



The Spirit

Winter
2018

of the United States Adaptive Recreation Center



KelLe and Paula, looking powerful in pink!

“You guys REALLY missed it, you shoulda been here yesterday!” So goes the famous line from the film *The Endless Summer* about missed opportunities, and this year’s version of USARC’s annual adventure certainly lived up to that particular characterization for the wannabe sojourners who could not make it this year.

Hills, heat and headwinds are all parts of the Peak to Peak Pedal challenge. While there’s nothing we can do about the inclines, the temps were pretty mild this year, and aside from a half day of pretty daunting north winds, even Aeolus himself seemed to smile on the riders this year, offering up a few tailwinds here and there!

(See Pink Power on pg. 3)

Time to Take or Teach a Lesson

One look at all the changes here at Bear Mountain is all it takes to know winter is coming. If you’re a *Game of Thrones* fan than you know what that means.

If not, then you will have to take our word for it that now is the time to begin your lesson reservation process or sign up for a volunteer training clinic. A 3-decades proven formula for success means USARC fills up quickly!

(See Winter is Coming on pg. 7)



Grant and Billy being funny.

Summer is always a Splash!

Most of you have seen USARC’s white oval decals with one word printed in black capital letters: ADAPT. Despite the anticipation that last winter would significantly replenish the lake level, the winter runoff didn’t quite fill the lake as much as we would have liked. Yet with that one word mantra in mind, USARC was undeterred in delivering its 25th year of wet and wild adventures.

This Summer was a warm one, with the benefit of the hot, humid days being an absence of the prevailing westerly winds, often leaving the uncrowded lake waters warm and glassy for USARC’s fun-minded water skiers, Jet Skiers and paddlers.



DJ gets Kate ready for Jet-Ski fun!

(See Summer Splash on pg. 4)

Thoughts from the Executive Director

We've all pondered the great philosophical question: is the glass half-full or half-empty? The conclusions to that particular dilemma can be as varied as the individual making the inquiry, spanning the range of humorous to way-too-deep-for-me.

So many people who called or came to the summer program this year were perplexed why the lake wasn't fuller after last winter's record-setting, drought-busting (for points north) storms. To be fair, the lake level was higher than the prior summer, as it had come up a full 30+% as a result of the good storms we did receive.

While that statistic may be a tad on the Pollyannaism side of things, the inquiries did avail themselves to deeper conversations on the concatenation of watersheds, geography and storm tracks. Thus we enter the realm of environmental awareness and education, one of USARC's program goals, and thus the silver lining.

Another is that the lake tends to get warmer as it gets shallower, which can make learning water sports slightly more enjoyable.

Plus, while limnologists and anglers may report fish preferring cooler water, those same fish are crowded into a smaller area and thus may encounter a tasty looking hook more frequently.

Of course we all want big, deep, powdery winters that end up producing a lot of run-off into the lake, and for that very reason, when the serotinal days of the year roll around, each of us starts rehearsing our snow dance. Yet the bottom line is that a less-than-full-of-water lake did not keep USARC's summer program from challenging and thrilling those who wanted to beat the heat, smell the fragrant pines, marvel at a summer thunderstorm, watch a bald eagle soar, or challenge and change themselves for the better in the process.

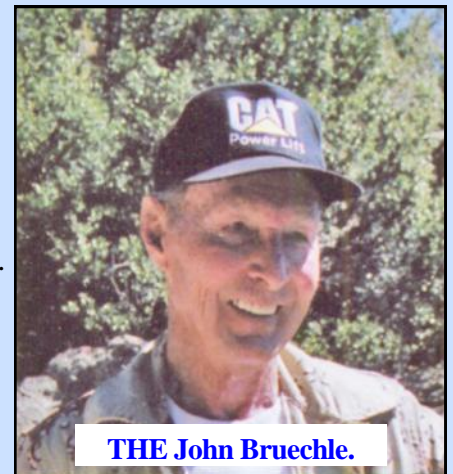


Tom Peirce
USARC Exec. Dir.

So to wrap up what I started, it seems I ken to the perception that the glass, or lake, is always full. The ratio of water to air may change at times, but whenever you stir in a good dose of smiles and success, both the lake and our hearts seem downright overflowing.

John Bruechle, One of a Kind

John Bruechle was exactly the kind of friend USARC needed in its formative years, and well after it had established itself as a leader in the field of adaptive recreation. John displayed exquisite attention to detail that covered not only the lesson content for the students he taught to ski, but also his willingness to pour over the miscellaneous classified ads in the local newspaper, always trying to find a grant lead or other financial opportunity that would help the USARC. John remains one of the handful of volunteers to reach the milestone marking 20-years of volunteer service. Always handy with a joke and a refined sense of humor, John would frequently criticize USARC's



THE John Bruechle.

Executive Director for misspelling the last name of Peirce, saying his wife's spelling of her maiden name of Pierce was correct because she said so and he was not about to contradict her! While we lost John recently, his legacy lives on in many ways, one of which is the continued success of the USARC and those it serves.



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P2P23 Pink Power (cont.)

However, it's not the geography or the climate that dictates the overall vibe of the ride; that really comes down to the people who join in on the fun as riders and volunteers, and whose upbeat attitudes and collective energy were infectious this year.



Rick makes sure the riders are on course and hydrated.

of the SAG volunteers, the occasional relief provided by masseuses, and the oh-so-very-nice portable hot showers are all parts of the successful equation year after year.

A special thanks also goes out to all the generous donors who contributed in support of the two dozen riders that collectively raised over \$90,000 to support USARC



How to beat headwinds in five easy steps.

siblings, the Peirces, to match the Mattos brothers' long tradition of riding together; and of course, KelLe's continuation of her streak of riding every single one of the Peak to Peak Pedals, now numbering 23.

The simple truth, whether this ride was your 23rd Peak to Peak Pedal or your 1st, headwindy or not, easy or difficult, is that this ride rewards those who choose to redefine the concept of limitations, be they a participant in the ride, or a USARC program athlete. See the next issue of *The Spirit* for top fundraisers and H.A. winner!



Team Mattos chat their way up Old Sherwin Grade.

Those attributes go a long way to soothing the pain of sore muscles, minor road rashes and even a couple of rare fractured ribs. Of course, the delicious offerings of the chuck wagon and break crews, the steadfast support



Oh, did we mention the scenery?

programming, enabling partial and full scholarships on every lesson, the acquisition of the latest designs in adaptive equipment, and expertly trained or certified volunteer and staff instructors.

P2P23 was also characterized by our youngest male rider ever, Cody, at age 14; a new handcyclist, Paula, coming all the way from Vermont; a new pair of



Cynthia celebrates a glorious day 5 morning.

Summer Splash (cont.)

Even when the occasional monsoon shower caused delays, it enabled people to enjoy Mother Nature's spectacular lightning and thunder displays from their various shelters.



Liz winding up for another big, high g-force series of turns.

Loving Our Summer Vols!



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The USARC gratefully recognizes these 2017 summer volunteers for their time and effort to help the USARC summer programs be a safe, fun learning adventure for all.

With access to the lake affected by the low water levels, USARC is grateful to John Gorzik from The Lakeside Boathouse Tavern for permitting our modification and use of his docks and other lakefront facilities. The amazing Steve and Shelly Fengler who run a first class organization at Big Bear Marina graciously donated slips so USARC's five vessels would have an on-water home all summer.

Equally deserving of accolades are the selfless, dedicated volunteers who came



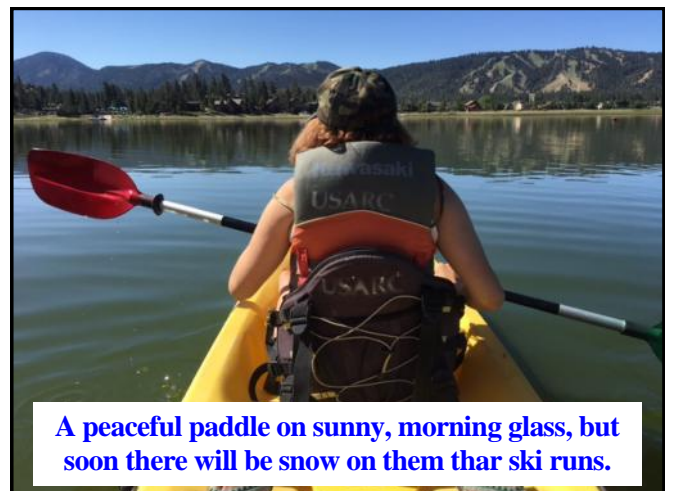
Grey, monsoon days provided Jeremy some of the best water.

out week after week, always enthusiastic and eager to lend a hand to USARC's talented staff. Whether they were jumpers, boat crew, or dock/shore help, everyone made a difference to someone this summer and that's

all that mattered, water level be damned. Fun was had, awesome memories made and smiles accomplished! [#summergoalsmet](#)

So who are we missing? Oh yes, USARC's wonderful participant athletes and their families who made the journey up to the high country to both have fun and challenge themselves with aquatic adventures, while at the same time escaping those oppressive heat waves and inhaling some cool, pine-scented mountain air. Ahhhhh.....

With autumn in the air and sub-freezing temps now commonplace in Big Bear, USARC's boats are now hibernating and dreaming (as if boats dream) of next summer's adventures, regardless of the lake being full or not!



A peaceful paddle on sunny, morning glass, but soon there will be snow on them thar ski runs.

No, REALLY, it's part of my education!

A lot of people have a hard time believing USARC interns receive college credit for spending a summer on the lake, but such is the reality of a Recreation Therapy major like Theresa Fox, whose words follow.

For as long as I can remember, I have loved being in the outdoors. So when it came to choosing where to do my Therapeutic Recreation internship, I knew I wanted it to be somewhere like USARC. While finishing the (almost) last of my classes at MSU Denver, I wanted to do my Therapeutic Recreation internship somewhere where I could spend most of my time working with participants in the outdoors. I had an offer in Alaska early on, but decided to stick it out until interviewing with USARC because I had a feeling that it would be the one. I soon found out that following my gut was definitely the right decision.



Theresa serves up wet and wild thrills on a Kawasaki Jet Ski.

I packed my car and moved from Denver to Big Bear, just me and my dog. At first I was a little nervous going into this whole thing because I had never done anything

like this before. However, everyone here was so welcoming and I immediately felt like part of the USARC family.

The first weeks were spent preparing for programs, and when July finally came I was ecstatic. This is what I had been looking forward to! Once programs started running, it didn't even feel like I was working. It felt like I was just having a great summer vacation where I got to be on the lake every day and drive a jet ski. And in reality, I think that is what shows that you are in the right field of work - when you actually look forward to going to work every day and sincerely enjoy what you do.

USARC truly is a special place. Even though their building may be small, their impact is great. The programs that they offer transform the lives of their participants in more ways than I could ever explain in words. Working with the participants throughout the summer and seeing their smiles and happiness after reaching their goals was such a rewarding experience. I am extremely grateful that I was able to be a part of something so much bigger than myself.

Looking back on everything now, I realize that my favorite part about this internship were the people: The staff who made me feel welcome from the beginning and always included me in the Wednesday night barbecues. Thank you all so much for always helping me out when I needed it, and for supporting me throughout my rivalry with my arch nemesis, the tube.



Theresa and Sara test-piloting USARC's chariots.

The volunteers who were always willing to help out whenever we needed and showed me how important volunteers are to a non-profit with their selfless donation of time and energy. Without them this program would not be able to function.

The participants who make all the hard work worth it in the end. Making a change in the lives of the people we serve is what it's all about.

Reminiscing on this summer and all of the wonderful memories I have made is bittersweet, but I will forever be grateful for the friendships I have made and the lessons I have learned. I am sad that it has to come to an end, but I have decided to stay for the winter season so I now look forward to that. And according to the wise words of Sara Rosell, I can always rest assured that "it's fine".

The USARC proudly salutes these 2017 fiscal year donors!

If your donation between 7/1/16 and 6/30/17 is not listed please accept our apologies and contact us so we can correct our records.

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Athlete Profile: Matt Leitner

The “grin-o-meter” is always pegged to the right with Matt!



Matt Leitner joined USARC at Casa Colina’s Land Meets Sea Sports Camp in Long Beach where he showed up, suited up and only stopped smiling so he could scream with joy. He was hooked, and he rejoined USARC later in Big Bear for another watery dose of adrenaline. Now Matt can’t get enough of the sport he rediscovered,

and we can’t get enough of him. Just make sure to cover your ears whenever he is on the water!

The Spirit (TS): So were you the screaming guy behind the boat that could be heard way down in San Diego?

Matt Leitner (ML): Yes!

TS: What were you looking forward to the most?

ML: I really wanted to try water skiing. I also wanted to do as much as I could, but water skiing was at the top of the list.

TS: You progressed quickly. What became your goals as you continued to do it?

ML: To ski with no outriggers. I wanted to try it in

Long Beach but ran out of time. Then when I came to Big Bear I did it! Next time: outside the wake!

TS: Regarding the aforementioned screaming, how did you feel out there?

ML: Exhilarating! For the first time in many years I felt life again. It was truly an amazing experience.

TS: What would you tell other people that were hesitant to try water skiing or Jet Skiing?

ML: Do it! It’s so safe and easy to do. The staff at USARC are awesome at what they do. There is absolutely nothing to be afraid of.

TS: Are you going to come see us in the Winter? Try some snow skiing?

ML: Definitely. I want to try and learn to snowboard. I’m waiting for the snow to come so I can get up there.

TS: If you could do one thing everyday what would it be?

ML: Water Ski.

There are no words to describe the feelings and joy that it brings me.

TS: Any other comments?

ML: Thank you so much! You guys are awesome. I was also really grateful that my Son was able to

accompany me on the tube, he had never done that before and that is something that we will always have.

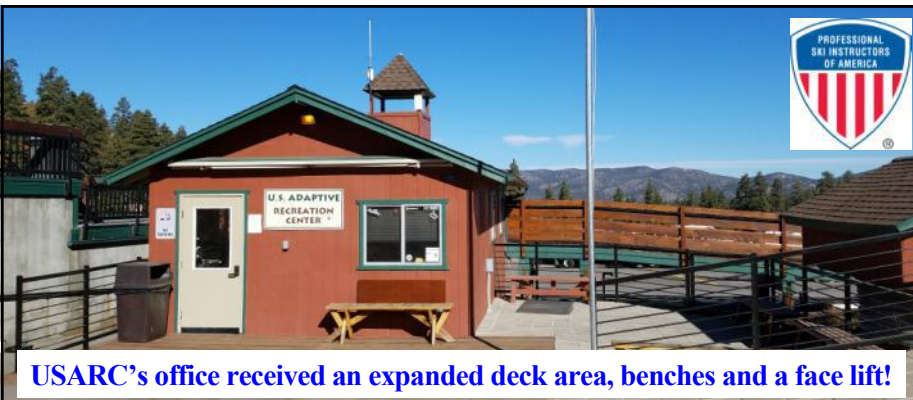
TS: Thanks Matt! We will see you when the snow flies!



Matt still screaming (with joy) in volunteer Jimmy’s ear.

Winter is Coming! (cont.)

Groups can begin reserving for 10 or more participants beginning at 9:00 AM on October 24, and individuals can begin booking lessons at 9:00 AM on November 7. USARC is a proud multi-year member school of the



USARC’s office received an expanded deck area, benches and a face lift!

Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA), and most of USARC’s staff possess instructor certification, as do many of the dedicated volunteers who donate over 6,000 hours of their time every winter! Volunteer candidates can check out the USARC website for information on requirements to join a unique cadre of dedicated and

selfless people who frequently claim they get more out of volunteering than they give! USARC is grateful to Bear Mountain for expanding our outdoor deck area, adding new railings and a fresh coat of paint, as well as to local Eagle Scout Bobby O’Connor who built and donated some new benches to rest on after a day on the slopes. For more information on lessons or volunteering, please call USARC at 909-584-0269.

How can I help USARC?

Since this is an oft-asked question we will continue to run this page in every newsletter because, quite frankly, YOUR options are numerous. In addition to volunteering, there are many ways to financially support the USARC!

DONATE ONLINE IN YOUR NAME OR AS A TRIBUTE TO A LOVED ONE

Clicking on the logo below, or via the Donate Online tab on the USARC website, www.usarc.org, will take you to a secure and reliable website where you can use your credit card to make a tax deductible donation in your name or in recognition of another.



PARTICIPATE IN THE ANNUAL SKI-A-THON OR PEAK TO PEAK PEDAL

Under the Support tab at www.usarc.org are the web pages for these respective special events. Held annually in March and October, respectively, these unique and fun events allow you to support the USARC while engaging in activities they love, be it snow sports or cycling!



SHOPPING PARTNERSHIPS

The USARC can be named as your partner when you shop at numerous retail outlets, at both online and “brick and mortar” stores. AMAZON’s charitable arm (www.amazon.com), and a variety of online retailers you can find through www.igive.com and www.escrip.com allow you to select the USARC as a beneficiary of your shopping forays. If you patronize [RALPHS](#), MACY’S, and many other retailers, you can select the USARC to receive a portion of your purchases.



PLANNED GIVING IN YOUR WILL OR TRUST

The USARC can be named as a beneficiary in your estate planning, enabling you to support the important and life-changing programs of the USARC well into the future. Consult your tax and legal professionals or call the USARC and we can put in you in touch with somebody to guide you through the process.

DONATE YOUR OLD CAR, BOAT, RV ETC.



Cars, boats and RVs [donated in the name](#) of USARC are sold, with the proceeds defraying USARC’s operating costs and you receive a tax deduction! Call or click on the logo to get started.

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BRIANA KEAN

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ROGER LEE

What’s ahead at USARC?

NOVEMBER

- 7 Lesson Reservations Begin at 9:00 AM
- 17-19 Ski-Dazzle Show (Los Angeles)

DECEMBER

- 9 Lessons Begin for Individuals
- 11-12 Returning Volunteer Training #1
- 14-17 New Volunteer Training #1
- 16-17 Returning Volunteer Training #2

JANUARY

- 4-7 New Volunteer Training #2
- 6-7 Returning Volunteer Training #3
- 8 Group Lessons Begin
- 28-29 PSIA Winter Rally (Snow Summit)

MARCH

- 10 2018 Ski-A-Thon
- 14-15 PSIA Adaptive Exams (Snow Valley)
- 24 Volunteer Party