

## Special athletes complete winter season of activities

By RHEA-FRANCES TETLEY  
Staff Writer

Rim Special Athletes (RSA) finished another winter season with their Veterans Ski and Ride Clinic at Snow Valley. The veterans came from the VA Health and Rehabilitation Program in San Diego to learn to ski, gain confidence in their abilities and learn to not be hindered by their disabilities.

While learning to ski, the vets have the opportunity to learn new skills that support their treatment goals. They first attended the dry-land ski simulator clinic in San Diego to learn the basics of skiing and to understand how their special abilities can be modified. Then they came to Snow Valley to practice those skills under the direction of RSA leader Jack Cooperman and volunteers, including Johnny Auer, Steve Auer, John Moore, Bobby Mourino, John Pacenti, Randy Pattison and Bonnie Peterson.

“The RSA Veterans Winter Clinic promotes biopsychosocial rehabilitation and sports performance enhancement by integrating the activity of alpine skiing and snowboarding into interventions that physically challenge the body through movement and psychosocially challenge the mind and body through the building and strengthening of internal positive resources, aka resiliency,” said Cooperman.

Each winter, the Rim Special Athlete program at Snow Valley has offered these veterans and other adaptive athletes a special ski program, through which they have a confidence building experience, despite any previous injuries, amputations, prosthetics or abilities. After eight sessions and dozens of veteran participants, this season ended with a barbecue for all the veterans and volunteers.

Since there was still snow the next day, RSA initiated a snow-shoeing program with participants from the Inland Empire Lighthouse for the Blind at Rim Nordic. That snowshoeing program is volunteer dependent. This first season of snowshoeing at Rim Nordic was coordinated by Jack Cooperman, assisted by volunteer Beth Johnson. Each Lighthouse participant was guided as they enjoyed snowshoeing through the forest across the Rim Nordic snow area.

Then, to wrap up the winter season of activities, RSA hosted a snow tubing day at Snow Valley on Monday, March 25 for all RSA members who wished to participate. About 30 attended, enjoying the fresh snowfall from the weekend before and spent hours on the tubing slopes followed by a pizza party on the sunny deck overlooking the slopes.



Lighthouse for the Blind snowshoeing at Rim Nordic.



RSA Vet skiers with their adaptive equipment at Snow Valley (Photo by Rhea-Frances Tetley)

The Rim Special Athletes Foundation is a group of volunteers dedicated to providing activities for individuals with special needs and disabled veterans, offering activities year-round. For many years, the RSA organization has been providing winter snow programs and summer water sports activities as a part of their year-round offerings of sports for individuals. RSA has offered golfing, skiing and snowboarding, water sports, fishing, plus year-round virtual yoga classes. Each activity offers a chance for socialization and an opportunity to learn new skills and RSA gives them the opportunity to practice those skills as often as possible. Many of the RSA participants ride or walk in the holiday parades in Crestline and Blue Jay.

The spring and summer programs will be starting up soon, with water sports on the beach near Peninsula Park at Lake Arrowhead for the kids and their families, enabling the participants to enjoy the RSA water toys for the lake, such as kayaks, an aqua cycle, lily pads, stand-up paddle boards (SUP), paddle boats and the ever-popular squirt cannons, along with an opportunity to swim. Fun will be the operative word, as the participants, ranging in age from 10 to older adults, play in the water on the beach, ride the toys and have lunch together. For more information on how to get involved in Rim Special Athletes, email them at [RimSpecialAthletes@gmail.com](mailto:RimSpecialAthletes@gmail.com).

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. All funding comes from donations and fundraisers at no cost to the participants.

For more information on the Rim Special Athletes Foundation or to get involved in their activities, see their website, <https://rimspecialathletes.org>.