Dear Ski for Light Friends,

I hope this finds you healthy and adapting as best you can to our newfound challenges. I often find myself distracted by news reports about the coronavirus, the Stay at Home orders, and the shortages of critical medical supplies and household items. I wonder about the health of my family, my friends who work in health care, my friends spread throughout the country. Not much else to do but wonder, worry, stay at home, spring clean a bit here, exercise a bit there; not nearly enough time dedicated to those last two things. Is it possible to productively procrastinate? If so, that is what I am doing—accumulating crowns and gems while perhaps learning German on Duo Lingo. (Ich esse, ich trinke, meine Form ist nicht sehr gut.)

Through all of this, I am heartened by my past experiences at Ski for Light events, and by recent phone calls and email exchanges with members of the SFL community. When confronted with challenges and unwelcome obstacles, we’ve grumbled a bit, groused some, complained a smidge, commiserated over circumstances over which we might have had some control or none at all. Time passes, though, and, without fail, ideas flow, solutions are proposed, pros and cons discussed, physical and emotional support is freely shared, action replaces inaction, and we press onward, buoyed by our collective energy, imagination, and commitment to SFL's mission; squeezing everything we can from our opportunity to ski together, sharing and learning throughout it all.

It is far from business as usual for any of us, but SFL is a far-flung organization, and we are comfortable with working from our home offices, kitchen tables, recliners, and couches—and with using whatever high and low technology is required to keep moving forward and ticking items off the To Do list.

At this time, we plan to hold the 2021 International week in Snow Mountain Ranch as scheduled, and will keep the SFL community informed as circumstances change and evolve. Bonnie O’Day is chairing the week, and will lead the planning team in their preparations to host a standout event.

To help folks keep connected during this strange time of Stay at Home decrees and our long off season, we are coming up with a few, creative ways to support one another: We’re increasing our postings to the SFL Facebook page, and we’ve resurrected our Twitter account. We’ve added a page on our SFL.org site with content and links to help us unite, inspire, encourage, and engage from afar.

We recognize that the social distancing and economic downturn has strained many people’s finances; consequently, we will not conduct our Spring Fundraising Campaign that usually happens in April. Our fundraising efforts are integral to ensuring that we will be able to stage future International weeks and to keep event fees affordable, so we will not turn down donations when offered; however, please keep in mind the needs of your local community, medical providers and first responders, food banks and home meal providers when deciding where to donate your dollars this spring.

During the February ski week in Casper, Wyoming, we encountered many twists and turns, ups and downs, and sideways slides—some we anticipated as features of cross-country skiing, and some others that surprised us. Howling winds, blizzard snow, white, ice-glazed hairpins and hills, and dicey bus rides challenged our resolve. Throughout the week, whenever we...
were blown sideways or backwards, we did what I treasure most about Ski for Light: We came together, pooled our energy, generated creative solutions and new alternatives, and displayed an optimistic resilience to embrace the adventure. We also saw the residents and business people of Casper truly engage with and embrace us, allowing us to experience the best their hometown had to offer. These memories give me confidence that we will persevere through these challenging days and weeks.

Be as healthy as you can, stay connected, and I look forward to skiing with you when the snow falls again!

Tim McCordle
our group toured an archeological museum that allowed blind visitors to touch fossils and other artifacts, and still others of us attended a kickboxing class led by VIP Karen Wood. Many of us gathered for various singing and musical jam sessions. Though we weren’t on the snow, we were doing what SFL does best, managing to have a great time in spite of it all!

Race Day was cold and challenging. First-time VIP, Audrey Farnum (an Oklahoma lawyer and winner of this year’s Jan Haug award) recalls: “The first lap was horrendous, and I kept falling. On a really steep hill, I kept needing to side-step up it after falling down and sliding backward repeatedly. I skied so much better on the second lap in places I’d fallen or struggled to snow plow the first time. We finished, there was a lot of good communication and teamwork (with guide Sonja Elmquist) to get it done, even when things were frustrating.” Despite the rigors of the course, we all skied hard, and cheered even harder as each skier and guide crossed the finish line to raucous shouts, applause, and cow bells.

In keeping with the offbeat nature of the week, one of my own, favorite experiences took place off the trail. Our hotel graciously provides free shuttle service to any of its guests wishing to travel into town, not just to/from the airport. On Thursday, I opted not to ski, and was able to visit an impressive, multi-story gift shop store called Lou Taubert Ranch Outfitters (whose owner generously offered a discount to people with SFL), and Donells, a chocolate/candy shop that has made its own, delicious goodies for about 70 years! I remember not only the amazing chocolate-covered strawberries I enjoyed, but the kindness of our shuttle driver, who entered both shops with me, described the merchandise, and waited there while I completed my purchases. Though I’d assured him he could go about his normal work and that I’d call when I was ready to return to the hotel, he simply said he had nowhere else he needed to be for a bit, and went right on assisting me in browsing both shops!

Though the week was filled with more than its usual adversity, we kept moving forward, on skis and otherwise. Bob Hartt, our intrepid transportation coordinator, did such an outstanding job of not giving up when the going got tough that event chair, Judy Dixon, bestowed on him the first ever Event Chair’s Award! Audrey Farnum sums it all up beautifully: “Everybody was so cool and welcoming. A great bunch of people. It was a perfect storm of insanity that turned out to be a total blast!”

Let’s stay Well at Home, together!

By Julie Coppens

Deep in the fine print of the SFL Vice President’s job description, under a few very discrete and doable-sounding tasks, you’ll find this bullet item: “Other duties as assigned.” In other words, “Just wait!”

I’ve been Vice President before, briefly, so I knew the deal—but I never thought those “other duties” would include “Manage positive messaging and maintain SFL community morale during a global pandemic.” And yet, here I am. Here we all are: Together, apart. How’s everybody doing, seriously? Are you staying safe, healthy, and upbeat in these isolating times? Are you getting what you need? I know we’ve got a lot of SFLers who might be feeling especially vulnerable to this terrible virus, and many others who are suddenly out of work—but I can’t imagine any of us are sailing through the COVID-19 crisis unaffected, physically, financially, mentally, emotionally. In so many ways, for so many reasons, this is hard. But then: we’re Ski for Light. We can do what’s hard, joyfully, for as long as it takes. And none of us has to do it alone. I have a few ideas for how we can support each other, in what’s typically an off-season for our organization:

- **SFL Well at Home video/audio series.** If you follow us on Facebook, you might already have seen a few examples of short clips (some goofier than others) in which some of your Ski for Light friends reveal how they’re staying fit while hunkering down. We’re adding these resources to our website as well, under a new navigation tab on the homepage, “SFL Well at Home,” (www.sfl.org/well.) Submissions welcome! Send clips to me, via email (jycoppens@gmail.com) or text (907-796-9031), or DM to the Ski for Light Facebook page.

- **SFL on Twitter: We’re back!** During our Casper event we asked how many of you use Twitter, and guess what —lots of hands went up! We’re going to bring our long-dormant feed back to life, and do our best to tweet you some good stuff on a regular basis. Be sure to follow us (https://twitter.com/skiforlight) if you haven’t already; this might be a way for those who choose not to Facebook (we get it) to stay connected, since we’ll be cross-posting a lot of content on both platforms. For fitness-specific items, we’ll use the hashtag #sflwellathome. Help us make it a thing!

- **Direct help.** SFLers are nothing if not resourceful. Are you struggling, either with practical things like essential errands, or with deeper issues like keeping anxiety and depression at bay? Are you bored, or just under-employed, and looking for a way to help others in our community? Do you have skills that might be particularly useful at this time—for instance, are you a trained therapist who would welcome a phone call from one of your SFL friends needing to talk? Are you a financially secure person who could maybe treat someone else to a home-delivered meal in their town? I’m volunteering myself to be a point person: Drop me an email to jycoppens@gmail.
com, or call/text me at 907-796-9031, and I’ll try to match willing helpers with the needs I’m hearing, while respecting confidentiality. Please don’t hesitate to ask for a hand up. I’ll say it again: We’re Ski for Light. This is how we roll.

• And finally: Remember the joy. We have so much to celebrate as a community, so much fun to remember, and so much more to look forward to, when these hard times are over.

The 2019 SFL Annual Report, coming soon to a mailbox near you, is now available as a pdf on our website at www.sfl.org/annual; you might enjoy revisiting past issues as well—so many wonderful stories, images, and uplifting messages in those pages.

I’m already gathering material for the 2020 edition. With (sadly) no Ridderrrenn coverage, as that great event couldn’t happen this year, I’ll have room for more of your stories, and I know Andrea will be happy to receive your Casper event recollections and other writings as well. Please take some time to remember and share what Ski for Light means to you, perhaps especially in this strange and difficult post-season.

That’s all for now from the Vice President’s desk, which—hey, where did all these potato chip crumbs and wine stains come from?! Yes, we’re all needing to cut ourselves some slack these days, starting with our pants. Good thing Ski for Light has always been a no-judgment zone. I can’t wait to be back there with you all, skiing, learning, and loving life, together. Until then, be well.

Need Something to Look Forward To? Where We’ll Be in 2021!

By Tim McCorcle

Mark your calendars and reserve the week of January 24-31, 2021. The 46th annual Ski for Light International week is scheduled to take place once again in the breathtakingly gorgeous Colorado Rockies! We will be skiing on the familiar trails and staying at the friendly confines of Snow Mountain Ranch in Granby, Colorado. As part of the YMCA of the Rockies, the venue boasts 90 kilometers of trails, providing ample skiing for all abilities from beginner to advanced. A bonus feature of staying at SMR is that those fabulous trails are just a short shuttle ride or ski away from lodging. General information about the week and about this much-loved location is available now at www.sfl.org/events/next. Bonnie O’Day has just been named Chair of the 2021 planning committee, and she and her team will be working hard to lay the foundation for what will no doubt be a fun-filled week of skiing, camaraderie, and other, memorable experiences. Stay tuned for updates about the 2021 event and be on the lookout for applications to go live in early August!

Monday, Monday

By Martha Steele

I have often thought of what my mother said to me back when I was 12 years old and on a family summer cross-country trip where, much to our dismay, our car had frequently broken down. Many times, she’d repeated, “Well, it will make a good story someday.”

Which leads me to SFL Casper 2020.

Casper was my first SFL event and the one refrain I heard most often was, this is an anomaly, please try again next year. By all accounts, this was the most difficult SFL week in a long time—perhaps ever; but as my mother said, there is a good story to tell, so let us revisit that first day—Monday, February 10—for the story.

The day started with excited anticipation of the week to come. By the time post-breakfast meetings were concluded, it was 9:45 before my guide, Patrick McManus, and I boarded a bus to the ski area for what we thought was a 30 minute ride. As best we could tell, we were on the second bus to leave the hotel.

Soon, we were ascending a steep, switch-back mountain road. The bus stopped and the driver got out. Apparently, he was putting something on his tires (chains?) to improve his traction. This delayed our arrival, as did the road conditions. But we finally made it to the ski area after about an hour. Patrick and I got ourselves going on the trail after about 30 minutes of making our final preparations for skiing.

The skiing was beautiful, with fresh and packed powder snow. The 2.5 km loop trail was a series of gentle ups and downs. We went around the loop twice before stopping for lunch a little after 1:00. There were no permanent facilities at the area, so a large and heated tent had been set up to serve lunch. The ground was snow, of course, and it was not long before puddles and ice were underfoot and creating slippery conditions within the tent. Staff began putting down hay to soak up the moisture and to provide more secure footing.
Patrick had been assigned a second skier for the week and he went out for the afternoon with her. Fortunately, Frank “Gib” Gibney was available to guide me, as his assigned skier called it a day after the morning. Gib and I also went around the loop twice before calling it quits at about 3:30. This is where things started to get surreal!

Gib’s partner, Diane Muhr, had earlier reported to him via text that she was sitting on a bus that never made it up the mountain, as it had gotten stuck in a snow bank after sliding slowly backwards. Diane recalls: “As we slid back down the hill with a bus full of skiers/guides, everyone (at least in my area at the back of the bus) was quiet. It was a very eerie slide backwards because the wheels made almost no sound at all, being on snow/ice. We slowly came to a stop alongside the snow bank and then we sat, and we sat, and we sat (for about 5 hours!) We had a choice to walk the 1/2 miles to the ski area, which entailed a slippery road of ups and downs. I let my skier make the choice to stay on the bus. We were warm, had a bathroom and were even served pizza! Plus we had lots of ‘entertainment’.” More on that later.

Most of us up the hill, however, were not aware of this mishap. By late afternoon, those of us at the ski site were boarding two buses to go back down the mountain to the hotel. We were completely unaware that we would go nowhere fast. We got on one bus and just sat there, waiting to leave, wondering at the delay. We continued sitting for about 45 minutes or so, at which point, an organizer reported that one of the morning buses had never made it up the hill, as it had gotten stuck in a snow bank down the mountain. Diane reported later that a rescue bus was sent to the scene, but it, too, promptly got stuck, further blocking the road. Here is where the entertainment began.

In Diane’s words: “Then a small shuttle van arrived on the scene, only to slide past our bus and get stuck in another snow bank below us. It took about 5 guys, lots of chains, and a pickup truck to finally extricate it. Just as we thought things couldn’t get more exciting, the “Welcome to Casper” car, sent to investigate the whole situation, came sliding down the infamous hill, and careened into the left front side of our bus. The youngish driver of the car was not a happy camper, and either was our now very exhausted bus driver.”

To make matters even worse, it seemed that a sheriff’s car, also sent to the scene to investigate, unbelievably slid slowly down the hill into the Casper official’s car in a display of a super slow motion chain reaction!!

So now, the road was blocked, presenting the logistical challenge of getting large numbers of people from the mountain back to the hotel while darkness approached. We all felt the worst for those on the bus that had never made it to the ski site, but we were also growing more concerned that we, too, were stuck on the mountain.

It was now about 4:30 or 4:45. Back up at the ski area, communication was quite spotty. In another “you cannot make this up” angle, one of the two hotel-bound buses full of people had run out of gas, so folks piled out again, with most going into the heated tent to wait for some unspecified and unknown rescue. Then, some real hope! We learned that there was some transportation available below the logjam further down the mountain; so, some of us, including Gib and me, decided to walk the 1.5 miles down the road past the vehicle pile-up in hopes of getting a ride back to the hotel from there.

With Gib’s skillful guiding, the two of us managed to make our way — without falling—down what can only be described as an inches-thick ice rink of a steep road. We learned that others who’d tried to follow us down on foot were forbidden to do so because the way was deemed too icy and steep to be safe.

In a moving display of support and kindhearted generosity, Volunteer Casper residents began to show up in their private cars to take people back to the hotel, and then, most of those volunteers promptly turned right around and went back to get even more of our stranded group. We learned later that about 8 private vehicles had responded, so the folks on the snow bank-stuck bus, who’d obviously not gotten to ski at all that day, finally made it back to the Ramkota somewhere between 4 and 5 o’clock after slowly navigating down the icy road to the waiting volunteers.

Meanwhile, up at the ski area, there were 4 or 5 private vehicles that were deployed to help bring SFLers down to the logjam site so they could, at least, get beyond the trouble spot to find possible rides off the mountain.

Those of us who had managed to walk down from the ski area arrived at the road blockage around dusk, and then caught a van (equipped with chains) that shuttled people to the Nordic Ski Center, which was located about a mile down the road, and had opened up to provide shelter and warmth to skiers waiting for transportation back to the hotel. While there, we learned that a four-wheel drive school bus was on its way after finishing its rounds of dropping kids off. In the meantime, the private vehicle shuttles were continuing, and I ended up getting into one of those and going back to the hotel with about 5 others.

Our driver’s name was Ryan—a lifelong Casper native—and he explained that the town had received far more snow than usual, and that the road up to the mountain had actually been closed for four days the previous week due to heavy snowfall. We finally got back to the hotel at 6:30 and gave Ryan warm hugs of thanks. My guide dog, Alvin, was mighty happy to see me, but our invaluable dog walkers from Guide Dogs for the Blind and Guiding Eyes for the Blind were ready to continue caring for our four-legged companions if our returns had been even more delayed. The final group of skiers from the mountain arrived at 8:00
to loud cheers from the rest of us at the postponed dinner in the ballroom. The group had not even had time to change before they came to eat!

The whole experience was so unbelievable that everyone could only joke about it the rest of the evening. Still, I cannot imagine the nightmare logistics involved throughout the day to ensure safe transport back to the hotel, and to orchestrate the eventual retrieval of the buses, which required massive tow trucks. I realized I was among the lucky ones who’d gotten in a full day of beautiful skiing.

This account is what I remember and understood to have taken place. Undoubtedly, all of you have your own, striking memories of this unbelievable day. Depending on where you were in this chain of events, just about every emotion was felt by at least some people, ranging from concern as a bus slowly slid backward down a steep, icy road, to anger over the lack of communication or information over long stretches of time—from high anxiety around trying to expedite everyone's return as quickly as possible, to profound gratitude for the Casper residents who made the difference and helped get us all back safely to the hotel. This is, indeed, a good story to tell, though perhaps not all of it warms the heart. It does, however, unite us all in a shared experience that we will not soon forget, and that we will relive with each other for years to come.

**Honorees and Award Recipients**

Each year, during SFL week, several SFL attendees are traditionally honored for service to SFL, embracing the SFL spirit and being positive representatives of Ski for Light.

On Tuesday, members of the 2019 Ridderrenn Team of two skiers and two guides announced and introduced the 2020 team. The skiers were Nancy Stevens and Michael McCulloch, and the guides were Carl Lantz and Kent Moore. Because of the coronavirus, the 2020 Ridderweek was cancelled. The 2020 team will represent SFL at the 2021 event in Beitostolen, Norway.

At the Saturday awards banquet a first-time participant who shows enthusiasm for the sport of cross-country skiing is honored with the Jan Haug award, named for a Minneapolis businessman who donated skis to SFLers for many years. This year's recipient was Audrey Farnum, who received a package of skis, boots and poles.

The Bjarne Eikevik President’s Award was given by president Marion Elmquist to Cathie Sandell, a long-time guide and more recently a Worker Bee, for her hard work and dedication in working for and improving Ski for Light. The award is named in memory and honor of Bjarne Eikevik, one of the founders of SFL, and president from 1976 to 1981.

**Ski for Light Elects Board Members and Officers**

Ski for Light, Inc. is an all-volunteer organization managed by an elected Board of Directors. Between meetings of the full Board, the business of the organization is managed by an Executive Committee composed of six board officers and the Immediate Past President. Unless a vacancy is being filled, Board members serve four-year terms and officers serve two-year terms. During the recent 2020 event, elections were held for about half of the twenty-five Board seats as well as for all six officer positions. We welcome new Board members: John Amundson; Cara Barnes; Betsy Fischer; Lynne Forsyth; Robert Hartt; Lauren Heine; Bonnie O’Day; and Sheri Richardson. For their past service, we thank outgoing Board members: Dede Chinlund; Robert Civiak; Leslie Maclin; Scott McCall; Nancy McKinney Milsteadt; and Richard Milsteadt. We also welcome new President Tim McCorcle, Vice President Julie Coppens, Secretary Krista Erickson and Directors-at-Large Michael Evelo and Robert Hartt. For their past service, we thank outgoing Executive Committee members Amy Brannan, Judith Dixon, Scott McCall and Nancy McKinney Milsteadt, as well as outgoing President Marion Elmquist, who will continue on the new Executive Committee as Immediate Past President.

Here is the full Board roster for 2020 to 2022.

**Executive Committee:**

Tim McCorcle, **President** - Seattle, Washington;

Julie Coppens, **Vice President** - Cincinnati, Ohio;

Krista Erickson, **Secretary** - Mundelein, Illinois;

Brenda Seeger, **Treasurer** - Red Lake Falls, Minnesota;

Michael Evelo, **Director-at-Large** - Rhinelander, Wisconsin;

Robert Hartt, **Director-at-Large** - Alexandria, Virginia;

Marion Elmquist, **Immediate Past President** - Des Moines, Iowa.
The SFL Bulletin

Editor: Andrea Goddard
Layout and graphics: Janet Atkins
Electronic version: Larry Showalter

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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 Summer 2020 Bulletin is June 15, 2020. We look forward to hearing from you.

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