



## AROUND THE EAST

## Listening to Our Members: What You Told Us in the 2024-25 Member Survey

Kathy Brennan  
CEO Eastern Region

Each year, we take time to listen directly to you – our members – about your experiences with PSIA-AASI Eastern Region. This season, 775 of you (plus 72 late respondents) shared your perspectives through our annual membership survey. Thank you for your candor, insights, and ideas. Reading through your comments, I was encouraged by the pride so many of you expressed, and I was reminded of how important it is that every member feels seen and heard.

## The Big Picture

Members told us they value their membership and the opportunities PSIA-AASI Eastern Region provides. Our Net Promoter Score (a measure of loyalty and likelihood to recommend) was +51.2, reflecting strong pride and engagement. When asked specifically about the Eastern Region's value, members gave us a positive score of +31.2. A "good" Net Promoter Score (NPS) is relative, but generally any score above zero on the -100 to +100 scale is considered "good," as it indicates more promoters than detractors. An "excellent" NPS is 50 or higher.

## Education is the Heart of Value

Two-thirds of respondents participated in an educational event this season, and those members consistently rated their overall satisfaction higher. The top motivators for attending were location, topic, and timing. Members told us they want more affordable events, more options on weekends, and more opportunities closer to home – and we're listening.

We also know that affordability is a challenge for many. Like everyone, our operating costs are rising, and while we work hard to keep event pricing as low as possible, we can't simply reduce fees without risking program quality. Instead, we've chosen to expand scholarship opportunities as a way to ease financial barriers. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, scholarship funding continues to grow – including the A. Dale Shaefer Fund – a newly endowed award for Level III candidates (see page 4). These scholarships are making a real difference in helping members pursue their professional goals.

## What Members Want

**Lower costs:** Reduced event fees and dues came through as the most common request. Our approach is to offset costs with more scholarships and financial support, rather than lowering event prices.

**More gear and industry deals:** Tangible benefits like discounts matter.

**Flexible education pathways:** From online CEUs to mentor programs, members are looking for options that fit their lives.



**Community connections:** Many value the friendships and memories they make and want more social opportunities alongside education.

## A Welcoming Community

Most members feel the Eastern Region is a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive community, with an average score of 4.09 out of 5. Still, some groups, particularly non-binary members and racial minorities, reported lower scores, reminding us that inclusion is ongoing work.

At the same time, a small number of respondents expressed concern about what they see as too much emphasis on DEI language. This tension highlights the fine line we walk as an organization:

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## Congratulating our Area Reps

By Pat Doherty

Area Rep Program Coordinator

Since we began the PSIA-AASI Eastern Region Area Rep Award Program in 2017, more than 70 members have been recognized for their service as Area Representatives. This year, the Area Rep program proudly recognizes two long-time serving Area Reps with the 10-year certificate for their service in our program. Those Area Reps are:

Bob Spofford  
Mad River Glen, VT

Dave Semo  
Holiday Valley, NY

The presentation of their certificates will take place during the Snowsports School Management Seminar Banquet on Tuesday, December 2, 2025 at Mount Snow.

Currently, 136 Area Reps serve 121 member schools, and 13 schools have two Area Reps. The remaining schools are part of the program and are in the midst of replacing their representative. Since its inception during the 1998-1999 season, the program continues to strive to improve the lines of communication between the membership and the PSIA-AASI Eastern Office in Albany.

Please check with your Snowsports School Director to be sure that your area does have a PSIA-AASI Eastern Region Area Rep. If your school does not, or only has one, please inform your Snowsports School Director of your interest in the program. It's a fun way to serve! <<

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## General Information

Submission of articles, photos, or other items for publication is invited. Articles are not to exceed about 1000 words. Receipt of submissions will be confirmed to the writer. Upcoming deadlines are published in each issue of *SnowPro*. Material should be sent to "SnowPro Editor" at: [contact@easternsnowpros.org](mailto:contact@easternsnowpros.org) as an MS Word document attachment.

All submitted material is subject to editing and, possibly, a writing process. Its use, whether solicited or not, is at the discretion of the editorial staff. All published material becomes the property of PSIA-E/EF. Articles are accepted on the condition that they may be released for publication in all National and Regional publications.

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## VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

### A New Season

By Katie Brinton

*Eastern Board Chair*

It was my honor in June to take over from Peter Howard as chair of the Eastern Region board of directors. Like many of you, I joined the organization as a first-year instructor and have stayed for the people, the shared love of learning, and the continued opportunities for growth. Snowsports instruction—and PSIA-AASI more specifically—has become a foundational part of my personal and professional identity.

While I have met some of you on the hill in my capacity as an alpine examiner, with 10,000 members in the East, most of you likely do not know me. So, in brief: I am a part time instructor and staff trainer at Okemo Mountain Resort in southern Vermont, the same place at which I learned to ski as a child in the early '90s; I am also the full-time senior editor of *Ski Area Management*, a trade publication more commonly called *SAM* magazine.

I have served two terms in an at-large seat on the board and seen it through some significant shifts, from operational governance to policy governance and more than 14 voting members down to nine, as well as through the appointment of a new CEO (the excellent Kathy Brennan) and an ongoing national strategic alignment project, to name but a few transitions.

It has been an exciting and deeply rewarding tenure, and as I step into the chair role, I am incredibly optimistic about the future of the organization, the strength of its leadership, the passion of its membership, and the durability and resilience of its community and education programming.

This was reinforced at our fiscal year-end meeting in June, where we reviewed our CEO's performance related to the organizational Ends (these pertain to strategic vision) and compliance with Executive Limitations (these place guardrails around financial, legal, and ethical decision-making).

A key part of the board's annual work cycle, the June meeting is when we take stock of the work of the office and its operational committees, the financial health of the organization, and our partnerships with stakeholders such as the national and regional arms of PSIA-AASI.

The board discussed reports on membership

satisfaction, retention, and enrollment, the wins and learns from our 2024-25 events calendar and programming, the progress of ongoing IT projects, and a preliminary FY26 budget.

We also had an opportunity to meet and chat with the new national CEO, Jeff Lifgren, about his vision and work plan, as well as take a closer look at our own strategic priorities for the coming year.

We make a practice of holding these meetings at ski areas around the region as often as we can, which affords us the opportunity to see more of the places you live and work and to talk with local leadership about how we can continue to provide value to you and to them.

This year, we gathered at Jay Peak in northern Vermont, where we were able to sit down with general manager Steve Wright, Ski & Ride School manager Rob Riedl, Ski & Ride School training manager Ian Boyle, and Marketing and Special Events manager (and former PSIA-AASI East board member) Ted Fleischer, who shared insights on Jay's unique culture and the concerns and considerations of its Ski & Ride School staff.

As we look ahead to our next in person meeting in October, the board, through its various committees, is diligently working on a review of our investment policy and annual audit, further refinement of our strategic priorities and an annual assessment of our financial and executive limitations, the evaluation of candidates for national and regional awards and recognition, and a new membership communication and linkage strategy.

October is technically our finance meeting in that its primary purpose is to allow the board to review a final FY budget and management parameters around financial conditions and activities and asset protection. But, as with all our meetings, it is, broadly speaking, about you. How are we serving you professionally and personally? And in what ways might we do that better?

Whether you are brand new or just received your 30-year pin, Level III certified or attending your first clinic, teaching full-time or part-time, in Maine or North Carolina, we are here to serve you.

To that end, I hope to have the chance to speak with many of you over my two years as chair—on the hill, on panels, on zoom, on the phone, or via email. This organization is only as strong as its members, and we're listening.

See you on the hill (or screen, or in my inbox)! ☺

## » AROUND THE EAST, continued from page 1

continuing to ensure all members feel welcome and supported, while also respecting the perspectives of those who prefer to focus just on education and professionalism.

### Voices from Our Members

Many members took time to share encouragement and appreciation:

*"Thank you for trying to be better today than yesterday."*

*"Keep up your great work! We love PSIA!"*

*"Great job on the survey and thanks for all the opportunities you provide."*

### Voices from Our Leaders

Of the 58 school directors/managers who responded to the survey, they emphasized the value of certification, noting that certified instructors improve guest experience, safety, and staff retention. At the same time, they pointed out cost, time, and complex requirements as barriers for instructors pursuing certification.

### What This Means Going Forward

Your feedback reinforces what we've long known: education is at the heart of membership value, and accessibility - financial, geographic, and cultural - matters. As I read through the results, I was struck by how consistently education emerged as the most powerful driver of satisfaction. That reinforces our path forward:

- Expanding affordable and local learning opportunities.
- Strengthening communication and transparency.
- Continuing to grow scholarships and donor support as a way to reduce financial barriers and help members pursue their goals.
- Ensuring our community feels welcoming and supportive to all, while recognizing that members hold a range of perspectives on how best to achieve that.

### Thank You

Your voices guide our path forward. I'm proud to serve such a dedicated community of professionals who share a love of teaching, learning, and inspiring others on the snow. Together, we'll continue to make PSIA-AASI Eastern Region stronger for every member.

*In our full summary report, we've also included a section on Bridging Perceptions and Reality - outlining how your feedback compares with what we're already doing, and where we see opportunities to improve further. If you'd like to dig into the details, you can find that summary report and the full survey results at [easternsnowpros.org/about-us/member-surveys/](http://easternsnowpros.org/about-us/member-surveys/). <<*

### By the Numbers - Quick Callouts

- Members gave strong satisfaction scores: 4.02 for helping them be successful, 4.17 for supporting professional development, and 4.17 for face-to-face education.
- 83% of school directors/managers said PSIA-AASI provides value to their school.
- There is strong confidence in Level I instructors teaching the Beginner/Novice zone: 4.17 out of 5.
- 86% of directors rated certified instructors as improving guest experience (score: 4.41).
- Members who responded skied/rode an average of 51 days and taught an average of 30 days this season.
- Inclusivity scores show most members feel welcome (average 4.09 out of 5), though non-binary and gender-unspecified respondents reported lower scores.

## Congratulations 2025 Inductees into the Pennsylvania Snowsports Hall of Fame:

August Picariello

Emily Spiker

Jim Parrish



PSIA



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**SNOW** Pro

## Upcoming SnowPro Copy Deadlines

If you are submitting articles, information or ads for the *SnowPro*

**December 12, 2025 is the deadline for the Winter issue.**

## Writing Guidelines

General member submissions should not exceed 1,000 words and should be emailed to [contact@easternsnowpros.org](mailto:contact@easternsnowpros.org) as a MS Word document. Please see additional guidelines on page 2 of this issue under General Information.

Thank you! <<



## Discounts on January Events

By Kathy Brennan  
Eastern Region CEO

**W**e've heard you — and your responses to our recent member survey remind us — cost is a challenge. While we work hard to keep our events as low-cost and accessible as possible, and provide scholarship opportunities to support your professional development, we want to do more to help.

If you're looking for an extra bargain this winter, January is the month to mark on your calendar. For any non-assessment, non-premier, event held in January, you'll save \$25 on your registration fee. It's a great way to get a head start on your education credits while keeping a little extra money in your pocket. Be sure to browse the online calendar for exciting opportunities that fit your interests and schedule.

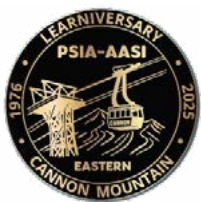
### Learniversary Returns: Celebrating Our History, Inspiring Our Future

Last year, we marked PSIA-AASI Eastern's 50th Anniversary with a special Golden Learniversary event at Belleayre, the site of our very first assessment. That celebration brought together longtime members and new members alike, and the energy was unforgettable.

This season, the Learniversary returns — this time at Cannon Mountain, NH on January 14-15, 2026. Cannon holds a special place in our history as one of the three exam sites (along with Killington and Whiteface) where members tested their skills back in 1976.

The Learniversary event will again combine education, assessment opportunities, and celebration. It's a chance to honor our roots, strengthen our community, and look ahead to the next 50 years of instructor excellence.

What's more, we offer special pricing for this event. Our 50+ year members will be invited to attend the education event at no cost, 40+ year members get a 40% discount, and successive discounts down to 10% off for 10+ year members. Please check our website for more information and how to register for this Learniversary event!



Scan to register for the Learniversary event.  
[Easternsnowpros.org/calendar/feature-events/golden-learniversary-specialty-clinic/](https://easternsnowpros.org/calendar/feature-events/golden-learniversary-specialty-clinic/)

### Join the Fun

With more than 500 educational and assessment events scheduled this season, there's something for everyone. Whether you're continuing your journey toward certification, expanding into a new discipline, or simply looking to grow alongside fellow members, you'll find opportunities to learn, connect, and celebrate.

Grab a friend, register today, and join us for a fantastic winter. We can't wait to see you at an event — and especially at the Cannon Learniversary!

Scan to check out the 2025-2026 events calendar.  
[Easternsnowpros.org/calendar](https://Easternsnowpros.org/calendar)



## New Scholarship Fund Expands Opportunities for Level III Candidates in Western New York

**W**e are proud to announce the establishment of a new endowed scholarship through the PSIA-AASI Eastern Education Foundation: **The A. Dale Schaefer Fund.**

Thanks to the generosity of 50-year member and supporter Dale Schaefer, this fund will provide a \$1,000 scholarship each season to support a Level III assessment candidate affiliated with one of the following Western New York resorts: Kissing Bridge, Holimont, Buffalo Ski Center, or Holiday Valley. The award is intended to help cover assessment fees and related expenses. The primary focus is Alpine candidates, but if none are eligible in a given year, the award may be granted to a Level III candidate in another discipline from one of the same resorts.

The award is merit-based and will be determined by the Eastern Region Scholarship Committee in collaboration with the donor. This permanent endowment will help support our members' pursuits of excellence for years to come and demonstrates Dale's deep commitment to advancing professional development in our snowsports community.

This fund reflects one member's personal vision for giving back; it joins a suite of scholarship opportunities available to members across all regions and disciplines, including:

- **Member Scholarship** – Any member, any discipline
- **CE Burbridge Memorial Scholarship** – For Adaptive events
- **Eastern Employees** – For employees of the Eastern Region
- **James Kapp Memorial Scholarship** – For Telemark events
- **James Leader Memorial Scholarship** – For Vermont-affiliated members, with priority given to employees from Killington
- **NextCore Scholarship** – For members ages 14 – 39
- **Russell Fleming Memorial Scholarship** – Supporting racial diversity
- **Terry Fund Scholarship** – For Children's events
- **William Hetrick Editorial Scholarship** – For contributors to *SnowPro* and other publications
- **Women's Scholarship** – For women members
- **NEW: A. Dale Schaefer Fund** – For Level III candidates from Kissing Bridge, HoliMont, Buffalo Ski Center or Holiday Valley, with priority given to Alpine candidates

### Apply Now – the Scholarship Deadline is November 1, 2025

Applications for all PSIA-AASI Eastern Education Foundation scholarships – including the A. Dale Schaefer Scholarship – are now open. If you or someone you know needs assistance attending an Eastern Region event or assessment this season, don't miss this opportunity to reduce your costs and gain support on your path to excellence.



Learn more and apply at: <https://easternsnowpros.org/membership/current-members/scholarships/>  
Deadline: November 1, 2025

We extend our deepest gratitude to Dale Schaefer for creating this legacy of learning and leadership. Your gift will make a lasting impact.



## Guinness Book Recognizes Eddie Kiziukiewicz

By Mark Aiken

**W**e have long known that the PSIA-AASI membership is a highly skilled and multi-talented group. In August, the Asbury Park Press shouted out a PSIA-AASI Eastern Region member... and not for his snowsports acumen. Rather, it was his summer job that caused the local paper to write about Eddie Kiziukiewicz, an alpine Level II instructor who supervises the adult program at Windham Mountain Club, NY.

Kiziukiewicz, a lifeguard at Bay Head, NJ, was recently certified by the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's oldest open water lifeguard. Having served on Jersey shore beaches since 1962, he is regarded as one of the most knowledgeable – and best – ocean lifeguards in the business. A pool would be an easier gig, but Kiziukiewicz loves the ocean and the challenges that ocean lifeguarding presents.

While everyone in our organization prepares for and looks forward to winter, we also value all the seasons. Congrats to Eddie Kiziukiewicz on the Guinness Book recognition – and on another summer at the beach.

## Your Spot Matters – Our New Cancellation Policy Explained

*An empty spot can't teach, inspire or connect – help us fill them!*

**W**e're making changes to our event cancellation policy to help keep event fees lower for everyone and ensure more members can participate.

In the past, last-minute cancellations made it hard to fill open spots, disrupted event staffing, especially for assessments, and increased per-person costs. By encouraging earlier notice, we can:

- Offer open spots to waitlisted members
- Better cover staffing and travel costs
- Keep events affordable for the entire membership

### Here's what's new:

- Cancel up to 3 weeks before: Full refund
- Cancel 1–3 weeks before: 50% refund
- Cancel less than 1 week before: non-refundable and non-transferable

Please note that no refunds will be issued for events once attended. We encourage members to review event details carefully before registering to ensure a satisfactory experience. Extenuating circumstances (medical or bereavement) will be considered for a refund if notification is given at the earliest opportunity. We know plans change; this update helps us protect the quality and value of every event we offer.



NOTE: Certain premier events follow a different cancellation policy, please refer to those events for their specific cancellation policies.

[Read the Full Cancellation/Transfer Policy](#)

# OFFICIAL NOTICE

## PSIA-AASI Eastern Region Annual Membership Meeting

**Wednesday, December 17, 2025, at 4:30PM**

**Grand Summit Hotel - Northstar Room**

**Killington, Vermont**

During this meeting, hear about the state of our organization and future plans from CEO Kathy Brennan and representatives from the Board of Directors. Also, take this opportunity to ask a question or make a suggestion. Following the meeting, minutes will be made available on the [Easternsnowpros.org](https://easternsnowpros.org) website.

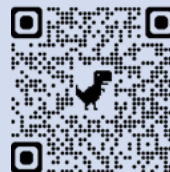
For members unable to attend this meeting, a virtual membership meeting is planned for **February 11th at 7pm. Save the Date!**

More details on the Virtual Membership meeting in February to come soon.



**Now through November 15**

**Join or renew now through November 15 – you save money on your membership and BJ's will donate \$15 for every new The Club+ Card BJ's member and \$5 for a renewal or a new The Club Card BJ's member to our Eastern Education Foundation.**



Visit our website for more information:  
<https://easternsnowpros.org/membership/current-members/member-deals/>



## Eastern Education Updates for the Season Ahead

By Keri Reid

### Eastern Director of Education and Programs

I am so excited to see the snow fly this year! The Eastern Region office has been humming with energy as we've built out the 2025–2026 calendar of events, and we couldn't be prouder of what's ahead. Spoiler alert: we're moving steadily toward our Strategic Alignment deadline in May 2026, when all regions will deliver discipline assessments in the same recognizable format.

While alignment remains a big focus, I am most excited about the fresh educational offerings in this year's lineup—and I hope you'll enjoy them as much as we've enjoyed creating them.

### Strategic Alignment: Updates to our Assessment Formats

All Alpine Level III assessments are transitioning to the new three-part modular format this season, with Snowboard Level II joining the movement. We're excited for the additional flexibility this allows members, with ability to tackle one part at a time. For each Alpine Level III, Snowboard Level III, and Snowboard Level II assessment, members will recognize three distinct modules which, when all three modules are successfully completed, will mark the achievement of the respective certification:

- Riding or Skiing Module – 1-Day
- Teaching & People Module – 1-Day
- Technical Knowledge & Movement Analysis Module – 1-Day

Our Nordic disciplines, Telemark and Cross Country, are rolling out standalone Level I assessments this year. For this winter only, we will offer both the standalone Level I events AND continue to offer the traditional education events with the opportunity both to obtain continuing education and the option to become a Level I certified member – as we have in the past. After this year, education events will be separated from assessments for all PSIA-AASI disciplines to provide clear performance expectations for each type of event.

Assessment formats for all disciplines are evolving for us to deliver a consistent experience across the country. However, much of the assessment criteria and performance expectations remain the same. For more information, consult the appropriate Performance Guide(s) on [thesnowpros.org](https://thesnowpros.org) in the "Get Certified" section or use this link to find certification documents in one place: <https://easternsnowpros.org/education/>

### Want to Join the Team? 2026 Tryouts Ahead

Are you Level III certified and ready to give back to our organization? Tryouts can be the gateway to new roles with the Eastern Region and the National Team.

- **Development Team Tryouts** are scheduled this season for Adaptive, Alpine, Telemark, and Cross Country. This is the entry point to becoming an Ed Staff member. If selected, Development Team members have up to four years to train and understudy at Eastern events with the goal of elevation to an Examiner role. Alpine and Snowboard hopefuls can consider preparing by attending Development Team Prep events or by being nominated by their Snowsports School leader for a Futures Camp.
- **The Eastern Team Tryout** is set for March 25–26, 2026. Our goal is to closely mirror the National Tryout environment, and this multi-discipline event will be the first of two offered. While a second tryout will be available for those unable to attend, participation in March is highly recommended, as it provides the most time for selected team members to benefit from structured training and support ahead of the 2028 National Team Tryout. Being selected for the Eastern Team is a requirement to receive regional endorsement for the National Team Selection.

### Fresh Events and New Opportunities

We've been hard at work behind the scenes, and I'm thrilled to share some of the exciting new opportunities waiting for you this season. From fresh course offerings to new twists on member favorites, there's something for everyone to explore in the 2025–26 lineup:

- In addition to our Alpine indoor courses offered at Liberty this year, we're pleased to add a **Snowboard Indoor Movement Analysis (MA) course** as an opportunity to hone this foundational skill for planning and delivering meaningful lessons.
- The **Eastern Trainer Academy** will now serve as an umbrella for several disciplines, helping develop resort trainers in addressing the unique needs of each area. This year, pathways will be offered for Alpine, Children's, and Snowboard, running concurrently with the Snowsports Management Seminar.
- We've added a **Children's Focus** to the Mini Academy lineup at Killington, Saturday and Sunday, December 13–14 to appeal to pros who want to ski, ride, and think about everything relating to kids instruction.
- **Alpine Updates** will be offered in two more-focused tracks: *Skiing & Technical Skills* and *Teaching Skills*. This allows our Education Staff to deliver a slightly more tailored program while still sharing the latest developments from PSIA-AASI.
- To better support the different skill levels we're seeing at our signature **Alpine Trees & Steeps** events, we'll now offer two registration options: *Intro to Trees & Steeps* and *Intermediate/Advanced Trees & Steeps*. By signaling their self-assessed starting point, participants allow our staff to better meet them where they are and then push boundaries to explore all the resort has to offer. In the same family of events, we're also introducing a **1-day version** of our ever-popular Trees & Steeps events for both Alpine and Snowboard.
- We're pleased to introduce new content on **teaching aging adults**, piloted across regions this season. This two-day course provides effective strategies and practical applications for teaching adults through the natural aging process, from beginner to intermediate levels. Using the CAP model, participants will explore considerations of low-impact skiing, gain insight into movement changes with age, study curated video examples, and learn how to connect meaningfully with this demographic.
- We're excited to expand our **Adaptive education** with *Adaptive Tethering Fundamentals (Alpine & Snowboard)*. This two-day event is designed for experienced adaptive instructors looking to refine their tethering skills with stand-up skiers, sliders, and bi-skiers.
- Read about updates and changes to our **Backcountry education program** in Mickey Stone's article on page 18.
- **Spring Rally** is set for the last weekend of March, and we're pleased to announce Stratton as this year's host. With education options for most disciplines and a wide range of certification and specialist opportunities, this event will continue to be a fun capstone to the season.
- We're adding an "annex" to the Snowsports Management Seminar this year: the **Eastern Snowsports Management Roundup**. This one-day follow-up, scheduled for the Friday before Spring Rally, is designed for leaders across the Eastern Region to reconvene, reflect, and re-energize. The morning will be spent on snow with a light focus, creating space for reconnection and informal exchange, followed by an afternoon roundtable for debriefing, sharing best practices, and sparking creative ideas to support the upcoming budgeting and planning cycle.

As always, thank you for your continued dedication to snowsports instruction and our awesome community. I am grateful for the opportunity to support you all in your respective journeys. Think snow! ❄️



## Why They Keep Showing Up

Kathy Brennan  
CEO Eastern Region

**H**ere is what I consider to be an impressive number: 6069 members participated in educational events or assessments last winter. Some people took more than one, which is also impressive.

But check this out... 44 members participated in 5 or more events last winter. Within that group, 16 members logged 6 or more events, and 3 members showed up eight times or more. We wondered, why this group of learners/instructors keep showing up? Separate from our member survey (which you can read about starting on page 1 of this issue), we reached out to all members who participated in 5 or more events. We thanked them, and asked some questions to learn why they invest their time, money, and energy in PSIA-AASI.

Their answers shared many common threads and were remarkably consistent: they told us they participated for the community, to build confidence, and for real growth and skill acquisition. Specifically, here are some of their comments. We hope their enthusiasm will encourage you to add an event to your calendar in the 2025-2026 season.

### Community on the Go

One aspect that kept many of these “frequent flyers” returning was the sense of community. Gerianne, an alpine instructor from Stratton finds community not just at events, but long after too. She had a mentor, but when her mentor retired, she found new mentors. She joined an informal study group, and now they keep in touch all year. Hazza, a snowboarder from Mount Snow, agreed and emphasized getting out. “The events force you to leave your home hill and see new terrain,” they said. “You meet people you wouldn’t otherwise – and those connections open doors.”

Tim, a Loon instructor who holds certifications and accreditations in telemark, alpine, and adaptive, is especially high on the telemark community. “Everyone knows each other, so there’s comfort,” he said. “But even in alpine, once you go to enough events, you start to know someone everywhere and there are people you can always reach out to,” he adds.

Together, their stories show that community isn’t limited to one discipline — it’s the friendships and networks that travel with you from mountain to mountain, season to season.

Another comment that truly resonated with me was:

“It’s not a dry seminar—it’s an experience,” said John (Pats Peak, Snowboard), describing a day riding with coach Brian Donovan when “small talk became big talk.” Watching Brian connect with riders and then mirror styles back to them “absolutely changed” how John frames goals: less fixed task, more “moving target” that evolves with the student.

### Confidence Earned, Not Gifted

Several members talked candidly about doubt—then described the moment it flipped. Our organization’s certification levels mean members met a standard; certifications are not given away. Therefore, when a member has a success at an assessment event, everyone knows that success was earned.

“Soulfully fulfilling.” That’s how Landon, a board member and member of the Southern Patrol, described how she felt when she passed the MA/Technical module at her Level III assessment. Her assessment experience

was the culmination of years of training, taking online courses, and support from her community. “For many women, we’re the caregivers,” she said. “Making space for our own goals matters.”

Just because certification is difficult, doesn’t mean it has to be unpleasant. “The most fun I’ve ever had in my life.” That’s how Hazza, a snowboarder from Mount Snow, described their Level II assessment event. A prep, a three-day exam, and the camaraderie of colleagues turned what they expected to be stressful into a joyful, confidence-building milestone.

“I thought it was for really great skiers,” says Debbie of Whitetail, who started instructing at age 48 and almost skipped going for her alpine Level I. A Mini-Academy at Killington changed everything. “Michael Rogan (PSIA-AASI National Team Coach) walking over to work with the ‘slow group’ set the tone.” “It said: ‘You belong.’ That moment defined what this organization is.”

For Tim, from Loon, confidence came from small, subtle improvements. “A simple Telemark drill revealed so much else — it changed how I moved,” he said “I never thought I had proprioception, but now I have the awareness. That’s a skill I can pass on.”

“Certification was a major driver,” said Bing, a snowboarder from Pats Peak. “But ultimately, the confidence comes from the learning opportunities — from national team coaches to peers walking the same path.”

Confidence, like community, is built discipline by discipline, moment by moment — and these members remind us it’s never gifted, but always earned. And that makes it all the more rewarding.

### Real Skill Growth

One reason our membership asks for a fully fleshed-out calendar of educational events comes from their desire to improve as instructors and as skiers and riders. Bing went on to share that trying to achieve his Level III certification drove much much of his training and event participation throughout the season, but his underlying motivation was always the learning opportunities. Their standout? Freestyle National Academy. “The size, the energy, and the off-snow sessions made the learning and networking even richer,” he said.

Todd from Thunder Ridge had this experience at an alpine Trees & Steeps event at Jay Peak. “Day One, I was falling. Day Two, I was jumping through brush into a steep woods line with confidence,” he said. “That was *real* improvement. I ordered powder skis after that event.”

Improvement doesn’t just happen on the snow. Alpine instructor Jason from Peek’n Peak called video-rich prep events with coaches like Dave Capron “game-changers” for his Movement Analysis skills. “I probably spent 10 hours reviewing the Zoom and my skiing video,” he said. For JT, snowboarder from Stratton, the value is in seeing his own educators in different settings and meeting examiners and riders across the division. He had this advice: “Even if you’re not ready for an assessment, you ride different terrain, get different perspectives, and you’re better for it.”

One aspect of members developing professionally is what they bring back home for colleagues and students. Andrew, alpine and adaptive instructor with Vermont Adaptive, keeps bringing early-season Eastern and Adaptive Academy “nuggets” back to a large volunteer corps. “MA doesn’t have to be complicated,” he says. “What do you see? What one thing would you change? That alone upped our coaching.”

Evonne, multi-discipline member from Stowe, described a stream of “light-bulb” experiences—rollerblading with Doug Stewart to feel ski parallels, women’s events with Kristi Robertson, exam-day clarity from Chris Ericson as well as great programs from snowboard clinicians including Dan Munn, Bonnie Kolber, Brian Donovan, and Greg Fatigate - “There are so many great clinicians!”



"Everytime I walk away I'm blown away," Evonne said. "With with each event, the clinician's high level of understanding of what I'm dealing with, they're able to guide me to my own self-awareness. That allows me to key in, trying different approaches, and unlocking new and different movement patterns in my riding or skiing"

Finally, Tim also highlighted another often-overlooked skill: adaptive techniques for cognitive differences. "They'll put kids in my lesson who are on the spectrum, but they just want to be kids," he said. "Using simple words and fun helps them thrive." He emphasized that adaptive events don't just prepare you for specialized lessons — they make every instructor better.

### **Time, Money, and Life Logistics—Making It Work**

No one sugarcoated the commitment. Just as our general member survey expressed that the financial burden is a concern, the members who attend event after event acknowledge this too. Our frequent flyer group spoke about the need for planning, scholarships, carpools, stacking events, and honest conversations at home.

Keith, an alpine instructor from Liberty who has transferred to Deer Valley, had this observation: "It's an eight-hour drive from DC, so I take longer events, or stack back-to-back clinics—more time on snow, less time at the wheel. Share costs with a buddy." JT from Stratton took advantage of scholarships but has a realistic outlook. "Scholarships—Eastern and National—provide assistance, but travel costs and scheduling are typically considered well in advance."

Over the years, various full- and part-time jobs have given Laurent, a multi-discipline member from Blue Hills, the time and resources to pursue his passion for skiing and teaching. "It is a commitment, and I love it. I've received a couple of scholarships over the years which are greatly appreciated, but I fund the rest with my summer work."

Going to event after event can cause friction at home, acknowledges Erin, alpine instructor from Loon. She blocks weeks so she and her fiancé can plan around her absence: "Concentrated learning with guaranteed high-quality coaches—worth it," she says.

### **What they'd tell a member on the fence**

We asked the group if they had advice for members on the fence — those who might be trying to decide whether or not to attend an event, their advice is pretty simple:

- "Just go. You won't regret the time or money. It's the cost of a lift ticket for world-class coaching." —Jason
- "If you want to improve—try disciplines you might not know you are interested in, you might find a whole new discipline you never thought of. You'll always learn something." —Laurent
- "Try preps even if you're not ready to assess. Low pressure scenarios to meet candidates and examiners from other mountains while practicing riding tasks, sample teaching, and discussing the assessment process as a whole." —Jeff "JT"
- "Every minute will benefit you as a whole person. Plan for it, use scholarships if you need to—you're worth the investment." —Landon
- "Be clear about your goals and go in with an open mindset. Collaborate with the group, focus on shared success—that's when you'll bring the most value back to your home resort." —Bing

### **A Final Word**

As did members in the general survey, these members shared thoughtful suggestions on formats, scheduling, mentorship, and access. We'll continue to consider them as we shape future offerings.

To the 44 who led by example last year: thank you. Your commitment raises the bar for all of us—and proves, once again, that when you show up, growth shows up with you. <<

## **Nominate A Member**

**Do you know a special person  
who has made significant contributions to  
snowsports instruction, the snowsports industry  
or to PSIA-AASI and the Eastern Region?  
Do you want to nominate a fellow member for  
Eastern or National Lifetime Membership?**

**Eastern or National Lifetime Membership  
Community Recognition  
Honorary Membership**

**For more information and to submit a nomination  
visit our website at:**

**<https://easternsnowpros.org/eastern-members-award-winners-and-information/>**

**The deadline is Friday May 15, 2026. Awards will be  
presented in the Fall of 2026.**

## **Nominate Your Leader**

### **Double Diamond Award**

**For an emerging leader in our industry for  
demonstrating innovation, growth, leadership, and  
exceptional contributions to their snowsports school.**

### **Snowsports Leader of the Year Award**

**For an outstanding snowsports school director/manager  
to acknowledge a career spent maintaining the  
highest standards in snowsports school management,  
outstanding dedication to their instructors,  
commitment to their school, contributions to our  
organization (both regionally and nationally),  
and impact on the snowsports industry.**

**Submit your nomination online at**

**<https://easternsnowpros.org/new-eastern-snowsports-management-awards/>**

**Deadline is Sunday October 26, 2025.**

**Awards will be presented at the  
Snowsports Management Seminar Banquet,  
December 2, 2025 at Mount Snow, VT**





## Eastern Region's Mentorship Program Continues!

By Matt Lyerly

Alpine Level II, CS1, FS1

Massanutten Resort, VA



mentorship: Effective partnerships require transparency, vulnerability, and a growth mindset from both mentor and mentee.

I hope everyone had a great summer and beginning of fall. My home state of Virginia experienced a “false fall” in August with unusually comfortable daytime temperatures and crisp mornings. I’ve been thinking about the fall-to-winter transition ever since. However, I’m still living in the present with plenty of fall left to enjoy.

As we approach winter, it’s time to start planning the upcoming season’s mentorship program. This will be the program’s fifth year, which in and of itself, is amazing. The program started during Covid with an eye towards continuous improvement and user experience. We have built a program that has staying power, thanks to backing from Eastern Region leadership and to all the amazing participants along the way.

Throughout the previous four years of the program, there have been a handful of repeat mentors and mentees who have either come back to work with the same person again or to branch out and seek multiple perspectives either as a mentee or as a mentor. I have tried my best to understand what it is about mentors or mentees that allows partnerships to thrive. I often ask myself why some partnerships struggle, but others have that *certain something* that makes the work not really seem like work? What is that secret sauce?

As you may have guessed, it’s not particularly obvious. One could poll 10 different mentors and get 10 different answers as to what in their eyes, makes a successful mentee. So instead of trying to distill years of survey results into a few broad strokes, I thought it would be nice change of pace to describe *my* experience of working with an awesome mentor last season.

As a native Virginian, I teach alpine skiing at Massanutten Four Seasons Resort and am located within a day’s drive of Snowshoe, West Virginia which is the home resort of my mentor, Drew Miller, a member of the Alpine Education Staff who was recently elevated to Examiner. Drew and I had crossed paths several times over the past several seasons, both in passing at Eastern Summit Academy and on Zoom calls. Drew had also been a previous mentor in our program. Because I was looking for someone to bounce ideas off and to get help preparing for an Alpine Level III assessment, I pitched Drew the idea of us working together in the 2024-2025 season. We had already talked shop quite a bit and had conversations about alpine fundamentals and how to improve this very program so it was obvious we were on the same page. When I suggested the idea of us working together as mentor (Drew) and mentee, it was a unanimous decision; “Let’s do this thing!”

The first conversation we had was about clear expectations of what each of us needed in a partnership. For example, one thing Drew needed from me was follow up after he sent content for me to analyze and think over. It was my responsibility to study the material, put into my own way of thinking, and check back to confirm understanding. Two-way

communication, for the win! My need from Drew was simple; help me get prepared to take the Level III skiing assessment in late March. That way, Drew could filter his feedback and corrections through the Level III lens and ask himself whether my current performance was at the Level III standard. And if not, what needs to be fixed?”

Being in close proximity to each other, we spent multiple days skiing at Snowshoe. The end game was Level III, so we focused first on the fundamentals as they related to tasks and activities on the Level III assessment guide. These included activities such as 1-footed skiing, skating, bumps, and, when we could find it, hard/firm snow. We also spent plenty of time on Snowshoe’s western territory skiing 1,500 vertical feet top to bottom without stopping.

An important point to consider as a mentee is knowing how you like to receive feedback. I vividly remember us talking about learning styles and how Olympic-level skiers are almost exclusively doer/experimenter learners. Drew challenged me to “go ski railroad tracks, leave pencil lines in the snow.” Olympic mode activated! Only after skiing railroad tracks for several runs did we start to break it down – turns utilizing the sidecut and bending the skis – and incorporate some performance cues. Performance cues included skiing quietly, pouring imaginary juice out of my boots by tipping them, and being aware of any skidding or rough sensations that result from turns that aren’t carved. Also note, those cues are external, meaning not focused on body movement or positioning, but rather the effect on the equipment, another way I prefer to receive feedback and learn.

Finally, it was assessment time at Waterville Valley, NH. On the drive into the Valley, the weather was full-on spring mode, 57 degrees. As you might expect for a northern location like New Hampshire, it didn’t last. The mercury dropped all the way to 14 overnight and the next morning at the Level III Orientation event, National Team Coach Jeb Boyd described the snow as “mucho firmo.” Indeed, granite counter top and loose rubble were the conditions *du jour* for the warmup day. The exam itself was a little better thanks to 3-5 inches that fell throughout the day. When the announcement came at the end of the day my result was... “did not attain.” My feedback was clear and gave me – and Drew – exactly what I need to attain at the next try. In a way, my result shows you what mentorship is supposed to be; a vision and path for the ‘way’ to success, not the actual success itself. Having an awesome mentor is no guarantee that you will be successful at an event. That said, if you show up and apply yourself, mentorship is still a valuable tool on the path forward and the benefits of a successful partnership go well beyond a certificate. ☞



## Board Report, Zone 1

By Ben Debenedictis  
Alpine Examiner, CS2, Zone 1 Representative  
Stowe, VT

**T**hank you for electing me as your new Zone 1 Board Representative—I'm honored by your support and excited to serve our PSIA-AASI East community.

After a stellar snow season last year, we have plenty to look forward to this winter. Keep an eye on the event calendar for "Intensive" Level II and III prep clinics with Dave Capron, featuring webinars, on-snow video capture, and indoor analysis. Also make sure to check out the Academy and Mini Academy events at Killington starting December 13. These events have something for every discipline including the return of the Snowboard Summit Academy.

Now's the perfect time to set your goals for the season. A great way to stay motivated is to team up with a fellow snow pro who shares your goals. Find an event that aligns with your aspirations, bring a friend, and get after it.

I hope to see many of you around Zone 1 (and elsewhere in the East) this winter. I look forward to seeing and hearing from you and taking a run! ☞

## Board Report, Zone 3

By Aleks Smith  
Alpine Examiner, CS2, FS1, Zone 3 Representative

**F**inally turned off my summer air conditioner, and I'm thinking about winter! Although it seems far off right now, it's time to start preparing.

As you survey your gear for the winter, please remember all the great sponsor partnerships PSIA-AASI has and that you have access to amazing pro deals as a member. Go to [www.thesnowpros.org](http://www.thesnowpros.org) under the heading "Membership" then "Pro offers" to find the pro deals. While you are checking out the website, also take a minute to make sure your profile information is correct and that your member school information is up to date.

The winter event schedule will be published by the time you read this. I encourage you to take an event away from your home area. It's great to explore other mountains, meet new people and try an event that may challenge you. If you plan to attend a certification assessment this season, it's never too early to start to prepare. Check out one of the MA webinars, and make sure to review all the resources at [www.thesnowpros.org/get-certified/](http://www.thesnowpros.org/get-certified/)

Take time now to connect with your Snowsports Director for the season. Also, it is a wonderful time to connect with your guests and get them booked on your schedule for this winter.

I hope to work events this season that will allow me to travel through Zone 3 and connect with our membership. Please let's make a run together or do an event together. I would love the opportunity to connect with as many of you as possible.

Have a great start to your season and I hope to see you on the hill! ☞



## At-Large Report

By Marc Angelillo  
Alpine Level III, CS2, FS1, Snowboard Level I, At-Large  
Board Member  
Sugarbush, VT and Stowe, VT

**I**'m deeply honored to have been elected to the PSIA-AASI Eastern Board of Directors. This new chapter is more than a title; it's a meaningful opportunity to give back to the snowsports community that has shaped my life in countless ways.

From dreaming of becoming a snow pro in my youth, to building a career in the ski, surf, and lifestyle industries for decades, my journey has always been fueled by hard work, authentic connections, and a deep love for both the mountains and the ocean alike.

Snowsports has never been just about skiing or riding—it's been about the people, a purpose, and the shared passion that brings us all together.

I'm truly grateful to the Eastern Region membership and current Board members for your trust and support. I look forward to serving with integrity, fostering collaboration, and helping move our community forward through leadership, education, inspiration, and plenty of shared stoke—on and off the snow.

I'm also excited to serve on both the Membership Communications Committee and the Nomination Committee, alongside a dedicated group of fellow Board members and colleagues. If you have comments, concerns, questions, or suggestions—for me or for the Board—I'd love to hear from you. Here's to meaningful connection, continued growth, and many seasons of shared passion ahead. ☞

## At-Large Report

By Emily Spiker  
Alpine Level III, At-Large Board Member  
Whitetail, PA

**T**he 2025-2026 snowsports season is almost here, which means it's time to review your manuals, set measurable goals and reserve your spots in high-demand clinics. For those who registered, the Eastern and Summit Academies at Killington (December 15-19) will be a great way to get ready for the season and review your teaching skills. If you weren't aware, registration for these events occurs mid-September, so be sure to set a calendar reminder for the 2026 event as it sells out annually.

All members can download digital resources on their phones or tablets. *Teaching Snowsports*, *Teaching Children Snowsports* and the technical manual for each primary discipline are available at no cost. If you need CEUs (continuing education credits) this season, they can be completed through many regional events and online courses.

Financial assistance is available for the clinics, webinars, indoor and outdoor courses. Many generous scholarships are available for our membership. Please go to [easternsnowpros.org/scholarships](http://easternsnowpros.org/scholarships) and fill out an application. Reminder – the deadline is November 1st

As an At Large Member of the Board, I look forward to hearing from you. Share with us how we can support your goals by completing this form [easternsnowpros.org/contact/](http://easternsnowpros.org/contact/). I look forward to meeting many of you as you attend clinics around the region. ☞

## At-Large Report

By Shannon Rucker

Alpine Level II, Snowboard Level I,

CS2, FS1

Mt Snow, VT

**A**s the green starts to fade from the trees and cooler mornings roll in, I find myself thinking: how do *you* prepare for the season?

If you're like me, the answer isn't simple. It's layered—like our favorite outerwear. Preparing for a new teaching season isn't just waxing your boards and checking your boots. It's physical, mental, emotional, and even a little philosophical. It's about asking, "What kind of instructor do I want to be this year?" and setting yourself up for success. Success probably requires a LOT of diverse preparation to maximize your sliding season.

Some of us spent our summer chasing trail time on two wheels. Mountain biking in the off-season is one of my go-to activities—it's dynamic, fast, and keeps the legs and brain sharp. Others hit Big Snow, the indoor snowsports facility in New Jersey to stay dialed in or push their freestyle boundaries. Some pros took advantage of our summer course offerings while others choose this time to research new gear, tweak their boot fit, or finally retire that piece of outerwear that's seen one too many duct tape repairs.

Beyond the physical, there's so much we can do to mentally tune in. Maybe you're queuing up a new podcast for your drive—*All I Really Need to Know I Learned from Snowboarding* (#JusticeForLarson), *The Fall Line with Chaos and Company*, or one of PSIA-AASI's official episodes. Maybe you're digging into a new book on sports psychology or movement analysis to strengthen your instructional lens.

It's also the perfect time to map out your personal goals and events. Want to level up this year? Circle those assessment dates (and more importantly, the educational events to get you there). Want to grow your teaching style or learn something new? Look for clinics outside your home resort or in a different discipline. Let curiosity be your compass.

The beauty is there's no one right way to prep. Your preparation is as unique as your teaching style. But whatever mix of riding, reading, listening, sweating, and dreaming you're doing right now—it matters. It sets your intention and energy for the whole season to come.

So what's your pre-season ritual? What's on your playlist, your calendar, your mind? Wherever you are in your preparation journey, I'll meet you out there—stoked, ready, and proud to be in this amazing community of passionate snow pros. ☞



## EDUCATION FOUNDATION NEWS

**T**he PSIA-E Education Foundation expresses its sincere appreciation to the following members who have contributed at least \$20.00 to the Eastern Education Foundation through the annual dues "add-on" program and standalone donations from May 1, 2025, to September 7, 2025. Contributions are the primary source of support for the Foundation and its scholarships. Thank you! ☞

Ronald Adinolfi	Herb Eschbach	James McHale
Luca Arrigoni	Dennis Fahey	Diane Mega
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Dan Earley	Michael McCabe	Joseph Yanushpolsky
David England	Stephen McGrath	



## In Memoriam



### Joe Fucci

Joe Fucci, known to many as “Big Joe,” passed away in April 2026. He started teaching skiing at Otis Ridge in 1978 in Massachusetts. In 1980, he moved to teach and be a race coach at Butternut ski area and Ski Sundown in Connecticut. In the 1990s, he moved up to Stratton in Vermont.

Joe attained his alpine Level III, and he also coached racing and was a part of the Connecticut ski council. When Joe first tried out to be an instructor, he taught a great lesson; however, not technically accurate. That was Joe, not afraid to go first or put himself out there. When he moved to Vermont, he got into snowboarding more, and he began a quest to get his AASI Level III.

He tried a few times and learned along the way. He was a big guy and older, but that never stopped him. Over the years, Joe served as an Eastern region board member, representing Region 2, speaking for all the instructors he met during this time. While at Stratton, Joe became a staple as a Mini-Mountain Riders coach and was a great seasonal program coach. On the weekends, you would find him riding with 12-plus Mini-Mountain Riders. It was always a great source of entertainment and stories seeing Big Joe being chased by so many kids through the woods and around the mountain. In the summers, he worked construction both in Vermont and Connecticut.

As Joe transitioned to riding more, you would find him out riding early with a group of friends or helping instructors until coffee time, and then he'd make more turns until lunch. Over the past couple of years, Joe spent time teaching his grandkids. He thoroughly enjoyed that, and they did too.

If you knew Joe, or met him at an AASI event, take a turn or two for him this winter. And if you find yourself in the middle of a perfect run, let out a big, joyful “Yowza!”—he'd love that. ☙☙



### Barry Stout

We mourn the loss of Barry Stout, who passed away peacefully on June 30, 2025. Barry was a loving husband, father, grandfather and brother, and a true friend to many. He touched the lives of thousands of people, as a gifted teacher and mentor, a coach, a camp counselor, and a tennis and ski instructor.

Born in Norristown, PA on December 5, 1948 to Ralph and Elsie Stout, Barry was raised in Souderton, PA. He was a graduate of Souderton Area High School and a natural athlete who excelled in football, basketball, baseball, swimming and diving. Barry graduated from Westchester University with a B.S. in Elementary Education. He was co-captain of the football team there, earning All-American Division II honors. Barry taught sixth grade for seven years in the Perkiomen Valley School District, Schwenksville, PA, where he also coached varsity football.

Barry married Martyne Clemmer from Souderton in 1970. In 1978 Barry and Martyne moved to Vermont, where Barry became Assistant Director of Killington Ski School, an Examiner for the Professional Ski Instructors of America, and spent a few summers as Waterfront Director at Camp Timberlake of the Farm and Wilderness Summer Camps. Later, he became Director of the Killington School for Tennis and began to compete and often place in New England amateur tennis championships.

In 1999 Barry and Martyne moved to Park City, UT. Barry became Ski School Director at Canyons of Park City Mountain Resort for more than a



### Alan J. Highhouse

Alan J. Highhouse, age 77, of Lakeville passed away peacefully at home on Friday, July 18, 2025. He is survived by his wife of 49 years, Linda Jayne (Snyder) Highhouse.

Born August 2, 1947, in Honesdale, Alan was the son of the late Lynn W. and Elizabeth E. (Gallick) Highhouse. He graduated from Honesdale High School in 1965 and Lehigh University in 1969. He joined the Army National Guard and worked at Highhouse Energy Company.

Alan volunteered for many organizations. He was on the Honesdale Planning Commission, Texas #4 Fire Co., Lakeville Fire Police, Civil Air Patrol, the BVM Queen of Peace Church choir, and assisted with the American Legion programs.

His hobbies included racing in the SCCA mini-Indy car series, racing at Moc-A-Tek, road racing, motorcycle racing, flying his Piper Cub, membership in the Delaware Hills Hunting Club, and riding bikes. He also played keyboard with the rock group, the Shondels, in high school.

He loved skiing and was an exceptional Alpine Level III instructor at Tanglewood, Elk Mountain, and Big Bear, and he served as an Eastern Region Division Clinic Leader (DCL). Alan enjoyed the New Jersey seashore with his family and taking skiing trips out West and up North, the Grand Canyon, Spain, and Africa. He made many friends through his experiences and love for snowsports.

In addition to his wife Linda, Alan is survived by his daughter Ann Elizabeth Breuninger and husband Russell of Jacobstown, NJ; his son John David Highhouse and wife Kristen Marie of Eynon; his brother Lynn W. Highhouse II of Honesdale, NJ; and two grandchildren Zachary Russell Breuninger and Juliet Christine Highhouse. ☙☙

decade, also working as a tennis teaching pro at the local racquet club for a short period, and continuing to participate in local and statewide tennis tournaments. Upon leaving Canyons, Barry taught skiing at Deer Valley Resort for 13 winters.

Barry's passions were skiing and playing tennis, watching his beloved Philadelphia Eagles on TV, enjoying time with his children and grandchildren, and attending as many of their sports competitions as he could, being a cat dad, and traveling with his wife Martyne to destinations including Panama, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, and London for Wimbledon. However, Barry could never be far from a TV with access to his favorite sporting events during his travels.

He was known for his wonderful sense of humor, his kindness, his love of family, his outstanding athletic ability, and his exceptional teaching and mentoring skills and always finding a way to patiently communicate to each person what they needed to improve.

Barry is survived by his wife Martyne, son Dan Stout (Jen) of Eliot, ME, daughter Ali Sibley of Park City, UT, brother Garry Stout (Diane), of Perkasi, PA, his four grandchildren: Nicolas, Wyatt, Camille, and Hazel, who lovingly called Barry “Pop” or “Pop Pop”. He was predeceased by his brother Larry Stout (Joan). ☙☙

## In Memoriam



### Gregory Horine

Gregory Edward Horine, 74 of Utica, NY, passed away peacefully August 30th, after courageously battling pulmonary fibrosis for more than a decade.

Born in Troy, NY, to Jules and Jean Horine, Greg was raised in West Sand Lake, NY. After graduating from Averill Park High School, Greg earned his teaching degree from SUNY Plattsburgh, where he also played soccer. This set the foundation for a life dedicated to education, coaching, and outdoor adventure.

Greg devoted more than 30 years to shaping young minds as an Earth Science teacher at Vernon Verona Sherrill High School. After earning a degree in broadcast meteorology from Mississippi State University in 1997, his love of science extended beyond the classroom and into living rooms across Central New York where he served as a meteorologist on WUTR-TV in Utica for five years.

In addition to climbing all the Adirondack High Peaks, Greg earned his alpine Level II certification and spent more than 35 years teaching at Woods Valley, Snow Ridge, Whiteface, and, most recently, 15 years at Gore Mountain, his "second home." An avid outdoorsman and kayaker in the off-season, he found peace and joy with his friends in nature's classroom.

His passion for learning extended beyond the classroom where he also coached soccer at VVS and later at Utica College, inspiring countless students and athletes. A proud moment for Greg was winning the Upstate New York men's soccer title in 1990 while playing alongside his son Marc.

Greg is survived by his beloved wife Marcia; daughter, Melissa (and her children, Ahmed and Sami), son Marc (and his son Jack); Marcia's daughter Jennette and grandson McKinley; and his brothers Garry (Irene), Geoff (Margaret), and Glenn (Holli), as well as many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Beyond family and teaching, Greg had an infectious enthusiasm for classic cars, auto racing, the Premier League, cycling, and travel – especially skiing in Utah and visiting the Smoky Mountains with Marcia. A proud Leicester City supporter, Greg admired Jamie Vardy most of all – the underdog who defied all the odds.

Greg's spirit lives on in every student he taught, player he coached, every mountain he skied, and every family memory he created. His legacy of curiosity, adventure, and dedication will continue to inspire all who knew him. ☙



### Scott Sherwood

Submitted by Steve Howie and Jocelyn Goldberg-Schaible

Rest in peace, Scott Sherwood. Bristol Mountain's Snowsports School lost a legend this summer. Scott will long be remembered by all who were impacted by his knowledge and wisdom, shared unselfishly over the past five decades. He was a master trainer whose professionalism was clear to all who knew him. He was helpful, caring, patient, and hugely dedicated to the sport we all love. As he impacted many and had many friends, here are some memories of those who knew him best and will miss him most:

*"46 winters ago, I was only hired because Scott went to bat for me. Of 81 candidates only 18 were chosen, and I was the 18th pick because Scott saw my potential. For that, I'll always be grateful."* – Jocelyn Goldberg-Schaible

*"Scott was one fantastic ski instructor and person."* – Larry Curtis

*"Scott's calm, quiet presence and professionalism will be greatly missed by the Bristol Mountain Snowsports School staff."* – Mary Larkin

*"Scott and I were Bristol Mountain rookies in December 1971 and grew professionally to Level IIIs. He was a great skier, clinician, and student of the sport. We didn't ski together often, because I was never able to keep up!"* – Mike Brown

*"We lost a man who was an institution here at Bristol. I had the pleasure of working with Scott for the past 50-plus years as instructor, clinician, and friend. Scott's passion for the profession brought countless people to the sport and to the ski school."* – Ted Goodwin

*"As a Bristol instructor, trainer and supervisor, Scott had a special enthusiasm for his many loyal customers and their skiing improvement. He also possessed a deep commitment to coach both new and experienced instructors so they could better share the sport he loved."* – Rick Copeland

*"Scott and I spent a lot of years together in Bristol Mountain's ski school. He will be deeply missed."* – Chris Sansocie

*"He was a great mentor to everyone on staff. A leader and a professional."* – Betsy (Sullivan) Borup

*"Mr. PSIA at Bristol Mountain and probably the most technical instructor on staff. Scott was always available to share his expertise. He was a well-respected and integral member of our staff."* – Beth DeFranco

*"Skiing at Bristol won't be the same with Scott not there. We will miss him. He was always willing to help and guide us."* – Lori Sawchuck LaPier

*"Scott was an inspiration to both of us. As Bristol's Technical Director, Scott specialized in 'herding cats.' Snowsports instructors can be independent and challenging. Like all aspects of his life, Scott managed that with honesty, integrity, and decorum – all increasingly rare attributes."* – Lee Dame and Bernie Durman

*"It was such an honor and privilege to have worked with, and learned from, Scott all these many years. Not only as professionals but as friends. He has left me with fond memories."* – Rich Knight

*"A talented mentor – Scott was always learning, understanding movements and the 'why' behind it all. He made you feel his engaging personality and challenged you to improve your skiing skills regardless of your level of professional development. I will always think of Scott's inspiring ways to teach our sport by first improving my own skills. Forever grateful."* – Gerry Stryker

*"I was very sad to hear about Scott's passing. He was a mentor to me over 40 years ago when I became a Bristol Ski Instructor. He was such a great person and a true professional. Rest in peace."* – Kevin O'Donohue

*"Scott was not only a great skier and a good friend, but one of the best mentors a person could have. He always made time for me. He will be missed dearly."* – Bob Pollock

*"Scott Sherwood – our friend, mentor, a true Renaissance man in depth and breadth. We will never forget those perfect turns."* – Kerry Marshall

*"It's hard to put into words the sadness felt by so many of us at Bristol Mountain, because Scott was an instructor, staff trainer, supervisor, technical director, mentor, and friend. He had a passion for sharing his love of the sport. A short story about this plaque: As the decades passed, milestones flew by – 20, 30, 40, and 50 years quickly approaching. Scott would tell me, proudly, 'this is year 48...year 49...year 50.' But as I put together his Lifetime Achievement Award, I realized that it was actually year 51. His response was, jokingly, 'Well, that's a little anticlimactic!' Of course, he appreciated the award as much as we all appreciated his many contributions over those 50-plus years. Too many memories to share, Scott will be missed."* – Steve Howie ☙





## KIDS, KIDS, KIDS

### The Fun Starts With You: Creating Joyful Learning Experiences in Children's Lessons

By Keith Rodney

PSIA-AASI National Team Member, Alpine, Telemark, and Children's Examiner  
Chair, PSIA-AASI National Children's Task Force



National Team members know how to have fun. Keith Rodney, Jim Shaw, and Greg Dixon, l-r

**W**hen it comes to teaching kids, we all want the same thing: engaged students who are progressing, smiling, and stoked to come back tomorrow. As instructors, we often ask, “How can I make this lesson fun?” But here’s a different lens—one that might just change everything: the best way to make ski and snowboard lessons fun for kids is to make them fun *for yourself*.

That’s not just a feel-good philosophy—it’s a strategic approach grounded in how kids learn and how instructors thrive. Within the Learning Connection Model (LCM), we build people skills, teaching skills, and technical skills to deliver effective and engaging lessons. But beneath all that lies how we view our students: through the CAP Model—Cognitive, Affective, and Physical development. The CAP Model helps us see where each student is developmentally so we can meet them there in real time. And the more engaged and joyful *you* are in your teaching, the more skillfully you can teach through that lens.

**Make fun a learning strategy.** Kids learn best when they’re having fun. “Play is an incredible motivator,” wrote Harvard professor Elizabeth Bonawitz in a summary of a study that looked at children, play, brain development, motor learning, and emotional safety. “It’s where children learn and challenge themselves. Play lets children choose to explore and discover new things.” When we view our students through the cognitive lens, we begin to see what they’re ready to understand and process. Through the affective lens, we recognize how they’re feeling and what motivates them. And the physical lens allows us to identify which movement skills they’re prepared to explore and refine. Play-based learning naturally brings these lenses into focus. For example, a game like “Red Light, Green Light” works balance and speed control (physical), requires inhibition and decision-making (cognitive), and gets everyone laughing (affective). A scavenger hunt around the beginner zone blends spatial awareness, terrain adaptation, and imagination—again, hitting all three CAP domains. And when the game is also fun for you, it becomes more engaging for everyone. Your energy, creativity, and presence go up—and the teaching becomes more fluid and more effective.

**Lead with joy—your group will follow.** The affective environment of a lesson is largely determined by you. In the Learning Connection Model, our people skills fundamentals remind us that we manage emotional connection, group dynamics, and build trust. That doesn’t mean you “force” excitement; it means showing up with authenticity. If you’re smiling, joking, and leaning into the moment, the kids respond with the same

openness and energy. If you’re just getting through it, they’ll sense that, too. Modeling joy, even in small ways, celebrating a first successful turn or making the walk to the lift a mini-adventure—helps kids feel safe, supported, and excited to learn.

**Teach what sparks your joy.** While it’s tempting to teach only what we enjoy, great instructors *find* the joy in *any* activity. The terrain might be less than ideal, or the progression might be predetermined. But that doesn’t mean the experience has to feel flat. When you bring your own spark to an activity by layering in a theme, storytelling, playful movement, or even just a creative twist, you re-engage both yourself and your students. A simple traverse can become a lava escape challenge. A balance drill might turn into a tightrope walk across Candyland. A day that’s slower technically becomes a chance to coach the subtle skills we often breeze past. By finding the joy in what the lesson requires, you elevate the experience for everyone.

**Use CAP to stay responsive and creative.** CAP becomes essential when things don’t go as planned. Kids rarely move through lessons in straight lines. One six-year-old might break down halfway through a task that seemed easy a moment before. Is it fatigue? Emotional overload? Confusion? The CAP lens helps us respond with empathy and strategy. We don’t default to frustration or blame—we assess and adapt. We stay playful, connected, and flexible. That’s high-level teaching. That’s LCM in motion.

**Connection is the shortcut to engagement.** If you want to fast-track trust and connection in a group, look through the affective lens. Use names often. Ask questions about their favorite animals or breakfast foods. Celebrate even the smallest wins: “You made it up that hill without falling? That’s mountain goat-level stuff!” When kids feel seen, they engage more fully. And when you feel connected to the group, your own experience improves as well. That feedback loop creates energy, resilience, and better outcomes for everyone involved.

**Reflect on your fun—and your decisions.** The Learning Connection Model emphasizes the role of decision-making in effective instruction. As instructors, we’re constantly responding to our group: what terrain to use, what activity to try next, how to keep the lesson flowing. These aren’t just technical or tactical choices, they’re affective and cognitive decisions, too. And one of the most important decisions you make each day? Choosing to bring joy into your teaching. Not fake energy—but authentic enthusiasm, humor, and presence. Reflecting on your lesson isn’t just about what drills worked, or which skills improved. Ask yourself: *What choices made this lesson more fun? What sparked a smile—from me or the kids?* Those are the decisions that elevate the learning environment, sustain your energy, and leave your students wanting more. Joyful decision-making is strategic, sustainable, and professional.

**So, what’s the takeaway?** When we view children through the CAP lens, we see whole learners—growing cognitively, emotionally, and physically—all at once, all the time. The Learning Connection Model gives us the structure to support them. But the spark—the piece that makes the learning *stick*—is your engagement. Fun isn’t a luxury in children’s lessons. It’s a lever. And fun for your students starts with you—not as a gimmick, but as a professional competency.

The next time you plan a lesson, don’t just ask, “What progression should I use?” Also ask: “Where can I find the joy in this?” and “How can I bring my personality into this experience?” When you do that, you’re not just delivering a lesson—you’re creating a memory. You’re shaping how kids feel about learning. And you’re making the mountain a place they (and you) want to return to again and again.

For more information on play, see *Why Do Children Play?* | Harvard Graduate School of Education. [www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/23/09/why-do-children-play](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/23/09/why-do-children-play) «



## Grab Yourself a SCARF; You'll Want It This Winter

By Kerri Petrillose

Children's Examiner, Snowboard  
Level III

No, not the gray scratchy one that Ralphie wears in a *Christmas Story* but rather the SCARF model found in ski and snowboard teaching and technical texts for the past decade plus. Like many others I personally struggled with how this model was applicable in a lesson environment ... until one season where I watched it play out in real time with children in a seasonal lesson program.

The SCARF model was born in 2008 by David Rock to create a framework to support leaders and individuals alike to manage social dynamics more effectively. The model emerged from Rock's research on how social interactions trigger reward and threat (approach or retreat) responses in the brain.

In the workplace, the SCARF model can improve communication, build relationships, and foster collaboration by harnessing the power of five domains of social experience. The five domains include Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, and Fairness, each having an equal part to play in fostering a workplace environment that workers want to cling to and engage with regularity.

### Definitions of each domain.

- **Status:** A feeling of being recognized, competent, accepted and even admired.
- **Certainty:** Having predictability and confidence in the future are important elements in making individuals feel psychologically safe.
- **Autonomy:** Having the ability to be in charge of one's day
- **Relatedness:** Feeling connected to others on a team can soften the rough patches and enhance the wins.
- **Fairness:** Difficult decisions and frustrating situations are easier to swallow when individuals feel like they're 'fair play.'

At first glance we can see the beginnings of how to leverage the SCARF Model in our daily mountain life by replacing the word "workplace" with "lesson" and changing the lens with which we look at the above descriptions. A child can struggle with their lesson environment due to SCARF related factors. The result can be a child who becomes disruptive to the lesson, disengaged with the instructor, and unhappy in the group. Let's dissect the interactions of the student in our seasonal program through the lens of SCARF model:

### SCARF Threat/ Avoidance Response.

- **Status:** The child felt like the weakest student in the group and that was inadvertently reinforced by limited feedback through the season.
- **Certainty:** The student didn't feel they knew what each day would hold. One day the group spontaneously took "one more run" after last run was called, and she took a wrong turn.
- **Autonomy:** The child had zero control over their day following the plans, drills, and terrain choices laid out by their instructor.
- **Relatedness:** There was a distinct lack of connection between the student and their lesson mates creating an environment of isolation.
- **Fairness:** Like their voice wasn't heard or that others were heard more often.

These examples resulted in a threat response for the child where in one extreme case they refused to go to their lesson. When broken down this way, the first thing that pops to mind was wow "rough lesson." In reality, the lesson was perfectly fine for the other students who were content in their lesson environment. It was just the one student experiencing a threat response who was struggling. Additionally, these examples were pulled from multiple lessons over the course of a season, and while they didn't all occur together at least one was present in every lesson. This slowly ate away at the child's willingness and interest in lessons and diminished trust and communication between the student and instructor.

### SCARF Reward/ Approach Response

Flipping these examples around, what decisions or behaviors could the instructor have made to invite the student to stay, engage, or get excited about upcoming lesson? This is the SCARF recipe for lesson success.

- **Status:** Giving every child a chance to be in the lead, encouraging children and building up confidence in their ability, and not over-terraining them.
- **Certainty:** As the instructor, do what you are going to say and say what you are going to do. Let the students know when and why a pivot may be happening.
- **Autonomy:** Give the children an opportunity to choose where they are going, and what drills, activities, or games to expect through the day.
- **Relatedness:** Build a strong group dynamic by finding ways to connect them.
- **Fairness:** Treat students fairly – knowing that fair is not always equal – different accommodations and support will need to be provided at an individual level so each student can thrive, rather than giving everyone the same thing. Additionally let the students know the motivation behind decisions that some in the lesson might find frustrating. For example, state that you were going down Trail A but needed to pivot to Trail B due to conditions traffic etc.

Since that pivotal season I have not forgotten my SCARF for every lesson. I regularly hit the "pause" button on assumptions and ask, "What could I change about my approach to this situation and interaction to reengage the students?" Using the people skills fundamentals and layering the nuances in a lesson become easier when SCARF is along for the ride. «

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**EASTERN REGION**  
Professional Ski Instructors of America  
American Association of Snowboard Instructors

Please take a moment to update your communication preferences, payment methods, addresses, and other member information on your account.



Thanks for being a member! If you want to add or edit your birthdate, change the email address you use to login, or if you need help updating your member profile, call (518) 452-6095 or email [contact@easternsnowpros.org](mailto:contact@easternsnowpros.org)



## Fall Update

By Brian Donovan

AASI-E Coordinator and Examiner

PSIA-AASI Snowboard National Team Member

**G**reetings AASI East Community, and welcome to fall! Here are snowboard updates to help you gear up and make the most of the upcoming winter season.

### AASI Eastern Region Event Schedule

- *Level I Assessments are coming to a resort near you!* We work hard to make Level I Assessments geographically accessible – our goal is to have one within roughly two hours of every member school. Please help new-to-AASI instructors in your Ski & Ride School find a Level I that works for them.
- *Didn't see your resort on the Event Schedule this year?* Don't worry – we rotate locations season to season to give members opportunities to experience different schools and mountains. If your resort isn't hosting an event this season, it might be a great opportunity for you to participate in an event at a new mountain this winter, and hopefully your resort will reappear on an event schedule again in the next few seasons.
- *Weekend events.* You keep asking. And we keep increasing the amount and types of weekend events on the snowboard schedule. But keep in mind that not every resort can host us on weekends. Thanks for understanding as we work with our member schools to balance demand and availability.
- *Fewer events = fewer cancellations.* We trimmed the Event Schedule to avoid event overlap and reduce cancellations. This means more stability and confidence that the event you sign up for will run.
- *Register early.* Signing up in advance secures your spot, helps us assign Examiners appropriately, and reduces the risk of an event being canceled due to low registration. Visit [easternsnowpros.org/calendar](http://easternsnowpros.org/calendar), sign up, and encourage your friends to join you!
- *Help shape the 26–27 winter.* Remind your Ski & Ride School Director in the spring to submit the PSIA-AASI event request form. We only schedule events at resorts that complete this form, so don't miss the chance to host AASI events!

### Scholarships

Have you applied yet? PSIA-AASI provides thousands of dollars in scholarships each year to support event and assessment participation.

- Eastern Region opportunities: [easternsnowpros.org/membership/current-members/scholarships](http://easternsnowpros.org/membership/current-members/scholarships)
- National opportunities: [thesnowpros.org/for-members/scholarships](http://thesnowpros.org/for-members/scholarships)

Spread the word – scholarships are there to support you and your fellow instructors in your professional development. Apply today!

### Encourage New Instructors to Join Early

Too often, new instructors wait until they register for their Level I to become PSIA-AASI members. Let's change that culture. Here's why it's better for them to join early:

- Paying membership dues ahead of time reduces the one-time financial hit when registering for their Level I Assessment.

- New members get immediate access to benefits like *32 Degrees*, *SnowPro*, digital manuals, pro-offers, and more. Becoming a member will increase the value they receive during their first season as a member of PSIA-AASI.

### National Alignment and Assessment Updates

All eight Regions of PSIA-AASI are working towards alignment on Level I, Level II, and Level III assessments and accreditations (like FS1, FS2, and FS3, and CS1 and CS2) nationwide. This effort ensures consistent, fair assessments across the country, strengthens the recognition of our credentials worldwide, and creates more opportunities for members to attend events in different Regions.

As the largest Region, the Eastern Region is leading the charge:

Last season, we rolled out the modular Level III format with great success and some of the highest participation rates we've had with the Level III Assessment in over a decade.

This winter, we'll bring the same modular approach to Level II Assessments.

#### Here's what you can expect for Level II & III this season:

- *Three days, three modules* – rooted in the Learning Connection Model.
- *Modular flexibility* – pass modules one at a time, take them in any order, bank your results, and complete certification at your own pace. You do not need to do all three modules in the same week, month, or even season. You can focus on specific parts of the assessment and take them when you feel prepared.
- You must pass all three modules to earn your complete Level II or Level III certification and will not be awarded partial certification (i.e. you cannot be a "Level II Certified Teacher", but rather you'll be a Level II Certified instructor once you pass all three Level II modules).
- **Assessment Modules (you can take them in any order):**
  - Movement Analysis & Technical Skills
  - Teaching & People Skills
  - Riding Skills
  - *Professionalism & Self-Management* are assessed every day during all three modules.
- Two Examiners, one experience. Every candidate benefits from feedback and scoring from two Examiners working together for a fair, consistent experience. No, the assessment will not be twice as hard because there are two Examiners. It simply provides all candidates with two Examiners to be able to hear, see, and evaluate everything going on, opportunities for the group to see demos performed by different Examiners, and a consistently fair and impartial assessment experience.
- Assessment Guides: Available at [easternsnowpros.org/education/snowboard](http://easternsnowpros.org/education/snowboard)

### Dates & Locations for 2025–2026 Assessments:

#### Level II

- Movement Analysis/Technical Understanding: January 12, 2026, Killington, VT
- Movement Analysis/Technical Understanding: January 28, 2026, Blue Mountain, PA
- Teaching: January 29, 2026, Blue Mountain, PA
- Riding: January 30, 2026, Blue Mountain, PA
- Teaching: February 9, 2026, Killington, VT
- Movement Analysis/Technical Understanding: February 25, 2026, Jay Peak, VT
- Teaching: February 26, 2026, Jay Peak, VT
- Riding: February 27, 2026, Jay Peak, VT

- Movement Analysis/Technical Understanding: February 28, 2026 (WEEKEND EVENT), Holimont, NY
- Teaching: March 1, 2026 (WEEKEND EVENT) Holimont, NY
- Riding: March 9, 2026, Killington, VT

#### Level III

- Movement Analysis/Technical Understanding: January 12, 2026, Killington, VT
- Riding: January 22, 2026, Killington, VT
- Teaching: February 9, 2026, Killington, VT
- Movement Analysis/Technical Understanding: March 10, 2026, Stowe, VT
- Teaching: March 11, 2026, Stowe, VT
- Riding: March 12, 2026, Stowe, VT

#### Pro Offers

Take advantage of your member discounts!

- [PSIA-AASI National Pro Offers](#)
- [Eastern Region Member Deals](#)

#### Share Your Voice in SnowPro

We're always looking for contributors! Share your ideas, experiences, and lessons learned – no English degree required. We'll help edit your submission for clarity and style. Send your article as a Word attachment to [contact@easternsnowpros.org](mailto:contact@easternsnowpros.org) with "SnowPro Editor" in the subject line.

#### AASI Eastern Team Tryouts

Mark your calendars: *March 25–26, 2026 at Stowe Mountain, VT.* We're assembling the next Eastern Snowboard Team in preparation for the *2028 PSIA-AASI National Team Tryouts*. What is the PSIA-AASI National Team? Check out the details here: <https://thesnowpros.org/about/national-team/>. The Eastern Snowboard Team will train together for 2 years in preparation for the PSIA-AASI National Team tryouts in 2028. This is a competitive tryout that will seek to identify the most talented riders and coaches in the Eastern Division. To be eligible, you must be:

- AASI Level III certified
- A passionate rider, educator, communicator, and athlete
- Skilled in training, assessing, and inspiring others

Want a sneak peek? Join the *Eastern Team Tryout Prep event* at Killington, Jan. 27–28, 2026.

#### Connect on Facebook

If you're not already part of the *AASI East Facebook Group*, join today! Moderated by AASI Level III members Brandon Cook and Dave Hirschberg, it's a great place to ask questions, coordinate for events, and connect with fellow instructors. Search for the AASI East group and request to join. Whether you are a top commentor or contributor, or whether you want to lurk in the shadows and just see what your fellow Eastern snowboard snow pros are up to, this is a super welcoming and smart bunch to do it with!

#### Thank You!

Lastly, I want to say thank you for being part of our AASI East community. Thank you for teaching snowboarding. Thank you for all the lessons you have taught, all the lives you have changed, and all the stoke and passion that you've shared with your students. Thank you and have fun out there this winter! ☕

## Get your shirt and support the Eastern Education Foundation!



*Thanks to Christa Ross for this standout 24-25 season design!*

**Do you want to support a good cause and get an awesome T-shirt, sweatshirt or hoodie? Eastern designs from the last three seasons are available in several different options. A portion of each sale goes to support scholarships through our Eastern Education Foundation (EF).**

**Check out all the great designs at Bonfire!**

<https://www.bonfire.com/store/psia-aasi-eastern/>

## Congratulations to our 25-26 Eastern T-shirt Design Winner, Margaux Zaus!



**The T-shirt will be on sale at the Eastern Academy at Killington in December, and it will be available for purchase online as well. Be sure to grab yours when it's available!**





## Changes to Nordic Certification Assessments: What You Need to Know

By F. Jay Nation

PSIA-E and RM Telemark Examiner,

PSIA-E Nordic Steering Committee Member and

Mike Innes

Cross Country Examiner, Cross Country Assistant Coordinator

**T**elemark and cross country certification assessments in PSIA-East are undergoing changes as all regions within PSIA work toward national alignment. So, what do these changes mean for those looking to earn telemark or cross country certification? When will they take effect, and how will they impact the assessment process that candidates in the East are familiar with? Let's break it down, along with what remains unchanged.

**When Will These Changes Happen?** The goal is to fully implement the aligned processes by May 2026. However, to ease the transition, this season will feature a blend of formats for telemark assessments in the East. Both the current "Get Your Tele Level I at Any Event" format and the new, more modular Level I that is an assessment only (with no coaching) format will be offered. The same is true in cross country: the current "Get Your Cross Country Level I at any Event" is still in play as is the new modular Level I assessment without coaching. Despite the different formats, the assessment criteria will remain consistent across the board and can be found on the unified assessment forms. Next season we will be offering just Level I events that stand on their own with some having a prep day before or near the time and place of the Level I geographically.

### Why the Change?

The ultimate goal of national alignment is to foster a more consistent and supportive educational environment. This alignment ensures that certifications are equally recognized across all regions, eliminating the perception that certifications from one region may carry more weight than those earned elsewhere. In the future, candidates can expect a similar experience earning certification, no matter where they take the assessment. In the past some coaching or teaching was included in our experiential assessment events. Now we are moving towards separating the learning from testing in the assessments. Thus, assessments will have activities for the candidate to show us their requisite knowledge in skiing, technical, movement analysis, and teaching skills.

### What Does This Mean for Candidates This Season?

For Level II and Level III assessments, there will be no change. Last season, these assessments were already conducted in a modular format over two days, with paired examiners using the national assessment forms to collaborate on a single score.

The biggest change this season affects the Level I assessment. This will be the last season where candidates can take the Level I assessment during an educational event. In the past, this was a holistic format, where the assessment was integrated with the educational event. This season, several Level I telemark assessments will shift to a new modular format as will one cross country Level I assessment. These will be offered over two or three days, with the three-day version including a training and coaching day, followed by two days of assessment. If you and your friends know they want to do a telemark Level I this season, it would be helpful if you would reach out to the office and

suggest host resorts that are close to you for simplicity and ease of attending. A mandatory online course or exam precedes the Level I assessment in both telemark and cross country.

### What Stays the Same?

Despite these changes, some things will remain the same. As always, come prepared to demonstrate the skiing tasks, teaching segments, and technical understanding/movement analysis as outlined on the Unified Assessment Form and assessment guides. Don't just skim the form—study it thoroughly. Ski with the telemark or cross country fundamentals in mind, teach to your peers as though they were students (not just going through the motions), and be prepared to observe, describe, and prescribe movements with clear cause-and-effect relationships. Being able to relate this info throughout the phases of the turn would also be expected in this section.

These upcoming changes to the telemark and cross country certification processes represent a step forward in aligning the Eastern Region with national standards. While there will be some adjustments in the way assessments are structured, the core of what makes a successful candidate—people skills, technical skills, teaching ability, and understanding of the telemark and cross country fundamentals—remains unchanged. Whether you're aiming for certification Level I, II, or III, the key to success will always be preparation, consistency, and a clear understanding of the criteria. Good luck and pass the word along. If you need any clarification, reach out to the PSIA-E office or the Nordic Coordinator. <<

# SKIDA®

## Exclusive Offer for Eastern Members!

**Skida is offering a special 15% discount to Eastern members with a code. Founded in 2008 in Vermont, Skida started with handmade, colorful hats and has since grown into a brand known for its high-quality, functional gear designed for the slopes and beyond. Whether you're preparing for the season or adding a pop of color to your gear, Skida has you covered!**

**Head over to [Skida.com](https://www.skida.com) and use the code **PSIAEAST\_15** at checkout to take advantage of this exclusive offer!**

**NOTE: This offer is available only to Eastern members, so don't miss out!**

## Upcoming Nordic Season

By Mickey Stone

Nordic Coordinator

PSIA-E Nordic Examine and ACE Team Member



**G**oodbye summer, hello fall in the east coast! I wish we always had one more month of summer up here, but, oh well, snow will be here soon.

It has been a busy summer with PSIA-AASI-E upgrading and solidifying many administration areas as well as the national alignment coming in May 2026. Some of the areas we have been discussing and implementing are agendas for each

level of certification, standard operating procedures for each module in each discipline, and smooth and thorough staff evaluation format. Currently cross country and telemark are working on these exact areas with a deadline by this season so we are aligned across the Nation. If you have not heard yet, we will be offering only Level I stand-alone events in both disciplines *next* season. This season we will offer these new assessments, but you can still get a Level I at an educational event this season for the last time. See additional information about the certification process in articles by Jay Nation and Mike Innes in this issue.

Another change for the 2025-2026 season is with our Backcountry Education Course. We will be having the five zoom sessions on November 4, 6, 11, 13, and 18. We will then add a two day on-hill event to implement all the skills from the zoom sessions. This season Smuggler's Notch VT will be our host. So, no longer two separate weekends; just one weekend plus

the zoom sessions. Mostly due to changing backcountry snow conditions weather.

We have added one-day events at Whiteface, NY and Holimont, NY this season and a few crossover events for something new. At Stratton, VT, we will host a one-day telemark session and the next day a cross country session to exploring movements that can improve your skiing in both disciplines. Gunstock will host a one-day alpine and a one-day telemark event in February, once again taking advantage of each discipline's skills to improve the other. Finally, at Waterville Valley, we are offering a one-day alpine and a one-day cross country event. We are branching out further south to reach our members and to gain new ones in Laurel Highlands, PA for a steep clinic. We'll offer a Level I assessment and a Level II prep in Snowshoe, WV and a "Learn-To" Level I at Massanutten, VA.

We are hoping a lot of southern folks participate in these clinics because we are hosting a Level I assessment and a Level II assessment at Timberline, WV this season at the end of February. Our normal assessments for Level II/III and Dev Team will be at Killington, VT in early March with the snowboard exams at the same time. One team concept, lots of cross-over events, reaching out down south are all our strategies to help meet out member needs and to expand our base in Nordic. Returning this year in early December we will offer a cross country program at the Snowsports Management Seminar in collaboration with the Cross Country Ski Areas Association. We are headed north to Sugarloaf in mid-January, then to Notchview, MA for a two-day classic event. Assessments this season will be at Bretton Woods and host Level I/II/III events. Our lite Backcountry tour will be hosted by Stowe Cross Country Center in mid-March.

Check out the event schedule early and plan on getting out there in one or more of our creative experiential events. Enjoy the off season and stay in shape by doing fun adventurous activities that include aerobics, strength training, and plyometrics all in one. ⚡

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## T-Minus One Year Until Unification Blastoff

By Chris Ericson  
Alpine Examiner  
Eastern Alpine Certification  
Chairperson

**T**he smell of fall is in the air—and if it weren't for what comes next, it might be my favorite season. For many of you, this time of year signals dusting off skis, preparing for training, registering for early-season PSIA-AASI events, and attending annual mountain onboarding sessions. It may very well be the most exciting time of the year.

For others, however, summer has been anything but quiet. Our committees and workgroups remained fully engaged, advancing projects with enough momentum that neither our skis—nor our minds—had the chance to collect rust.

Over the past several years, I have shared updates on the ongoing national unification process for PSIA-AASI. This initiative has been guided by the “Three C’s”: Communication, Collaboration, and Consolidation. These principles have driven the development of Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria, Unified Assessment Forms, and Performance Guides. We are now progressing into the next phase: the creation of Unified Assessment Activities and Processes.

As we move into the season, I want to provide insight into how these new activities and processes are being designed, and how they may be integrated into assessments this year. You may encounter newly introduced components, familiar approaches, or a structured combination of both.

One of the most significant challenges in national alignment has been establishing shared

values. Specifically: What qualities do we, both as individuals and as a national organization, consider most essential for instructors certified at Levels I, II, and III? The nationally adopted Assessment Criteria (AC), in place for several years, serve as the framework for identifying and upholding these qualities. The next question, then, is: within the Skiing Assessment, which activities best determine whether a candidate meets the AC?

Historically, each of the eight regions has maintained its own list of assessment activities. Some activities were identical, others varied slightly, and still others had different names for the same task. The greatest inconsistencies surfaced in the evaluation of Individual Fundamentals. In this category, candidates are assessed on their ability to adapt and integrate the Technical Fundamentals within a prescribed activity.

To address this, the Alpine Task Force compiled the full set of activities used across all regions in this category. From there, we identified critical elements required to evaluate each activity against the Assessment Criteria with fairness and validity. For every activity, we documented its **designated name**, a **general description**, the expected **ski performance**, the expected **body performance**, the **terrain** where the activity should be performed, and the **general speed** at which it should be executed.

By developing these standardized descriptors, we are building greater national consistency and reducing potential evaluator bias. This structured approach ensures that every assessment activity is both transparent and aligned with the established Assessment Criteria.

When looking at the assessment process, we again observe significant variation across regions.

Historically, candidates at the same assessment could encounter different activities depending on what an individual Examiner deemed necessary to evaluate. In some regions, there is minimal coordination regarding which activities will be conducted or the specific terrain on which they will be performed. Assessment delivery also varies: some regions provide results immediately after candidates leave the hill, while others return results within 24 hours. This timeline can be further impacted by logistical constraints, such as limited WiFi or inadequate meeting spaces at certain resorts, which can delay in-person performance discussions.

The development of nationally agreed-upon Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for assessments has been a collaborative effort involving all regions. The process focused on identifying practices that worked well locally, evaluating how these practices supported candidate success, and ensuring that the Assessment Criteria remained consistent and uncompromised across regions.

The examples discussed here represent only some of the assessment process and the steps undertaken to create unified assessments. Extending this collaborative methodology to all assessment levels—Level I, II, and III—and across multiple domains, including Teaching, Technical Knowledge, Movement Analysis, People Skills, as well as additional disciplines such as Snowboarding, Nordic, and Telemark, has been a substantial undertaking. The scope and complexity of this initiative have been considerable, and at times, overwhelming. Nevertheless, the effort is nearing completion, and by May 2026, these updated unified assessment processes will be fully implemented ☞.



Photo by Brett Miller

### Looking for an event?

Check out the schedule at:

<https://easternsnowpros.org/calendar/>  
Check in periodically for changes and additions.





## Alpine Dev Team Tryout: Finding the Next Steps in Skiing and Teaching

By Dave Capron

Alpine Development Team Coach, Alpine and Telemark Examiner

As summer turns to fall, my thoughts naturally turn to snow and skiing, not that they ever strayed too far. Every winter for me is full of skiing, learning, and sharing. My first love has always been the skiing itself. From a very young age, the thrill of sliding on snow captured me—and it never fades. I suspect many of you reading this know exactly what I mean. That same pull to get out on snow unites us.

What I never anticipated, however, was how teaching skiing would become just as powerful an addiction. When I first began teaching, I couldn't have imagined how deeply it would spark a thirst to improve—not just as a skier, but as a communicator, mentor, and lifelong learner.

That passion for ski teaching has fueled my drive to explore everything connected to our craft: technique, biomechanics, equipment, communication, teaching and learning theory, and more. My personal journey has followed the path of PSIA certification, which eventually led me to the PSIA-AASI Eastern Education Staff in both Alpine and Telemark. Each step has opened doors to growth, and each has deepened my appreciation for this profession.

If you hold your Alpine Level III, this season could mark the beginning of your next chapter. In March, Waterville Valley will host the **Alpine Development Team Tryout**. This is the pathway into the Eastern Alpine Education Staff—and it is an incredible opportunity to elevate your skiing, teaching, and communication skills while working alongside some of the best educators in the country.

The Development Team members serve a four-year term, during which they train annually with the staff, understudy educational events, and get mentored by some of the finest teachers in the profession. Simply put, there is no greater opportunity to learn, grow, and expand your influence as a ski professional.

To help you prepare, we've built in a series of **Development Team Tryout Prep** events:

- **Hunter Mountain** – January 8-9
- **Killington** – January 14-15
- **Waterville Valley** – March 5-6 (final tune-up at the tryout site)

The January sessions provide early insight and direction, while the March prep event is designed to help you get comfortable at the tryout venue and fine-tune your readiness.

For me, the Development Team experience was transformative. I was fortunate to have incredible mentors—Steve Moore, Bill Beerman, Bob Shostek, Terry Barbour, Mermer Blakeslee, and many others—who opened my world to new ways of thinking, skiing, and teaching. Beyond those individual mentors, the entire Eastern Education Staff became a community of over a hundred world-class educators willing to share their expertise and passion. That kind of support and inspiration is unmatched.

If you're an Alpine Level III instructor who wants to continue learning, growing, and sharing your knowledge with others, I encourage you to consider the Alpine Development Team Tryout, March 19–20 at Waterville Valley Resort. This could be the first step on your own path of endless growth and contribution to our profession. ☺

## Member Benefit

We are pleased to announce the Eastern Region has partnered with **SKI THE EAST** to provide you with a great benefit!

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## Collaboration for Teaching Success

By Sue Kramer

Alpine Examiner Coach, ACE Team Member

I have worked many assessment events over the past several seasons and would like to share some observations on how to be more successful with the teaching component. Specifically, refining the ability to collaborate with peers—and recognizing what collaboration is and is not—is key to success.

**Unpackaging the Word.** Let's start with unpackaging the word itself. To fully grasp the meaning of a word or concept, I often find it helpful by first identifying what it is not. Collaboration is not simply telling your student what their goals are or should be. Nor is it collaboration when relying solely on the "Command" style of teaching. While the Command style can be useful when combined with other approaches, on its own it does not allow for collaboration.

By definition, collaboration is "the action of working with someone or a group of people to create something or to get something done." The key word here is "working" – an action verb. In the teaching or assessment context, this means actively engaging in two-way communication, responding to verbal and non-verbal cues, and matching practice and terrain exploration with *agreed-upon* goals. Collaboration can sometimes feel like a longer route to individualized solutions. However, it fosters greater ownership of results—and that ownership is a powerful outcome.

**What Collaboration Looks Like.** Collaboration begins with a mutual understanding of the situation and, through dialogue, leads to solutions or deeper insight. It involves:

- Assessing the situation
- Planning
- Adapting
- Customizing the approach

These are all essential elements of the Teaching Module's Assessment Criteria. Another key factor is ensuring that your decisions and feedback align with the learner's needs. The only way to achieve this is through mutual agreement on learning outcomes. In short: to be successful with this module, collaboration is essential.

**Implementing Collaboration in Assessments.** Teaching Assessments always begin with a Learning Outcome (LO) for the group. The way you achieve that LO is through collaboration. When introducing the LO, use inclusive pronouns like "us" and "we" to set the tone for shared problem-solving. For example: "I noticed that, as a group, we tend to bank during the shaping phase of the turn. Let's explore ways we can move more accurately during this phase for cleaner edge engagement."

Include yourself in the learning process to send the message that you are part of the group, not separate from it.

- Use group-oriented directives such as "let's" rather than "you should." This language conveys presence and shared experience, helping create an open, trusting environment.
- Start with activities for everyone to practice, then make observations and provide feedback as the group progresses. Provide individuals with nuanced modifications to the original activity to align with their needs.
- Reinforce positive changes, acknowledge challenges, and invite input from peers. Realistic teaching includes recognizing when someone struggles—this is simply an opportunity for further explanation, feedback, and practice.

**Practical Tips for Collaboration.** Here are real-world suggestions for successful collaboration at an assessment:

- Ask peers to try something new.
- Encourage them to describe new sensations.
- Treat group assessment as ongoing—be ready to adjust your plan based on observations and feedback. If adjustments are purposeful, they will likely lead to positive outcomes.
- Provide time for peers to verbalize sensations and reflections. This solidifies learning and reinforces the value of open dialogue.

I hope that these tips will help you be successful in your teaching. Getting in front of your peers can be stressful and made more so in the assessment environment. Remember that you're there to be better at your craft. Taking a team approach to problem-solving not only creates a more engaging experience, it also leads to positive outcomes. <<

## Welcome Webinar



PSIA-AASI Eastern Region, as well as the National organization based in Lakewood, CO, provide many great resources – *when you know where to look*. **To help you maximize the value of your membership, I'm inviting you to join me, Kathy Brennan, CEO of PSIA-AASI Eastern Region, for a free, one-hour Welcome Webinar and Office Hours. Here is your chance for members to connect with the CEO if you have questions or concerns.**

Please take this opportunity to learn how to use our websites, register for amazing educational and credentialing events, find resources, get great deals on equipment and participate in our wonderful community of like-minded professionals. Invites are sent to all members who joined in the previous month; however, everyone (including prospective members and long-time members) is welcome to participate in these webinars.

The webinars run on the last Wednesday of every month at 7:00 PM EDT. There is no registration, participants do not earn CEUs. The call-in information remains the same each month. The next call is October 29th.

### Welcome Webinar Zoom Info

October 29, 2025, at 7 PM EDT

Zoom Meeting ID: 890 4571 7732

Passcode: 666130

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89045717732?pwd=NjludTFhUHBqQmpKT0YvL2tuSFh2Zz09>

Or Dial in – 646 558 8656



## ADAPTIVE AIRTIME

### Expanding Horizons in Adaptive Skiing and Riding

By Ed Meltzer

Eastern Adaptive Coordinator, PSIA-E Adaptive Examiner  
Alpine Level III, Children's Specialist 2

Since I began writing quarterly updates as PSIA-E's Adaptive Advisor, I've focused on national changes and developments shaping our assessment process. Over the summer, we turned our attention to modernizing our Adaptive workshops – benefiting not only Adaptive instructors, but our entire professional membership. These updates also strengthen essential teaching, people, and technical skills we've identified as needed areas of growth across many adaptive ski and snowboard programs.

We have some long-standing workshop "brands" that resonate across our division. One example is *Every Lesson Is Adaptive*, championed by staff member and former National Team member Michael Ma. Another is *FUNDamentals of Adapting for Neurodiverse Athletes (Version 2.0)* – formerly known as *FUNDamentals of Teaching People with Intellectual Diagnoses* – the creation of Mary Ellen Whitney, who recently retired after 40 years as founder and CEO of STRIDE Adaptive in Albany, NY and plans to continue to focus on strengthening the STRIDE and PSIA-AASI snowsports programs.

This season, we're proud to roll out enhanced versions of several of our most relevant and impactful offerings:

**FUNDamentals of Adapting for Neurodiverse Athletes (Version 2.0).** Mary Ellen Whitney has updated her classic course with a broader, more current focus – reflected in its new title. This two-day, multi-discipline clinic – led by either Mary Ellen or education staff member Norm Staunton – helps instructors in all disciplines work effectively with athletes who have neurocognitive differences. Participants will explore strategies for maximizing people, teaching, and technical fundamentals to improve both athlete performance and independence.

**Why the change?** "The update reflects the growing understanding and acceptance of neurodiversity in sport and education," writes Mary Ellen Whitney. "Version 2.0 expands beyond its original adaptive framework to include current best practices, new research, and a more inclusive approach to working with athletes across all disciplines. By shifting the language and focus, the course better equips instructors to meet the needs of today's athletes –

emphasizing independence, empowerment, and the integration of teaching strategies that align with PSIA-AASI's Fundamentals model."

**Adaptive Tethering Fundamentals (Alpine and Snowboard).** Designed by Norm Staunton, this two-day, equipment-specific workshop focuses on applying Alpine and Snowboard Technical Fundamentals within tethering techniques. The goal: to promote greater skier and rider independence and skill progression.

**Why now?** "At its best, tethering is both a kinesthetic teaching tool and an adaptive modality that allows us to enhance movement patterns, isolate fundamentals, and promote ski or board performance," writes Norm Staunton. "Rather than being used simply to 'steer' or 'control,' tethering can – and should – be an effective physical connection between coach and athlete that maximizes the athlete's independence and performance. This offering is truly a *lab* – hands-on, experiential, and filled with opportunities to experiment and try different tactics to achieve a range of performance outcomes. Across the adaptive community, and especially in assessments, we've seen a drift toward tethering as full control and management by the tetherer. That approach can diminish the fun, autonomy, and performance of the skier. Our goal in this clinic is to refocus on partnership – where the tetherer's skills elevate the skier's experience, independence, and joy on snow."

#### Looking Ahead

We have also been planning for the future, including at possibly adding courses focusing on independent ski-ski learning, maximizing teaching skills and the Learning Connection Model, and an expanded CAP Model program for teaching neurodivergent children and adults.

Working one-on-one with a student is like solving a jigsaw puzzle: you try a piece, it may not fit, so you adjust until it does. Each success builds the framework for the next. It's challenging but deeply rewarding.

These adaptive workshops reflect a growing reality in our industry – our worlds are overlapping. This is a positive shift. It challenges us to expand our skills, deepen our understanding, and embrace a more student-centered approach to learning. «

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## YOUR TURN

*The Your Turn section is an opportunity for members' voices to be heard. Submissions are welcomed and are subject to editing (and in some cases the opportunity for the author to workshop a piece with editorial staff). Opinions expressed may not reflect the views of PSIA-AASI or all of its members.*

### Is Your Equipment Holding You Back?

By Jess Anthony

Alpine Development Team Member, CS2  
Hunter Mountain, NY

It's important to check your equipment at the beginning of each season. Poorly fitted equipment can significantly delay a skier's progress, while the right equipment can elevate performance dramatically. Proper gear is often underestimated; however, it's a huge part of improving your skiing. Having some basic knowledge can also help our students. As a USSS Level 300 race coach, I spend the first few days of every season assessing athletes' equipment. Here are some things to consider and tips regarding boots, skis, and poles.

**Boots.** Properly fitting boots are paramount. A lot goes into getting the right boot. Find a reputable boot fitter and work with them to get the best boot fit for you. Keep in mind that it often takes more than one visit to get your boots properly set up. Some factors to consider when getting fitted are the width of your foot and the size of your calf. Boots should fit snugly, so you can't move your foot independently of your boot. You also don't want too much space behind your calf. Boots should be tight enough that even the smallest movement of your foot transfers directly to the boot and then to the ski. Any excess space within the boot drastically reduces the reactivity of the boot.



Properly fit boot

A good first check for proper boot sizing is called a shell fit. Take the boot off, pull the liner out, and slide your foot into the empty shell, pushing your toes to the front. If you can fit two or more fingers behind your heel, the boot is too big.

Another key factor in selecting boots is how easily you can flex them. In other words, does the boot cuff move with you when you flex your ankle? Here's a good rule of thumb: when you're trying on boots (especially indoors, when everything's warm), you should be able to flex the boot without excessively muscling your shin forward. If you have to work overly hard to flex the boot, it's too stiff.

"Sizing up" or wearing boots that are too stiff negatively affect fundamental movements. For example, if your boots are too big, it's harder to keep shin contact with the front of the boot. And there's too much movement in the boot making it harder to keep flex in your ankle. Without that ankle flexion, your weight shifts back making it hard to engage the front of the ski. Similarly, with a boot that's too stiff it would also be difficult to keep your weight from shifting back. These factors decrease your ability to control relationship of your center of mass and your base of support and you become less able to direct pressure along the length of the ski. Ultimately, everything becomes harder. Turning, edging, balance – all of it.

A well-fitted boot is hands down one of the best investments you can make in your skiing.

**Skis.** When selecting a ski, think about where you do the bulk of your skiing. What ski length and width makes sense for those conditions? If you mainly ski on the east coast, you'll want an all-mountain ski that grips well on hardpack and ice. An all-mountain ski length should fall between your chin to the top of your head or above based on ability. If you are newer to skiing shorter skis are easier to control, while a more advanced skier might choose longer skis for more stability.

You have probably seen a lot of skiers on wide skis, even in the East, using them for all-mountain setups. While wide skis are fun in powder, they aren't always sensible for everyday Eastern

conditions. Unless you regularly ski powder, you probably don't need anything much wider than 70 to 80 millimeters underfoot. Go only as wide as you actually need! Pick something that works for the conditions you ski the most. A ski that matches your terrain and focus will do way more for your development than something trendy or overly wide.

Maintaining your skis also makes a big difference – especially how sharp you keep your edges. You might describe a run as "icy," while someone else thinks it's "great!" Same slope, different take. If your edges are dull, your skis may be holding you back from getting the performance you want. I tune my skis after every use. You may not feel like that's necessary for you; however maintaining your skis does matter. Especially if you're serious about improving your skiing.

**Poles.** Specifically, pole length. Most people know the classic trick: flip the pole upside down, grab it just under the basket, and check for a 90-degree bend at the elbow. That's been the go-to for years. With today's shaped skis and modern technique, skiers are getting way more edge angle and angulation of the upper and lower bodies, which means our bodies are getting lower to the snow. Considering this, we often don't need poles as long as we used to (unless you're racing giant slalom or speed, where longer poles still have a purpose).

Poles that are too long throw you backwards as you pole plant. Too much pole affects balance and rhythm. I recommend getting a pair of adjustable poles. That way, you can play around with length and find what works best for you. And – if you're the sharing type – you can lend your adjustable poles to your student for a run to help them explore the right length for them.

Having the right equipment makes a huge difference in how you ski. It's not just about comfort or convenience; it's about giving yourself the best shot at improving and enjoying the sport. Whether it's making sure your boots fit properly, having the right ski for the right terrain, or adjusting your pole length, every detail adds up. Take the time to really get to know your gear, work with professionals (or colleagues) you trust, and be willing to make small changes that can lead to big improvements on snow. <<

## Who's On Your Team?

By Amy Kizak  
Alpine Examiner, CS2  
Pats Peak, NH and  
Ragged Mountain Resort, NH



Everyone can use a solid team behind them.

Nobody accomplishes getting to higher certifications alone. It takes a village – or in this case a mountain – to help you set, stay on track, and achieve your goals. People you may need along your journey could include:

- *Coaches* – people you respect, and expect honest feedback from
- A *training partner* – someone who is on the same path, moving at the same pace as you who you work well with
- *Technicians* – providing you with properly fitted boots and finely tuned equipment
- *Chauffeurs* – getting you safely to the mountains in all weather conditions
- A *Confidant* – someone who you can sit down with and just discuss whatever is on your mind
- *Insiders* – fellow snow pros who volunteer to help work through training segments
- *Outsiders* – people who know you outside of skiing who have insights and experiences that can benefit you as a whole.
- And *family*... since you've already picked them!

As I looked towards starting to train for my PSIA Alpine Level III, I had to have a conversation with my family about the decision. At the time my son was 7 years-old, and I knew starting this journey would require some time away from my family; therefore, I needed everyone on board. With their full support, we called it “Go Team Mommy”. I was able to take the time I needed to train at different mountains and attend training events. When I wanted to check out a mountain where I was going to take an exam, we would go over February school vacation and make it into a family trip. On “assessment day,” they would make the trip over just to see the results and cheer me on. My husband was also my ski tech. He

knew how I skied, how I wanted the skis to perform, and sharpened and waxed my skis with a personal touch.

After my first unsuccessful attempt at the Level III skiing, I started to get connected with one of the other people from my mountain that was at the same exam and experienced the same results that I did. While there were others at Pats Peak working toward Level III certification, Jon and I found ourselves progressing at a similar pace, and we decided to start training together and going to exams together. We would take days off from work to ski bigger mountains, talk about what we were doing in our skiing and what we were seeing in each other's skiing. We would meet up and talk about the fundamentals and share ideas about teaching. We held each other accountable and pulled each other along to our shared goal. By looking for answers rather than wanting our coaches to tell us the answers, we developed a deeper understanding of the information. When we could not figure something out, we would then go back to our coaches to get clarification. It was also valuable to have someone to confide in, who was going through similar frustrations and successes. When we needed to scope out a mountain where we would be taking an exam, my training partner would join me and my family over February vacation to ski and have fun while we scouted. This allowed us to return for the assessment with good memories of a fun time skiing as a group.

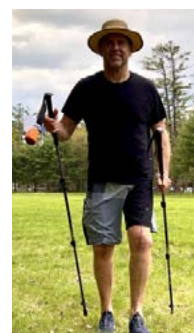
There is a huge mental component to skiing. In my case, I had to overcome self-doubt and build self-confidence. A perfectionist, I felt if I did not succeed, I had failed. About the time I started working towards my Level III, my son started taking karate. After taking a parent coaching class with him, I thought learning karate would be a great way to get into shape and train for my Level III. I had no idea the impact this choice would have on my skiing and teaching. During each class our Senior Instructor did a 3-minute “on-the-mat chat.” These chats often dealt with the power of positive thinking, goal setting, and building self-confidence – in other words, skills that applied in our lives outside karate. By listening to the chats and embracing them in my daily life I realized that failure only occurs when you stop growing. The opposite of success is a learning opportunity, and growth comes out of the learning opportunities. Believe in yourself and visualize achieving your goal whether it be wearing the next karate belt or wearing a gold pin.

I was fortunate to have several trainers at my home mountain to work with. Each one played an important part in my journey. Our head trainer taught me to expect everything, be ready for anything, and pushed me to be more precise in my skiing and movement assessment. Another trainer gave me permission for skiing not to feel “pretty” especially when you were not on groomed terrain. The PSIA-AASI Examiners I worked with at different events helped unlock pieces I was missing from my skiing. For example, they helped me understand that everyone can feel something when they ski; we just have to help them figure out what that is. Each trainer I worked with gave me a piece of the puzzle to help me develop the skills I needed to succeed.

While the journey was not always easy, being able to share it with all the people on my team made it worthwhile and inspired me to continue beyond Level III to my current role on the Alpine Education Staff. So I ask: “Who is on your team?” ☞

## When a Telemark Examiner Needs New Knees

By Jim Tass  
Telemark Examiner  
Mount Abram, ME



Walking with trekking poles at Martha's Vineyard three-and-a-half weeks after surgery.



Skiing Vallee Blanche from Courmayeur ten months post-surgery!

It has been well over a year since late April 2024, when a surgeon cut open both of my knee joints, sawed off the ends of the femurs and tibias, and installed metal/plastic artificial knees. In doing so, I received the approximate trauma of a moderate traffic crash, at least with respect to bone and soft tissue impacts. Yikes.

Having Total Knee Replacements (TKRs) is a choice many skiers have to contemplate making, but resorting to bilateral TKRs was not something I did quickly or easily.

I began to have issues with my knees in 2015, when I first felt the subtle twinge of what turned out to be a meniscus tear in my left knee while making a relaxed medium-radius parallel turn.



By the end of the 2015-16 season, my right knee also hurt. By the end of the following season, both knees hurt more, and my doc suggested steroid injections. By the following year I was a candidate for a meniscus “clean up,” which is not as minor as it sounds: the “clean up” means removing the shredded meniscus, leaving behind only. . . nothing!

From that point on, I was bone-on-bone in both knees, and every step, ski turn, or bicycle pedal stroke was increasingly painful. I tried the gels, the physical therapy, the unloading braces, the injections. I went on hiatus from the education staff, where I am a telemark examiner, because I felt like I could no longer ski consistently at that level. I began to accept that my knees were truly worn out and that I had to consider replacements.

Even then, it wasn't an easy decision. My knees didn't hurt all the time—they just hurt when I was doing fun things: skiing, biking, surfing, hiking. I kept returning to the question: was I in enough pain to justify scrapping my biological knees? Should I wait a couple more years?

It wasn't until a particularly frustrating day skiing that I decided it was time. Skiing powder shouldn't hurt. I booked a date in April 2024, and started the countdown.

At the end of it all, the calculation came down to these variables:

- Need. Both knees were bone-on-bone. They were done, and I had exhausted all other options.
- Age. I am in my early 60s and figured it wouldn't get easier to recover from this surgery as I got older.
- Current health. There was (and is) no telling when my excellent health situation might change.

- Ability to get both done at once. It sounds insane, but for me it was better than doing the surgeries twice. One anesthesia, one surgery, one recovery.

It all added up to—why wait? As the ski season wound down, and every ski turn had some pain in it, I began to get increasingly eager to get the knees done.

On April 25, 2024, I went in for surgery.

The recovery from knee surgery takes time. The first two weeks were the roughest and seemed to suggest that things would happen fast. I was walking more or less immediately after surgery—I used a walker for a couple of days, then a cane, and by day seven I was pretty good at walking carefully around the house.

But by week five, the pace of healing slowed. Every week my knees felt a little better, but it was gradual. My e-bike became my best friend, and I walked a lot. In early August 2024, 13 weeks after surgery, my care team gave me one last exam and told me to call only “if something exciting happens.” At that point, I began to try to just live my life as I always had, which always included a lot of bike riding, hiking, walking, skiing and paddle sports.

Week to week, even day to day, I felt alternately hopeful and worried: I'd be happy with how I felt and anxious that I didn't feel better. I had been warned that the recovery process included a mental and emotional roller coaster, and I found that to be true.

By September, I felt strong enough to go on a Colorado mountain biking trip, where I probably overdid things. Caregivers tell you to listen to your body, but my body would only talk to me when I'd pushed it too far!

Ski season arrived for me on December 3, 2024, eight months post-op, when I hiked up the

not-yet-open Mt Abram and made my first tentative (alpine and tele) turns of the season. I felt good enough to return to my role as director of ski school training, and I also skied regularly at Sunday River midweek. I returned to cross country and skate-skiing, rode my fat bike, and snowshoed. But I felt like I was still in recovery mode and took things slowly.

Overall, it was a good season. I made alpine and telemark (tele felt better than it had for five years!) turns, skied bumps gently, caught a few powder days, and had a couple of alarming crashes. I tried to have a typical season, although perhaps with fewer bump runs. The peak of the season was a weeklong trip to Courmayeur, Italy. Ultimately, I skied somewhere around 65 days. That seemed like enough.

If you've got x-rays that show you bone-on-bone in your knees, it may be a matter of time before you need to get them replaced. If you go down the TKR path, here's my advice:

- Get as fit as you can before surgery.
- If you need both knees done, see if you can do them at the same time.
- Stay on your pain killers and ice!
- Do your physical therapy faithfully, and consider getting an e-bike, which can really help with the recovery.
- Expect it to take over a year before you really feel good.

Age and wear take their toll on our bodies! Fortunately, medical technology can sometimes help extend how long and how hard we can push ourselves. I'm feeling hopeful that my new knees will enable me to ski more comfortably until I need to retire to the lodge and spin tall tales of my long life sliding around on snow. Ski ya later! «



Photos courtesy of PSIA-AASI



## CALLING ALL FUTURE PROS

The *SnowPro* publication is featuring pictures of our Future Snow Pros.

What did their very first day sliding on snow look like?

Share their adventure!



**Remi Mercier, 25 Months**  
Mohawk Mountain, CT

Share your child's or grandchild's very first day on snow, submit their image:

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## Brian Donovan Appointed Eastern Team Coach

We're excited to announce that **Brian Donovan**, our very own Eastern Region Snowboard Coordinator, has been named **Eastern Team Coach**. In this new role, Brian will guide the planning of the multi-discipline Eastern Team Tryouts and a two-year development plan leading to the 2028 PSIA-AASI National Team Tryout. His leadership will help prepare and support team members across disciplines for success on the national stage.



Brian Donovan



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