



Hello!

This newsletter is being sent to members of the SSASS community to help us keep in touch. You are receiving this update if you are a current or recent student or instructor. We are also including those of you who kindly donated to our program during the last two seasons. And...you can unsubscribe at the bottom of the letter if you do not wish to receive our occasional updates.

Our season this year is shaping up to be closer to normal. The Weekly Program is busy with quite a few new students and instructors. The Race Team has grown. The Visitors and Schools Programs have returned. We are happy to welcome students and instructors who took a break last year and it is good to see some of our regular visitors again.

We will not be having the Carter Classic or a formal fundraiser this year. Donations are always appreciated and can be made online at https://www.ssass.bc.ca/wordpress/?page_id=363.

Our SSASS room is still only accessible to our instructors. Students arrange to meet their instructors outside the SSASS room, ready to start their lessons. We can still be reached at info@ssass.bc.ca. If you see us around the hill in our red jackets, say Hi!

Keep reading for these articles:

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Thoughts from Long-time SSASS instructor (Terry Brill)

It was during the winter of 1998-99 that I was introduced to SSASS. Being too late for training, I was allowed to shadow instructor Randy Schellenberg with a sit skier, weekly for the entire season. What a learning experience it was! The next season I began my certification with NODSA - North Okanagan Disabled Skiers Association. All of us would agree that our students are not disabled but do have a disability whether physical or cognitive. I am not sure of the year we became known as SSASS locally and BCAS provincially but thankfully our name is now so much more appropriate.

Over the years I have had the privilege of skiing with students not only from all over BC, but also Ontario, Australia and Ireland.

What has been so encouraging to me?

1) Our team of instructors who have a common goal and sincere heart to teach and encourage students and are ALWAYS willing to share teaching methods and experiences. I cannot think of any other "A" like ours. I am privileged to be part of our SSASS team.

2) The relationships that we develop with our peers and students - many long lasting.

3) The satisfaction - joy, smiles, cheers, hugs - that we see when our student achieves a goal. It is most rewarding when a student, after a few years is able to ski independently. For that student, possibly Mt. Everest has been reached. As well, some parents might very well shed a tear. (Many of you know of whom I am speaking.)

4) So often I have come away from a lesson feeling that I have been the learner.

In closing, allow me to express my sincere "Thank You" to our board of directors who over the years have provided exceptional leadership and have always been approachable for concerns and questions.

Terry Brill



Visitor (Niall Howard) Returns for 22nd season with SSASS

Willie, Janine and Niall.

Driving up the Silver Star Road out of Vernon and passing Butcher Boys always brings a smile to my face and a sigh of relief. It feels like we are home even though we live thousands of miles away in Ireland. When we left here in February 2020 we were already planning what we would do here the following year never realising that the world would be locked down for almost two years. But time flies even in a pandemic as I try to remember the 22 years we have been coming to Silver Star Mountain Resort.

It all began in 2000 when our family of 4 children and 2 adults visited Silver Star for the first time. We had travelled all the way from Saudi Arabia on the recommendation of some Canadian colleagues and friends; "Go to Silver Star if you want some great skiing" was their unanimous choice of all the skiing resorts in North America. How could we ignore such a positive recommendation? Arriving into Kelowna Airport, we didn't know what to expect in this far flung corner of Canada, but we had a good feeling as we drove up the Okanagan valley past

the ice covered lakes and the lake-side farmhouses proudly displaying their Canadian flags.

Our three older kids quickly settled into their respective ski school groups and were soon at home skiing on the hill and eating lunchtime hotdogs in the Town Hall Eatery. It was a different story unfortunately for our youngest, aged 6. Niall was autistic and after a week in the regular ski school he was still on the magic carpet, skiing down to the bottom of the wee slope, falling over, and lying there eating snow until someone picked him up again. The instructors just didn't know how to relate or respond to his special needs. We were despondent until someone told us about SSASS and met up with Andy Mather, one of the founding members. We had a chat with him about Niall's special needs and he agreed that Niall could join their programme. Within days Niall was skiing down the slopes on a harness following an instructor, with a second instructor controlling his speed and direction. It was a spectacular transformation and SSASS is one of the reasons why we have been coming to Silver Star every winter for the last 22 years!

The SSASS programmes are run by a group of dedicated, talented, enthusiastic and friendly volunteers, who are simply motivated by their love of skiing and their desire to help disabled children and adults experience the thrill of snow sports.

In our case, Niall was their first student with a cognitive disability. Andy and his team had to work out a way of getting Niall to ski with his limited ability to communicate and comprehend. The instructors worked out that Niall would mimic the movements of someone skiing in front, while an instructor behind could control his speed and direction with a harness. It worked, and by the end of the week Niall was happily skiing down green runs and the odd blue.

Fast forward 22 years and Niall is 27 years old and loves coming to Silver Star to ski. He is now able to go skiing with a single instructor and can ski all but the most challenging slopes at his own pace. He loves skiing through the trees and has no problems with bumps. He still has a lot to learn and each time he goes skiing with SSASS the instructor works with Niall to improve some aspect of his skiing. This interaction is also great for Niall as he has limited opportunities to meet new people outside his family. He enjoys telling jokes, singing songs and having fun with all of the instructors.

There have been so many instructors over the years and I would like to give a very special thanks to every one of them. A special thanks also to Sandie, the SSASS Out of Town Coordinator, for organising the ski sessions for Niall this year under such challenging conditions. And one last big word of thanks to Andy for teaching Niall to ski all those years ago.



2nd Year Instructor (Diana Hicks) Discovers the Joy and Fun of SSASS

Hi, my name is Diana. This is my second season with SSASS and I really can't say enough good things about this program.

First of all the joy of sharing the passion of skiing with others is priceless.

To see the progress the students make is so rewarding, the freedom it gives them, the control or lack thereof, the lessons learned of falling and getting back up, getting on and off the chair lift, graduating from the Magic Carpet to their first run down Far Out. Sharing the beauty of the mountain, Snow ghost alley on Criss Cross, stopping to see the horses. Of course there is the Peanut Trail, a few turns in the trees and their first tracks in a little pow.

I'm sure you would agree that there is no better place to be than in the great outdoors, let alone on the side of a mountain to get the adrenalin rushing, to be enveloped by the beauty of the surroundings.

Whether it's the beautiful sunshine beating down on you or being in a snowstorm, you see it building character, resilience, amazement in themselves.

To see self-esteem, balance, and confidence build in the students to name a few, build trust with the instructors, is all hugely rewarding.

Oh yes and then there are the parents. So much gratitude, it gives some parents the time to do some turns on the hill or nordic trails, or just chill and have a coffee. Freedom for two hours, again, priceless.

But really, to see their child come back with an ear to ear smile, to see them build trust with others, to find a sport they love, even a sport the family can do together. To see their communication skills improve. There is just so much this program has to offer. SSASS is a program we are a part of to enrich the lives of others as well as ourselves.... and of course, most importantly to have fun!

Diana Hicks



Former SSASS Student (Logan Leach) named to Canada's Paralympic Alpine Ski Team

Chris Roy was thrilled to hear from her former student Logan Leach this summer telling her that he had been nominated to Canada's Paralympic Alpine Ski Team and that he would begin training for the 2022 World Cup tour and potentially the Beijing Paralympics.

Logan's parents had enrolled him in SSASS in 2010 because he could no longer play hockey due to a degenerative eye condition, Stargardt Disease. Soon he was skiing black runs and through the trees with Chris.

His first experience ski racing was SSASS's annual fundraiser, the Carter Classic, where teams of skiers join SSASS students to go down an easy dual slalom course which he participated in for five seasons.

Logan joined the SSASS Race Team for the 2016/17 season. Coaches Dan Cook and Colette Laplante taught him the basics of

ski racing, increasing his skills and confidence. He attended BC Adaptive Snowsports (BCAS) camps with national level coaches. After a couple of seasons he wanted more intense training and transitioned to the Vernon Ski Club.

In spring 2019 he and his guide, Caele Kassa, won a silver medal at the Canada Winter Games in Red Deer, their first sanctioned competition. They finished that season by earning 3 golds at the CanAm Championships in Colorado.

Prior to the 2019/20 season BCAS hired Julien Petit from Quebec to be Logan's guide and they have continued skiing together ever since. Last season Logan was invited to Alpine Canada's Para-Alpine Next Gen program with the goal of being named to the National Team.

For the past two seasons all races have been cancelled, but that did not keep them from training at ski hills in BC. Finally, this September they trained in northern Italy, then returned to Europe and competed in World Cup races in Austria and St Moritz, Switzerland. Logan confesses to being a bit of a history buff and really enjoyed the trip to Europe for more than just the skiing.

When asked how a skier with a vision disability could race down a mountain at 100 km/ hour, Logan explained there are three important components: first, careful inspection-he and Julien go over the course carefully to learn every turn and bump, memorizing every detail.

Then it's practice and passion- a lot of time and effort and, he admits, there can be falls before they get it right. "You have to love what you are doing".

Finally, there is trust- Julien skis in front of Logan. They wear helmets with headsets so they can communicate. Logan follows Julien, a bright-coloured fuzzy image moving a gate or two ahead of him. Sometimes, he says, "I don't see him for a split second. I have to trust where I am going. I have to commit to the course."

Logan is not sure what lays ahead for training and races this season. There have been many cancellations, so he will not predict the future. But it seems clear he has a very exciting future in ski racing.

He does have a couple messages for SSASS. The first is THANK YOU!! "Without SSASS I would have never found out how much I love to ski." And to SSASS students his message is "Anyone who wants to, can do it! Believe in yourself. There will always be people there to help you!"