



Sierra Regional Ski For Light NEWSLETTER

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WHO WE ARE

Sierra Regional Ski For Light (SRSFL) is an all-volunteer, nonprofit 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 provides blind and visually impaired individuals with the opportunity to challenge themselves physically and mentally, learn new skills and to enjoy good health, all by being involved in a winter cross-country ski and a summer program.

WHAT A WONDERFUL 3-DAY WINTER EVENT

By
Edie Lott, SRSFL President, Truckee,
CA

After two years of covid and two years of blizzards we finally held a winter three-day event and what an event it was! All the preparation and work were more than worth it when I watched Yerald, who had never touched snow before, kick and glide down the tracks. The happy faces everywhere told me I was called to do



President Edie on skis

this. I want to thank everyone who helped make this event possible. After twenty years of volunteering for Sierra Regional Ski For Light I continue to be amazed at the joy this little nonprofit brings to all it touches including me!

A UNFORGETTABLE FIRST EXPERIENCE

BY

Yerald Medina, West Sacramento, CA

My First Snow Experience:

Recently, I had the opportunity to experience snow for the first time, and it was thanks to the excellent guidance of Jean. She is an experienced and patient instructor from SRSFL. From the moment I put on my skis, I knew I was in good hands. Jean explained each step clearly and concisely, which made me feel comfortable and secure on the slopes.



Guide Jean and Skier Yerald

What impressed me most about Jean was her ability to make everything seem easy and fun. Her sense of humor and enthusiasm were contagious, and soon I found myself laughing and enjoying the learning process. Thanks to her experience and dedication, I was able to overcome my fears and enjoy the thrill of gliding through the snow.

My experience with SRSFL was truly enriching, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have met Jean and learned from her.

Without a doubt, I would love to participate in future experiences with SRSFL and continue improving my skills on the snow. Jean's patience, kindness, and professionalism are an example to follow,

and I am sure I would recommend her guidance to anyone looking to learn how to ski.

THE ADVENTURES OF A KANSAN AND A COLORADAN IN TRUCKEE, CA

By

Tina Jensen, Edora, KA

One afternoon in early January, I received a text from my dear friend since the fourth grade, Karen Shrawder, who was also one of the 14 participants in the Ski for Light event held from March 8-10 in Truckee. Our birthdays are three days apart, and we both turn 55 this year, so she invited me to take part in this skiing/snow-shoeing journey. When we were in high school, we participated in an annual down-hill ski trip coordinated by a teacher for the visually impaired, and it was an



Guide Eric and Skier Tina

incredible experience, so after reminiscing, praying, and extending an Invitation of my own, I accepted her invitation. We were trying to decide whether to go to Florida to swim with the dolphins or go skiing. As we were discussing the options, I recalled that Eric, a running guide and friend whom I met while visiting my family in Florida, used to guide for the national Ski for Light event in Colorado. While running together, we discussed the hope that we could ski together one day. Eric now lives in Colorado, so I have not been able to run with him for a couple of years. When I shared the possibility of skiing in California, he was enthusiastic about it. When Karen made the decision to go to Truckee, so did we.

As it turned out, Eric's guiding adventure started well before we reached the ski trails. We invited him to join us for a birthday dinner at, of all places, The Melting Pot, a restaurant serving primarily fondue. He patiently guided me through the dipping and flipping of tidbits of treats in melted cheese or various sauces or chocolate. That is an art and not as simple as it may sound.

On the day that the skiing part of our journey began, I boarded the bus and began to meet new friends. Everyone was so friendly and welcoming to the "foreigners" from KS and CO. Lisa, the bus driver, showed such kindness and attentiveness. All of the coordinators and volunteers just seemed to blend in with everyone and enjoy themselves right along with the participants. Their presence and camaraderie meant a great deal to me. Betsy, who cannot ski anymore, made an impression on me. She was simply present to us each day as we gathered to depart for the ski trails. Her warm interactions with me each day provided encouragement. I think our hurry-scurry; competitive culture often loses sight of the value of being present to one another in this way. I am thankful to Betsy and others who just took the time to greet and encourage us along the way.

Skiing proved to be a bigger challenge for me than I expected. I am used to down-hill skiing, and my balance is now a bit impaired because of a serious accident I was involved in five years ago. I expected the terrain to be flatter, and I struggled to maintain balance going down-hill on cross country skis. The ground and I became well acquainted, and Eric was very patient with me as I struggled to learn. I felt like I was starting over. Eric and I were able to communicate honestly and directly about our challenges and began to figure out some strategies, especially on the final day of the trip. I believe that this communication between participant and guide is key

.
Another key for me was sharing experiences with other skiers. I received excellent advice from other participants who used to interact with the ground as much as I found myself doing. They

provided encouraging and helpful suggestions.

It is impossible for me to separate my spiritual journey from my day-to-day experiences. I must admit that there were moments when I felt myself about to fall that I became a bit fearful. God was reminding me that He was there and to do everything I could to hold on to Him and trust Him. Life's journey involves slipping and sliding around, losing the tracks, falling, and bruising for sure, but it also involves giving up a strong need to control everything, trusting, and rising from the ground in the arms of God. I am thankful to Eric, who gave of his time and financial resources to travel to CA to meet me. He guided both on and off the trails and even went to Mass with me. He was open to my guiding suggestions, and I hope I was open to his guidance and instruction.

I am thankful to all of the guides and volunteers who give their time each year. I was blessed to be a part of an enthusiastic group of people who encouraged one another to get out and move at whatever level each was ready for! I need to see what God has in store, but I would love to consider another trip to Truckee in the near future

A DAY TO REMEMBER ON THE SNOW

By

Robert Edwards, Rancho Cordova, CA

I was unsure of how I would be able to ski with low vision let alone that I am missing my right leg. I had no experience skiing before but loved the hiking we did the previous year with your program. I was most impressed with the help the guides provided. They were both experienced visual impairments and individuals with amputations. I had no problem getting up on skis . Their instruction was clear and easy to follow. I was so excited I decided to ski under shades, for my last lap. This experience has motivated me to attend any adaptive sports I can find. I even went

downhill skiing. Thank you for everything you and your organization do.

A HAPPY WEEKEND

By
Ron Vigil, Sacramento, CA

From start to finish and literally from top to bottom, one of the greatest weekends of my life was going hiking in Truckee this past August, with SRSFL, and I

almost forgot to mention the great food. The list keeps growing the more I reflect on the awesomeness of my guide, and the great company camaraderie, and everything else that goes along with a group of people getting together. I would say it is a once in a lifetime opportunity but fortunately it is much more than that. It happens on an annual basis, and besides now I am looking forward to snow skiing this winter, also, a 1st for me. I would like to give a big thanks from the bottom of my heart to all who participated and put together a great weekend of hiking, and just hanging with other blind people and again, a hat is off to all of the sighted people who volunteered their time. I will end by saying that because of my Hiking weekend I am now going to play Beep Baseball.



Skier Ron with guides

A HIKING WEEKEND TO REMEMBER

By
Linda Sutfin, Sacramento, CA

Come Hike or Walk with Me

Val Gal implied we should go hiking

An accessible group may be our liking

Sierra Regional Ski for Light can hook us up with guides to show us the trails

They are experienced and prepared so nobody fails

The plants and trees are plenty and lush
The air fresh, renewing your blush
You may hear the melodies of birds or the chatter of small critters
A pleasing distraction from your jitters and bitters

No matter what your fitness level is, light, medium, or advanced,
you're missing out if you don't take the chance
The guides are friendly, ones you want to know!
They are easy to stop and know when to go

After your return to the lodging
You can engage in other ways to begin some dislodging
Relaxation in the jacuzzi or play in the pool
Either may be just the tool
Grabbing a drink or appetizer at a place nearby
Whatever the indulge, no need to justify

A local parish may also delight you with some of the meals
You may get to and from by a bus with large wheels
Whether it's a wine down or instilling some power, you won't be
without a clean towel and a shower
Sleeping accommodations IS not an event
No tree burrows or tents
Don't be like me, who took too long to go on this weekend
Give it a chance, you won't regret it!

A WEEKEND OF JOY

By

Valerie Ries-Lerman, Sacramento, CA

Scenes of wonder greet those with or without usable vision, as the
trails bring the scent of pines, with a light breeze through our hair.
We feel the terrain under our feet, as the sun boldly appears
between clouds, reminding us we are lucky we dressed in layers.

Our guides, knowledgeable in the natural history of our Sierra locale, educate us on the flora and fauna of our emerging forest expedition.

Ever think about hiking? Whether you're raring to go, or like some of us, dare I say it, couch potatoes, there are trails for you. Sierra Regional Ski for Light summer hiking group, is tailored to your individual needs and preferences.

As a low vision person who cannot drive, access to the wonders of nature, in the great outdoors is rarely possible. But thanks to SRSFL, these trips are something magical that has opened up a whole new world for me.

Although hiking was our understood stated goal, the experience blossomed for me before we even got to the trails. Meeting other blind or visually impaired people, we connected immediately. Volunteers who assisted us as needed, were friendly and knowledgeable.

Perhaps you might wonder, how were the accommodations, etc.? Quite impressive, with catered meals that were to die for. For those who might like to become more involved in their community, especially in such a meaningful way, why not consider donating some time or resources to such a fine group? Hope to see you next time!

MY RETURN TO SRSFL

By

Christine Smith, Redlands, CA

I flew on Southwest Airlines from southern CA to Sacramento CA to attend the SRSFL summer 2024 event. It was blistering hot at about 100 degrees. I took an Uber to the Fairfield Inn in Rancho Cordova where I joined the group. I was excited to hike in the mountains and get out of the heat in both northern and southern CA.

I had attended SRSFL in the Winter of 1994 and it was long overdue and time to return. I've been retired for almost 3 years from a 38-year career as a psychiatric social worker.

Saturday morning, we took a bus to Truckee. It was only about 76 degrees at about 6500 feet of elevation. We started hiking right away. My partner, Carrie and I, went into the woods to keep cool. We caught up with other hikers along the way. Dinner was catered by a local restaurant. After dinner we went back to the motel and I, for one, went to bed.

The second day I hiked with guide Doris up to 7,630 elevation and reached the ski hut. I've always felt close to God in nature. I even found some patches of snow, but I missed hitting another hiker with my snowball.

Our final day was in the state park. I was able to touch the monument to the Donner party. It was the back of the fireplace to one of the family cabins. I am looking forward to joining the cross-country ski group in 2025

Christine at the warming hut.



REMEMVBERING VICKI POST

By

Edie Lott, SRSFL President

After a short illness, Sierra Regional Ski for Light has lost one of its pillars. Vick was hospitalized on Friday May 2nd with multiple strokes and a heart attack. She lost her battle for life on Monday, May 12th. She was 71 years old. Her involvement with SRSFL goes back more than 25 years. She served the group in many ways including more than one term as Board President. For many years we worked together to train new guides. It will be difficult to train new guides without her! She was a brilliant teacher, a peacemaker, a counselor and a musician with an amazing voice. Vicki met the many challenges she faced in life with optimistic hopefulness.



Perhaps the best way to describe Vicki is with her own words taken from her Spirit Alive website, "Now who am I really? I love the outdoors; hiking, cross country skiing, climbing mountains and taking long walks with my guide dog. I'm a radio news junky; I love to sing and play guitar; I'll talk for hours over tea, coffee or wine; I love being stirred to the depths of my soul by good books, movies and music; and I love dark chocolate. I am a happily married, hopelessly independent, flaming idealist who believes there is still hope for this planet."

It is hard to imagine SRSFL without her. You will be greatly missed dear friend!

FUND-RAISING EFFORTS

Fund-raising is one of the most vital elements to ensure SRSFL's future. Anything you can do to help will be greatly appreciated. We are seeking individual and group donations as well as grants. 100 percent of the money raised goes directly into the programs for transportation, scholarships, other expenses, and to keep the cost down for all our participants. If you have questions, ideas and/or suggestions on fund-raising, can refer us to community organizations, or other helpful connections, please contact one of our board members to coordinate a donation or a presentation to a group. Thank you in advance for your help.

SRSFL would like to take this opportunity to thank the many individual donors from the past year for their support of our cross-country ski/snowshoe program and summer outings. A BIG thank you to the Sacramento Turn Verein Actives, Auburn Host Lions Club, and the Embarcadero Lions Club

Visit us at our web-site: <https://srsfl.org> and follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064381341411>

SRSFL Board

President: Edie Lott: thelotts@gmail.com

Vice President: Susan Mangis: susanmangis@comcast.net

Immediate Past President: Betsy Rowell: betsy.rowell2@gmail.com

Treasurer: Jean Snuggs: snuggsj@gmail.com

Secretary: Nancy Anderson: nancyand7841@gmail.com

Member at Large 1: Nelly Emerson: narconelly11@gmail.com

Member at Large 2: Christine Smith: chris2smith@gmail.com

