

Year after year, resorts across the country take what may be viewed as a rather dull topic, safety, and turn it into a reason to celebrate. This year's 5th annual Heads Up National Safety Awareness Week, sponsored by Ovo USA and Mountain Dew, was no exception. From hot sauce to superheroes to a 4000-person posse, NSAA resorts large and small once again rallied to make safety a hot and saucy subject.

It isn't a matter of how large your resort is, it's about how much effort and imagination you put into your safety program and this year's winners have done a remarkable job of educating guests and employees about the importance of safety," said NSAA Director of Education, Tim White.

TOP SAFETY PROGRAMS

BY TROY HAWKS

Funtastic Four, who focus on ski and board safety.

Kids that complete all activities in the book sign a promise to follow the code. Once turned in, they get an exclusive page of full-color *Funtastic Four* superhero stickers.

"The coloring book characters have had a tremendous impact, we've received many unsolicited letters from grade-school kids with drawings enclosed," says Schweitzer General Manager Tom Fortune. "Even better, the stickers are starting to appear on water bottles, helmets and lots of other places around the resort."



Powderhorn's season pass winner

The winner of the *Best Small Ski Area Safety Program* entry was Powderhorn Resort. Powderhorn's program included displaying safety logos and literature on its website, at the guest service desk and at all points of sale locations. A safety tip of the day was displayed on lift tickets and the Responsibility Code was shown on resort televisions. In addition,

Powderhorn guests who were able to recite all seven items of the safety code were entered into a drawing for a free season pass.

Communications Manager Karen Guillen reports that as a result of its efforts, the resort captured local media attention including a weekly radio spot on eight stations and three T.V. stations carried safety week information on their newscasts.

Winning the *Most Creative Safety Program* was Schweitzer Mountain Resort, with its *Superhero Coloring Book*. Heading up Schweitzer's program was Staff and Program Development Director Mary Weber-Quinn. Featuring various pictures to color, safety-themed word puzzles, mazes and more the coloring book emphasizes Your Responsibility Code and Smart Style concepts in an attention grabbing, fun format for kids. The book features Schweitzer's own set of superheroes, *The*



Squaw Valley won the *Best Backcountry Safety* award. The resort's annual *Steep & Deep Avalanche Clinic* drew over 150 people this year. The clinic includes multimedia presentations by several local backcountry guides, high profile athletes and local weather and avalanche forecasters. Presentation topics included terrain analysis, snow stability, weather and safety protocol. Several local TV stations covered the event, which further promoted avalanche safety to the Reno and Sacramento markets.



In addition, the Squaw Valley ski patrol held beacon classes to help educate skiers and riders about the proper way to use beacons and transceivers.

Also freeride safety public service announcements were produced featuring high profile members of the Squaw Valley Freeride team such as Brad Holmes and Scott Gafney. The spots were aired on the Resort Sports Network.

The *Best Terrain Park Safety Program* was awarded to Stratton Mountain Resort. This year Stratton advanced its safety program by adding the Safety Education Session (SES). The program caters to terrain park enthusiasts. Guests must first attend a session in order to enter Stratton's most challenging Power Park terrain park. In addition to showing a quick educational video, the park educators also focus on park etiquette, features and risks. Stratton reports that to date it has had more than 5000 guests participate in the program.



“Feedback from the guest has been phenomenal and parents are extremely appreciative for all of Stratton’s efforts in helping make their time enjoyable as well as being safe,” says Stratton Mountain Safety Supervisor Kathy Buckley.

Meanwhile Sierra at Tahoe won the *Best Overall Originality* award. This year Sierra focused primarily on the Smart Style campaign as well as the tagline “respect gets respect.” The resort’s objective was to reach the younger crowd of snowboarders and skiers.



“Many of our guests are young and adventurous and National Safety Week was a way of targeting a group that may not be aware of the more traditional safety messages,” says Human Resources Director Brittany Clelan.

The program included distributing safety-related t-shirts and hats to all front line employees, filming a local T.V. program demonstrating good and bad terrain park behavior and using Sierra mascots Captain Safety and Snowball to greet guests and answer questions.



This year Aspen was placed in a league of its own, winning the award for ‘Sauciest’ Safety Program. As part of its program, the resort created custom labels for a popular hot sauce brand.

The label features the NSAA logo, the dates of National Safety Week and the phrase, “Safety is hot and you’re the sauce.”

Bottles of the sauce were placed on every table of the resort’s food and beverage operations during safety week. Chefs at each mountain operation created special menus highlighting the message.

“The chatter about the program was rampant,” says Aspen Ski and Snowboard School Director Rich Burkley. “Certain restaurant specials were so popular that they have become permanent menu items and we’ve received many requests for more bottles of the sauce.”

New this year, Beaver Creek created the largest safety posse in Colorado, which helped them win the *Best Use of Community Volunteers* award. The resort deputized over 4000 employees and guests with special Beaver Creek Safety Posse caps, star badges and buttons throughout the day to help bring awareness to



National Safety Week. Beaver Creek’s safety alliance, a combination of local police, firefighters, paramedics, nurses and others, joined together to help educate the local community and skiing guests about safe practices.

Also new this year was Beaver Creek’s Parkology, a ski school program that teaches kids three to 17 terrain park etiquette and how to be safe and respect others while skiing and riding. The resort’s efforts gained the attention of local media. Stories appeared in local and regional newspapers, Vail’s TV8 aired three live interviews and two separate segments on the Parkology program aired on Denver’s CBS affiliate.

“This year’s safety week was a big success,” says Beaver Creek Communication Manager Christina Schleicher. “We had unprecedented participation in our on-hill activities and all of our events drew impressive crowds.”

This was the fifth consecutive year that Vail presented an award winning safety program. This year the resort placed emphasis on adding new and more creative signage throughout the resort. Their efforts were enough to bring home the award for *Best Overall Safety Program*.



“We are proud to have been recognized by NSAA for having the best safety education programs in each of the last five years,” says Julie Rust, director of Vail’s ski patrol. “From the creative ice sculptures and Skiing Safety Chefs in the winter to our downhill mountain bike volunteers in the summer, the emphasis of the importance of safety is a part of our culture.”

Vail Mountain is a five-time award winner of the NSAA’s Heads Up National Safety Awareness Week. So how do they do it? Vail’s vice president of operations Brian McCartney offers these tips.

- Enlist the talent and instill creative license in your staff
- Be sure to recognize success
- Establish partnerships, especially in the ski safety arena
- Involve the local community
- Keep a log of your activities and build a photo album

Next year’s National Safety Week will be held January 15–22, 2005. For more information on how to enter the contest, visit the ski and snowboard safety page at www.nsa.org ■