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# Sierra Snow Notes

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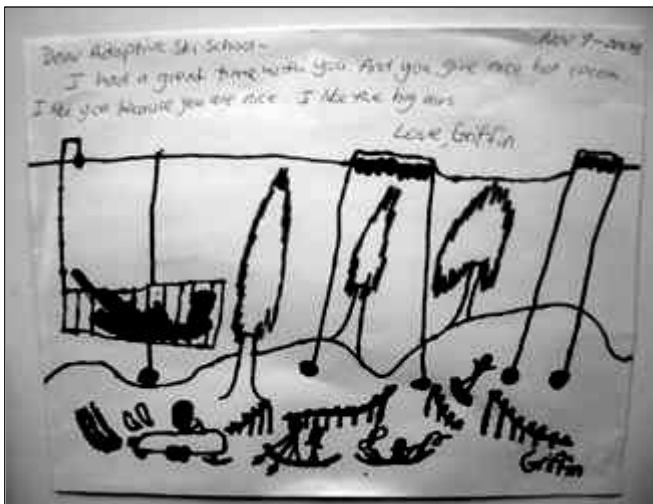
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*Empowering our students and staff to maximize their abilities!!*

## Disabled Sports Eastern Sierra Kicks Off its First Season...

**DSES opens on Nov. 9<sup>th</sup> with Griffin  
Horwitz**



**Picture by Griffin Horwitz:** "I had a great time with you. And you give nice hot cocoa. I like you because you are nice. I like the big lifts. Love Griffin."

Karen "Tako" Taketomo, Kathy Copeland and Lee Aaker took Griffin Horwitz out for a couple of days of fun and skiing on Sesame Street. Griffin, who has a connective tissue disorder called Gordon's Syndrome, had a great time "going fast" in a junior bi-ski with fixed outriggers. Griffin's mom, Lois, was thrilled to see her son ski, commenting that "If it were not for this program, my seven-year old son would not be able to enjoy outdoor snow sports."

## Holiday Season a Huge Success

Take a look at some of the comments from the great lessons that went out during this holiday season. Fun was had by all!

**Carol Clayman:** "Brad had a great time. He seemed to progress and the family really appreciated that we could all ski. Thank you."

**The McSpaddens:** "The staff was extremely knowledgeable with respect to treating the child first before the disability. They seemed to share the same philosophy as us, challenging our child to do her best always."



Intern Diana Proemm and Kelly McSpadden tear up the slopes in the bi-ski.



Zach Picard and intern Diana Proemm enjoy some time with Mammoth's Woolly.

**The Shaws:** "This was such an incredible experience for our three girls. The instructors were so kind and nurturing and made the girls feel so safe. Christie and Kathy went out of their way to make this the very best time."

**Shirley Kenny:** "Everyone was so warm and gave good tips and I felt really safe. The people really made it; I felt spoiled." When asked what kinds of suggestions she had for us she replied, "I can't think of any, I just felt so spoiled."



Skier Shirley Kenny, guide Alex Fabbro and volunteer Mike Henderson get ready to go out and enjoy the slopes.

**Charlene Drapp:** "Wonderful program. We will come back because of the DSES program for Elena" (We also received a \$500 donation from Elena's godfather)

**Scott Hopkins:** "Great Program! Great Start! We appreciate all the volunteers and their willingness to teach and to learn☺ Thank you"

**Brian Chaffin:** "This was my first skiing experience since my accident. I couldn't be happier. I was treated so well by the staff and the instruction was excellent. I would recommend this program to anyone."

## Three Volunteer Training Weekends and over 52 Volunteers



Tako and her volunteer posse - out for a morning clinic.

We are fortunate to have so many dedicated individuals on our volunteer crew. So many, in fact, that DSES offered three full training weekends for the 52 charter volunteers!!!! Wow! Some of you may wonder what prompts such a giving attitude. We interviewed a volunteer to provide some insight into why one volunteer does it.

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## Dr. Phil

### “An Interview with the Volunteer of the Month”



Dr. Phil has been quite an asset to our DSES team. However, being as humble as he is, he was a little reluctant to single himself out for this article. He wants it to be clear that he is an average person. Here are some of his thoughts on volunteering for DSES:

**Why do you volunteer? You have already clocked over 125 hours in the past 2 months...** I recently had an injury. I hit a tree while skiing and sustained a skull fracture and 3 herniated discs. I was partially paralyzed on my left side and was ultimately left with upper extremity weakness. It really gave me a feeling of what it would be like to be disabled. I remember one time in particular, I was in a hard collar being wheeled to the doctor's office in a wheel chair. Everyone in the elevator ignored me: I felt like I was invisible. After recovering enough, I decided to participate in this program pretty aggressively. It's Karmic.

**What has been your most positive experience?** Learning how to work with disabled children. I really thought I was too old to work with kids but it has turned out to be really fun.

**How have you been challenged?** My biggest challenge is that after the injury I still have difficulty lifting. I think it's important for me to admit that at this point.

**What advice would you offer others who are thinking of volunteering?** A volunteer in this line of work, needs to be open to people that don't have the same social skills that we might expect. I now understand that having any kind of a disability makes being social tough. However, volunteering is a lot easier that one might think because the clients are really enthusiastic. Without us, it would be almost impossible for them to ski and enjoy the mountains.

**Is there anything else about the program that you would like to comment on?**

Well, the people in the program, every single one, are fantastic. It's great being around people who don't mind sharing their time and expertise in skiing with others.

## Letter from Staff Trainer: Karen Taketomo



**Hi Everyone!**

It's the end of January and we've successfully worked our way through three holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas and Martin Luther King). As Kathy mentioned, on our busiest day we staffed eleven lessons. What a **great** job for a (then)

four week old program! Training clinics cycle through skiing skills - ATS, disabilities knowledge, and adaptive equipment as we continue to welcome new volunteers. In addition, with Robin

Conners' assistance, we will form exam prep groups for those interested in pursuing PSIA Adaptive Level 1 & Level 2 certifications. It looks as if we'll have groups specializing in Developmental Disabilities and one in Visual Impairment. I'd like to thank everyone involved with our program. We simply could not exist without your support. The biggest **“THANKS”** goes out to our staff of instructors – all volunteers – who share their expertise, their love of skiing and most of all, their hearts. Thank you for caring!

Your Staff Trainer, *Tako*.



Kathy hugging student David Linn on his 11<sup>th</sup> birthday

## Letter from the Director: Kathy Copeland

Dear DSES Friends;

If you have had a chance to visit us in our “digs” here at Mammoth Mountain, you will have seen all the magical things that are happening. We “officially” opened our doors on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2003, but we really started our first season with Griffin Horwitz on November 9<sup>th</sup>.

Over Thanksgiving we taught 35 very successful lessons and our students and staff have memories that will last a lifetime. “Tako”, our staff trainer, offered numerous clinics during the slow spell between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

We are just emerging from the Christmas rush. **WOW!** On our biggest day we taught 11 lessons! However, we did receive more requests from deserving people than we were able to accommodate. That’s the only hard part of this job, not being able to help EVERYBODY! We had a tremendously successful fundraiser in November and raised a miraculous \$15,000. I can see that this fundraising business is an ongoing project!! Every contribution goes straight to the program – funding training, scholarships, buying equipment and much more. Thank you everyone who has been a part of our dream...donors, volunteers, students and moral supporters. Stop by and say HI! Smooches to all! *Kathy*

## Photo Gallery



Eszter Vig - Snowboard instructor extraordinaire - takes some DSES volunteers out for a clinic.



Some beautiful ladies at the Island Extravaganza fundraising event:  
Holly Emmerson, Kathy “Coconut” Copeland and Dewey Perpall.



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