

Inside NYSRPS



President's Message

Hello Everyone,

I hope all of you had a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year.

As we move into the New Year the economic climate is one of catastrophic budgets cuts and depress revenues. The situation is self evident, and unquestionably the executive board and staff have many challenges on the horizon. We will have to work within the framework of reduced spending, restricted resources and limited revenue streams. The picture is not pretty, but I feel we have some very talented folks on the executive board and staff coupled with those in the membership who will help make us prosper through these difficult times.

The Executive Board has already approved some restructuring of some of our committees and boards to make them more effective. I will be meeting with the finance committee the latter part of this month to develop a 3 year budgetary plan for the society. As most of you know it is critical that we have a multi year fiscal document to serve as an economic policy footprint for the future. The Executive Board will be asked to work closely with the society, committees and boards to help us complete this task. The Executive Board will also be asked to do more fundraising throughout the state. If you see us offering a golf outing, raffle, program or seminar please try to contribute or attend. These revenues will allow us to continue our level of service.

I will also be asking the board to appoint a fundraising chairperson to oversee these yearly activities.

Our Executive Staff will be challenged to do more with less; however they can not be the focal point of every task that needs to be done. The problems and challenges are the concern of the entire society with each member willing to make his /her contribution so the society may prosper. The society staff is committed and dedicated but they will need our help to better benefit you as a service provider. We understand the difficult economic times and want to continue to provide services of value to the membership. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Kate, Robin and Debbie for doing such an outstanding job and keeping the wheels on track.

While I am spreading praise, my sincere thanks to Paul Blake and the entire conference committee for developing an extraordinary program that has something for everyone. Mark your calendar! The conference will be held on Long Island from April 19 – 22 at the Hyatt Regency, Hauppauge, N.Y. This year's theme will be Leadership and Legacy. I hope to see you all there.

On behalf of Executive Board and Staff I would like to thank you for your continued support. It is truly our pleasure to serve you. If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Raymond M. Gomes
Raymond M. Gomes
NYSRPS President

TABLE OF CONTENTS

69th Annual Conference	3
Conference Registration	14
Conference Hotel Form.....	15



NRPA News	16
2009 Legislative Platform	18
IRRC- Embracing Winter.....	20
Member News	22
Facility Spotlight.....	24
CNYRPS Leisuregram.....	25
GVRPS Communiqué.....	26
NFRPS News.....	28
2020 Calendar Information....	29
Welcome New Members.....	30
Awards Nomination Information.....	31
Commercial Reference Guide	35



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Embracing Winter:



Adaptive

The days grow shorter, the air crisper, and the snowflakes begin to fly. Instead of dreading the cold, snowy months ahead, over 13 million people in the United States get very excited. Of these, 6.6 million people are snowboarders, and 5.9 million are skiers, and they are ready to hit the slopes for winter fun. In New York and other New England states, ski and snowboard visits have been increasing by almost 10% each year. And in New York, no matter where you live, there is a mountain resort nearby. With over 40 ski and snowboard areas spread around the state, and numerous *Learn to Ski and Ride* programs, snowsports are accessible and affordable to all.

Accessible to *all*? Having or acquiring a disability may make skiing or snowboarding seem inaccessible, if not impossible, to learn and enjoy. The difficulty of negotiating the winter environment, with its cold and snowy conditions, the challenge of steep terrain, and the seeming need to be fit and athletic, make many of us feel that snowsports are out of our reach. However, according to the Snowsports Industries of America, over 100,000 people with disabilities ski or snowboard every winter. And that number is growing, thanks to specialized equipment, and support from programs like Wounded Warriors, adaptive snowsports, and Special Olympics. Having a functional difference, whether physical, sensory, or cognitive, does not mean you cannot enjoy the slopes. It may mean that you need to take advantage of the many adaptations available to make snowsports accessible.

SNOWSPORTS ADAPTATIONS FOR PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES

Differences in physical functioning can be due to things such as spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, amputation, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, and other physical disabilities. Adaptations to allow someone with a physical difference to ski or snowboard can include any of the following equipment or activity modifications:

- Use of a mono-ski, that allows a person to sit instead of stand

while skiing or boarding

- Use of outriggers, allowing someone to “tri-track” (one ski, two outriggers) or “four-track” (two skis, two outriggers). The outriggers, basically forearm crutches with retractable ski blades on the ends, allow for improved balance and weight transfer for someone with an amputation or balance problems.
- Use of a snow slider – basically a sophisticated walker on skis – that allows someone with very little strength or muscular control, to stand and ski while tethered by other skiers or snowboarders.
- Use of tethers – long straps attached to the skier or rider with a disability - allowing another skier or snowboarder to control their descent, until they have gained the skills, strength, and confidence to traverse the slopes independently

SNOWSPORTS ADAPTATIONS FOR SENSORY DIFFERENCES

Differences in sensory functioning can be due to things such as blindness and other vision impairments, deafness and other hearing impairments, and even things like autism, where an individual may have difficulty with sensory processing and sensory integration. Adaptations for sensory differences can include:

- Guided skiing or snowboarding, where a sighted guide provides constant directions and cues to the skier or rider with the vision impairment, as the pair descends the mountain. The directions can be given over a radio system worn by the pair, or out loud. Guides and skiers or riders wear bright orange vests identifying them as a “Guide” and “Blind” so that other skiers and riders on the mountain are aware that the pair must stay together, and to prevent unnecessary obstructions.
- Simple sign language or written cue cards can be used with a skier or rider with a hearing impairment, mostly to provide any needed directions or warnings



Skiing and Snowboarding

- A hula hoop, Snow Wing, or other similar device can be used with a skier or snowboarder with autism, who may need to have a sense of a more confined space around him or her while descending the slope, to help prevent sensory overload

SNOWSPORTS ADAPTATIONS FOR COGNITIVE OR LEARNING DIFFERENCES

Differences in ability to process information and learn can be due to many different disabilities, ranging from intellectual or developmental disabilities, to traumatic brain injury, to learning disabilities to mental illness. Many adaptations in teaching and learning can be used to help people with cognitive differences learn to ski or snowboard. Here are just a few examples:

- Task analysis and activity adaptation – breaking the skill sequence down into small steps and changing some of the steps to make them easier to learn – is a common approach to facilitate learning
- Tethering, hula hoops, bamboo poles, harnesses, “edgie wedgies” (small rubber devices that hold the ski tips in a wedge position), trombones (metal devices that hold the ski tips in a wedge position, but allow natural movement), and other equipment that allows two instructors to help guide the new skier or boarder through the movements and skills as they descend the slope, helps facilitate learning through a more sensory approach, versus a verbal or linguistic approach
- Picture cards, cue cards, and other storyboard techniques that allow the participant to see and understand the steps in each aspect of skiing or snowboarding (from getting equipment from the rental shop to getting on the chair lift) helps the learning process

INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATIONS

A qualified adaptive snowsports instructor is as important to

successful learning as the modifications to equipment and skills. The Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA) and the American Association of Snowboard Instructors (AASI) provide instructor certification programs, preparing instructors for the specialized instructional techniques and equipment needed to introduce and help all people learn to ski and snowboard. PSIA/AASI offers certifications in areas such as visual impairments, developmental disabilities, mono-ski, bi-ski, three-tracking, and four-tracking. See Gregg Macey’s story (accompanying this article) as one example of a mono-skier who pursued certification to teach others. When choosing an adaptive ski and snowboard program, check on the qualifications of the volunteers and staff, and look for PSIA/AASI certification.

With the programs, equipment, and instruction now available across New York (see sidebar for the numerous programs in our state), all people truly can learn to ski or snowboard, and get excited for winter! Gregg Macey’s story inspires us all to bundle up and hit the slopes. Once you have the skills and equipment, you can join the millions of people who are joyous when they see the snowflakes start to fall!

Additional Resources

- PSIA/AASI certification information: <http://www.psia.org/01/adaptive/adaptive.asp>
- Freedom Factory adaptive snowsports equipment: <http://www.freedomfactory.org/>
- Wounded Warriors Project: <https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/>
- Special Olympics <http://www.specialolympics.org/>
- Winter Feels Good: <http://www.winterfeelsgood.com/index.php>
- Disabled Sports USA: <http://www.dsusa.org/>

By Dr. Lynn Anderson, CTRS, CPRP

Meet Gregg Macey, Certified Adaptive Snowsports Instructor

By Whitney Mayer, SUNY Cortland/NYS IRRC Graduate Assistant

Gregg Macey has been skiing since he was fifteen years old. The only difference is when he started skiing in high school, Gregg skied standing up. Now he skis sitting down. Although Gregg was an avid skier, after an accident resulted in him using a wheelchair, he gave up on the idea of skiing for many years. Gregg had never envisioned there was a way to ski without having to stand up.

Friends of Gregg knew how much he loved the outdoors and consistently tried to get him back into skiing, but for years Gregg refused. "I couldn't envision what skiing sitting down would be like. I didn't get it. I didn't get how fun or easy it could be." After many tries Gregg's neighbor and friend finally convinced him to give mono-skiing a try. Gregg caught the skiing bug again and his only regret was that he had not tried it sooner. His interest in mono-skiing gave him a new outlook on winter in Upstate NY.

Today you can find Gregg on the slopes of Greek Peak Mountain Resort in Virgil, NY several times a week and on weekends. He still skis with the same neighbor who reintroduced him to the sport. He also has made many new friends by skiing at Greek Peak. One thing he loves about skiing is the ability to meet new people and make new friends through the sport.

Gregg started as a participant in Greek Peak's Adaptive Snowsports program five years ago and as his skills improved he figured that the natural progression would be to become an adaptive instructor, and to help others learn to ski. Last year he passed the PSAI level one adaptive test to become a certified instructor. Gregg now works as part of the all-volunteer instructor led adaptive program at Greek Peak.

He feels that Greek Peak's program is second to none and encourages anyone interested to check it out. Not only are the staff at the program great, but the facility and equipment are top notch. He feels that the program at Greek Peak is the best in the area. Gregg's advice to those who are thinking about trying mono-skiing is, "Don't hesitate! You are only young once."

Gregg loves watching people grow as a skier and develop new friendships through his role as an instructor. He especially loves that skiing is an activity where people can see significant gains in a short period of time. He finds being an adaptive instructor a rewarding experience where he gets to share something he loves with others. When Gregg is not on the slopes, he enjoys hunting, riding his all-terrain vehicle, kayaking and cutting firewood.

For more information on the Greek Peak adaptive program please visit: www.gpadaptive.org

Adaptive Snowsports Programs in New York State

Adirondacks

Double H Ranch – A Hole in the Wall Camp – Adaptive Winter Sports Program

- <http://www.doublehranch.org/winter-program.htm>
- (518) 696-5676

Gore Mountain

- (518) 251-2411, x1005
- <http://www.goremountain.com/>
- Double H Ranch collaborates with Gore Mountain on adaptive snowsports opportunities

Whiteface Mountain

- (518) 946-2223
- <http://www.whiteface.com/newsite/lessonsprograms/adaptiveski.php>

Capital-Saratoga

STRIDE Adaptive Sports

- STRIDE collaborates with Catamount Mountain (see Hudson Valley below), Jiminy Peak in MA, and Ski Sundown in CT
- (518) 598-1279
- <http://www.stride.org/sports/skiing/>

Catskills

Belleayre Mountain

- 845-254-5600 ext. 2473
- <http://www.belleayre.com/winter/adaptive.htm>

Windham Mountain

- 518-734-5070
- <http://www.windhammountain.com/lessons/adaptive-programs/>

Chautauqua-Allegheny

Holiday Valley Resort

- (716)699-2345
- <http://www.holidayvalley.com/winter.cfm?subpage=366>

Finger Lakes

ARISE & Ski at Toggenburg Mountain

- (315) 472-3171
- <http://www.ariseinc.org/programs/ski.html>

Greek Peak Adaptive Snowsports

- 607-657-8317
- <http://www.gpadaptive.org/>

Hudson Valley

Catamount Mountain

- <http://www.catamountski.com/lessons-racing/stride.cfm>
- Adaptive snowsports provided by STRIDE. – see Capital-Saratoga Region



The NY Access Pass is accepted at Gore, Whiteface, and Belleayre Mountains – call for details