own vision and ideas, while helping others to blossom and bring new life to the organization I love. When I'm not working on by-laws, elections and the like, I ski when I can, hike and walk whenever possible, take part in social justice and other activities with a progressive group of Franciscans and still eat way too much dark chocolate. I am a spiritual counselor and a singer/songwriter, and I look forward to being part of this new Board, preparing for our twentieth anniversary celebration; ah yes, a good mix of work and play!

A 20 YEAR CELEBRATION
By Betsy Rowell

It may be hard for some to realize, but the 2012 ski season will mark two decades of Sierra Regional Ski For Light. It began as an idea among attendees at Ski For Light International in Colorado and evolved into the wonderful program that we know now. It was not easy or effortless to make all this happen, but with the help of many dedicated individuals, it came to be. Now it is time to celebrate our success and have a party. Nothing is planned yet, but with so many inspired participants we are bound to come up with ideas to make it happen.



MY CAREER AS A SKI GUIDE
or
LIFE IN THE FAST LANE
WITH BETSY
by Monte Rowell

It all started for me in February, 1981, when my friend, Charlie Beazell, called and asked me if I would like to join him and some others on a Sierra Club cross-country ski trip. You all know Charlie, he and his wife Kay have been SRSFL volunteers for many years, providing great meals at the three-day event. Charlie picked me up in his humungous blue station wagon, which was famous for carrying vast amounts of skis, boats, gear and passengers. We met the Sierra Club group at Arden Fair, and, having merely 5 people in the car



already, Charlie announced, "I can take a couple more over here." So two young ladies climbed into the car, one of whom was a tall blonde named Betsy. You might say she made a lasting impression on me; we have been married now for nearly 26 years.

We skied at the old Donner Summit, and near the end of the day, Charlie said, "Let's ski down the old Donner Road to Donner Lake." The road was unplowed at that time and there was no vehicle traffic. So 5 of us began the 3-mile downhill stretch. I had just recently taken up Nordic skiing in addition to downhill, and I was cussing the lack of edges on these strange skinny skis. Betsy was a beginner and was concerned about skiing off the road into oblivion. She had mentioned something about being visually impaired, but she got around so well that I thought she was kidding. Sometime later when we were out to dine, I noticed she was holding the menu upside down, and realized she wasn't kidding after all.

As I got to know Betsy, I learned that she was involved in a section of the Sierra Club called Inner City Outings (ICO), an outreach program originally targeting disadvantaged youth. Betsy had started a new group within the section which provided outings for blind and visually impaired persons. It seems that when she went on the regular Sierra Club trips, she had trouble with tripping over obstacles in the trail, finding flat rocks in stream crossings, etc. When some of the old time members found out that she was legally blind, they feared she might get hurt, get lost or cause a delay of the group. Those familiar with the Betsy personality know that the most certain way to get Betsy to accomplish something is to tell her that she can't do it. So she gathered up all the visually impaired folks she could, and organized trips doing the same activities that the rest of the club did. Later, the Sierra Club gave her a couple of awards for these

efforts, and many of the old time members became the sighted guides.

I, of course, became a guide, and one of the first trips I was on was a downhill ski trip to a bunny hill at Squaw Valley called Ski Any Mountain. My skier had skied before, and had a good snowplow and a good right turn. His left turn left much to be desired, though. A typical run went like "Turn right, now left. More left, left." "But I am turning left." "No, you are going straight. Go left, left, LEFT." The drama ended when my skier managed to wipe out a couple of the crossed bamboo poles that defined the right hand boundary of the trail.

After that, we stuck to cross-country skiing. At first it was like the Sierra Club, breaking trail in deep snow and going through the woods. Guiding was primitive; I once put sleigh bells on my pole so my skier would know where I was. Once I thought my skier had vanished, only to find him in a deep tree well. If a potential guide was not a good skier, he/she was allowed to learn while guiding. We soon found that this was somewhat like pairing a novice equestrian with a horse that had not been ridden, and letting them learn together.

Guiding improved when a few guides and skiers went to Ski For Light International and did track skiing. They brought back good techniques for guiding, and skiing was done thereafter at cross-country resorts which had set tracks. A guide manual was prepared, and blind folks had a thing they could do and really enjoy. Day trips of cross-country track skiing became the winter activity. Guides were required to be able to ski at a level higher than their skiers.

In the winter of 1992, a few attendees of Ski For Light International were returning from Granby, Colorado to Sacramento by train. We got together and decided to start up a Sierra Regional program modeled after the

International program. The focus would be a three-day ski event. It was a tedious process, with a lot of paper work, such as writing by-laws, Articles of Incorporation and getting recognized as a non-profit organization. The first event was scheduled in 1993, but organizational matters were in such disarray that some gave up on it. However, Betsy was determined that the idea would not fail, so we put aside the paper work and went to Tahoe Donner for 3 days as a group of friends, 7 skiers and 7 guides.

Things got much better in the following years. SRSFL was incorporated as a non-profit organization and recognized by the IRS under section 501(c)(3). We wrote by-laws, refined the guide manual and gave guide training sessions. The Sierra Club connection faded out and the cross-country day trips were taken over by SRSFL, to add to the 3-day event. SRSFL soon became the envy of other Regionals and of Ski For Light International.

At one of the SFL events in Colorado, Betsy was awarded a trip to the Ridderrenn, in recognition of her efforts in starting up Sierra Regional. The Ridderrenn is an annual ski event in Beitostollen, Norway, and is the mother of SFL in this country. It attracts about 1000 participants from around the world, and includes not only the blind, but also those with many other disabilities. Everyone in Norway is familiar with it, the Royal Family participates in it, and even the military is involved. Guide training is a several hour session in a very large auditorium. They don't have an on-the-snow session, perhaps because most Norwegians seem to be born with tiny skis on their feet.

I went along to Beitostollen at my own expense and joined the scene. When they held the guide training, I dutifully attended, hoping to acquire some pearls of wisdom straight from the source. When I returned to

the hotel room, Betsy asked "What did you learn at the guide training?" "Not much" I replied. "The whole thing was given in Norwegian". Unfortunately my Norwegian vocabulary is limited to "Takk" (Thank you) and "Uff da" (Aw, shucks). During the event Betsy placed first in her class and won a trophy for the 20 K race.

Guide training has nevertheless progressed well, and along the way we have been blessed with quite a few really excellent guides. Skiers have thus been able to fulfill their potential in a challenging sport. Guides, including myself, have found that they derive as much benefit from guiding as do the skiers from being guided. Personally, I tend to be rather introverted, and guiding has forced me to think first and foremost about the person I am guiding. Guides must put themselves mentally within their skiers and make quick decisions for their safety and pleasure.

Sometimes I ask Betsy, should I retire now? After all, I have been at the 3-day Event for 19 straight years, I am 84 years old, my balance isn't as good since my stroke and I have a pace maker. Nearly all the skiers can go faster than I, and besides, I have developed macular degeneration in spite of all assurances that this blindness thing isn't catching. But then I am reminded that next year is the 20th Event and it will probably be a big one. Often there is a need for a guide willing to putter around the meadow with a total beginner. And then there is always snowshoeing. Besides, if your macular gets worse, you can simply switch bibs.

So, we will see. Maybe just one more year. I suppose it is better to die with one's ski boots on than in a nursing home.



**SRSFL: THE REGIONAL
WITH TLC**
by Judy Wilkerson
San Leandro, CA



Judy and Monte S. head out for a ski

I've had the pleasure of attending four regional SFL events.

Each is unique. At the Black Hills Regional in Deadwood, South Dakota the town treats us like royalty during "ski week", many restaurants offering low-cost or even free meals. The casinos offer lots of action, and happy hour extends long into the evening. At the Pennsylvania Regional, we take over the entire Sons of Norway Lodge near Sherman, PA, and with the place to ourselves we are a huge happy family with great home-cooked meals and long evenings sitting around the fabulous wooden bar, carved in the shape of a Viking ship's prow. At the New England Regional, we can ski right out the door at Craftsbury Commons, and we spend long evenings in the lounge assigned to us: playing scrabble, holding silent auctions, and always in one corner, the book group shares everything we've been reading over the past year.

I was definitely curious to see how SRSFL would demonstrate its own unique qualities. My long-time friend, Betsy Rowell, had been asking me to come for years, and this was finally the year. I'd say the thing that sets this regional event apart is what I'll call the TLC

factor! I saw all kinds of tender loving care from the moment I was met literally on the train platform by Jack Wadman from the **Sacramento Valley Sertoma Club** and driven to the hotel. But that was just the start. My goody bag given to me by Kay Bezell had enough snacks in it for a small platoon to share. I swore I wouldn't eat any of it, but each evening I'd find myself just a little hungry before (and after) dinner and I'd hit those snacks, having the list of the contents in Braille! Well, TLC indeed!

It was TLC to find a whole troop of guides greeting us when our bus pulled into the ski area on Saturday morning. I had a choice of either skiing or snow shoeing, now that's TLC! Jon Courtway made sure my luggage was waiting for me in my room when I arrived at the hotel that evening. And the TLC of the wonderful guides is awesome. Judy, my guide the first day, believed me when I said I didn't need to ski the meadow; we went to Lion's leap and the valley instead.

On Sunday, Monte (the other Monte) did believe me when I said we could ski the dippers, and wouldn't you know, I fell a lot. Oh well! And on Monday I skied with Judith Sneed whom I had recently met for the first time at SFL International. I've definitely made a new friend and we plan to stay in touch.

The fine catered dinners including the beautiful cake donated by a local bakery where the food was delicious and healthy made me feel totally pampered.

The skiing, making new friends and visiting with old ones, and the hard work involved in putting on the event made the entire experience so much fun. Next year is the landmark 20th anniversary of SRSFL, and I'll definitely be there for more of that TLC.

A GREAT VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

**By Gabriel Hojman
Sacramento, CA**

My volunteer experience at the Sierra Regional Ski For Light was definitely a great one! When I first arrived, I really didn't know what to expect. I used to always picture volunteer work as grueling and unexciting, so I felt a little intimidated at first. On the first day they assigned me to take care of the guide dogs in a hotel room while the skiers went on the slopes. As an owner of two Labradors, I felt like I had the proper experience but I certainly didn't expect to handle so many dogs in one room! At one point we had about seven or eight dogs running around and I wondered whether we could really handle them all. Eventually they quieted down and relaxed and I was able to start a conversation with the other folks in the small hotel room. I got to know Pam and Bill, Steve Emerson and two local ladies from a church in Truckee. They were all very friendly people and loved dogs just as much as I did!



Pam was the group leader and she did a great job of keeping us on track and organized. She made sure we took the dogs out for a walk every hour or two, and that all the leashes were organized. When it came to walking the dogs, we definitely took the long route around the large hotel complex to make sure they got plenty of outdoor time. I was glad that Pam and her husband made sure there was coffee for the volunteers every morning.

At times when it got real quiet, most of us talked endlessly about politics, our jobs and even about the issue in Japan that happened that weekend. We definitely killed

a lot of time conversing, and we all seemed to have benefited from it.

We all finished around 4:00 pm and by that time, all the dogs made their way back to their owner's rooms. We were also released back to our rooms for a short break since we would all meet back in the conference room for dinner. The dinner was definitely a great time to meet everyone involved in the event: the organizers, skiers, guides and all the other volunteers. The whole group was very happy and social which I thought was very warm and inviting. I was very surprised to see how much the skiers praised the volunteers, because to me it seemed more like fun than work. I was glad to know that we were helpful during the event. I was even more surprised when I was handed a badge from Sierra Regional Ski For Light for my work. I really felt appreciated.

The experience was definitely a great one and I felt like I was becoming part of a wholesome community. I now feel more open to join other volunteering efforts and really help out the communities I live in.

FUN ON THE SNOW **by Cristian Rodriguez** **Age 14** **Reno, NV**



my mobility teachers and other friends from the program. I had lots of fun even though I fell a bunch of times.

This year the mobility teachers didn't take us but my mom did. In January we invited two

Dear Sierra Regional Ski For Light: This is my second year going skiing with you; last year I had so much fun doing this with

other kids from the mobility program that wanted to go too, Patrick and Michael. It was awesome again. Patrick and Michael skied. Even my mom skied but I did snow shoeing. It was so much fun. Yesterday, February 12, we came back for the second time this year. This time my brother Jordan came too. Patrick, Michael, me and my Mom had so much fun. I hope we can do this every year because I think it is a good experience for us and the guides always help us and teach us new things. Thank you again for inviting us and I hope to go next year.

MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION **By Jill Guilbeau** **Antelope, CA**



My New Year's resolution for 2011 was to get out more often and meet new people. My son is getting older and I knew that I really could use some "me" time. An old friend told me about a group called SRSFL. After a couple of phone calls and many questions, I decided to participate on one of the trips. I chose the 3-day trip. I am so glad I did.

I have to say, the morning of the trip I was a little nervous. I was afraid that I would be all by myself being that I didn't know anyone. I also had not skied in over 10 years and I didn't think I could keep up with the others. The volunteer driver who picked me up was very nice. He made me feel right at home. As the day went along, it all got better. Everybody was very friendly and helpful. The ski guides were absolutely wonderful. They were very patient and fun to be with. The other members of the group were wonderful as well. I got along with everyone and even made some new friends. The hotel at which we stayed was nice and easy to get around in. The staff was extremely helpful and made me feel welcome. At the

end of the trip I was asked by several people if I would be along next year. I can definitely tell you. I sure will. I even plan on going on a day trip or two. I can't thank all involved enough for making that trip happen. I met some amazing people during the weekend. It was something I needed and really enjoyed. I will see you all next year.

GUIDEING AT THE GREAT SKI RACE 2011 **By Sharon Fong, Truckee, CA and** **Shawna Ramsey, Reno, NV**



Shawna, Marilyn and Sharon,

Sharon Fong and Shawna Ramsey participated in the 30 kilometer Great Ski Race this spring as co-guides for Marilyn Gerhard, who has skied it in the past as a sighted racer. They started at 8AM with Walter Raineri and Catherine Black to much fanfare; dozens of skiers shouted encouragement as they passed. Shawna joked that Marilyn had the biggest fanbase in history. The weather forecast was dicey ... overcast with snow flurries and wind ... but the snow was soft and predictable without any ice. Marilyn wanted to ski the final descent rather than walking it, and navigated well, down the fall line in a deep snowplow, avoiding the bodies of less fortunate skiers. She wore a huge smile from the crest of Starratt Pass to the finish, always ready to ski faster than her guides would allow her on the downhill. All three of them had a

wonderful day skiing; Sharon and Shawna would like to encourage other SRSFL skiers to participate in the future. The race takes 4 to 6 hours but is a very satisfying pursuit for a Sunday morning.

SKIING WITH SRSFL **by Andy Thom, age 17** **Sacramento, CA**

I have been skiing with Sierra Regional Ski for Light for as many years as I can remember, probably since I was seven or eight. I am glad to say that I have gotten much better with the help of the encouraging and enthusiastic guides I've had over the years. This past season was at a new location. However, since I had a guide who knew the area well, ... it was a lot of fun. I have better sight than many of the skiers and less than others, but for a group of people to come together to help make skiing for the blind possible is an amazing and incredible event. Since I will be turning 18 in January 2012, I will hopefully participate in the 3-day skiing event for the first time. As a young adult I plan on encouraging youth and others to enjoy the same opportunity through SRSFL that I have had.



ONE VERY SURPRISED **SKI GUIDE** **by Margie Donovan**



RC and skier Steve head out for a day of skiing

RC Upham was one very surprised ski guide when he was presented with the California Council of the Blind's Humanitarian Award at their annual meeting on May 14, 2011, in Sacramento. He was presented this award for his many years of service to the blind and visually impaired community. He started his volunteer work over 13 years ago when Betsy approached him in a parking lot because she saw that he had a canoe and a van. A simple day of canoeing and he soon began volunteering with Inner City Outings, taking blind and visually impaired participants canoeing.

Later, RC was again approached by Betsy to be a ski guide for Sierra Regional Ski For Light. He has been guiding for 13 years.

After he and Margie Donovan became a couple, she invited him to volunteer at Enchanted Hills Camp for the blind and visually impaired on Mount Veeder in Napa, California.

As a result of all of RC's volunteer work, a number of people from SRSFL and EHC nominated him for this coveted award which was read aloud during the banquet on and even though he heard his name, he was dumfounded to learn that the moderator was speaking about him. The award read:

**California Council of the Blind
Humanitarian Award
To**

Robert C "RC" Upham

for his volunteer service as teacher, coach, mentor, guide, driver, philosopher and door opener for people who are blind or visually impaired to recreations pursuits such as skiing, canoeing, and camping, dedicating countless hours to such organizations as Sierra Regional Ski For Light and Enchanted Hills Camp.

Presented this fourteenth day of May, 2011
in the city of Sacramento, California.

**CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING:
AN ADVENTURE AND A
STEPPING STONE
by Pam Drake
Visalia, CA**

I was blinded at four months of age in an auto accident. In addition to totally losing my sight, there were other effects which only became evident as I grew into adulthood.

First, the severe head injury which took my vision resulted in brain damage. Though minimal, I have always had problems with finding my way in



I'm on skis

unfamiliar locations and my distance judgment means I may even bump into a wall in my own home if I'm not paying attention or make too sharp a turn as I walk from one room to another. Balance has been a problem as well. Over the past few years I have been taking instruction in Pilates and working with a physical therapist

to help me learn how to properly position my feet, strengthen my legs, and move more smoothly in a straighter path when walking.

I have made progress. On-coming drivers are less likely to honk and yell, "Straight! Straight!" I fall now and then, but am no longer sporting skinned knees as I did before the Pilates and the arthroscopic surgery to repair torn tissue and clean debris left by too many falls.

I have been sharing my life and home with Dave McElroy, a regular participant at SRSFL events for many years. Until this year I had no interest in skiing, figuring I would never be able to stand for a minute on skis with my poor balance and weak ankles.

In January, 2011, I decided to push my newfound stamina one more notch. I would try snowshoeing. I didn't know how I would do at it, but decided the trip with Dave to Truckee would be fun, and I'd have a better idea of how my stamina might be improving. My first efforts were rocky, but during a long talk with Guide Coordinator Edie Lott I explained my spatial issues. She decided I should be with two guides rather than one. One person in front and one behind me, a procedure later changed to having one person on each side, helped me to stay on a straighter path. This didn't avoid falls but it did mean I stood less chance of contacting un-groomed, uneven snow.

While finding snowshoeing a little harder than I had expected, and learning that one could in fact fall, I was curious about the sensation of skiing. I doubt anyone thought I would actually get up on skis. I decided to try anyway. I figured that if I could even experience a step or two on skis I would have an idea of what skis were, how they felt, and that would be enough. So it happened that on the afternoon of March 12, 2011, I put on a pair of skis for the first time and cautiously moved onto the snow. I took

small steps, and am not yet comfortable with the thought of sliding along at anything more than a turtle's pace. I don't know if I will ever graduate beyond the lesson area. That's not important right now. The fact is that I've actually skied!

At this point I had intended to mention the names of all the volunteers who were willing and patient enough to work with me. As I mentally reviewed the three events I realized I might leave out someone. Rather than risk that, I will simply say to all who helped me, thanks to each and every one of you. You know who you are, and I appreciate your help in making this new adventure possible. I think of it not only as a new adventure, but a sort of stepping stone toward easier and safer movement.

I WILL BE BACK
by Clark Smith
Lincoln, CA



As a new guide, the way I was treated was outstanding. The training was thorough, the goodie bag was a surprise, the dinner and gift were excellent and last but not least the people were most welcoming.

Probably the best thing I got out of the experience at the Three Day Event was an understanding of and appreciation for our skiers' handicap--very little holds them back. Oh!! I had fun too. I will be back.



LEARNING TO BE A GUIDE
by Mary Corley
Truckee, CA



Training to be a ski guide for the visually impaired made me see skiing in a whole new light.

My unofficial ski guide training began in January with a day trip to Tahoe Nordic Center. I was fortunate enough to shadow Catherine, a fantastic guide, and Marilyn, an exceptional skier. These two ladies had already skied together and worked as a team negotiating curves, bridges, and crowded sections of the trail. It was quite inspiring!

One of the first exercises in guide training is to put on a blindfold and ski around a relatively flat loop. I immediately became aware of every change in slope and snow texture. It was difficult to gauge my speed. Skiing in the tracks was now comforting and not restrictive.

Next, I tried my hand at guiding with the assistance of an experienced trainer. I quickly developed a huge amount of respect for trees and other immovable objects. My volunteer students, Cindy and Margie, were brave and hardy souls who never complained when I had to yell, "SIT".

Last, I was paired with Nellie and Bea, two of the nicest, most fun, and patient skiers who were very kind when my instructions were less than stellar. I was having so much fun skiing that at times, I had to remind myself that I was guiding, and not just out enjoying myself. I am looking forward to next year's ski season and to skiing with my new friends and meeting others.

BECOMING A JUNIOR GUIDE **by Sam Castro** **Truckee, CA**



When heading out for my first day of guide training with Ski For Light, I was incredibly nervous. I kept picturing myself leading a skier to his or her doom. With

these horrible images in my mind's eye, I was thrilled with the gradual and gentle pace at which I was taught to be in full control of the visually impaired skier. Perhaps I could do this after all.

My first skier, Cindy, was an experienced skier. She was a great source of knowledge on how to direct a visually impaired skier so they felt comfortable on the hill. The Ski For Light guide I was paired up with was very patient with my mistakes and was happy to fix any misconceptions I had.

For my second weekend with Ski For Light I got to ski with Michael, a fellow kid who, like me, had a love of the faster downhill and needed very little guiding himself. We climbed up and skied down many a hill that day, but fortunately for me, Michael was very open to multiple snack sessions at the lodge.

He was a cool kid and was great to hang out with. For the first time I saw the full extent of how fun guiding for Ski For Light could be.



Sam (far right) with Joseph, Walter and another Guide are off for a day of skiing

During the final three-day guiding event, two of my fellow guides and I were paired up with Josef and Walter. These two really gave me a workout and I got the full experience and joy of guiding. It is a great feeling being able to successfully guide a skier down a twisting trail.

For two days Josef and Walter pushed us harder and faster than I usually go. We skied down into Euer Valley and up into the higher hills. It was a great experience and I look forward to guiding again next year.

FUND RAISING



The 2010 – 2011 SRSFL ski season has come to a close, BUT fundraising goes on year around. We are seeking supporters, donors and cash. All money

raised goes directly into the program for transportation, scholarships and other expenses, and to keep the cost down for all. If you know of someone who may like to help out in this way, contact **Bruce Johnson at 916-858-8028.**

RECRUITMENT

Just as the SRSFL program depends on a steady flow of fundraising dollars to keep things running, it depends on a steady flow of guides, volunteers, skiers and youth to make it possible at all. The recruiting of such dedicated persons should come from us all, as we spread the word of the benefits of the program to others. If you would like more information about the SRSFL program contact Bruce Johnson at **916 858-8020.**

A SRSFL THANK YOU

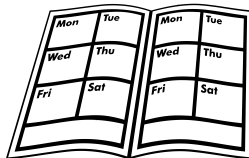
SRSFL would like to take this opportunity to thank the many organizations and businesses for their continued support of the cross-country ski program. Please show them how much you appreciate their support by patronizing their business or supporting their other activities. **MANY THANKS** also to the individual donors who continued to support SRSFL this past year.

Adams Vending, Gold River, CA
Auburn Host Lions, Auburn, CA
CLIF BAR, Berkeley, CA
Commerce Printing, Sacramento, CA
Folsom Lake Lions Club, Folsom, CA
Embarcadero Lions, Sacramento, CA
49er Ski Club www.49erskiclub.com
Land Park Lions Club, Sacramento, CA
Lions Education Foundation
Papa Murphy's Pizza, Gold River, CA
Sacramento Valley Sertoma Club
Sacramento Turn Verein Actives,
Safeway, Truckee, CA
Sunrise/Citrus Heights Kiwanis Club
Tahoe X/C, Tahoe City, CA
www.tahoex/c.org
Tahoe Donner Cross Country, Truckee, CA
www.tdxc.com
The Treat Box Bakery, Truckee, CA
Twin Peaks Catering, Kings Beach, CA
www.twinpeakscatering.com

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

FALL GATHERING

November 5, 2011
Gold River, CA



For more detailed information on the fall gathering, guide training and the scheduled ski trip, contact: Bruce Johnson at (916) 858-8020 or Vicki Post at (415) 928-2711.

GUIDE TRAINING:

CLASS ROOM

Thursday, January 19, 2012
Gold River, CA
Saturday, January 21, 2012
Truckee, CA

ON THE SNOW

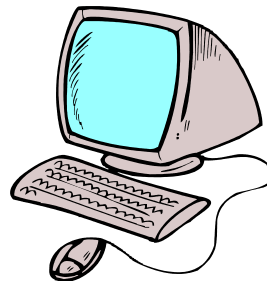
Saturday, January 22, 2012
Tahoe Donner Cross Country, Truckee CA

DAY TRIPS FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS:

Saturday, January 21, 2012
Saturday February 11, 2012
Tahoe X/C, Tahoe City, CA.

3-DAY EVENT - 20th ANNIVERSARY

March 10-12, 2012
Tahoe-Donner Cross Country
Truckee, CA

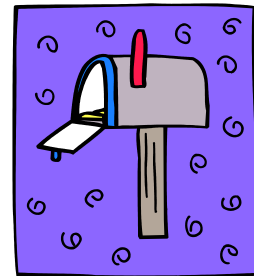


WE ARE ON THE WEB

Keep in touch with
SRSFL at
www.srsfl.org

SRSFL MAILING ADDRESS

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Truckee, CA 96161
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thelotts@tlpc.org





SRSFL 2011



Jim and Shawna are ready to ski



Bill and Monte R. guiding since 1993 are looking forward to celebrating 20 years of SRSFL



Destiny and Edie



Youth on the snow



What a difference a bus makes