



SKI FOR LIGHT, INC.

SKI FOR LIGHT BULLETIN

Summer 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.

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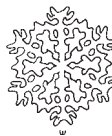
President's Message

By Scott McCall

Hello SFL Friends, I hope that everyone is staying safe and active this summer! While many are enjoying annual vacations, this is also a very busy season for SFL volunteers. On June 30th, treasurer Brenda Seeger closed the books on another fiscal year and is preparing a variety of end of year reports. Webmaster Larry Showalter continues to keep our web site up to date and to managed the preparation and posting of on line applications for the 2018 event. Bob Civiak, chair of our budget and finance committee, took the lead in preparing our budget for the new fiscal year. Bonnie O'Day and Bob Hartt coordinated a recruitment reception at the recent convention of the National Federation of the Blind and Judy Dixon and Tim McCorcle coordinated a similar event at the convention of the American Counsel of the Blind. Tim, also the event chair for the 2018 International Week, has been busy assembling the planning team and reviewing numerous details related to our next event. Others are engaged in guide and participant recruitment, fundraising, preparation of this issue of the Bulletin and many other activities that occur throughout the year. I could fill this entire issue with examples of volunteers working for SFL, but I'm sure you get the idea: As an allvolunteer group, we depend on many to work throughout the year to manage this very special organization.

As we were completing work on the spring issue of this Bulletin, we learned of the death of our dear friend, Ken Leghorn. In recognition of Ken's spirit, leadership, and passion for life, we are dedicating this issue to him.

Best wishes to all for a fulfilled summer and be sure to visit www.sfl.org for complete information and applications for the 2018 event.



Great Times Ahead: We're Bound for the High Sierra!

By Tim McCorcle

Ski for Light will explore new territory in 2018 when we venture to the Sierra Nevada Mountains of northeast California for our International ski week. The festivities kick off on Sunday, January 21, and continue through Sunday morning, January 28.

The Tahoe Donner Cross Country Ski Area, near Truckee, California, will be hosting all of our week's fun on the snow. It is widely acclaimed as one of the top Nordic ski venues in the United States, offering more than 100 kilometers of trails and a variety of terrain to satisfy the appetites of skiers of all abilities and ambitions. The SFL snow team will work with the staff at Tahoe Donner to create fun and interesting 5k and 10k loops that will showcase the beauty and variety of the High Sierra. We will offer skill sessions to help skiers improve their cross country technique and expand their skiing horizons. The property boasts five warming huts, which facilitate the exploration of the far reaches of the ski area's forests, meadows, and climbs. Tahoe Donner receives an average annual snow fall exceeding 360 inches, which bodes well for tasty tracks for all.

Base camp for the International Week will be the Nugget Casino Resort in Sparks, Nevada, just minutes

away from the Reno International Airport. That's right, it takes two states to accommodate the enthusiasm and energy of Ski for Light. The Nugget has hosted two national conventions of the American Council of the Blind and their staff is eager to showcase their skills and the resort's amenities. Once the skis are stowed for the day and we return to the hotel, there will be educational and special interest sessions to serve up food for thought before dinner time. Evening programs will provide ample opportunities to mix and mingle, to rekindle friendships forged over Ski for Light's four decades, and to spark new ones formed during the day's skiing in the snowy range at Tahoe Donner, or over a pint, a glass, a dram, a cup of tea, or a mug of coffee. Who knows where a turn on the dance floor or a bidding war at the Silent Auction might lead?

The planning committee is hard at work, brainstorming and pulling together the ingredients for an exciting event! Please join us in the Sierra Nevada and add your spark to the 2018 Ski for Light International Week! For more details, please visit the event page on the SFL website at <http://www.sfl.org/events/next>. Or, go straight to <http://www.sfl.org/applications/> to submit an application!



Remembering a Dear Friend

By Scott McCall

Most of you know that veteran SFL guide and board member Ken Leghorn passed away on April 11, 2017, following a seven month battle with cancer. Ken's life was filled with accomplishments, adventures, and the love of thousands of friends and acquaintances.

I first met Ken in 2010, when we were matched as skier and guide. In the tracks, Ken guided with confidence, precision and an infectious enthusiasm for skiing and with a relish for the great outdoors. As my instructor/guide Ken helped me modify my technique to gain speed and endurance. Over the years, I was privileged to be guided by him in several races. Since both of us enjoyed making our best run of the week in the final race, there was a special thrill in putting forth maximum effort to celebrate a week of skiing together.

In 2010, we were skiing in Utah at Soldier Hollow, about a fifty minute bus ride from our hotel in Provo. It was during those rides that Ken began talking with me about how we could improve and expand our instructional program for first time skiers. Subsequently, he introduced new approaches

and activities that have since been incorporated into our trainings for first time skiers and into the technique sessions for intermediate and advanced skiers. This led to his taking a lead role in completely rewriting our instructorguide handbook.

While it was a love for skiing and adventure, along with encouragement from his cousin, Chris Leghorn, that brought Ken to SFL as a guide, his influence quickly spread beyond the tracks. His creativity, along with incredible organizational and leadership skills, shone as he enthusiastically encouraged all of us to get involved and to participate in various evening programs throughout the SFL week. I think Ken was guided by a sincere desire to get others involved whether the activity was skiing, dancing, singing or just sharing stories over a few adult beverages. SFL was also where he met and later married

the love of his life, Julie Coppens.

As a member of the SFL family, Ken was a guide, board member, guide trainer, trails coordinator, member of various committees, and 2017's recipient of the Bjarne Eikevik President's Award.

Between annual ski weeks, he excitedly shared his SFL experience with others. His vivacity and encouragement brought at least six new guides to us.

As a friend he was kind, supportive, humorous, thoughtful and always eager to help. Like others who have been remembered in these pages, he developed a deep and loving relationship with this very special organization; he made a difference, and his memory will be cherished by many for decades to come.

A Contagious Passion: Ken Leghorn and Our Journey to SFL

By Scott and Betsy Fisher

We ran into Ken one day while on the trails at our home ski area in Juneau. As ski instructors, we got together regularly during the ski season to clinic and review teaching progressions and we were trying to determine a good time for all of us to meet. Ken had been out of town for over a week, which was not unusual, so naturally we asked where he had been. He smiled his big goofy grin and started to tell us about Ski For Light. We could tell it had made a big impact on him, although at the time we had no idea just how momentous it was. "You would love it!" he said, urging us to look into it. We were working fulltime running a small business and ski instructing, so there was no way we could consider taking on another project that involved being gone during the middle of ski season. We filed it away under "Fun things that Ken encouraged us to do, but we will probably never have time."

True to form, though, Ken persisted. He invited a blind skier that he had guided at SFL to visit Juneau, and he organized several clinics to introduce guided skiing to interested local skiers. Again, we were intrigued and enjoyed every minute of those clinics and getting to know our guest. Several local skiers signed up to volunteer at the next SFL event and they told us about how much they enjoyed it. We started to get to know Ken's future wife, Julie, through her frequent visits, and after she finally relocated to Juneau. She did her own form of gentle lobbying, smiling her beautiful smile and letting us know how much we would enjoy participating.

After a few years, we sold our small business and our

only focus in the winter was skiing and ski instructing. Ken kept going to SFL every year and he never gave up telling us what a great experience it would be. He started to play on our ski instructor egos and told us how much SFL "needed" us as PSIA (Professional Ski Instructors of America) certified instructors. We started to consider it, but again, leaving in the middle of the ski season seemed just a little too much.

Then last summer, Ken helped us figure out a few details of a wilderness trip we were planning. In typical Ken fashion he gave us more than enough helpful information, including personally drawn maps and useful advice. Around the same time, he forwarded the next SFL event's information to us. We thought "What the heck, let's just do it and we will figure it out when the time comes to leave next winter."

But soon after we committed and well before winter had arrived, Ken shared his cancer diagnosis. We were crushed to hear that we would probably lose our longtime friend before any of us was ready to say goodbye, and we thought it was especially heartbreaking that it had taken us so long to sign up for SFL only to face the likelihood of its being Ken's last chance to attend. Ken's years of lobbying paid off. We are hooked on being SFL guides and are already looking forward to next year's event. Every moment we are there, we will be thinking of our friend Ken and how fortunate we are that he shared this wonderful gift with us.

Lauren Heine Remembers Ken Leghorn

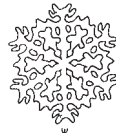
I've known Ken for almost 40 years. We met and dated in college. He was so full of energy and passion. A cross between the Energizer Bunny and Joan of Arc. While the relationship ended because I was not quite ready to move to Juneau, Alaska, our friendship rekindled years later when Carl and I visited the state of the Last Frontier for our honeymoon. We went sea kayaking in Glacier Bay on one of Ken's trips. Ken ran Alaska Discovery and he mastered the creation of excursions filled with natural beauty and personal adventure. I'll never forget the sound of humpback whales singing just offshore while Carl and I rested in our tent.

Ken shared his knowledge and love of nature generously and challenged others to push themselves. He could be very silly and funny during some of the most trying

moments. Ken and Carl immediately hit it off and started planning adventures together. Ken had plenty of room in his heart for new friends and it was wonderful to see the two of them become close.

Like Ken, Carl always wanted to live in Alaska and, thanks to Ken, we learned when there was an opportunity to work at the hospital in Juneau. This time I was ready to move. While the Juneau chapter came later in my life story, it was still wonderful.

Carl and I also have Ken to thank for introducing us to Ski for Light. SFL was a fabulous fit for Ken with his zeal for snow and skiing. It was a joy to see how he matured over the years and how he got so much pleasure from helping and inspiring others. He will be greatly missed.



Ridderrenn Memories

By Marion Elmquist

The SFL Executive Committee selects two guides and two visually or mobility-impaired individuals to attend the Ridderrenn, the program upon which Ski for Light is modeled. The team officially represents SFL as a way to maintain and to enrich the bonds between the two programs. Including the selected representatives, there were 15 guides and skiers in this year's total SFL contingent. 2017's team was composed of VIPs Melinda Hollands and Dave Wilkinson, and guides John Elliott and Lars Johanson. They each sent along memories of that week, and here are their impressions of a memorable event:

Dave Wilkinson: I have wanted to go to the Ridderrenn since my first Ski for Light in 1997, but it was not on my realistic list of happenings. I could not imagine ever being chosen to go on such a trip. I was shocked when I was chosen, and that honor is and always will be one of the highlights of my life.

I went to the Ridderrenn to compete against athletes who grew up on skis. But what ended up being more important were the bonds my wife, Dawn, and I formed with my guide John, his wife Lynn, my fellow teammates Melinda and Lars, their spouses, and all the others from SFL at the event. We formed friendships that I hope will last a lifetime.

If you have a chance to go to the Ridderrenn, you will get to ski with some of the best. You will be incredibly well fed. While in Beitostolen, King's Guards will carry your luggage and drive you just about anywhere you need to go. You will feel welcomed by your hosts. But my biggest takeaway from my Ridderrenn was the joy of forming lasting relationships with my team members. Thank you Ski for Light!

Melinda Hollands: Who would ever have imagined that after three short years attending Ski for Light, that I would represent this great organization internationally? I shudder to think where I would be had I not summoned the courage to fly by myself to Colorado, join the Ski for Light group, and ski my first 10 K! The opportunities I have experienced and the blessings I have been granted just keep coming! Like Olav Pedersen described in the SFL history on the SFL website, those seemingly inconsequential happenings can really change your life if you pay attention to them.

But Norway? Me? Really? Yes, really! I kept pinching myself to be sure it was real, and it was! My husband and 14 year old daughter were there, as well as some of my Ski for Light family, to prove that this experience was indeed reality!

The ski conditions were challenging. The first day I skied through an ankle deep puddle. I prayed for cooler weather, but be careful what you wish for. The next day it was all ice...the slippery kind of ice! By the end of the week we had beautiful fresh snow that resulted in great tracks for race day. Due to the conditions, we did not get to experience the gently rolling hills I had heard about on the Ridderrenn trails. Instead we were transplanted to a World Cup racing course!!! More than 800 skiers, all crammed into a smaller stadium, doing hair pin turns to create the distance! So, instead of completing my first 20 K on the Ridderrenn course, I successfully completed the 4K race on the World Cup tracks. Yea!

John Elliott: What a rush it and honor it was to get a call in November, informing me that I had been selected to represent SFL at the 2017 Ridderrenn. Lynn and I arrived in Oslo a couple of days early and were shown some of the local highlights by our American/Norwegian friends. On Saturday, other SFL friends joined the group at Hotell Bondehiemen and that evening Marion led us to our first “official” SFL function, pizza at Pepe’s. We were joined by Svein Thorstensen, who graciously picked up the tab.

Sunday morning, we set off on the 3 1/2 hour bus ride to Beitostolen.

Because of the sparse snow conditions, instead of skiing at the usual venue, the Helsesportsenter, we would be training and competing on a shorter, hillier course at the World Cup stadium. We learned from more experienced Ridderrenn skiers that there were other trails higher up the valley, at Garli. The views across the expansive, largely treeless, rolling terrain reminded me of skiing in Colorado.

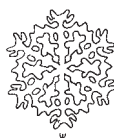
Memories of my visit to Norway are textured by many experiences: traveling with Lynn, exploring Oslo, the culture and history, the mountains, skiing with Dave, the Ridderrenn, the food, oh, the food. But what I have an even greater appreciation for now is the warmth, kindness, curiosity, and humanity of the Norwegian people.

Thank you SFL for giving me the privilege of representing you in Norway.

Lars Johanson: After missing the Ridderrenn in 2016 due to injury, and hearing so many stories from previous participants, it was certainly exciting to finally be at Beitostolen this year. Of course, all of us were disappointed that the snow conditions were not very good, however, we were very fortunate to have some good outings on the mountain at Garli and to have relatively good conditions for race day.

As usual for me, the best part of a ski week at Ski for Light or the Ridderrenn, was the time spent together with other skiers, whether on the trails or at other places. Both in Oslo and at Beitostolen, there were many opportunities to learn more about each other and our family members who went to Norway. There was also socializing with those participants from Norway, Denmark and England whom I have previously met at SFL week. It is the opportunity to meet friends and know them better that I really appreciate.

There was one special moment that I will remember for the rest of my days. Melinda and I had finished skiing one morning when the conditions were not great. Sitting on the bus we said to each other that we were pleased with the day despite the relatively poor conditions. I noticed a young woman on the bus whom we had passed several times in the stadium. This skier has cerebral palsy and she was always skiing with a great smile on her face. That smile was still there when she was on the bus. Melinda and I were reminded of the great joy that can be found in the moment despite whatever the external and personal conditions may be. What a great memory to have from the Ridderrenn.



Two Weeks in the Himalayas

By Wendy David

This past spring, I voluntarily endured 41 hours in the air, another 42 hours in airports (in many of which, I didn't speak the language), and countless hours on a very bumpy bus traversing mountain roads with devastatingly steep dropoffs and no barriers, all with a group of people I hadn't met until I landed halfway around the world in Kathmandu, Nepal. I had decided I was ready for a great adventure, "something outside my normal box," and something memorable. And wow, I got it all and much, much more. Many of you who know me know I love to meet new people, and often love to travel independently or with Larry and our two guide dogs. Nepal, however, was not on Larry's "bucket List" nor was it advisable to go there with my guide dog, as the water is unsafe to drink, rabid dogs and monkeys roam the streets, and the weather conditions vary from extremely hot to torrential rains, depending on the hour. Additionally, I quickly learned that traffic, as we know it, follows no rules, involving a continuous cacophony of honking horns, vehicles of all types dodging inbetween any number of items on the street (from cows to couches), and uneven and rocky terrain, making accessible and independent travel nearly impossible.

I chose to meet up with a group out of the UK called "Travel Eyes," which provides travel holidays to blind and sighted alike, with the sighted travelers acting as guides and audiodescribers throughout the entire excursion. It was something I had never experienced before and found it both fun and liberating in what would otherwise have been a chaotic and stressful experience for me. My entire trip lasted two weeks, and included 4 days in Kathmandu (Nepal's capital city), 4 days in the Chitwan National Park (in the South near India), and 4 days in Pokhara (in the West and of Nepal at the base of the Annapurna Mountain Range). Each destination was unique and offered a plethora of multisensory experiential delights. Nepal is composed of both Hindu and Buddhist faiths, each of which brings a colorful and unique landscape to the area.

In Kathmandu, we had the opportunity to visit several Buddhist temples and stupas, including Swayambhunath Stupa, a UNESCO World Heritage site, locally known as "The Monkey Temple." The peaceful ambiance of this grand temple, complete with hundreds of colorful prayer flags, prayer wheels, and singing bowls and bells offered an awesome backdrop to the lively monkeys who claim this lovely sanctuary as their home.

A visit to the Kopan Buddhist Monastery offered a glimpse into a working center of Buddhist monks and nuns, who live, study, and practice their faith while offering retreats and a spiritual path of meditation and fasting to students from around the world. We also learned about Hindu traditions and visited the palaces of Durbar Square, most notably the home of the Living Goddess, Kumari, a young girl whose feet never touch the ground until she leaves the temple when reaching puberty. She came to the window and peered out at us during our visit, which offered a glimpse of her red dress, young age (7 or 8), and many adornments.

Our 4 days in the Chitwan National Park included two days on a Jeep safari, where we spotted numerous species of deer, rhinos, crocodiles, wild boar, birds, and elephants. While in the heart of the park, I asked my Jeepmates for a minute of silence and recorded the symphony of bird sounds on my Iphone, which I was able to later share with Larry and still enjoy listening to.

The highlight of my time in the Chitwan National Park was spending a day upclose and personal with a couple of elephants: A very playful elephant allowed me to ride on her back in return for many trunkfuls of river water in my face! She made the mechanical bull look like child's play! I also sat with a resting elephant in the river while she put her powerful trunk in my lap and gently blew hot air at me, which felt amazing. I felt very connected to both of these incredible animals and hope I never forget that feeling of being invited into their lives.

In Pokhara, we visited a Tibetan refugee camp and had an opportunity to talk with residents who welcomed us into their community. Many of them create exquisite handcrafted rugs, scarves, and jewelry, which they sell for their livelihoods. I found these Tibetan refugees especially gracious, kind, and inspirational, and wished I could have spent

more time learning from them. One gentle woman, named Karma, showed me how to make the Tibetan bowl “sing” and I will always remember her patient and encouraging tutelage.

Our trip would not have been complete without a 5 A.M. visit to Sarangkot and a hike up the foothills to a viewing point, where we watched and felt the sun rise above the Himalayan mountain range. This was truly a moment of awe and inspiration, listening to the awakening birds and pondering the magnificence of this massive ball of heat as it illuminates and warms our entire Earth.

This trip brimmed with moments of wonder and enlightenment. I witnessed incredible patience, generosity, and respect, along with incredible poverty, suffering, and hardship. It was humbling to see how people with so little are willing to give so much of themselves and value what we often take for granted human kindness, the beauty of nature, and the universality of a genuine smile. I learned and gained more than I could ever express, and am grateful to my many TravelEyes guides, tourmates, and the Nepali people we encountered for making this such a memorable and extraordinary experience!



REGIONAL Summer and Fall 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 crosscountry skiing, and several of them also have a summer and/or fall program as well. The summer and fall programs range from weeklong programs to single day trips or hikes. The Regionals that usually offer summer and/or fall 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 year 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.

The SFL Bulletin

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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 Fall 2017 Bulletin is October 15, 2017. We look forward to hearing from you.

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SKI FOR LIGHT, INC.

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