

A NEW KIND OF BOARD GAME

BY MERYL ROBINSON

IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY, AMIDST THE ELEMENTS, LAYERS OF CLOTHING, AND POTENTIAL SPILLS TO GET LITTLE ONES TO STICK TO A NEW WINTER SPORT. AT THE TREASURES CHILD CARE CENTER, NEW SNOWBOARDING ACTIVITIES AIM TO GET KIDS AS YOUNG AS TWO AND A HALF INTERESTED IN SNOWBOARDING AND READY FOR SUCCESS. HOW? SIMPLY BY PLAYING WITH A NEW TOY — A SPECIALLY DESIGNED, KID-FRIENDLY RIGLET BOARD.



Future shredder Zane takes a trip through the "car wash."



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BURTON

board game

By incorporating the snowboarding activities into the kids' playtime at *TREASURES*, "The kids will get to experience snowboarding for themselves, and they'll find out that they like it and want to do it more," says Snowboard Program Manager Mike Chait. Chait first brought the idea to the *TREASURES* team. "We'll ease them into it and show them that it's just like playing, and they'll get to feel it out," he says.

Exploring equipment on their own and playing fun games on the board lets every child at *TREASURES* try snowboarding at their own pace. They'll learn balance and coordination while getting a feel for movement on the board — building blocks for a successful start on snow. "The daycare environment is a nice easy introduction with no true expectations, just true fun," says *TREASURES* Nursery Director Shelly Schaffer. "We keep it fun and light."

The Riglet Boards — small, durable snowboards with grippy padding and no metal edges — glide easily over almost any surface, turning everything from linoleum to carpet into virtual snow. On a typical day at *TREASURES*, all the kids and their caregivers will have plenty of time to try the boards out through free play, games, and activities — no extra sign-up or equipment required.

With feet planted on the board (knees bent, of course), kids find their

own balance point through obstacle courses and over ramps while being pulled by the yo-yo-like Riglet Reel. They might play "Snowboard Twister" or go through the "Car Wash," engaging muscles for flexing, extending, and balancing to feel the movements they need to feel on a snowboard. Falls aren't scary (just step off the board) and there are no worries about catching an edge.

GET READY TO SHREDDY!



The boards go on snow, too, and the playground at *TREASURES* is an ideal place to start. Children & caregivers can hone their skills on small bumps and ramps in the snow, while watching bigger snowboarders (maybe even Mom & Dad) shred it up on the hill.

Introducing a way for Smugglers' youngest guests to try out snowboarding became a goal for Chait after helping to set up snowboarding activities for kids in parking lots, at a local school, and even in New York City's Central Park. When he took the idea to Schaffer, "she immediately said, 'this sounds awesome, let's do it,'" recalls Chait. Schaffer, a snowboarder herself, understood how these activities would benefit her own daughter as she learns to ride.

The key to success for young children is progression: mastering small skills, like balancing on a moving board, before taking on bigger challenges, like balancing over bumps. With plenty of time to try it out through play,

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board game

snowboarding can be easy, fun, and safe for kids. Progression-focused teaching using new tools like beginner-specific equipment and sculpted teaching terrain will set children up for success on snow from the start.

“We’ve tried it with the kids and they don’t want to stop,” says Schaffer. “Their knees are bent, their arms are out, and they keep saying more, more, more.”

Giving them “more” is easy: Riglet Boards are inexpensive and easily available from Burton Snowboards, so parents and kids can keep playing at home and even over the summer.

“Snowboarding is quite the commitment — there’s a lot of practice, a lot of awkwardness, and the more we can do to set kids up for success, the better it will be,” says Chait. The new activities at *TREASURES* aim to do just that; and for Chait, the reward is clear: “I see how much fun they can have... when a child starts uncontrollably clapping, I think, that’s how I feel when I snowboard, too. I wish I could have been doing that when I was their age.”

It’s time to forget the “kids should ski first” myth — with a great start at *TREASURES*, young children can get their feet on a snowboard, have fun, and be ready to tackle the mountain in no time.

Freelance writer Meryl Robinson is something of a beginner snowboarder herself. She lives in Brattleboro, Vermont.



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