

# Far West News *Flash*

June, 2023

**MEET THE ONLY'S:** Meet the 3 Ski areas that are the only ones in their respective states. *Ober Mountain—Rocky Top Attraction*. Tourism is the engine that drives Gatlinburg, home of Tennessee's only currently operating ski area, Ober Mountain (formerly Ober Gatlinburg). "If you're from here, tourism—particularly in the summer—is a part of your life," says John Baker, the new owner of the ski area-cum-amusement park, just outside Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Baker and his team are new to the snowsports industry, but he feels their history and dedication to the Gatlinburg region will guide them to help Ober evolve and grow. *Wisp Resort* – a four-season destination. Long ago, when government employees, and elected leaders of the greater Washington, D.C., area needed to escape, they hopped a train from the city and traveled 180 miles northwest to the Oakland station in Maryland's Garret County, where the fresh air and beauty of Marsh Mountain and Deep Creek Lake offered them a reprieve from city life. That region, now home of PGRI-owned *Wisp Resort*, Maryland's only active ski area, remains a mecca for those from D.C. and Baltimore seeking a ski or summer escape close to home. Eighty percent of the resort's business comes from those two cities. In the summer, *Wisp* has disc golf, a zip line and canopy tour, the "only mountaintop recirculating whitewater course in the world" offering whitewater rafting and kayaking at the mountain's and two 18-hole championship golf courses, among other activities. Lastly, *Yawgoo Valley Ski Area* in Exeter, R.I., has stood the test of time through "pure determination," says general manager Tracy Hartman. "If you don't have the heart for this industry, you're just not going to make it." When Yawgoo Valley first opened in 1965, some may have wondered how advisable it was to take a modest hill set close to the ocean—where the water's temperature tends to turn snow into rain quicker than most areas—in the nation's smallest state and turn it into a ski area. "We're near the ocean, so we get more rain if the lows track to the east, more snow if to the west. That's why snowmaking has to be our first priority. Fixing it easily and turning it on when we need to is vital for us."

**U.S. SKI AND SNOWBOARD BRING PARALYMPICS BACK INTO FOLD:** U.S. Ski & Snowboard (USSS) will add the Paralympic Alpine ski and snowboard teams back under its umbrella effective immediately. The teams have been under the management of the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee since 2010. The switch allows USSS to provide more comprehensive support and resources to its Paralympians, including coaching, along with access to sports science, medicine and psychology. It also allows Paralympians to interact even more with some of the best in the business, like Mikaela Shiffrin and two-time reigning Olympic snowboard halfpipe champion, Chloe Kim, just to share tips and advice. "It's going to make a world of difference," said paralympic ski racer Andrew Kurka.

**NSAA HONOR BEST IN SKI INDUSTRY:** National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) named the winners of its annual awards in sustainability, safety, marketing, and beginner conversion (growth). The awards were presented to ski area members with the most innovative and successful programs in each category at the association's National Convention and Tradeshow in Savannah, Ga. Those winners include: *The Conversion Cup*, which recognizes resorts turning beginner skiers and riders into repeat customers: *Big Snow American Dream*, NJ; *Gunstock Mountain Resort*, NH; and *Mt. Hood Meadows*, OR. *Golden Eagle Award for Sustainability*: *Massanutten Resort*, VA; *Taos Ski Valley*, NM; and *Wild Mountain*, MN. *Climate Change Impact Award*: *Massanutten Resort*, VA; *Taos Ski Valley*, NM; and *Vail Resorts*, CO; and the *Community & Partnership Award*, fostering a collaborative environment in their community: *Arapahoe Basin Ski Area*, CO; *Big Sky Resort*, MT; and *Copper Mountain Resort*, CO.

**WINTER PARK DONATES PROCEEDS:** After another successful season of *Winter Park Resort's* uphill program, the resort is proud to donate the proceeds from the sales of its uphill armbands, which is more than \$70,000, to three non-profits serving Winter Park and Grand County adventurers: *Grand County Search and Rescue (GCSAR)*, *Colorado Rapid Avalanche Deployment (C-RAD)* and *Friends of Berthoud*

Pass. Winter Park Resort allows uphill on many of its open trails during the winter season and asks any guest uphill at the resort to read and agree to its policy and purchase a \$25 armband.

## FAR WEST TRAVEL

**FWSA 2023 DIVE TRIP:** The FWSA 2023 dive trip will be at the *Little Cayman Beach Resort* on *Little Cayman*, a beautiful and tranquil island in the *Cayman Islands*, **October 7 – 14, 2023**. **Availability for 1 female, and 1 room for two.** Little Cayman had been named a top dive site in the Caribbean for its iconic Bloody Bay Wall, year-round perfect diving conditions, pristine coral reefs, and spectacular marine life. Little Cayman Beach Resort brings this magnificent experience beneath the sea directly onto the sand. Bloody Bay Wall is the main attraction, but there are other sites that are equally as exciting with numerous tunnel systems and crevices, both on the shallow reefs and out over the wall. Offering some of the most beautiful reef structures to be seen in the underwater world, this is where divers in-the-know go. Many dive operations claim the late Philippe Cousteau declared Bloody Bay Wall to be one of the three best dives in the world. The information is now available on the FWSA website at [www.fwsa.org](http://www.fwsa.org).

**FWSA 2024 SKI WEEK:** *Steamboat* will be the site of next year's North American Ski Week. The dates will be **January 27 - February 3, 2024**. Online registration is open NOW. Go to [fwsa.org](http://fwsa.org) to get the Council Trip Leader contact information and request the Council's online registration link. Contact Nancy Ellis for any other information: [fwsatravelnancy@sbcglobal.net](mailto:fwsatravelnancy@sbcglobal.net).

**FWSA 2024 INTERNATIONAL SKI WEEK:** The 2024 International Ski Week will be to *Madonna di Campiglio, Italy*, with an extension trip to Northern Italy. The dates for Ski Week are **February 25-March 3, 2024**. This trip will include 7 nights lodging at the 4 Star *Hotel Relais des Alpes*. The lodging package includes daily breakfast & 5 nights' dinner at the hotel providing 2 nights to dine out on your own in Madonna. *We will be offering an optional day tour during the week if one chooses to explore the local culture.* The extension trip - **March 3-10, 2024** - will be in Northern Italy, which will include Milan, Lake Como, Verona, balsamic tasting in Modena, La Specia/Cinque Terra, Portovenere...with day tours included and free time to explore on your own. Initial trip registration will be handled in the traditional method – you will complete the forms and send along with a check payment for your initial registration 1st payment. Subsequent payment may be made by check, cashier's check, money order OR via our online Pay Pal Credit Card process. For further information, contact: Debbie Stewart, [fwsaintltrlv@prodigy.net](mailto:fwsaintltrlv@prodigy.net).

## FAR WEST CONVENTION

**The 90<sup>th</sup> Annual Far West Ski Association Convention** is over and done with!! Another one in the history books. A positive, productive, and fun-filled event. We had club and council members from all of our regional councils. We had 40 Industry partners. We had some wonderful guest speakers, and a fantastic Keynote Speaker –Genia Fuller Crews. Genia even brought several of her “freestyle” friends: Scott Brooksbank, Rick Bonnell, Bob Young, Dan Fromer, Greg Johnson, and Drew Whalin.

The *Intermountain Ski Council*, and *Bogus Basin Ski Club* did an amazing job hosting this event! The volunteers went above and beyond getting us to Ansots on **Wednesday** evening for a wonderful Basque dinner. **Thursday** was filled with rafting on the Payette River, led by *Jenn Coutts*. Following the raft trip, was a scrumptious BBQ, thanks to *Michael Bouton's* “Big Bertha” barbeque grill. We had a great Bike Ride along the Greenbelt, led by *Kim DeWit* and *Paul Markowitz*. A nice stop for a picnic lunch took place along the way, and everyone was back to the hotel in the early afternoon. This left plenty of time to fluff and buff for the 26th Annual Pub Crawl. *Sherri Lechten* did an outstanding job, taking us to 3 lovely places: *Boise Brewing*, *Mother Earth Brew Co.*, and finished up at the *Basque Center* for dinner. We were able to order what we wanted to drink, have some munchies along the way, play a little Jenga, and all end up at the *Basque Center* for dinner. On **Friday**, *Top Golf*, was one of the two activities planned for the day. While the original plan was to play 9 holes, the most they were able to get in was 6, but everyone had a great time. *Bill Coutts* was the Activity Leader, *Sheri Parshall* handled the hole sponsors, and *Barbara Blasé*, as well as *Mike and Eileen Sanford*

were there to cheer the teams on. *Lynda Clark* led an adventurous “Day on the Mountain” at Bogus Basin, which included a nice drive up, a short hike, and a wonderful Italian lunch in the lodge. Friday night was the time for the 37<sup>th</sup> *Annual Silent Auction and Trade Show* at the Boise Centre. Another exciting, fun-filled night, meeting and greeting our Resort Representatives and Tour Operators, to bid on ski and stay packages, which included a trip to Peru from *One Seed Expeditions*, and a Tournament of Rose Parade Event, from *Mayflower Tours* on New Year’s Day. A portion of this year’s proceeds benefitted the *Idaho Youth Ranch, Kuna*. We also had a drawing for two Travel Gift Certificates provided by our North American Travel Program and International Program. The winners were: *George Kish*, for the North American trip, and *John Walsh*, for the International trip. The Silent Auction was sponsored by *Visit Boise*, with beverages donated by *Payette Brewing Company*, and wine sponsored by *Mammoth Mountain Ski Area*.

The SLA sessions on Saturday were phenomenal! Thank you, *Debbie Stewart*, for your *Group Travel Secrets – “Details...Determine...Destiny”*. Very well attended, and so, so informative! *Tony Baker* and *John W. Lundin* for your “*Ease in Preparing a Digital Book*”. Another well thought out, well-presented session! Lastly, our afternoon Public Affairs Panel, with *Brad Wilson*, General Manager of Bogus Basin Recreation Area and *Tony Harrison*, *Publicist for Ski Idaho*, speaking on Climate Change, resort insurance, and other hot topics, were very well attended.

Our Keynote Speaker was *Genia Fuller-Crews*, a legend of freestyle skiing and Honored Member of the US Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame, as well as a member of their board of directors, held the attention of everyone in the room! With accompanying videos, Genia took us on a tour of her life, from ice skating at the early age of 2, to learning to freestyle ski in her teens, to putting on ski exhibitions with the likes of Susie Chafee, Bob Salerno, and Scott Brooksbank. Her presentation was followed by a boisterous and prosperous Live Auction of Genia auctioning off 5 different autographed “freestyle” posters, with all proceeds going toward the Far West Athletic Scholarship program.

Elections were held Sunday morning, resulting in the re-election of Linda Westlund, as President, Nancy Ellis, V.P. of North American Travel, and Sheri Parshall, Trustee. Newly elected were Todd Hood, V.P. of Council Services; Chris Gill, Trustee; and Steve Coxen, V.P. of Public Affairs.

As V.P. of Marketing & Sponsorship, and Convention Chair, I would like to extend a HUGE thank you to all who attended, including all of our Industry Partners, and our sponsors: *Steamboat Ski & Resort Corp.*, Western Ski Heritage Award and Pub Crawl Sponsor; *Sun Valley*, donor of the Delegate Tote Bags; *Sports America Tours*, sponsor of the Neck Wallets; *Aspen/Snowmass & Snowmass Tourism*, Golf Tournament sponsors; *Visit Boise*, sponsor of the Silent Auction Welcome Party; *Payette Brewing Company*, donor of the beer for Friday and Saturday; *Snowvana*, sponsor of the beer on Friday night; *Mammoth Mountain*, wine sponsor on Friday; *Big White Resort*, sponsor of the Volunteer of the Year; *Telluride Ski & Golf*, sponsor of Saturday lunch; *Group Travel Simplicity*, sponsor of the lunch wine; *Grouse Mountain Lodge*, sponsor of the Awards Banquet on Saturday night, as well as the Athletic Scholarship Program, along with *Whitefish Mountain Resort*; and finally.. the *Boise Centre* for hosting our event, and the *Grove Hotel*, as our host hotel. See you all next June 6-9, in Reno, NV, at the Atlantis Casino Resort Spa, for the 91<sup>st</sup> Annual FWSA Convention.

*Stay safe! Stay Healthy!*