



care *and feeding*

OF ADULTS ON THE SMUGGS SLOPES

by Sherm White

Smugglers' Notch Resort's family programs have been designated as #1 by SKI magazine readers for over a decade. Many people seem to assume that this recognition is primarily due to the Resort's excellent kids' programs, but that's only the half of it. Just ask any of the Snow Sport University staff responsible for adult winter sports programs. An enthusiastic bunch, they spend a lot of time thinking about the care and feeding of adults on the slopes because their over-arching goal is to share Smugglers' three mountains with as many people as possible. From what they tell us, however, it's a tough goal to accomplish. Why? Well, it seems that adults don't really think about their own on-mountain learning opportunities. Adults talk themselves out of instruction by saying things like, "I had lessons in high school, I'm all set" or "I need to hang around the condo in case the kids need to get in touch" or "Ski school. Sounds like it's for beginners. That's not ME."

Hmmn. Seems there's an opportunity for a little PR for the adult program so that you big people can understand what it's really like. We've assigned the position of standard bearer to the one guy at the Resort who probably spends more time thinking about adults on the slopes than anyone else: Sherm White, Smugglers' adult programs training manager. Sherm loves to ski. He knows every inch of Smugglers'. And like his adult program compatriots, he's a people person who recognizes that convincing adults to sign up for ski instruction requires enthusiasm, patience, a sense of humor and the ability to play the equally important roles of teacher, partner in adventure, and psychologist. If anyone can convince you that instruction offers an opportunity for bettering your skills, exploration, camaraderie, and just plain fun, it's him. Take it away, Sherm.

I started skiing at a small rope tow in East Corinth, Vermont. Life led me to Middlebury College, where I minored in skiing, and to spots all over the world in search of the perfect turn. It's become clear to me after 55 years on skis that the total experience is more important than the skiing itself, and that "teaching skiing" is not about ski lessons, but about creating great experiences in the mountains. This insight has become the basis for the adult alpine skiing programs here at Smugglers'. And how do we create those great experiences?

We start with mindset. To truly understand the spirit of Smugglers' adult programs, you need to ski with children. I have



wonderful memories of the first time I skied in the glades with my children, or last year, when I skied in the woods at Morse Highlands with my five-year-old granddaughter, who was excited to show me where she had skied with instructor Larry Arnold of our Discovery Program. A spirit of exploration and adventure is the foundation of any worthwhile mountain experience, and children have that spirit in spades.

It's important to have that adventurous outlook because even though skiing is a physical activity, success largely comes from your state of mind. If you are feeling confident, you are having fun, and if you are having fun, you are skiing well. Other times all you might need is just to get out there. I know that whenever I feel like I got out of bed on the wrong side, and put my boots on the wrong feet, all I need to do is go take a couple of runs to get my brain back on track to enjoy myself. People sign up for our programs for a variety of reasons—spousal pressure, boredom, frustration, sometimes just a desire to improve. Whatever the reason, set yourself up with a positive frame of mind.

Second, accept that assistance in the form of instruction brings expected and unexpected benefits. Sometimes it might take some coaching to get you into confident mode, and that's fine. It doesn't matter if someone is a first time skier, or has skied for years, frustration or boredom can rear their heads. A good

instructor finds what motivates a person and uses that motivation to get them to open up to the variety of experiences that Smugglers' mountain playground has to offer. From an instructor's perspective, there is nothing like taking someone who is tentative and unsure about skiing, or bored with skiing the same old stuff and getting them reenergized and excited by coaching them down new terrain. Sometimes we hear from good skiers who recognize that they need coaching. I have one student who I have skied with for several years who also skis at areas in southern Vermont. I asked him one time if he ever skied with instructors at those areas, and his response was, *"No. I can't get into trouble on the mountain down there. Up here, I can get in trouble."* He wanted to safely take on the challenges of Smugglers' three mountains, and together we have mastered skiing steep terrain and we're working on glades, bumps and mixed conditions.

Like me, Neil Leach and Bud Conger are two longtime instructors who have raised their kids and grandkids on the mountain. They have a passion for sharing the mountain experience. Every year, there are people who come to the adult lesson line-up just to say hi to Neil or Bud and remind them of the time they spent skiing with them. They've got a great relationship with their students based on camaraderie and positive support with a goal: to meet a mountain challenge. Students frequently mention

the importance of creating the right spirit during instruction. In feedback about the adult program they have noted that program instructors know when to challenge and when to ease up, appropriate trails to experiment with, and how to guide learning rather than impose it.

Winters at Smugglers' are so great because of the mountains and the never-ending variety of experiences they help to create every day. One of the side benefits of setting yourself up with an instructor is that Smugglers' terrain is more easily discovered in the company of one of the Resort's insiders. One guest, Betty Hyde, told us, "When I came to Smuggs 16 years ago I was a black diamond skier but didn't know how to ski moguls. So I started to take lessons. Since then I have gained the skills to ski 99 percent of the mountain. I love to ski with my instructor friends who always know where the good snow is. It's a great way to meet new people. The instructors will take me to places I didn't know about or that I didn't think I had the ability to ski. If I don't really have the skills they will teach them. I am always looking for a new adventure; sometimes I need a shot of courage and I get that from the instructors."

Define your own epic adventure. It might be coming down a steep slope in powder, riding the Mogul Mouse chair for the first time, or following the kids through the Alley. Whatever it is, seize the experience. I'll close with a poem that adult instructor Tom Glynn received from one of his students:

**Listen to the sound
of happy people clapping
for someone
who led them down
a steep slope
in heavy snow safely
still laughing
still having fun
when the run
was done.**

That's the spirit of the adult program at Smugglers'.

Treat yourself! After a day exploring all that Smugglers' three mountains have to offer, tired muscles might need a little help relaxing. Professional massage therapists at the Resort's Mountain Massage Center offer five different types of therapeutic and relaxation massage, including Swedish relaxation, deep tissue, and sports massage, which is specifically intended to work out the kinks unique to particular sports such as skiing and snowboarding. The Mountain Massage Center also hosts yoga class. A sauna is available to enjoy; use is complimentary with any Mountain Massage Center service, which can be reserved through the Guest Service Desk.

Snow Sport University's programs for adults

Smugglers' Snow Sport University offers a variety of programs for adults who want to learn how to ski or snowboard or fine tune their existing skills. Different formats are available ranging from a 1.5-hour group lesson to a multi-hour private session, each designed to maximize use of a skier or rider's precious vacation time and respond to individual skills and interests.

Group lessons: Group lessons for beginners (levels 1 and 2) are included in the *Club Smugglers' Advantage Package*. For advanced to intermediate skiers and snowboarders (levels 3 through 9) on the *Club Smugglers'* package, the first group lesson is included and subsequent lessons can be booked at 50 percent off. Group lessons are held at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. (For skiers and riders not on the *Club Smugglers'* package, the morning session is \$65 and the afternoon session is \$45.)

MAX5 group lesson: Smugglers' developed the MAX5, a 2.5-hour lesson with no more than five other students, for adult skiers and riders who want longer instruction time and a smaller class size. The MAX5 is held from 10:00 am until 12:30 pm and costs \$75.

The Mountain Experience: The Mountain Experience is for anyone envious of their children's ski or snowboard camp experience with its extended time on the slopes and group camaraderie. This adult camp for levels 4 and higher heads out seven days a week in a four hour session from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. with a lunch break. Participants may enroll for as many days as they wish, but at least two days are suggested for skill progression. The camp features a mountain tour format guided by a ski instructor who encourages and supports students as they sample terrain they have not previously experienced. No more than five students are in the camp, allowing for lots of personal instruction and interaction. New this year, Mountain Experience campers will use a FlaiK GPS to track their mileage, vertical and speed. Demo equipment is available at a 50 percent discount.

Private instruction: Even the best athletes require a personal coach, and Smugglers' private instruction is designed to respond to individual needs and requirements in a comprehensive session of one hour or more. Sessions can be tailored to focus on special interests, such as skiing the glades.