



SKI FOR LIGHT BULLETIN

Spring 2017

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.

Ski for Light, Inc., 1455 West Lake Street, Minneapolis, MN 55408-2648

Phone: 612-827-3232 - Web Site: www.sfl.org - General Information: Info@sfl.org

President's Message

by Scott McCall

Hello Ski for Light Friends,

During the week of February 5 - 12, 2017 more than 250 SFL attendees gathered at Snow Mountain Ranch, near Granby, Colorado, for the 42nd SFL International week. One of the highlights of this year's event was the opportunity to welcome 72 first timers to our SFL family. This group of enthusiastic guides and energetic disabled skiers made it an unforgettably dynamic week!

The competent and friendly staff at Snow Mountain Ranch accommodated all our needs both in and out of the tracks. This year's event planning was led by Heather Berg. Over a period of 10 months, leading up to the International Week, Heather was constantly making necessary arrangements, solving problems, assisting and motivating other members of the planning team, and always leading by example. Thanks Heather and planning committee.

As SFL's President, I have the pleasure of giving several awards during the week. This year, veteran guide Ken Leghorn received the Bjarne Eikevik President's Award. In addition to serving as a guide for seven years, Ken was a co-author of our Guide Training handbook and developed our "indoor, introduction to skiing" instructional program. Ken has also led our efforts to make technique sessions a more prominent part of the week's schedule.

Cuqui Soto received the Jan Haug award. This award, which includes a complete ski package, is given annually to a first-time participant who demonstrates enthusiasm and potential for the sport of cross-country skiing.

As always, SFL events are successful because we have so many dedicated and committed volunteers. While financial support will always be essential, the spirit of volunteerism within the SFL family is our most valuable resource.

Heart-felt thanks to all.

This edition of the Bulletin is dedicated to the memory of Bjorg Dunlop in recognition and appreciation of her numerous contributions as a guide, teacher, coach, mentor, member of the Bulletin team, dear friend and so much more. When we say that SFL touches lives, we are referring to the people of SFL. Bjorg was indeed one who touched and changed lives.

Sunshine On My Shoulders: Snow Mountain Memories

By Andrea Goddard

“If I had a day that I could give you, I’d give to you a day just like today. If I had a song that I could sing for you, I’d sing a song to make you feel this way.” (John Denver)

As Nancy Stevens’s guitar anchored us, we let our voices rise and fall with Denver’s beautiful, simple melody, filling the Indian Peaks Lodge lobby with a warmth that more than made up for the nippy air we’d breathed on the trails earlier that day. Oh, if I could only bottle this, I thought, a lump growing in my throat. This was my week, these were my people, and the challenges plaguing my life had finally receded to a respectful distance. The song and the act of singing it (with dear SFL family members Ken Leghorn and Julie Coppens among us, and with some others of us unable to attend and being deeply missed) was like voicing all the hellos, thank-yous, and goodbyes that ever needed to be said.

The 2017 International ski week was quite the hit for well over 250 skiers, guides, and fabulous, helpful others. The Snow Mountain Ranch staff (coordinated and led by Marie Huston) couldn’t have been kinder or more accommodating! Trail conditions were superb, with good, solid tracks that made for great skiing, and the weather was positively balmy!

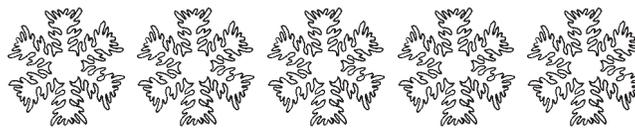
Besides the rewards and challenges of a week of skiing on great trails at altitude, we were also treated to a brand-new event at SFL International... shooting an audio-guided laser rifle with instruction and guidance kindly provided by representatives from the U.S. Association of Blind Athletes. Visually- and mobility-impaired participants engaged in target

practice, alternating shooting with skiing, and felt exhilarated when they got more shots than they’d thought possible. This was made possible by an incredibly generous gift from veteran guide Svein Thorstensen from Norway, in an effort to bring the Ridderrenn’s biathlon experience to SFL.

The week’s off-trail highlights included a few dances (the last with a live band cranking out great tunes), a trivia night, and Wild West night, where some of us bravely mounted an increasingly irritable and violent mechanical bull, while the rest of us alternately dared others to ride, then groaned with and applauded for them when they fell off!

A golden on-the-trail moment for Yours Truly came the day the MIPs did our group ski on some of the less-traveled trails. The small handful of us and our beloved guides had paused in our skiing along a quiet stretch of track when we all heard the clear, high, sweet notes of a recorder arising from what seemed to be out of nowhere, serenading us with “Edelweiss” and another well-known melody. The crystalline notes fell into the awed silence of the moment... an evanescent stillness that spoke for us all. The minstrel was none other than my very own guide... the talented and incomparably witty Glenn Beachy!

“Yes,” I thought, back singing with Nancy and her guitar, moved and openly crying now: “If I had a wish that I could wish for you, I’d make a wish for sunshine all the while.”



The Grace of the Sport: You Don't Have To Race To Win

By Cecilia Walsh

This year, I was the happy and proud recipient of the annual sighted guide scholarship granted by Ski For Light Puget Sound (SFL PS) to attend SFL International at Snow Mountain Ranch. What an experience this was!

The preparatory instruction I received from the sighted and visually impaired guide training team was very thorough. While I have been a guide for SFL PS for over 12 years, I'm not a great skier, and this training took my skills, confidence and competence, as skier and guide, to new levels.

I was matched with a 'new skier,' but in fact she was a returning VIP who'd last been out on the snow 15 years before. Her goals for the week were to have fun and to recall and improve upon her skills. Though somewhat hampered by a fear of falling, and aggravated in turn by high, sound-distorting winds, she appeared more confident and relaxed by the end of the second day and had tripled her distance - going back and forth on the approximately 15-meter long practice tracks. I worried we'd stay there all week and that I did not have more to teach her (and I admit I was feeling sorry for myself at not getting to burn the energy I'd brought with me), so I consulted with our guide training team.

The trainer and I agreed we wanted my skier to get onto the trails so on Wednesday morning we were assigned an experienced instructor. He started back at basics with skis on the carpet, but we graduated quickly to the trails, skipping the practice runs all together. By that afternoon my skier had doubled her distance from the day before, had stopped herself multiple times without falling, and had set another goal of entering Saturday's rally to complete the 1km in 1 hour. And, though I had

not put on my skis all day, I had learned more about guiding, skiing - and patience!

To break up the stress and challenges of learning we took a couple of relaxed snowshoe walks, enjoying the quiet - and for my skier the sense of control. The longer of the snowshoe ventures demonstrated that my skier had the stamina to complete the 1km (she uses a guide dog and walks daily) so we signed her up for the rally.

On Saturday we left our time pieces behind, geared up, and off we went.

Neither of us had ever done a ski race or rally before. We didn't care for the adrenalin of competition or the flurry of activity at the start line.

Within minutes we'd been passed by all the other rally participants with later start times and I realized we could just ski and have a good time, at last, as we did. My skier recalled her mother singing to decrease her anxiety so we took turns with songs we both knew, and occasionally sang to one another! We simply skied along steadily, taking our time, and as we approached the finish line, she announced that next year she'll aim to complete 5k. I have no doubt she will.

For my part, I've fallen in love all over again with skiing and guiding and have a greater appreciation for the grace of the sport; and, even as my skills were honed, my heart and ego were humbled with increased respect for the courage, shared trust, and determination of each SFL participant, and by a deeper understanding of what it means to bear witness to and to accompany another on her journey.



Announcing the 2018 International Event!!

The Ski for Light 2018 International Ski Week will be held from Sunday January 21 through Sunday January 28, 2018 at the Tahoe Donner Cross Country Ski Area in Truckee, California. Tahoe Donner is consistently voted as one of the top cross country ski sites in North America.

We will be skiing out of the recently completed Alder Creek Adventure Center on immaculately groomed trails. The extensive trail system boasts both gentler and more challenging courses in an effort to meet the needs of both beginners and more advanced skiers.

Tahoe Donner is the site of the Sierra regional SFL program, so the staff has some familiarity with hosting

a Ski for Light group.

We will be staying at the Nugget Hotel Resort in Sparks, Nevada, just ten minutes from the Reno Airport.

Tim McCorcle is serving as chair of the 2018 planning committee. Work is already underway to make 2018 another exciting and enjoyable week of “Skiing, Sharing, and Learning”. Complete information about the 2018 event, including applications, will be posted in late July at www.sfl.org.

Fire In Her Heart: Remembering Bjorg Dunlop

By Andrea Goddard



It was standing room only in the Cocksackie, New York, funeral home on the day Bjorg Dunlop’s loved ones and extended SFL family gathered in her memory. It seemed so impossible that this vibrant, grandmotherly, take-charge free spirit had left us so suddenly after a vigorous 77 years of living and of loving life to its last drop. Of course, we’d all been looking forward to seeing her in Granby, but a fast-growing brain cancer had other ideas.

“Bjorg Dunlop WAS Ski for Light. In all shapes and sizes. While Northeast Pennsylvania was her home, she was a familiar face at the New England Regional, among others, and it was VERY rare for her to miss an International program. Within the Sons of Norway community, she was a great advocate for the program, never ceasing to talk about her adventures in efforts to recruit new guides and participants. Her no-nonsense attitude while out doing an activity, whether it be skiing a 10K or hiking, meant that you needed to keep up or be left in the dust! She had a way of getting the best out of whomever she was teamed up with, usually without the partner’s even realizing it until after the fact.”

While there seems to be no single story that encapsulates everything Bjorg was, each memory shared has her spirit singing through every word.

A veteran guide trainer at SFL International, Bjorg had been sharing her passion for skiing with both VIPs and new guides for 23 years. For the last 13 of those years, she also served as a crucial member of our bulletin production team, overseeing each issue's layout, printing, and distribution.

Beloved by all who knew her (you couldn't help but be instantly fond of this tell-it-like-it-is, vivacious woman), she was 2014's proud recipient of SFL's highest honor, the Bjarne Eikevik President's Award.

A couple snapshot memories come to mind when I think of this big-hearted, pragmatic Norwegian: I once arrived at International with a raging head cold... on my birthday. I let it slip to someone (I have a feeling it was actually Bjorg), and the next thing I knew, all 200-some-odd SFL'ers gathered in the dining room were singing Happy Birthday. Afterward, happy to be there, but exhausted and dying to get some rest, I was headed up to my room when Bjorg called out to me: "Hey, Andrea, I have something for you!" She came down the hall toward me, placing a luscious bar of Norwegian chocolate in my hand with a heart-felt, "Happy birthday." We gave one another a huge hug, then she went on her way. I knew I was home.

One skier shared a story typifying Bjorg's earthy approach to guiding: Several years ago, at the Ridderrenn, she'd realized by the second day out that

she and her guide weren't "seeing eye to eye." She was putting all she had into trying to ski up the hills, and the guide was insisting that even more effort was needed in order for her to ski effectively throughout the week and in the coming Saturday race. "In the middle of the week Bjorg, who was there but not guiding anyone, offered to ski with me," she says. Her guide was amenable, and Bjorg hit the trails with her the following morning. As she struggled again to climb the first hill, Bjorg looked over and said, "your ski poles are much too short. No wonder you're having trouble getting up the hills!" The skier remembers: "We went back to the rental shop and exchanged them for poles that seemed almost twice as long and do you know what? I positively flew up the hills after that! Bjorg was wonderful to ski with- a gentle coach, an interesting person, a warm heart and fun to be with. And at the end of the week I not only skied the 20K race with her, I came in second place!"

Another member of our SFL family said it best: "We have lost our North Star. Our Norwegian Marine. Our heart and soul of our program for so many, many years. Our loss is Heaven's gain."

Wherever you are, Bjorg, may the powder be fresh and plentiful, may the sun be shining, and know that your skis have carried you home one more time!



Other Passings

Our Ski for Light family has lost several other loyal and loved members in recent months, and we honor their memories here:

Dick Ashley, a visually-impaired participant whom many of us remember fondly, made it to an impressive 25 SFL International events. He last attended in 2013.

Ardis Hammen was a guide at 9 events, most recently in 2003. She and her husband Wally were also very active in the Puget Sound Regional program.

Sandie Page attended 5 events as a guide, most recently in 2004. She was also very active in the New England Regional program, serving as their Secretary.

Haakon Randar was a guide at 16 events, most recently in 2005. He also served as a member of the SFL Board.

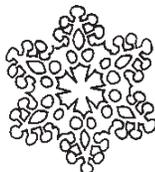
Everyone mentioned above lived out our Ski for Light spirit and brought fulfillment and joy to those who had the privilege of knowing them. Each will be greatly missed.

Late Breaking News

As this issue of the Bulletin goes to press, we have just learned of the untimely passing of SFL Guide and Board member Ken Leghorn, from pancreatic cancer. There will be more about Ken and his legacy in the Summer Bulletin.

REGIONAL Summer Activities

There are nine local affiliates of Ski for Light, Inc. scattered throughout the United States. All of them have a winter program centered on cross-country skiing, and several of them also have a summer program as well. The summer programs range from week-long programs to single day trips or hikes. The Regionals that usually offer summer activities are the Black Hills, Montana, New England, Northeast Pennsylvania and Sierra affiliates. You can learn the details of what each Regional is offering this summer by visiting their respective websites for their latest news. Each is linked directly from the Regionals page on the SFL website at www.sfl.org/regionals.



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, no subject required, 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, no subject required, to sfl-l-subscribe@sfl.org.

Spring Appeal

Dear Ski for Lighters,

Join in the campaign! Now that we've put away our winter gear, it's time for Ski for Light to raise funds to support next year's event. The actual cost of making Ski for Light happen each year greatly exceeds what attendees pay to be there, even though all of us are working for free. We need your help now to keep the event affordable for everyone.

Consider a taxdeductible donation as an investment in the future of SFL. How? You can go to the Donate page on the SFL website at www.sfl.org/donate and make your donation electronically, or you can send a check to:

Ski for Light, Inc.
1455 West Lake Street
Minneapolis MN 55408

And help us expand our circle of friends by asking friends, families, colleagues and employers to give as well. Thank you for your support!

Ski for Light Board of Directors

The SFL Bulletin

Editor: [Andrea Goddard](#)
Layout and graphics: [Janet Atkins](#)
Electronic version: [Larry Showalter](#)

The SFL Bulletin is published three times a year. It is available in ink-print or via e-mail.

If you wish to change formats, please send your request to: webmaster@sfl.org

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:

Andrea Goddard
SFL Bulletin Editor
E-mail: chinook80@centurylink.net

The deadline for the Summer 2017 Bulletin is July 1, 2017. We look forward to hearing from you.
Ski for Light, Inc. is a registered trademark. All rights reserved.



SKI FOR LIGHT, INC.

1455 West Lake Street
Minneapolis, MN 55408

Corporate Sponsors

Our thanks go to the following companies that have provided products or services to help support Ski for Light.

Many of these companies have stood behind us for years – and we're grateful. Be sure to think of our friends when you're gearing up for your next adventure.

JanSport • Blue Ridge Chair • Borton Overseas • Chums • Clif Bar

Cocoons/Live Eyewear • Columbia • Crazy Creek • Dansko • Darn Tough Socks

Eagle Creek • Farm to Feet • Fjallraven • Fox River Mills • Haiku • HeatMax/Grabbers

Injinji • Kavu • Klean Kanteen • Leki • Mountainsmith • Native Eyewear • Nite Ize

Olly Dog • Patagonia • Peet Shoe Dryers • Ruffwear • Spyderco Knives • Turtle Fur • Zuke's