



SKI FOR LIGHT BULLETIN

Fall 2016

News and Information about the People and Programs of SFL International Skiing. Sharing. Learning.

The mission of Ski for Light is to enhance the quality of life and independence of visually or mobility-impaired adults through a program of cross country skiing.

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President's Message

by Scott McCall

Greetings All,

For many people, fall is the season to welcome cooler temperatures, brilliant colors, the holiday season and special gatherings with family and friends. For those of us who regularly attend the annual Ski for Light International week, the big celebration occurs in January or February.

In 2017, the 42nd SFL International event will be celebrated February 5 through 12 on the grounds of Snow Mountain Ranch in Granby, Colorado. Apparently, many of you are also looking forward to the 2017 event because applications are coming in at a near record pace. So if you have not submitted your application, you should do so immediately, at www.sfl.org, in order to guarantee yourself a spot.

The 2017 planning team is led by Heather Berg. Heather has assembled a capable and enthusiastic group of SFL volunteers to manage and to produce the upcoming event. Up next in this bulletin, you will read more from Heather about some of the excitement in the works for 2017.

As I review plans for the international week, anticipation grows. Because we are returning to an SFL venue that's become a personal favorite, I know that we will be skiing in near perfect tracks prepared and maintained by the experienced and committed grooming staff at Snow Mountain Ranch.

Following a day of vigorous skiing, guided by one of our skilled and dedicated guides, I will gather with old and new friends to share some of the thrills and even some of the spills of the day in the tracks.

Throughout the week I will learn from other SFL attendees. The breadth of learning that occurs at a Ski for Light week always astounds me. It might be new technology, new travel destinations, new books to read, songs to sing, or new activities to add interest and variety to my life.

To summarize, the "Skiing, Sharing, and Learning" that occurs during an SFL week provides me with joy, with information, and with a treasure trove of great memories. It is truly this combination of "Skiing, Sharing, and Learning" that keeps me coming back for more.

Hope to see you in the tracks.



Let It
SNOW



NEW AND FABULOUS FUN AT THE 2017 SKI WEEK!

By Heather Berg, Ski for Light 2017 Event Chair

The cooler, shorter days of fall are upon us and that can only mean one thing. It's nearly cross-country ski season. With winter fast approaching, the 2017 Ski for Light event planning committee is hard at work preparing for an amazing ski week from February 5-12th, 2017 at Snow Mountain Ranch in Granby, CO. In addition to the unsurpassed ski conditions at SMR, this year we are bringing you a very special activity.

Ski for Light is pleased to announce the debut of biathlon at our 2017 event. In this our 42nd year of skiing, sharing and learning, we have partnered with the United States Association of Blind Athletes, USABA, to offer this exciting sport to our participants. Biathlon is a sport that combines the intensity of cross-country skiing with the precision of marksmanship.

The origins of biathlon lie in Norse mythology when one god, Ullr, was revered as both the god of skiing and the god of hunting. Biathlon has evolved over time being embraced as both a military and civilian activity in Scandinavia. Contemporary biathlon remains popular in Norway, but is also enjoyed around the globe for recreation and competition. It became an official sport of the Winter Olympic Games in 1960, although women were not allowed to participate in Olympic biathlon until 1992.

In recent years Biathlon has been adapted for participants who are blind, utilizing a rifle outfitted with a system of lasers and auditory signaling. Those of us who have had the good fortune to attend Ridderrennett in Norway know the challenge and thrill of this unique sport.

Working together with USABA, Ski for Light will provide two and a half days of demonstration and instruction in the sport of biathlon during ski

week. Additionally, USABA will be presenting an evening program and a special interest session giving participants the opportunity to learn more about their events, athletes, programs and services.

Stay tuned for more information about biathlon and all things SFL. If you have not already submitted your SFL application, do so now by heading on over to www.sfl.org and selecting the "applications" tab. Don't delay. We are experiencing unprecedented numbers of early applicants and we anticipate interest in biathlon to be very high. Reserve your very own heaping helping of Ski for Light awesomeness with a bonus topping of biathlon goodness before it's too late.

To learn more about USABA, please visit www.usaba.org. See you in the tracks!

KEEPING IN SHAPE FOR SFL: OUR SUMMER ADVENTURE AT RAGBRAI

By Bob Hartt and Bonnie O'Day

When we got hooked on Ski for Light several years ago, we asked our visually impaired ski buddies to tell us what they did to keep in shape in the warm weather months. That led us to create a tandem bike group and to begin a new and fun way to stay fit and enjoy the great outdoors. In 2016 we spent July 23rd to the 31st tandem cycling in the Register Annual Great Bike Ride across Iowa, affectionately called RAGBRAI. About 13,000 riders participated in the 44th annual RAGBRAI, sponsored by the Des Moines Register, which this year spanned eastward 420 miles across Southern Iowa, from the Missouri to the Mississippi rivers. Here are our experiences and some lessons we learned along the way.

Because flights to Des Moines were quite pricey, we flew to Indianapolis on Friday and met some friends, who drove us to Iowa. We learned our first lesson during our travel day-- if a gate agent says, "Just leave your carry-on bag with me and I'll make sure it gets on the plane," don't believe her. While we arrived in Indianapolis on Friday night as expected, we did not

receive our bag until Sunday evening! The missing bag offered us a great opportunity for a Saturday shopping trip for new bike shoes, gloves and other necessities.

On Saturday, we arrived in Ankeny, a suburb of Des Moines, where we met the rest of the Adaptive Sports Iowa Cycling Team and took a bus to Glenwood, where the ride would start the next day. The team consisted of about 30 members; half had disabilities of various kinds and half provided a range of support. Our friend Chuck Miller, who will be a first time visually impaired participant at Snow Mountain Ranch this winter, joined us on the ride and helped Bob find a captain. Adaptive Sports Iowa matched Bonnie with a captain. Two other blind riders besides the two of us and several other team members rode tandem bicycles during the week. Adaptive Sports Iowa made sleeping arrangements in church basements and school gymnasiums and we always had shower and bathroom facilities.

We headed out at 6 AM for our first ride from Glenwood to Shenandoah. Early starts enabled us to enjoy the sunrise, to complete most of our ride in the coolest part of the day, and to avoid riders who stopped for a cool brew several times along the way. We learned our second lesson that day—Iowa is not flat! Bonnie thought the first day was the toughest, as we completed our first 50 miles in over 90 degree heat. “Why did I sign up for this?” she groaned at the end of the ride. But Bonnie realized that the only thing she had eaten all day was ice cream, which probably contributed to her fatigue.

Things improved markedly after day one with a little more protein, low humidity and temps only in the mid-80s. On day two, we rode 75 miles and climbed about 3,900 feet over that total mileage — our longest and highest elevation climb for the week. We began to really enjoy ourselves and learned our third lesson—the best food can be found in Iowa’s small towns! Some riders, including Bob, refer to RAGBRAI as, “Eat Your Way across Iowa!” Vendors and church and other civic groups with food such as pork chops, corn on the cob, ice cream, turkey legs, fresh fruit pies and other Iowa favorites provided sustenance to hungry riders in every town and at other rest stops

along the way. (Did you know that the best cinnamon rolls ever can be found in Essex, Iowa?)

On days three and four we rode between 60 and 70 miles, with more climbing spread over nice rolling hills. By day three, we had learned our fourth lesson—we can send a spaceship to Mars but can't seem to manufacture a comfortable bicycle seat! Our butts were getting pretty sore, despite wearing padded shorts and using Shammy Butter. We nursed our aching backsides over a couple of beers each day at ride’s end. A highlight of day three was meeting Marion Elmquist for a couple of beers in the town of Leon after the ride. As if 70 miles per day wasn’t enough riding, day four included an additional thirty mile loop, which enabled Bob to complete his first-ever Century, a 100-mile ride!

Talking with other riders along the way was a special treat. RAGBRAI is truly an international event, with cyclists from England, Canada, Wales, Australia and every state in the Union. Each rider had a placard on the back of the bike with their city and state. We even met participants from our home town, Alexandria, Virginia.

Days five through seven rides were shorter, with less climb as we neared the Mississippi River. The shorter rides enabled us to explore our destination towns, including Centerville, Ottumwa and Washington. Day seven culminated with a tire dip in the Mississippi River and farewell promises to see team members again in 2017.

If you would like to learn more about RAGBRAI and tandem cycling, consider joining us and other SFL participants when we share our experiences at RAGBRAI and other rides at our special interest session at the 2017 SFL week in Colorado. You’ll learn that you too can ride in RAGBRAI!



NOT TOO EARLY TO PLAN FOR SUMMER FUN... REALLY!

By Mary Hiland

Imagine walking down a street made of bricks, where no cars are allowed. You hear piano music floating from the windows of more than one charming old house. Here comes a man whistling as he walks, and you recognize it as a Chopin waltz. You stop and wait for a group of little kids on bikes with no parent in sight. They ride wherever they please, just like we did as kids. As you walk along, you hear people laughing and talking on their front porches, and if they look your way, they wave. Everybody you encounter is smiling. People you sit next to on a bench engage you in conversation. When you go into a store, the girl at the counter smiles and seems genuinely interested in your having a good time. She actually likes her job, and when she's not serving a customer, she's reading a book. Everyone you meet is interested in learning and has a sense of humor. Every other person seems to be a musician, a writer, a scholar, or at least a reader. You look around at the audience before a lecture, and you discover that someone like Stephen Spielberg is sitting 2 rows behind you. You see a lot of little old ladies with their canes and walkers, but they are just as eager to keep their minds and bodies active and healthy. You leave your door unlocked, even at night, because this is Chautauqua.

Last year, I checked off an item from my bucket list, to go to Chautauqua, CHQ. Then I decided that next on my bucket list was to go again, and I did. In late June, I returned from a week of physical and mental exercise with my friend.

Each morning, we walked a mile to the aquatic center for 10 laps of swimming and then walked back to our respective rooms at our rooming house, so there were 2 miles and 500 meters before breakfast. The rest of the day, we attended fascinating lectures and discussions with such notables as Ann Patchett, Jane

Pauley, Gary Trudeau, and Alan Alda. We managed to squeeze in a little plain old fun by renting a pedal boat, even with my Seeing Eye[®] dog Dora along.

In the evenings we enjoyed music from the Army Brass Band, the CHQ Symphony Orchestra, and a variety of other entertainment.

One of the highlights for me was having one of the teachers of prose give a quick critique of the book I'm writing. He was very encouraging, and I was thrilled to hear him say it looked quite promising.

As we drove out of the gates on the last day, we felt like we were leaving a bubble of pure Americana—Americana with the ambiance of the fifties but with the search for knowledge and truth of today.

Chautauqua is located in the Finger Lakes region of New York.

If this appeals to you too, contact me at mary.hiland@wowway.com



IMPROVED WHEELCHAIR ACCESS TO LOCAL OPEN-SPACE PARK!

By John Elliott

Three years ago, I came upon a strong, young man in a wheelchair, high-centered on a narrow, washed-out gravel path leading into one of my local parks. I regularly take this route into that park, traversing the short distance from an on-street bike lane to the paved path in the open space. But until I met this man, I hadn't considered how difficult it was for someone in a wheelchair to traverse this path after big rains periodically wash it out. Even for Adam, a fit, adaptive athlete, this was an obstacle.

I vowed to Adam that I would call the appropriate management office to get this problem resolved. How difficult could it be to pave about 40 feet of a pedestrian access path, we thought? Simple solution, right? Wrong.

It turned out that the path traversed both County and City properties, and although both government entities were flush with new construction funds, getting the two to work together took some special collaboration. Over the next 3 years, including two administration changes in the City and County offices, I wrote letters to several sympathetic Council members, to the Mayor, and to County Administrators. All thought paving the path and correcting the drainage problem was a good idea, but there was always some excuse why it would have to wait until next year.

Finally, this spring, it happened. The access to the park was enlarged and paved. A few days later, I ran into Adam who was training in the park with another wheelchair adaptive athlete. Adam and his teammate were preparing for the Rio Paralympics. Adam Scutaro from Lakewood, Colorado, is a wheelchair rugby player on the US National Team. Last weekend, in Rio, Adam and his team took home the Silver Medal in Wheelchair Rugby! The next time I see him, I will attempt to interest him in trying out a Nordic sit-ski! This has definitely been one of the highlights of my year since last winter's ski week, and it's an accomplishment that brings me deep satisfaction!

THE TC VIP SHIP: ADVENTURES OF A BLIND ROWING CREW

By Melinda Hollands

After experiencing my first SFL International Event in 2015, I returned to my home town, motivated to form a local group of people who were also visually impaired. The thrill of sharing, learning, and playing with other people with vision impairments was so impressive, I could not wait a whole year until the next SFL! For years I had thought about gathering people together in my community to share resources, to provide information, and to offer support to one another. My positive experience at SFL inspired me to get it done!

So in May of 2015 the TC VIPs (Traverse City Visually Impaired Persons) met for the first time. Little did we know then what lay in store for us! We continue to meet monthly, usually at a restaurant, to network, to learn from each other, and to socialize. We have connected with the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District and have attended Daily Living Skills Trainings to talk with students and parents about functioning in the adult world. We have met with the Bay Area Transit Authority to discuss transportation resources in our community and to suggest improvements in these services to persons with limited sight. We work closely with our local Talking Book Library and are speaking at World Sight Day on Oct. 12. For fun, we have attended our local minor league Beach Bums baseball game, have gone bowling and out for pizza, have attended a holiday Symphony Orchestra concert, and much more. But the biggest thrill thus far has been rowing...

This spring I received a call from Erik Zehender from Fountain Point Resort and the Lake Leelanau Rowing Club. Erik has been coaching rowing for years and says one technique they use is to blindfold rowers as they learn to feel the rhythm of the boat as their oars move through the water. He had seen videos of blind rowers, and wanted to open up this opportunity in our community. Basically he said something like, "Do you have some blind friends who may want to come out to our beautiful resort on a gorgeous summer

evening and row in our high quality 60-foot sweep boats with an experienced coach to guide you?" I couldn't believe my ears! "Are you kidding?" I replied! "Yes, most definitely! We'll be there!" So off we went!

Seven of the TC VIP group members made their way to Lake Leelanau: men, women, in shape, not so in shape, young (13 years old) and not so young (74 years)... all with varying degrees of visual impairment. Initially Erik assigned two college rowers to be in the boat with us.

Upon arrival, Erik and his staff showed each of us the basic rowing techniques and terminology on the on-land erg machines. After 20 minutes or so, he said, "Okay everyone, go get the boat off the rack!" So we grabbed a staff member's arm and were led to the racks. We were taught how to place our hands and arms, and then on command, we all lifted the boat over our heads. With verbal guidance from Erik and his staff, we were directed down the hill and onto the floating dock. We were instructed to lower the boat onto the water and to climb in. Once we pushed off the dock, we sat quietly waiting for instructions. All we heard were exclamations such as ... "Wow! That's amazing!" and "I have never seen that happen." And "Would you look at that!" Our curiosity was rising, wondering what amazing sight we were missing! "What is so fabulous?" we asked! "Fill us in!"

It was our boat that had fascinated the experienced rowers. It was steady! Without any directions, we had "set" the boat, as they say. We thought we were just sitting there! But apparently, we used the same, innate senses we use all the time to navigate and to orient ourselves in varied environments to acclimate us to the tippy boat. So we skipped the beginning lesson about balancing, and moved right into rowing techniques! Little did we know that the local TV crew was on the pontoon boat with Erik filming us for that night's news. And a week later, the news clip was shown on the Today show! Were we ever excited!

Well, we have rowed nearly every week since then. Our youngest member was promoted to a single sculling boat as she was smaller and therefore not as strong as the rest of us. Her parents bring her out to the resort two to three times a week to work on the erg machines and to work individually with Erik. At

this point in time, she is rowing by herself in the middle of the lake with verbal instructions shouted from the shore or pontoon boat!

As for the rest of us, we now have five people with visual impairments and three sighted friends committed to our TC VIP SHIP! The Adaptive Rowing Coordinator, Sydney, is our sighted coxswain. We are still rowing weekly and plan to race in our first regatta on October 29 at Fountain Point Resort.

What an adventure! What fun! All of us in the boat are thrilled to be there and so grateful to Erik for initiating this opportunity! Erik and his staff are learning how to communicate and to assist us, and we are learning how to row and to be a team. It is an amazing partnership!

Incidentally, four of our boat members will be attending SFL in Colorado in 2017. Nancy Simmons will be a first year VIP. Larry Wright will be a second year VIP. Greg Horn will be a first year guide. And I will be a third year VIP. When we see you in Granby, we will tell you how the regatta turns out!!



COME SKI IN NORWAY!

Join the Ski for Light group for the Ridderrenn in Beitostølen, Norway March 26 to April 2, 2017.

The Ridderrenn, started in 1964, is the event upon which Ski for Light is based. It's a wonderful week of cross country skiing, including a biathlon, 5 k and 10 k race for women and men, culminating in the 20 kilometer Ridderrenn on Saturday.

There are all sorts of activities including a talent show, an auction, and entertaining evening programs.

If you are interested, please contact Marion Elmquist, by early December.

Marion Elmquist, 515-279-3681

mlelmquist@aol.com

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

There are nine local affiliates of Ski for Light, Inc. scattered throughout the United States. While they share our name, each operates totally independently. Each was founded by SFL Alumni, in order to make the benefits of the program available to more people, in their local areas. All nine offer winter cross-country skiing for visually- and mobility-impaired adults and guides. A few also offer other activities, including snowshoeing and downhill skiing. Their programs vary from single day trips to week-long events. Many of them also offer summer activities as well as winter programs.

The nine regional affiliates are located in New England, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Colorado, South Dakota, Montana, California and Washington. You can learn about their upcoming programs by going to the Regional and International Events page on the SFL website, at www.sfl.org/regionals. From there, you can link directly to the website of the affiliates to learn about their upcoming plans.

In addition to the regional affiliates located in the United States, there are programs of a similar nature in Norway, Canada and Japan. You can learn about these, too, on the SFL website.

STAY IN TOUCH WITH SKI FOR LIGHT!

Ski for Light maintains two electronic mailing lists for people who are interested in the activities and programs of the organization:

The SFL-Announce mailing list is a low traffic, announce only list used to send you timely information about Ski for Light events, activities and people. To subscribe to sfl-Announce send an empty e-mail message to

sfl-announce-subscribe@sfl.org

The SFL-L mailing list is a general discussion list that provides a forum for individuals to exchange ideas and information about SFL programs, or about other sports and outdoor activities for persons with disabilities.

Replies to list messages go to the entire membership of the list.

To subscribe to sfl-l send an empty e-mail message to

sfl-l-subscribe@sfl.org

The SFL Bulletin

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The current as well as past issues of the Bulletin are also available online at www.sfl.org.

In addition to an online edition that may be read in your browser, you will find a downloadable pdf version of the current issue.

For future Bulletins, remember that your contributions and feedback are always most welcome.

You may submit articles as e-mail or as a word or text attachment. Send all items to:

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The deadline for the Spring 2017 Bulletin is March 1, 2017. We look forward to hearing from you.

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SKI FOR LIGHT, INC.

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