



**DISABLED
SPORTS
EASTERN
SIERRA**

Sierra Snow Notes

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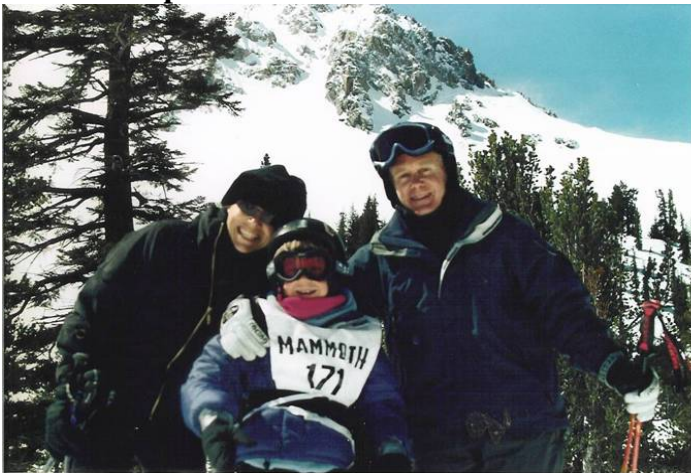
Empowering our students and staff to maximize their abilities!!

Disabled Sports Eastern Sierra First Season Huge Success!

Special Sports Launch

by Cheryl Wood

Reprinted from Mammoth Times



9 year old Davis with parents, Cheryl and Mayor of Mammoth Lakes, Rick Wood

Special is how we describe the youngest member of our family Davis, who is eight. He is special. This year he began to ski with Disabled Sports Eastern Sierra. It seemed only natural to let him follow his class with his teacher Krisha into Special Sports, the event held April 19 to 22 at the Main Lodge for the twenty-ninth year. Actually, this was not a 'natural' choice for me. I fretted about chair lifts and collisions on the hill while my husband Rick simply signed the paperwork signaling our approval and said, "Its time."

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Also Featured in this Issue!

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The Numbers are In! First Season Recap

by Karen "Tako" Taketomo



Tako ~ Happy as can be!

We have completed our first season of Disabled Sports Eastern Sierra. It has been a great first season and 112 volunteers donated 4600 hours, accommodating 625 lessons. Our program boasts five newly certified Adaptive Level 1 instructors: Dorie Bouelle, Alex Fabbro, Anita Haenni, Tim Hop, and Kathy Copeland Adaptive Level 2. Congratulations! We also purchased two much-needed pieces of equipment, due to generous donations: We purchased a Junior Mountain Man Bi-ski, donated in honor of Jennifer Van Vliet and a Child's Bi-Unique Bi-ski, donated by Darcy Bauer. The Mountain Man allows us to better accommodate lessons using fixed outriggers, while the "Baby Bi" is a better fit for our students who weigh less than 80 pounds.

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“How do you know?” I asked. Everyone in my family seemed to understand this transitional moment far better than I. Some moments are pre-ordained, such as sending our oldest boy off to college. When I stood in his empty room that fall I knew that officially, Ryan had been launched.

I remember when I was 14 and had asked my father, the Reverend, when it would be ‘time’ to date, not that I wanted to, I assured him. Just wondering.

“When you are 21.” He answered. Oddly enough I turned away and accepted this while my little sister saw my mother elbow our dad in the ribs.

I have known when it was time for soccer and other sports activities for our older kids, it is just that Davis has his own set of markers for these passages.

This year it was time to get Davis off the Sippy Cup. For a child like ours with a simple mind, this cup is much like the baby’s first bottle—easy to hold, convenient for the parents to hand-off without fear of mopping up the mess. But Davis’ trainer, Noel, wanted him to be age appropriate, so in our home we try to use straws whenever possible and stand beside him now.

Yes, Davis has a trainer. I suppose this too is a mark of time and transition for over the years he has had nannies to assist us in the diapering and daily duties that follow him like a shadow cast long from a sinking sun. For lack of a better word, Davis has a trainer and together they attend to the tasks designed to work on communication and behavior.

Technically, Davis cannot speak. He can utter odd sounds and a few standard syllables. Sometimes he will nod yes or no. There are moments of what I call spontaneous speech when somewhere in the recesses of that mind the words blurt out and this offers us hope. While he understands what we say to him, pretty well, we want to understand him.

Years ago it was suggested that Davis would never walk, perhaps because his body lay limp like a noodle before he started in with a rigorous physical and occupational therapy regimen. Today Davis and I jog along together on the bike trails out in the meadow. And, of course, this winter he learned to stomp about in boots and slide down a hill from ‘The Magic

Carpet’ used to teach the first stage of skiing at the ski area.



DSES instructor Jes Schwartzkopf tethering Davis

However, his inability to communicate his needs causes me to contain my eight year-old closely as if by intuition I might decipher his desires and keep him safe. While he may never be fully launched as his siblings have been in their various endeavors, my husband is determined to wrench this small child from my protective grasp and let him bump and bruise his way onto new experiences.

That is why Rick signed the papers for Special Sports. It turns out that the week’s events did provide a series of tremendous moments for Davis and his fellow participants.

One of Davis’ Adaptive Sports instructors, a former neighbor E.L. Smoogen, called to fill us in on Davis’ skiing the second day of the week. At first Davis was off, he explained. He seemed mad and not very cooperative. Then they took him up the chair lift one more time (my heart lurched with the image of the chair lift high in the air and my little guy peeking over the edge.) They decided to take him on a practice run down the race course. Davis loved it.

See DAVIS on page 3

Interested in joining our board of directors?
Contact: Mammoth Adaptive Sports Foundation
 PO 7275, Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
 For more information contact Kathy Copeland at
 760 934-0791 or kcopeland@uneedspeed.net

DAVIS from page 2

At the end of the course his instructors turned him around to see what he had just skied down “I did it” Davis blurted out twice. The buddies confirmed what they had heard with each other and decided to give us call later. My eyes moistened during this part of the phone call. I expressed my gratitude for both the time he had spent with Special Sports and for sharing this moment with me. But I could not stop there.

The next day I hauled my daughter Lynnell up the hill to watch her brother ski. We sat through a lunch where we saw adults and children with special needs dancing to the beat of Kathy Copeland’s drumming ensemble. The numbers of volunteers stunned me, though our town has always been there for any given cause, these people had been specially trained just to take our children down a ski run and offer them the thrill of wind on their face and motion in their body. The fourth day my husband joined us on skies, and our son returned early from college to watch. Davis discovered speed, and Jes Schwartzkopf, one of his instructors, could not hold him back on the leash for he was eager to fly. She did rein him in and helped him to discover his ski edge. He clapped as he skied, and on the chair lift declared “I like, I like. My face was not the only one smeared with tears, for there were many families witnessing their child’s explosive joy from this new adventure though some of the smaller cherubs did muffle a sob or two as they struggled to get up and back to speed. None of this would have been possible without the tremendous efforts put forth by the Adaptive Sports Program (headed up by none other than our favorite Kathy Copeland), the Special Sports staff, the Mammoth Mountain administrative team, the local sponsors for food and prizes, and the army of volunteers needed to shepherd these differently-abled individuals about from the main room to the lifts, to the tube runs and ski mobile rides. Of course, a special thanks go out to the local teachers, Krisha, Peter and their staff for having the students participate outside the classroom this year from skiing to horseback riding and more. Thank you all, because of you Davis’ language is launched officially.¶

**Want to volunteer? No experience necessary!
Stop by the DSES office in Woollywood or visit
www.disabledsportseasternsierra.org**

TAKO from page 1

Bi-ski lessons accounted for 11% of this season’s lessons. Although students with developmental disabilities account for 74% of our lessons, I expect the numbers of equipment lessons to increase dramatically over the next five years.

We’re already looking forward to next season. I expect both the numbers of volunteers and lessons/participants to grow rapidly over the next three years. Be prepared for another huge growth spurt! We’re happy to report we’ve hired our first full-time instructor: Dave Owings. Dave has spent the last two winters at United States Adaptive Recreation Center (USARC) in Big Bear. He is Adaptive Level 1 certified and is wrapping up his degree in Recreational Therapy. With the addition of Dave and our newly certified instructors, our training opportunities should be more extensive than this past season. I’d like to extend a HUGE “Thank You” to the volunteers for all the time they donated—truly a gift from the heart! And thanks to all the students, the families, and the donors: our program exists because of your continued support!

**Karen Taketomo (“Tako”)
DSES Staff Trainer¶**

DSES WISHLIST

Here is our wishlist; these are some items that DSES would be very grateful to receive or money for them!

1. Digital camcorder \$500-750.
2. Equipment repair tools \$50.
3. File cabinet for office \$250.
4. 2 Scholarships for California Association of Non-Profits San Francisco \$1800.



DSES last run of the season!

Mario Arce “My Life as a Volunteer”

I moved to Mammoth by myself in early January. I never had much of a skiing background and had worked with special sports little league in the L.A. area, so I decided to give ski instruction at DSES a try. Instantly Kathy, Tako and all the volunteer instructors made me feel like I had found a home in Mammoth. I realized that these were the type of people I wanted to surround myself with in my new life in the mountains.



I began to attend the ski clinics for instructors prior to the lessons going out for the day. Initially I had trouble getting down the easy runs and as I skied I would hear terms such as “S turns not Z turns,” and “Your in the backseat, get out of the backseat.” As my skiing progressed I felt more and more comfortable not only on skis, but with my ability to handle tougher terrain and maybe one day teach. I had done a minimal amount of volunteer work in the past, but I knew that DSES was a good place to keep me busy and away from the Mammoth party scene. I started by simply shadowing experienced volunteers and learning each instructors tricks and methods. I discovered the traits of numerous disabilities and techniques to teach an array of different challenges both physical and cognitive. I was taught to properly assess the disability and how to tailor fit our equipment to best suit our students needs.

My journey with DSES began as a sincere interest in learning about a new sport, helping a group of people that I had minimal contact with in the past and surrounding myself with a good group of people. What I ended up with was a love for skiing (Thanks to Kathy’s hard work teaching me,) an overwhelming joy in helping the disabled, a group of friends that bring out the very best in me and a new found use for the word love which I had trouble using prior to DSES. Those of you who teach here at DSES understand what is gained by teaching a lesson and the types of emotions that might not have been brought to the surface without our students. I have seen virtual transformations in instructors who came to DSES humorless and abrasive and have become the type of people that light up a room.

My time with DSES has been one of the most positive experiences of my life. I came to Mammoth on my own, out of shape (292 lbs.) and looking for a change. Today, I have a wonderful group of friends, I’ve lost 60 lbs. and have a new love for fitness and am preparing myself for law school exactly one year from today. I don’t know if everyone’s experience will be as life changing as mine, but pass this letter along, maybe someone you know is looking for what I found at DSES.

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Mammoth Mountain supports DSES in so many aspects it would be hard to list them all! We want to say a great big **THANK YOU** for everything you do to ensure our success! Thank you for our office space and utilities, for lift tickets for students and volunteers, for our uniforms, for adaptive equipment, food discounts for our volunteers while they’re working, and all your technical support! This is a fabulous place to work and we are happy to make winter sports at Mammoth accessible to ALL!



Thank you to each and every one of you for your generous donations since our last newsletter! We can't do it without you...and with you, we really do *make a difference* in many people's lives. We apologize for any omissions or incorrect listings here...please contact us at (760) 934-0791 or dses@uneedsspeed.net for any corrections. Apologies to **Sheldon Bromberg** for not mentioning his huge donation of **\$500** in our last newsletter and also to **Amy McKnight and the Bank of America** for their gracious gift of **\$2500!**



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A note from the Director ~

The summer is blowing by quickly...here I am sending out the season wrap-up newsletter and working on the next season kick-off issue all at the same time! A huge thank you to Mario Arce for all of his invaluable help and support this summer...especially in putting this newsletter together!! If it wasn't for Mario...I would have gone crazy!

As always, money is tight and nothing has gotten cheaper!! We need your help! We depend on your generosity to ensure that our program is run professionally and consistently! Please continue to give!

Contributions from private individuals should be made out to DSES, PO Box 7275 Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546. Foundations should make their checks out to Mammoth Adaptive Sports Foundation (MASF).

To donate by credit card, please visit our website disabledsportseasternsierra.org. Go to Donations then click on Fundraisers (this is a secure on-line transaction). Or call us here in the office (760) 934-0791.

With a smile,

Kathy Copeland

