In April, NSAA named three finalists for its second annual Conversion Cup Challenge including Michigan’s Crystal Mountain Resort, Oregon’s Mt. Bachelor, and Vermont’s Killington Resort. Launched in 2010, NSAA’s Conversion Cup Challenge, sponsored by Head Wintersports, is designed as a fun way to pique competition among member ski areas and recognize those who make significant efforts to boost skier and snowboarder conversion rates. One finalist from each of three ski area size categories is selected: (up to 200,000 visits; 200,000 to 500,000 visits; and 500,000 and more visits). Applications are judged on a number of key conversion indicators including:

- Increases in Level 1 lesson volumes;
- Level 1 lesson volumes in relation to total skier and snowboarder visits;
- Quantifiable success of multi-lesson packages;
- Season-to-date sales and repeat sales data on specific “learn-to” packages;
- Overall data collection capabilities and sophistication;
- Marketing ingenuity, creativity, use of new media, etc.

As part of its effort, Crystal Mountain offered guests a variety of lesson options, including the innovative “Nanny McSki” that the resort bills as a “service-centric” private lesson in which the instructors make all off-mountain arrangements, including rentals, lunch, and childcare. Rick Schmitt, vice president of sales and marketing, says the Nanny McSki service “has guests buzzing” and that participation has increased 300 percent since its inception in 2010.

Meanwhile, Mt. Bachelor’s “Ski or Ride in 5” program is in its third season and in that time, the program is credited for boosting Level 1 lesson volumes by 23.5 percent. Amy Ohran, snowsports director, reports that 34 percent of those who have participated in the program have gone on to be third-year season pass holders.

Killington Resort tracks all of its adult “learn-to” students through its web-based PURL program, which assigns a personal uniform resource locator (URL) to each individual. Guests are entered into the system at the time of their first lesson and are encouraged to visit their personal web address, where they can find special promotional deals on food and beverage, retail, and lodging. Dave Beckwith, ski school director, reports that as of March 2, 46.3 percent of those who had participated in its three-lesson promotion had returned for a second visit, and 4.1 percent had made their fourth visit, for which they received a free lift ticket.

The winner of the Conversion Cup will be crowned live at NSAA’s National Convention and Tradeshow in San Antonio, Texas. The Conversion Cup is a traveling award. Last year’s winner, Snow Time Inc., owners of three Pennsylvania ski areas including Liberty Mountain, Roundtop, and Whitetail, claimed the Cup last year and will receive a Conversion Cup plaque to keep on display. An in-depth review on this year’s Conversion Cup winner will be highlighted in the August/September 2012 issue of the NSAA Journal.