

Speaking Outline/Talking Points for Presentation About Ski for Light

- Introduce Presenters.
- Possibly begin presentation by showing SFL video and/or with a ski tour (for ski tour written description see Page 2 or use the audio file).
- Mission of Ski for Light: “To enhance the quality of life and independence of visually or mobility-impaired adults through a program of cross-country skiing.”
- Brief introduction to/history of Ski for Light (Page 4).
- Share your experience at/of Ski for Light (memorable story(s), why you return to Ski for Light, what Ski for Light means to you, why someone else (skier or guide) would want to attend).
- Sons of Norway. If talking to a Sons of Norway Lodge, please reference the provided materials in this packet to explain SFL’s history and collaboration with SONS. (See Page 6).
- [Show video](#) (if not shown at beginning of presentation).
- How to get involved (Page 7).
- Learn more/connect with Ski for Light -- website, SFL Bulletin, e-mail lists and social media (Page 7).
- Leave time for questions. Please be sure to follow up with any information requested that you may not know or don’t have with you.

Ski Tour Description By Andrea Goddard

The winter air is crisp. The sun goes in and out this morning, and each time the clouds part, you feel its warmth through your layers of long underwear, shirt, vest, and jacket. What are you doing here? You, whose experience of winter sports is sitting at home in your most comfortable chair, enjoying the Super Bowl, and hoping the announcers are stellar because you can't exactly see the TV. Or maybe you are a Harry Potter fan, and vicariously play Quidditch on a broomstick in a snowstorm. Either way, nothing has quite prepared you to be a long way from home, here with a group of people who were mostly strangers until yesterday, standing in boots that are mounted on two, very skinny, long, Wooden sticks, and hoping to figure out how to propel yourself forward with only the aid of two, disturbingly light-weight poles, and the verbal instructions of your partner in crime... a sighted skier who will be your guide on the snow for an entire week!

All around you, people move. The distinctive click of ski poles tapping against one another as someone picks them up out of the snow, where they rested as their owner applied sunblock or adjusted their cap. The muted jab and gliding swish that tell you the skier and guide ahead of you are off down the trail.

"Tracks are straight ahead! Looking good, looking good! Tracks curving right... Curving right... And straightening out. We are coming to a little bit of an uphill, so – – –"

You tense with anticipation as the sound of their skiing recedes. "That's going to be me in a minute," you realize, wondering whether you're up for this.

"You ready to go," your guide asks, and you gulp, and say yes.

For the first little while, it seems like absolutely everyone is not only skiing by you, but is positively flying down the trail, calling out as they pass, happily greeting you by name and saying their own, as well. Although you are largely focused on staying upright, everyone's open hearted enthusiasm takes the chill right out of the air and has you smiling, even as

you work to maintain your balance on the snow. You ski on, and suddenly realized that you've been climbing a gentle hill for some moments. You stop, turning your head toward where your guide has stopped beside you.

Together, you start to laugh at exactly the same moment, in that instant, you know that your guide is not here for you as much as here with you. Also, you've just skied up that hill without falling!

Or, perhaps you don't have great use of your legs, and have decided to try sit-skiing for the first time. You've transferred from your wheelchair to this low seat on a tubular, metal frame that's mounted to a pair of Nordic skis. As you and your guide go about securing your waist strap, the one that goes over your legs above the knee, and the one that helps to hold your ankles in place, you work to sit as upright as possible. With your legs bent at the knee, but mostly straight out in front of you, your guide shows you how to double-pole. For you, skiing will be all about using your upper body and core muscles to push yourself forward and to stay upright. Although the first uphill of the trail has you gritting your teeth as you work not to slide backwards, you know you are in good hands as you feel your guide brace the back of your ski, and start a steady, light push that takes away some of the strain. Just when you think your shoulders and arms will go on strike, it happens! The trail levels off, then your ski begins to pick up speed on the downhill your guide swore was coming! You sigh with relief as your shoulders loosen, lengthening your pole strokes to go even faster.

Your laughter builds, along with your momentum, until you feel as though you are flying down the hill, still staying attentive to your guide's rapid, exacting instructions to "lean left! Lean a little right! Straighten up! It's like riding a motorcycle! OK. Pick up your polls and just enjoy the ride!

Brief Introduction and History of Ski for Light

Ski for Light, Inc. is an all-volunteer not-for-profit corporation that was founded in 1975.

Ski for Light was created by a group of Norwegian-Americans who were familiar with a program in Norway, the Ridderrenn, and the success that program had enjoyed over the years in teaching blind/visually-impaired and mobility-impaired people the Norwegian national sport of cross-country skiing.

The two cornerstone premises, or beliefs, that led to the creation of Ski for Light were that:

- Blind/visually-impaired and mobility-impaired people can learn how to cross-country ski quite well, have fun while learning and skiing if given proper instruction and equipment, and if paired with a sighted, experienced cross-country skier to act as instructor and guide.
- Experienced, sighted cross-country skiers will find it fun and rewarding to share their love of skiing by being an instructor/guide for someone who can't easily have that experience on his/her own.

Each year Ski for Light, Inc. conducts a week-long cross-country skiing event at a U.S. location that varies from year to year.

The primary goal of the event is to teach blind, visually-impaired and mobility-impaired people who have never skied before the basics of the sport, and to give people who have already learned the basics a chance to improve their skill and technique, or to let them just have fun on the snow. About 25% of the skiers are first-time participants each year

The week usually attracts 250 or more total attendees. The typical composition of the group is:

- 100 or more people who are blind or visually-impaired
- 8-10 people who are mobility-impaired
- 115 or more able-bodied sighted instructor/guides
- 15 to 50 skiers and guides from foreign countries, including a delegation from Norway
- 15 to 30 companions and volunteers who help with many of the non-skiing tasks that make the event run so smoothly

The fee paid by all attendees – guides, disabled skiers, and volunteers alike – covers lodging, meals, ground transportation, cross-country trail fees, and, for first-time visually- or mobility-impaired skiers only, the use of rental ski equipment for the week.

The only expectation of new participants is that during the week they give cross-country skiing a serious try.

A prospective instructor/guide does not need any previous experience guiding visually- or mobility-impaired skiers.

Instructor/guides should be intermediate level classic cross-country skiers capable of safely managing their own speed and direction while, at the same time, communicating with their skiing partner. Prior to the start of the week, Ski for Light provides on-snow training for first-time guides taught by experienced skiers and guides.

On the last full day, a 5-kilometer rally and 10-kilometer race is conducted in which each skier has an opportunity to test and demonstrate his or her newly-acquired skills over a measured distance.

While skiing is the focal point of the week, it is only part of the Ski for Light experience. The Ski for Light week includes both late-afternoon and after-dinner organized and informal activities and a group dinner each evening. Visually- and mobility-impaired individuals usually discover, in the process of learning how to ski, that they can accomplish much more, both on and off the snow, than others have told them was possible for a person with disabilities.

Mobility-impaired participants usually discover that the dangers of ice, snow and outdoor activity for wheelchair users that they have been warned about for years are not always true.

- Guides usually discover how personally rewarding and gratifying it is to give of their time and ability when it allows another person to achieve goals that might not be achievable without their involvement. This often carries over to new activities, interests and personal goals in everyday life.

Sons of Norway and Ski for Light:
By Marion Elmquist

Sons of Norway has been involved in Ski for Light since the very beginning. In fact, the first Race for Light (later re-named Ski for Light), might never have happened without the support of the Sons of Norway Foundation. Olav Pedersen, a Norwegian immigrant to Colorado, had known and worked with Erling Stordahl, a blind Norwegian musician, to start the Norwegian program for blind cross-country skiers, the Ridderrenn. After he arrived in Colorado, Olav wanted to introduce the concept to the U.S. With support from Stordahl, the Norwegian military, and many others with Norwegian roots and connections, the event was planned for Summit County, Colorado, in 1975. But, there was a financial shortfall. The Sons of Norway Foundation stepped in with a crucial contribution that allowed the event to happen. Since then, Sons of Norway has been an integral supporter of Ski for Light. Lodges and individuals make annual contributions; over the years, many guides and volunteers from Sons of Norway lodges have attended annual SFL events and been invaluable in keeping SFL healthy and vibrant. Ski for Light will be forever indebted to Sons of Norway.

How to Get involved with SFL!

Join us at our annual week long XC Ski Event: SFL International Week!

- As a blind, visually or mobility impaired skier

Beginners thru advanced skiers are welcome!

- As a XC Ski Guide (SFL provides on-snow training)

Share the sport you love with adaptive skiers.

Both intermediate and advanced skiers welcome.

Or, ski locally and help a future SFL skier prepare to ski SFL International Week or a ski race or tour!

- As a Worker Bee

Volunteer to assist the ~200+ skiers attending SFL International Week!

Support SFL!

- Make a financial contribution (tax deductible)

Support SFL's General Operating Fund, Goodfellow Fund (guide training and financial aid for guides) or Endowment Fund.

- Sponsor SFL by donating goods or services

Connect with Ski for Light and spread the word about SFL to potential skiers, guides, volunteers & sponsors

- Website: www.sfl.org
- Facebook: Ski for Light, Inc.: <https://www.facebook.com/SkiforLight/>
- Twitter: @skiforlight
- Instagram: hashtag #skiforlight
- LinkedIn Group: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/3552867/>

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