

Kiwanis Club Ski and Snowboard School December 6, 2023

The Kiwanis Ski & Snowboard School is a local service project in collaboration with the local non-profit-Mt. Holiday Ski & Recreational Area. Many years ago, the Kiwanis Club of Traverse City recognized the need for a youth-based initiative that would help create confidence and peer-to-peer encouragement, teach safety practices related to skiing & snowboarding and provide an outdoor, healthy winter activity for the youth in our area. The Kiwanis Ski & Snowboard School has been in place for decades where generationally, families and participants have been positively impacted by the experience. The origins of the Kiwanis Ski School go back to 1965. In collaboration with Mt. Holiday, the Kiwanis Club of Traverse City has organized, promoted and provided volunteer support for this project the past 6 decades.

Due to the partnership, the ski and snowboard lessons have always remained very affordable, priced much lower than normal ski lessons. This was always the goal of the Kiwanis Club, was to provide a low cost option for local children to learn how to ski and snowboard and enjoy a wonderful winter sport. Children and adults have many ski & snowboard options to enjoy at our local ski resorts around the Traverse City area. In addition to the affordability of the lessons, the association with the non-profit Kiwanis Club of Traverse City has created a trust and comfort with parents who enroll their children.

The geographic outreach is primarily focused on the greater Grand Traverse area. The Kiwanis Club markets the program to all of the local school systems. Due to the long history, parents know to reach out to the Kiwanis Club or Mt. Holiday to sign up their children. Many of the parents were actual benefactors of the program when they were a child, learning to ski at the Kiwanis Ski School.

In 2023, the Kiwanis Ski & Snowboard School recorded that 330 children participated in the ski and snowboard school. Since its inception, thousands of children have participated in the Ski School over the 58 year history. Annually, approximately 10-12 ski instructors are hired by Mt. Holiday to teach the children to ski or snowboard. In addition, Kiwanis Club provides 2-3 volunteers on the ski hills to help the new skiers & snowboarders to navigate the tow ropes and assist the instructors.

Mt Holiday Ski & Recreational Area is a key partner in this program, providing the facility, rental equipment, instructors and overall guidance. Starting last year, the ski school changed its enrollment and payment to a digital process all through the Mt. Holiday website. This has streamlined the enrollment process greatly and made payment more efficient for the families.

This project has been a signature service project for the Kiwanis Club of Traverse City Club for over 50 years. Many of the Kiwanis Club members, guests and presenters have participated in or volunteered with the Kiwanis Ski School over the years. Our community identifies the Ski School with Kiwanis. One of the most impactful outcomes of the Ski School is the peer-to-peer 'life skills' learned by the kids. For example, very few activities/events allow kids to succeed, fail and learn together in a friendly, safe and encouraging environment. A comment from one of the tenured instructors at the annual Kiwanis Ski School stated "the kids, whether 1st graders or 5th graders, gain confidence by watching what their peers can do – they start with no confidence and end with confidence and new friends".

In the Spring of each year, after the Ski School has wrapped up, the Kiwanis Club of TC donates all of the net proceeds of the Ski & Snowboard School to Mt. Holiday Ski & Recreational Area, a local non-profit, to help fund its operation. Mt. Holiday relies not only on its daily ticket and rental fees but also local donations (such as these) to funds its operation.

Due to the long relationship the Kiwanis Club has developed with the team at Mt. Holiday, the Kiwanis Club of Traverse City has chosen to provide additional financial support to Mt. Holiday Ski & Recreational Area the past 5 years to improve their operations which serve our community.

In 2018, a special donation of \$2,000 was made by the Kiwanis Club of Traverse City to Mt. Holiday to replace all of the “walkie talkies” used by the ski school instructors and lift operators. The new “walkie talkies” allow improved communication among the instructors and lift operators to improve safety on the ski hill.

In 2023, the Kiwanis Club of Traverse City donated \$45,000 to the capital campaign of Mt. Holiday to make improvements to the chair lifts and related equipment which improves the safety and reliability of the ski resort.