



SAFETY PROGRAMS

Vail Wins Sixth Consecutive National Award

BY TROY HAWKS

From Whiteface Willy to Heavenly's Gus the Safety Turtle and Vail's Pork Chop the Safety Pig, areas across the country utilized fun safety mascots to help celebrate the sixth annual National Safety Awareness Week, Jan. 15–21. Each season during Safety Week and throughout the year resorts proactively educate their staffs and guests about the seven rules of the Your Responsibility Code, Smart Style, terrain park safety, helmet use, avalanche awareness, sun protection and more.

“Since its inception, National Safety Awareness week has provided the industry the opportunity to showcase creative slope safety programs, this season’s eight winning resorts pulled out all the stops to educate employees, guests and the media about the importance of slope safety,” says NSAA Director of Education Tim White, who adds: “It’s never too early to start planning for next year. The benefits of participating are numerous, including national media exposure and recognition for hard working employees and volunteers who develop the programs.”

Here is a brief review of the winning 2004/05 safety programs:

BEST TERRAIN PARK SAFETY PROGRAM

Welch Village, MN “WATS UP!”



This season Welch Village built its first terrain park, called the Unleashed Terrain Park, and along with it, created the WATS UP! (Welch And Terrain Safety in the Unleashed Park) terrain park safety initiative, which involved several departments including marketing, mountain operations, ski patrol and front line employees. More than just a safety program geared toward guests, Welch Village Marketing Director Brad Larsen reports that WATS UP! was also used as an interdepartmental plan for terrain park management, including design, construction, operation, closure and risk management.



“We have impressed upon people that safety is an important part of their terrain park experience through person-to-person encounters and website promotion, the WATS UP! ideas have reached thousands of people,” says Larsen. “Equally important is the internal management system that we created with WATS UP!, marketing, ski patrol and mountain operations all had a stake in the success of the terrain park, each was sensitive to the needs of other departments and lines of communication remained open.”

He adds that each department utilized the NSAA Terrain Park Resource Guide, Smart Style and freestyleterrain.org to create tasks and to achieve their departmental goals.

BEST SMALL RESORT SAFETY WEEK PROGRAM

Eaglecrest Ski Area, AK



National Safety Week events at Eaglecrest Ski Area included a daily safety challenge, which consisted of two sets of trivia questions, a word search, an avalanche match and other safety related puzzles.

The resort also hosted several school groups throughout the week, bringing approximately 360 local students to Eaglecrest. For older guests, Eaglecrest hosted an Avalanche Awareness Day. General Manager Kirk Duncan reports that the event attracted more than 1,000 guests with more than 450 people participating in at least one clinic. The most popular clinic, says Duncan, was the avalanche rescue dog demonstration, which drew 100 participants. Each guest who attended at least two events that day was eligible to win a season’s pass for 2005/06 and there were several other door prizes given away

BEST COMMUNITY OUTREACH SAFETY PROGRAM

Mountain High Resort, CA

“Mountain High has perhaps one of the toughest demographic areas in the industry,” says resort risk manager Rose Reinhardt. “Mountain High needed a way to communicate to those whose English speaking skills and reading are second to their own.”

Reinhardt’s solution was to use the Smart Style language and its graphics on one big sign. The 128-square-foot sign was placed at the



Sequoia, Mountain High Resort’s Safety Ambassador.

base of the resort’s main lift, Chair 4. Among several other activities, the resort promoted Lids on Kids, and Helmet Zone programs by insisting that all 385 participants wear helmets as a part of the education process. Safety Education Director Rick Strasser, along with his sidekick Sequoia, also played a key role in spreading safety messages. The two traveled to various schools throughout Southern

California and presented each “soon to be” snowsport participant a business card with Sequoia’s picture as well as the Responsibility Code printed on it.



“We get feedback from guests as well as ski school participants that they feel less intimidated on our slopes and we have seen the numbers of on-mountain collisions decrease,” reports Sunday River Vice President Marvin Collins. “We have dedicated ourselves to a multiple year program that we will keep rolling out to ensure that all levels and abilities of skiers and riders can feel safe on our slopes as well as have a good time.”

BEST SAFETY MASCOT

Whiteface, NY “WHITEFACE WILLY”

Pictured here Mike McLean of the Whiteface Mountain lift operations department prepares one of several Whiteface Willy signs displayed throughout the resort that helped spread a variety of safety messages to employees and guests. The resort also created a Safety Enforcement Team comprised of retired and



BEST SAFETY MESSAGE

Sunday River, ME “GO WITH THE FLOW”

A key objective of Sunday River’s Go with the Flow slope safety program has been to change the discussion with people on the mountain from, “You’re going too fast,” to “Let’s allow everyone to have an enjoyable experience.” The Go with the Flow zones are areas where there are mixed abilities and guests need to join the pace set by the most inexperienced skier/rider in an identified zone.



active duty law enforcement officers from local police departments and federal agencies. According to Whiteface Ski Center Manager Jay Rand, having experienced law enforcers on the team is a benefit because they are accustomed to delivering safety advice in a professional and tactful manner. The goal of the program is to have at least six members of the team on the mountain at all times, particularly during weekends and holiday periods. The team reports directly to the Whiteface Ski Patrol department head. In 2004/05 Whiteface Operations Supervisor James Allott reported an 8 percent reduction of public safety incidents.

MOST CREATIVE SAFETY IDEAS

Aspen Skiing Co., CO "WHEEL OF SAFETY"

ASPEN SNOWMASS

The "Wheel of Safety" created at Snowmass was among the highlights of National Safety Week activities for Aspen Skiing Co. Guests were invited to "spin to win" and answer questions about the Responsibility Code and general safety concepts. Everyone was a



winner and received a safety-oriented prize including sunscreen, lip balm, a bottle of water or a packet of hand warmers, as well as a card with the Responsibility Code printed on it. Additionally, guests were invited to demo a helmet and receive a discount coupon toward the purchase of a helmet at one of its retail outlets. Also the resort created a "Safety Pin" (made from

an actual safety pin) which was worn by ticket sellers. Aspen also held a contest for local students to create their own video to be used in future safety awareness presentations. The winning DVD was announced during National Safety Week and the students were awarded season passes and \$1,000. Due to popularity, Aspen plans to hold the contest annually.

BEST SAFETY WEEK PROGRAM

Heavenly Mountain, CA "GUS THE SAFETY TURTLE"



Gus the Safety Turtle and his 'Slow is the Go' motto helped spread the message about on-mountain safety at Heavenly Resort. Other activities at Heavenly included: entering guests that were able to recite all seven parts of the Responsibility Code into a daily raffle drawing for free lift tickets, rentals, helmets and other soft-goods; the children's ski school participated in the NSAA Kids Safety Poster contest; emergency medi-



cal services teams displayed equipment and gave tours to children's ski school and guests; Forest Service rangers were present with Smokey the Bear; ski patrol and avalanche dogs toured the base areas; free equipment inspections were available for guests and employees at the four base areas; and three terrain parks enlightened guests of the importance of retention devices. In all, the resort gave away more than 1,200 snowboard leashes, 24,000 Responsibility Code cards and more than 300 pounds of candy for guests and employees who know the Code.

BEST OVERALL SAFETY PROGRAM

Vail Mountain, CO "PORK CHOP THE SAFETY PIG"



In Vail, Pork Chop the Safety Pig, who was on hand throughout the winter, helped promote Vail's safety messages on and off the slopes. Pork Chop quizzed children's ski school classes about safe skiing and riding, offered tips to guests and perfected his tricks safely in the terrain



parks, where he is affectionately known as "P. Chippy." According to Julie Rust, Vail's director of ski patrol, mountain information and Yellow Jackets, the mascot has been a huge success. Pork Chop immediately made a splash in the local papers and has had some national press as well. In addition, this year the resort created a Vail Junior Ski Patrol. Skiing and riding kids earn their entry onto the patrol by being able to provide a safety tip. ■