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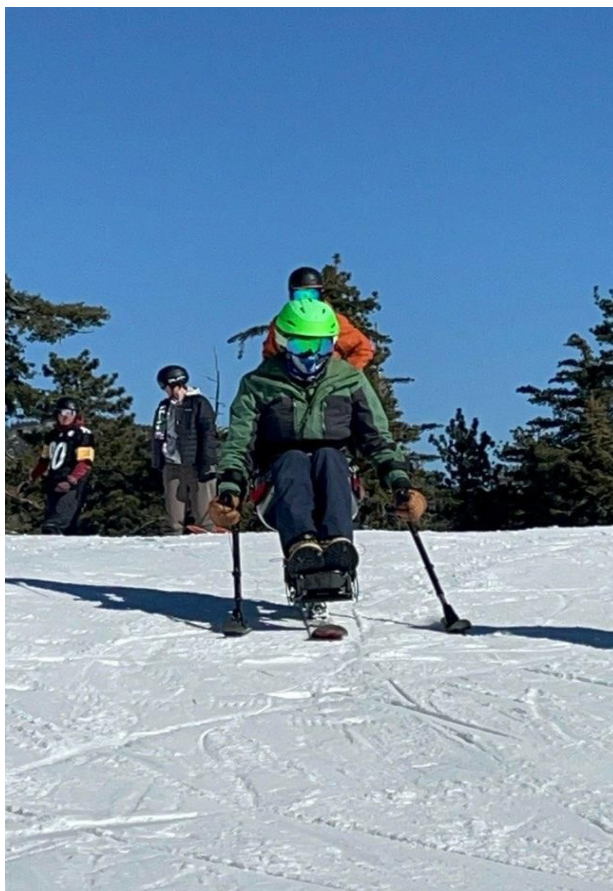
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CEDARPINES PARK • VALLEY OF ENCHANTMENT • CRESTLINE • TWIN PEAKS • RIMFOREST • AGUA FRIA • BLUE JAY • DEER LODGE PARK • LAKE ARROWHEAD • CEDAR GLEN • SKYFOREST • RUNNING SPRINGS • ARROWBEAR • GREEN VALLEY LAKE

Rim Special Athletes sponsors veterans winter sports clinic

By **RHEA-FRANCES TETLEY**
Staff Writer

It is the time of year that Rim Special Athletes (RSA) conducts their veterans winter sports clinics at Snow Valley. They offer these classes to help America's injured veterans recover from injuries such as amputations, brain injuries, PTSD, blindness and other injuries by integrating alpine skiing and snowboarding



Using RSA adaptive sit-ski equipment on Snow Valley's slopes during the first day of the veterans winter sports clinic.

into interventions that physically challenge their bodies through movement that builds their confidence and gives the veterans a feeling of resiliency. Some vets require adaptive equipment and RSA supplies that and specially trained instructors to enable them to achieve these lofty goals.

These skiing and snowboarding activities give the vets a more positive body image of what they can do and teaches them they can enjoy activities they did

previously or discover new challenges and sports they had never previously attempted. This program works in conjunction with the various rehabilitation programs the veterans are enrolled in at the VA, after injuries suffered in battle.

RSA is a group of volunteers dedicated to providing activities for individuals with special needs and those veterans who have been injured during their service to the country. Rim of the World Special Athletes' objectives and purposes are to provide a recreational experience that is safe and positive for adaptive individuals and veterans.

The RSA veterans winter clinic promotes biopsychosocial rehabilitation and sports performance enhancement by psychosocially challenging the mind and body through the building and strengthening of internal positive resources, while having fun and learning a new individual sport.

RSA recently had their welcoming barbecue, greeting the season at Snow Valley. During the barbecue, the ski patrol joined in and socialized with the vets, along with the ski instructors. This social time is enjoyed by all. RSA brought the barbecue, burgers and hot dogs, and the vets brought their appetites and were expressing how much they were enjoying the beginning of the ski season. That day, all the snow was man-made, but the skiing was still fun.

The vets are excited that snow has now fallen and that they will be coming two to three times a month for the RSA ski days at Snow Valley. Their Veterans Administration bus is not deterred by the snow as it has four-wheel drive, snow tires and chains with a trained driver. Most ski days, the VA brings between 12 and 24 skiers for the day. Most of the vets need adaptive equipment and adaptive instructors, which RSA supplies. RSA trains the vets how to ski with their particular special need, as some have lost a limb, eye or have another disability. But through skiing they learn how to adapt and through these adaptive skills they also learn how to continue living a full life.

RSA will be hosting the vets at Snow Valley on Feb. 3, 10 and 24 and March 10, 20 and 24. At the end of the season, another barbecue will be held to celebrate their season of successes. That day is one of rejoicing at all the changes in attitude and the accomplishments that have been achieved. RSA President Jack Cooperman is very proud of how impactful this program can be on the veterans' future and their lives.

Some of the goals of the RSA winter ski clinic are to improve the veteran's endurance, strength, flexibility and balance, which will help him or her be able to do their own self-care, enhance their life management skills and enjoy a new sport, which will assist them in enjoying life again. This helps them learn an injury is not



Hector, one of the vets, insisted on cooking the burgers. (Photos courtesy of RSA)

the end of enjoying life, but they learn how to enjoy it in a slightly different way.

Through this program, the vets learn to focus more on the process over the outcome, which also gives them the ability to cope with stress and pressure. Through the RSA skiing program, it shows them that even when they fall down, getting up and skiing again is fun.

The Rim Special Athletes Foundation serves individuals of all ages with visual and hearing impairments, amputations, spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Down syndrome and autism, as well as many other cognitive and physical disabilities. They will be offering a snowtubing day at Snow Valley in February for their members.

RSA also offers summer programs at Lake Arrowhead and other activities for those who live locally. For more information on the Rim Special Athletes Foundation, or to get involved in their activities, see their website, <https://rimspecialathletes.org>. Contact them directly by email at RimSpecialAthletes@gmail.com.