



SKI FOR LIGHT BULLETIN

Fall 2023

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 Julie Coppens

Having just returned from Rhinelander, Wis., after a fun and productive planning weekend with the SFL 2024 International Event team and our local hosts, I can assert the following:

- This town is as excited about our ski week, January 28 to February 4, as we are! It's always a risk bringing SFL to a new location, but those winter-loving Rhinelanders really get us, and they are ready to show us a good time.
- The driving distance between any two Rhinelander locations is always ten minutes. Don't ask me how this is physically possible; just know that when you hop on the SFL shuttle in the morning to head to our ski area, at the beautiful Northwood Golf Club, you'll be there in a jiff, you betcha.
- Fresh cheese curds really do squeak when you bite into them—a phenomenon I'll need to investigate more fully on my next visit. Who's with me?
- The greatest peril of the Hodag (Rhinelander's ubiquitous goofy green monster mascot) is to your Visa bill, as Krista Erickson and I discovered when we made the mistake of stopping at The Hodag Store on our way out of town. So. Much. MERCH! We're working with store owner Ben Brunell on a pop-up shop at our hotel, consider yourselves warned.
- Event chair Marie Huston and vice chair Cara Barnes can take over the organization of my life *any time*. Keep reading for more on what these two dynamos, their phenomenal planning team, and the Wisconsin North Woods have in store for us.

First, though, let me mention a few other important happenings on the horizon:

- **SFL Board elections.** Interested in Board service, in 2024 or further down the trail? Want to learn more about how Ski for Light works, behind the scenes and off the snow, and have time and talents to give? Our Board Development and Elections chair Karen

Wood (karenawood58@icloud.com) would love to hear from you!

- **The 2024 ParaBirkie.** Once again, Ski for Light will serve as Presenting Sponsor of the adaptive skiing event at the iconic American Birkebeiner in Hayward, Wisconsin. I'll be part of a team of SFLers on hand to represent and seek redemption for last year's Giant Ski debacle. Want to support our efforts? Consider joining the "Second Wave" of SFL ParaBirkie donors, with a gift of \$250 or more toward our annual sponsorship cost. Huge thanks to "First Wave" donors Mike Evelo (who also organizes our Birkie team), Stan Smith, and Leslie Maclin for getting us started last year with this awesome partnership.
- **DEI at SFL Zoom, 3-5 p.m. EDT Nov. 12.** All are welcome at this community forum on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, to build on past work, designate leaders, and advise the Board on next steps. Drop me a line (president@sfl.org) if you'd like to join, and I'll send out the Zoom link with any pre-reads closer to the time.

Finally, I want to recognize some of the people who've been bringing this Ski for Light Bulletin to you, season after season, since we've arrived at a transition point: Our longtime publications angel, Janet Atkins of Hinterland Design (friend of the late Bjorg Dunlop) is retiring—thank you, Janet, for all you've done for us! In addition to Janet's design and layout expertise, low-cost printing and fulfillment, this Fall issue was managed by Marion Elmquist, who graciously stepped in to support Bulletin editor Andrea Goddard through a busy time in her life. As we consider the Bulletin's future, in all formats but especially its future on paper, we invite your suggestions—and if you have publications experience, we'd sure welcome your help! Reach out to me (president@sfl.org) or Marion (MLElmquist@aol.com).

It only takes a moment...

By Marie Huston, Event Chair

Indulge me and imagine a moment on skis—the crisp air fills your lungs as you glide through the snow on double-tracked trails through a pristine forest of snow-covered pines, tamarack bogs, and groves of hemlocks. A light wind brushes your cheek, and the sun warms your face. The silence is broken by the occasional communication from your skiing partner/guide about the next corner or slight uphill. You feel a sense of peace and tranquility wash over you as you take in the beauty of the Northwoods of Wisconsin on skis!

The 49th annual Ski for Light International event is to be held January 28 to February 4, 2024 in the Northwoods of Rhinelander, Wis.

Our lodging for the week will be at the Quality Inn and the AmericInn, located across a small parking lot from each other. With quick access to the downtown

of Rhinelander, we hope to have activities embracing the Midwest like a brewery tour, cheese tastings, and a sports night in the Hodag Dome. A 3-mile daily bus ride will take us each day to our 5K and 10K ski trails at the Rhinelander Northwoods Nordic Ski Trails.

During our fall planning committee weekend, we got to meet the welcoming local community and see first-hand their excitement of hosting Ski for Light.

We need guides! Remember we can only accept visually and mobility impaired applicants if we have a guide to pair them with. Please consider joining us for a fun-filled week of skiing.

You can find information and register for the event at Ski for Light's website: <https://www.sfl.org/events/next/>

It only takes a moment to register for a week of memories!!

SFL Silent Auction 2024

By Judy Dixon

Again this year, we will hold the everpopular silent auction during the SFL event week, at the event hotel. For the newbies among us, this is a chance to bid on more than 150 items: Many jackets, gloves, and neat dog gear products are donated by our corporate sponsors while other fun or gifty things are donated by SFL attendees. Lots of us especially look forward to bidding on those great locally sourced edible goodies such as wild rice from Minnesota, Almond Roca from Seattle, and chocolatecovered cherries from Michigan. Sometimes, there's even a nice bottle of wine or two. So if you have a oneofakind something from your corner of the world, consider donating it to the silent auction. You will be amazed at how much such treats bring in for SFL. Here are just a few guidelines to keep in mind:

All contributions must be new, in original packaging, if applicable.

Handmade items are welcome and anything unique

would be great.

A minimum retail value of \$20 is appreciated. This makes the tasks of sorting, cataloging, Brailleing, and recording sales more manageable for the worker bees who put everything together in just a few short days.

Please feel free to contact Judy Dixon with questions at judy@judydixon.net.

If you would like to donate something to the silent auction, you may bring it with you to Rhinelander. But if you are not attending the event, or would prefer to mail your item in advance, you can send it to:

Michael Evelo
Attn: SFL Silent Auction
3144 Wildflower Bay Rd
Rhinelander, WI 54501

Happy bidding!



Calling for Board Nominations

By Karen Wood

Happy Autumn Ski for Light friends!

If you are interested in nominating yourself or someone else for the Ski for Light Board of directors, now is the time.

Please send your nomination(s) in an email to Karen Wood at karenawood58@icloud.com. There is no limit to how many nominations one individual may submit. The deadline for submitting nominations is December 18, 2023.

Each nomination must include the name, email address and phone number of the candidate. A brief statement written by the candidate should include the following information:

An explanation of why the person is running for the board, a description of past and/or current involvement in the work of Ski for Light, details about possible future areas of involvement or responsibility that would be of interest to the candidate if elected to the board, a summary of any applicable professional or volunteer experience outside of Ski for Light and anything else that the candidate deems relevant or important.

The results of the election will be announced at the event in Wisconsin.

If you have any questions please call Karen Wood at 317-506-8837 or email at karenawood58@icloud.com.

Ski for Light Pioneer Oral Miller Dies

SFL pioneer Oral Miller passed away on August 6, 2023 at the age of 90. He was one of the 42 blind people from the U.S. who attended the very first SFL event in 1975. He recognized the potential that the fledgling organization had to improve the lives of blind people, and along with fellow pioneer Bud Keith worked to create an organization in which blind people could play a significant role. Oral was a member of the original SFL Board and served as Vice President for a period of time. He last attended in 1986.

Oral was a graduate of Princeton University and the University of Chicago Law School. He was a long time employee of the United States Small Business Administration. He was active and influential in many blindness organizations, in addition to SFL. Most notably, he served as president of the American Council of the Blind, and later as its Executive Director, and president of the United States Association of Blind Athletes. Thank you Oral, for all that you did to improve the lives of your fellow blind people. Your legacy will live on forever.

SFLers Share Tandem Adventures This Year

By Amy White, Laura Oftedahl, Bonnie O'Day and Bob Hartt

Editor's Note: Portions of this article were written by each of the folks in the byline above. The name of the writer of each portion appears at the beginning of their section.

Amy White

Here's a story about my tandem adventures this year:

At the past two Ski for Light silent auctions, I've entered myself as an auction item to serve as a tandem captain for a ride chosen by the winning bidder. In 2021, Laura Oftedahl was the lucky recipient and she decided to cash in on her prize this year. Filled with excitement, Laura, Pacer, Laura's guide dog, our trusty

tandem bike, and I piled into a rented pickup truck in Chicago and hit the road bound for Fort Wayne, Ind.

Our destination was the 2023 Midwest Tandem Rally, nestled amidst peaceful landscapes of corn and soybean fields. Taking place over Labor Day weekend, this event brought together an impressive gathering of 250 tandems and 500 participants, transforming the heartland into a vibrant tandem cycling haven.

During the rally, participants had the opportunity to



Bonnie and Amy

explore routes that ranged from 25 to 70 miles per day, catering to cyclists of all skill levels. The local tandem chapter and extended community extended their warm hospitality, offering valuable SAG support, well-marked routes, and delightful communal lunches that made our journey comfortable and enjoyable.

As we pedaled through the scenic routes, the camaraderie among fellow tandem cyclists was heartwarming, with shared smiles and stories along the way. The culmination of our adventure took us along the city trail system to Riverside Park on the final day, where we treated ourselves to sweet donuts, savoring the simple joys of our shared experience.

In 2022, Bob Hartt and Bonnie O'Day acquired my auction item for their adventure. Along with another captain, Mark Mulligan, we tackled a portion of the picturesque Great Allegheny Passage rail-trail, spanning from Pittsburgh, Pa., to Cumberland, Md. Our journey featured a steady uphill ride on a crushed gravel path along a scenic river for 75 miles on the first day.

Thank goodness Bonnie is such a strong cyclist--I couldn't have made it without her as the stoker! The second day promised a rewarding downhill stretch after passing through a tunnel at the highest point. However, unexpected rain altered our plans, and we had to cut our ride short, missing out on much of the swift downhill descent. We did get to partake in Moose Tracks ice cream though—one of my favorites!

Laura Oftedahl

Bicycling With the CATS, COWS, PIGS and HOOTS

Cycling on a tandem has been a passion of mine for many years. So when Amy White offered as an auction item to “captain” a tandem with a blind person, I jumped at the chance to bid on and won the opportunity. Since I moved back to Illinois four years ago, I’ve wanted to attend the Midwest Tandem Rally held over Labor Day Weekend. I attended many Eastern Tandem Rallies when I lived on the East Coast; there are annual tandem rallies in the South, and West Coast as well.

We were all set to go in 2022 until I injured my left knee. So, this year we made it to the event in Fort Wayne, Ind. The location rotates each year between Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and Iowa. That’s where the animals come in. The groups that coordinate the rally in their state, and have rides throughout bicycling season, have names. There are the CATS, Chicago Area Tandem Society; HOOTS, Hoosiers Out On Tandems; COWS, Couples On Wheels (Wisconsin), and PIGS, Partnered Iowans Going Someplace.

The first thing, though, was that Amy had to fly from South Carolina to Chicago. She got a rental pick-up truck and drove to my house 30 miles from O’Hare Airport. We loaded one of my tandems, a Co-Motion Periscope, in the truck, and away we went with my guide dog, Pacer, in the back seat. It was around five hours to Fort Wayne, where we joined more than 250 tandem teams from many states for a fun weekend.



Laura and Amy

The terrain was fairly flat. A good thing because I didn't get many hours in the saddle this past summer. Each day, there were three ride options of varying distances, all convening in one lunch spot.

Bob Hartt and Bonnie O'Day

What Do TNT, Crabs and Dogs have To Do with SFL and Our Tandem Adventure?

We were very excited when Amy offered a weekend ride at the SFL auction. As avid tandem cyclists, we immediately thought about the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) trail through the Laurel Highlands of Pennsylvania, and we placed our bid.

After we won the bid and confirmed the ride date with Amy, we scheduled a test ride when Amy was in our area for a work meeting prior to our ride to make sure our tandem would be a good fit for Amy. We knew we had discovered a true expert with the SFL spirit for adventure when Amy departed her flight at Reagan National Airport, took the subway from there to Alexandria, unfolded her Brompton travel bike and pumped her way up two miles of hill to reach our house.

There was one problem though, there are two of us who need captains to ride and Amy is only one captain. So this is where dynamite enters the picture. Bonnie and I coordinate a tandem cycling group for cyclists with visual impairments from our home. We blast off with our sighted captain and stoker friends every Tuesday after work, so our bike jerseys say TNT, which stands for Tuesday Night Tandems. We quickly recruited an additional captain, Mark Mulligan, from our TNT group, picked a convenient

weekend, and took off with Amy and Mark. As Amy described our trip at the beginning of this article, it was a really fun experience, and we hope we can outbid our ski buddies to raise funds for SFL and have another chance to do this in the future.

So what do crabs and dogs have to do with our SFL adventure? Well, just like SFL has its own acronyms with tongue in cheek double meanings, such as VIPs, MIPs and GIPs (Guide Impaired Participants), and similar to Laura's story above about bicycling With the CATS, COWS, PIGS and HOOTS, the tandem riders on the East Coast shall not be outdone, and we have the Maryland CRABS (Couples Riding A Bike Simultaneously) and the New Jersey DOGS (Doubles Of the Garden State)!

When we first joined Ski for Light and caught the SFL bug (another double meaning), we asked our VIP friends how they kept in shape in off-season so we could return in better shape for next year. The answer was tandem cycling, and we have never looked back. Regardless of what may inspire you, the diverse family and spirit of adventure at SFL beckons us back every year, and we look forward to new acquaintances and reuniting with our SFL friends in Rhinelander.

Amy White

As I look ahead to the next SFL event in January, I'm excited to offer the same auction item once more. It's been a joy for me to explore different places through these tandem adventures, places I might never have visited on my own. So, start thinking about your dream ride for next year, and let's create unforgettable memories together.

Ridderrenn to Celebrate 60th Anniversary

By Marion Elmquist

The 2024 Ridderweek will be the 60th anniversary of the Ridderrenn, which was begun in 1964 by blind Norwegian entertainer, Erling Stordahl at Beitostolen, Norway, as a cross-country ski event for blind cross-country skiers. It should be a very special week.

As many of you know, the Ridderrenn is the event upon which Ski for Light is based. Like SFL, Ridderweek is a week-long event full of fun, skiing, and activities.

Ridderweek 2024 will be held in Beitostolen from Sunday, March 10 to Sunday, March 17 with the actual Ridderrenn, or Knight's Race, a 20 kilometer event, to be held Saturday, March 16. If 20 k sounds a bit ambitious, there are shorter routes available as well.

Ridderweek is a wonderful opportunity to ski, to make new ski friends, enjoy wonderful Norwegian hospitality (and not-to-miss salmon), and to learn more about the program that spawned Ski for Light.

The week is much like the Ski for Light week, with evening programs, dances, a talent show, and a live auction that raises money for the Ridderrenn. There are a couple more opportunities to challenge yourself on the trails during the week—a biathlon, using audible, tone-guided laser rifles, and a 5 k race for women and a 10 k for men. There is also an alpine slalom race for mobility-impaired skiers and VIPs on Friday. During the race, held at the alpine ski area right across from our hotel, there's also a picnic so you can enjoy hot dogs wrapped in lefse or hamburgers while cheering on the racers.

Beitostolen is a summer and winter resort town, with a downhill ski area and many kilometers of Nordic ski trails in the area. There are some shops, restaurants, bars, a couple of grocery stores, and ski shops where you can rent XC skis.

After the week of skiing, we'll spend a couple of days sightseeing in Oslo, which is about a three-hour

drive from Beitostolen. The city of Oslo is beautiful and easy to navigate. We will stay at a hotel that's convenient to sightseeing, and to the harbor lined with shops and restaurants. It also happens to be close to the royal palace, to the parliament and to the city hall.

It's a great trip and I'll be available during SFL week to fill you in on what to expect, whether you are just curious, or are actually planning to join some of us in Norway.

You will want to plan to leave the U.S. no later than Friday, March 8 for the overnight trip and arrival in Oslo on Saturday, March 9. We'll spend Saturday night in Oslo and a bus will pick us up Sunday morning to take us to Beitostolen.

If you have questions about the Ridderrenn, feel free to contact me via e-mail, mlelmquist@aol.com, or by phone at 515-279-3681.

It's a fabulous trip!

Betsy Thomason's Disappearing Act

By Betsy Thomason

I'm looking forward to winter in Vermont. But, for the third year in a row, I will not be skiing or snowshoeing. Blame it on Lyme co-infections that have been dormant and undetected in my body since my first tick bite in 1991. Back then, one week of the antibiotic doxycycline placed me in the "cured" category. Around 2013, I began feeling a "glitch" in my left hip when I walked. An x-ray in 2019 indicated zero cartilage in my left hip. I declined a hip replacement. I thought, I don't do replacement parts. First, I want to get to the root cause of the loss of cartilage.

Then I learned that Lyme bugs chomp on soft tissue—brain, heart, cartilage. After years of trying herbal and non-drug remedies, with little success eradicating all the Lyme co-infections like babesia, bartonella, and mycoplasma, my massage therapist recommended I try the Lyme Magnetic Protocol www.joan-randall.com. Now a year and a half later—natural healing is slow—the laying-on of medium strength magnets once or twice a month is slowly assisting my body to eliminate the parasites so that tissues can heal. Things do get worse before they get better—pain, fatigue, brain fog, mobility issues, and depression. Healing is a 10 k X-C race in a snow and sleet storm at 10,000 feet

in Colorado. It takes longer than you think and requires enormous fortitude. And it's a profound learning experience.

How do I manage these new living conditions?

1) Outbreath-focused breathing: If I didn't know how to use my outbreath for drug-free management of anxiety, fear, pain, and stress I would still be in bed. Refer to my website: outbreathinstitute.com

2) Being active, physically and mentally: I push myself out of bed in the morning, which usually includes manually lifting my recalcitrant left leg. But I sleep when my body tells me, sometimes three naps daily. This summer, tending my community garden plot and swimming in the farm pond provide normalcy. My intention, modified by my body's messages, is to walk outside every day for at least 30 minutes. My balance is excellent, thanks to stretching, but, I'm a falls risk because of leg stiffness, spasms, and unexpected pain. So far, my muscles have been strong enough to prevent falling.

3) Researching and asking questions: *Read Pain Free: A Revolutionary Method for Stopping Chronic*

Pain by Pete Egoscue. This book convinced me that my hip problem is a muscle problem, not a bone problem. Also, consult HealingALS.org, people helping people reverse symptoms of chronic environmental illness, not just ALS. More than 50 people have been medically documented to have reversed ALS symptoms.

So while you are in Wisconsin gliding on slippery boards, I will be happy to shovel my front path, walk a country road, and go skiing, in my imagination, with my Ski for Light friends.

Regional Events

Ski for Light, Inc. is loosely affiliated with eight regional organizations around the United States that share our name, but are independent organizations. Each group holds one or more winter events that include teaching and guiding visually and mobility impaired adults in crosscountry skiing. Some of the programs also offer other outdoor winter activities. Here are the events for this coming ski season.

Black Hills: Coeur Wharf and Terry Peak, Deadwood, South Dakota, January 21-25

Colorado: Snow Mountain Ranch, Granby, Colorado, dates pending

Michigan: Ralph MacMullan Conference Center, Roscommon, Michigan, January 12-14

Montana: Rendezvous Ski Trails, West Yellowstone, Montana, February 15-19

Northeast Pennsylvania: Sky Lake Camp & Retreat Center, Windsor, New York, February 18-25

New England: Craftsbury Outdoor Center, Craftsbury Vermont, January 4-7

Sierra: Tahoe-Donner Ski Area, Truckee, California, March 2-4

Puget Sound: Trollhaugen Lodge, Stampede Pass, Washington, January 6 and 20, February 10 and 24, March 9 and 23

You may learn more about each program and the details of their events by visiting their respective websites, each linked from the regionals page of the SFL website at www.sfl.org/events/regionals.

Thank You Janet!

Ski for Light wishes to thank Janet Atkins of Hinterland Design in Coxsackie, NY for her superb work for Ski for Light for the past 20 years. Since 2004 Janet has produced, printed and mailed each issue of the print edition of the Ski for Light Bulletin. Starting in 2017, after the death of Bjorg Dunlop, she took

on the additional tasks of graphic design, layout and distribution of each issue. Her work has always been creative and timely, and of consistently high quality. Thank you again, Janet, for all of your good work on our behalf.

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/bulletin. 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, no more than 500 words please. Send all items to info@sfl.org.

The deadline for receipt of submissions for the Spring 2024 Bulletin is March 15, 2024. We look forward to hearing from you.



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.

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