

THE Big Bear CONNECTION

March/April 2026
Volume 2 • Issue 2
FREE

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2026 Pet Photo Contest Winner



From the Mountain to the Page,
the High Altitude Training Center
Newsletter Makes Its Debut.

“Where Elevation Meets Determination.”

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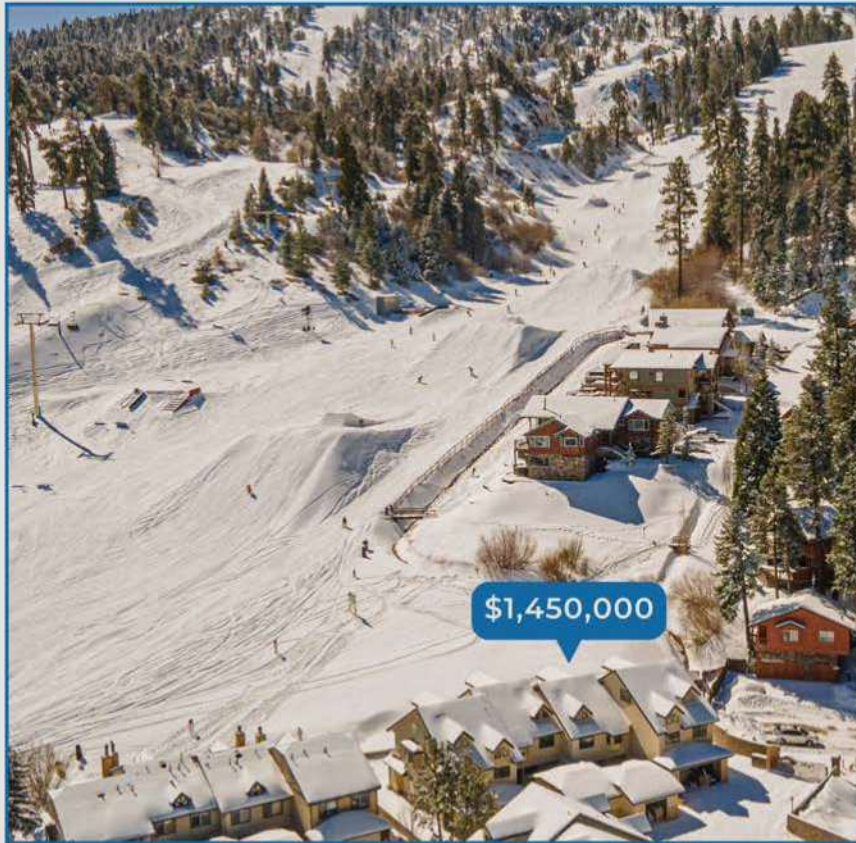


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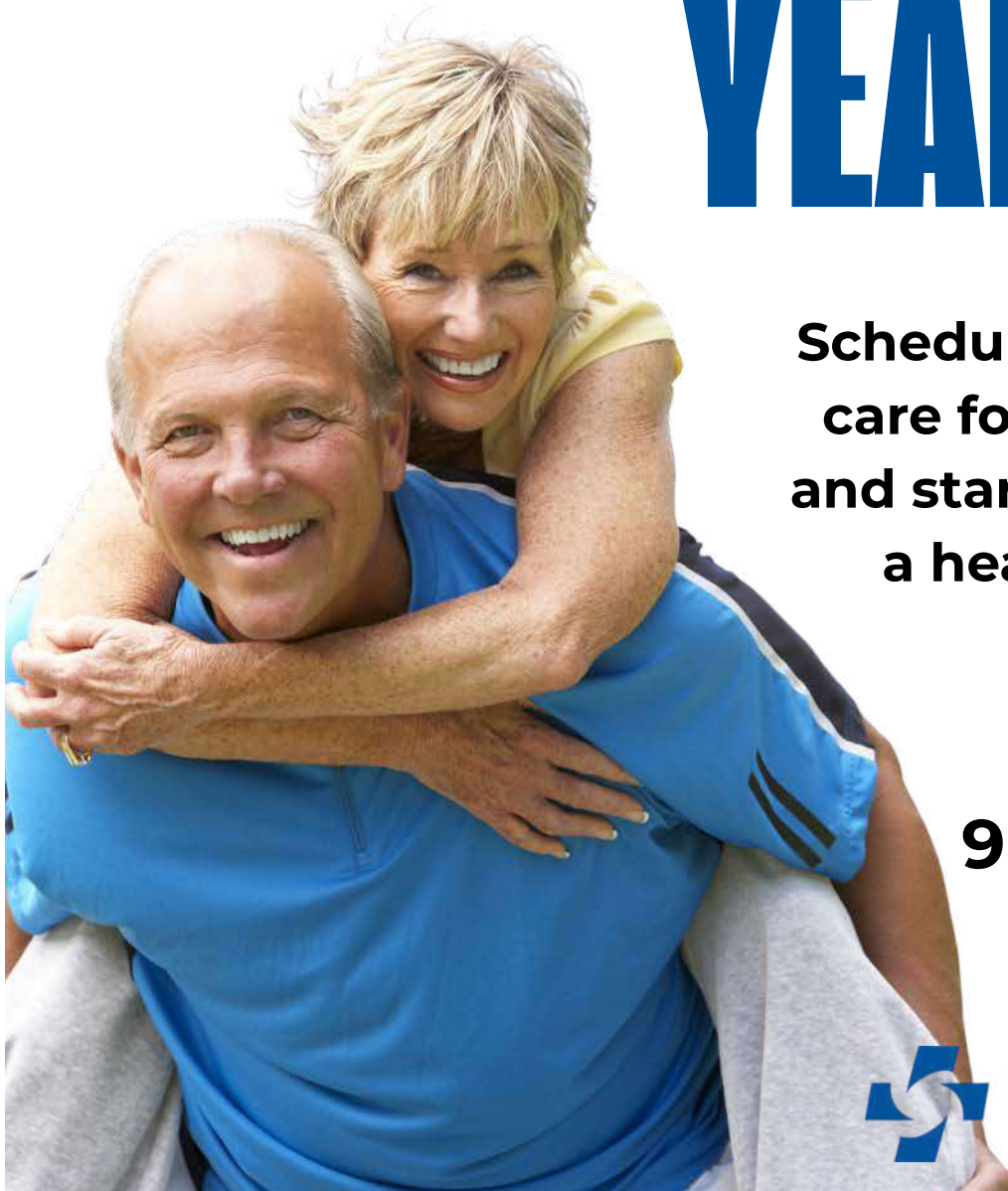


Shadow on the left watching
Jackie jump perch.

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BIG BEAR MARKET UPDATE

Big Bear Market Stats

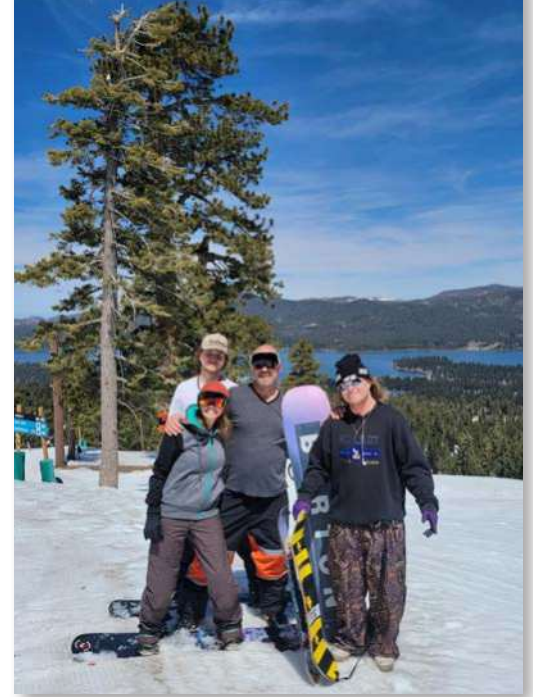
Data as of 3/2/26

(Data from Big Bear MLS & out of area MLS)

- Active Single-Family Residential Listings: **498** (A normal market has a 6-month supply of homes for sale.)
- Sold in the past 6 months: **445**
- Sold in the past 30 days: **60**
- Open escrows: **77**
- List price range: **\$199,900 - \$4,350,000!**
- Median Sales Price (for the past 90 days): **\$431,500**
- Ave. sales price to list price (for the past 90 days): **97.09%** of asking-
92.93% of original list price (before price reductions)
- Average days on market (for homes sold in the past 90 days): **94**
- Price reductions in the past 7 days: **21**

Email me at bigbearresortliving@gmail.com today for your free market update and expert assistance with your property search and/ or home sale. I would love to help!

Are there any other stats that you would like to see here? Let me know and I can add it!



ROOTED IN HISTORY *Echoes of Elegance: The Highlander Hotel*

In the heart of Big Bear's golden era, the Highlander Hotel stood as a beacon of luxury and glamour. Built in the mid-1920s at the southwest corner of Lakeview Drive

and Bartlett Road, it was the grandest hotel in the valley — a favorite retreat for movie stars and high society guests seeking mountain serenity.



Its legacy lives on at the site of today's Robinhood Resort, but the original Highlander met a tragic end when fire swept through the building on the night of November 27, 1940. Though the flames took the structure, the stories and spirit of the Highlander still linger in local lore.

Photos and historical info provided by Mark Durban.



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As a lifelong resident of Big Bear with 20 years of real estate sales experience, I am confident I can get the job done for you! My family has been in Big Bear for several generations, and my husband and I raised our two boys here as well.

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If you need anything, please don't hesitate to contact me directly at 909-261-2486. I look forward to helping! Thank you. Nothin' but the best! God bless!



Holly Gardner

Big Bear Resort Property Specialist
BRE# 01731359

909.261.2486

BigBearResortLiving@gmail.com
BigBearResortLiving.com



Publisher's Note

March/April, 2026 – The Big Bear Connection



Hello Big Bear!

This issue feels especially full. The kind of full that only happens here. We finally had snow. The real kind. The kind that blankets everything and reminds us why winter in the mountains is worth the wait.

And then, two eggs.

As we remember and celebrate the life of *Sandy*

Steers, a tireless advocate for our local bald eagles, the nest holds new life. There's something deeply special about that. *Sandy* reminded us that living here isn't passive. It's participatory. When you choose to live in the middle of nature, you become part of its care.

Up here, surrounded by forest, lake, and wildlife, we are all, in our own way, natural environmentalists. Loving this mountain means protecting it. Taking care of it is a way of life.

There's so much more inside these pages.

The High Altitude Training Center has published its quarterly newsletter, and if you haven't stopped by yet, the time is now. Go take a look. There's a steady energy building there. Athletes training, children laughing, community growing, something bigger taking shape.

Our *Pet Photo Contest* brought in 109 entries. One hundred nine. We truly couldn't narrow it down to just one. The winners are *T-Bone and Brisket*, two adorable Scottish Highland cows who completely stole our hearts. Have fun looking through all the honorable mentions. The personality in these photos is a reminder of how much joy animals bring into our mountain lives.

I also sat down with *Dana Andrews of Mountain Yoga Center* for a thoughtful conversation about business, life, and the wellness community in Big Bear. It's honest, inspiring, with a little bit of zen mixed in.

Everybody Jump! It's time again for the Polar Plunge in support of the *Special Olympics*. A chilly tradition that reflects the generosity and heart of this town.

Also featured is the creative partnership of *Irma and Brian Macleod*, blending music and art in a way that feels authentic, wild, and beautifully collaborative, with a little *Sheryl Crow* story mixed in.

Snowfall. New life. Wellness. Creativity. Community.

This is Big Bear. Where eagles soar and the land feels alive.

Sit back, relax, and enjoy the read.

With love,

J Nemeth
Jessica Nemeth
Publisher

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Have a story to share, a photo you think is fantastic....an idea for a future issue? Please contact us! (Every effort is made to avoid errors, misspellings, and omissions. If you find any, please bring them to our attention and accept our sincerest apologies. Thanks!)

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March

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LA Kings Watch Party
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Big Bear Comedy Underground
- Care For Big Bear Presents* _____ 03/21
Climate and Cocktails
- Big Bear Mountain Resort Presents* _____ 03/28
Red Bull Roll the Dice

April

- Big Bear Mountain Resort Presents* _____ 04/04
Bear Break
- Chateau Big Bear Presents* _____ 04/05
Annual Easter Egg Hunt
- Special Olympics Inland Empire Presents* _____ 04/18
Polar Plunge
- Care For Big Bear Presents* _____ 04/25
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Inside Big Bear's First Nature Documentary

High above the desert floor of Southern California, Big Bear Lake sits where the air cools, the pace slows, and the landscape shifts in ways you can feel the moment you arrive. It's an ecosystem known as a sky island, a high elevation ecosystem shaped by conditions found nowhere else nearby. Forests replace scrubland. Weather moves fast. Wildlife follows different rules. Seasons are not just something you notice, they shape how life happens here. And if you spend enough time in Big Bear, you start to understand that this place does not just change with the seasons. It changes the people who live in, and visit it.

That idea sits at the heart of Sky Island Sanctuary: Big Bear Lake, a documentary series created to explore this place not as a backdrop, but as a living system where land, wildlife, and community are deeply intertwined. The series was produced by Visit Big Bear, Care For Big Bear, and The Night Collective, and filmed entirely by a crew made up of Big Bear residents. This is not an outside production passing through. It is a story shaped by people who live here, work here, and understand what it means to share space with a complex and delicate environment.

Because of its elevation and isolation, Big Bear Lake supports an ecosystem unlike the landscapes below it. That separation allows unique biodiversity to thrive, but it also makes the region especially sensitive to change. Weather shifts quickly. Wildlife adapts constantly. Human impact, even when well intentioned, can have lasting effects. Sky Island Sanctuary explores those realities through lived experience rather than explanation, showing how life in a sky island requires awareness, patience, and adaptability.

What makes Sky Island Sanctuary feel different from traditional nature programming is the intention behind it. The series is visually rich and honors the beauty of Big Bear Lake, while staying rooted in the realities of life here. It centers on the people who know our community and its ecosystem best. Viewers meet several locals from around Big Bear, each offering a perspective shaped by daily, hands on experience with the land and wildlife.

The series also brings audiences inside moments rarely seen. Cameras follow animals at the zoo as they receive critical veterinary care, capturing both the fragility of wildlife and the expertise required to give them a second chance. Veterinarians and caretakers share what it means to work at the intersection of science and compassion, where decisions matter and outcomes

really matter. These moments ground the series in honesty. Conservation is not presented as an abstract idea or a distant mission. It is shown through real choices and responsibilities carried by people who care deeply about this place. Sometimes that work is quiet. Other times it is urgent. Always, it is personal. The series is hosted by Kathryn Hutchinson, who brings a visitor's perspective to the story. She approaches Big Bear Lake with curiosity and respect, asking the questions many first time visitors would ask. Her presence helps guide viewers into the complexity of a sky island without telling them what to think, allowing the place and its people to speak for themselves.

Episode one, titled Second Chance Heroes, introduces stories of resilience that reflect the reality of life here. From wildlife rehabilitation to habitat stewardship, the episode highlights what it means to step in when something is vulnerable and to accept that outcomes are never guaranteed. These are not framed as dramatic victories, but as ongoing commitments that require care and follow through. The impact of using a local crew is felt throughout the series. Familiarity with the landscape allows moments to unfold naturally. The camera waits when it should, moves when it needs to, and understands the rhythms of weather, seasons, and wildlife. The result is a series that feels grounded and observant rather than imposed.

Big Bear Lake has long been known as a destination for outdoor recreation, but Sky Island Sanctuary adds depth to that understanding. It shows that enjoying this place comes with responsibility, and that living in a sky island means learning how to adapt alongside nature rather than trying to outpace it.

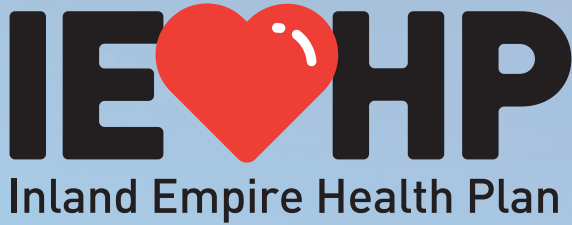
Sky Island Sanctuary: Big Bear Lake is ultimately an invitation to slow down, pay attention, and see this mountain community for what it truly is. A place shaped by elevation, sustained by care, and defined by the people who understand that living with the land is the only way forward. Whether experienced through the series or in person, the sky island leaves its mark long after you return to lower ground.

Watch Episode One, *Second Chance Heroes*, now at bigbear.com.





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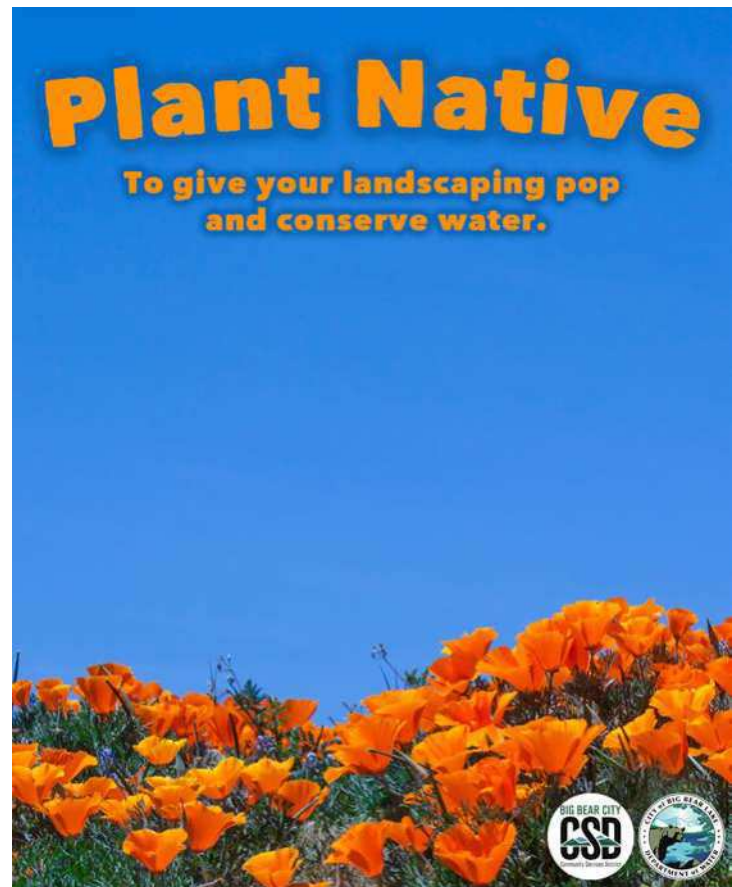

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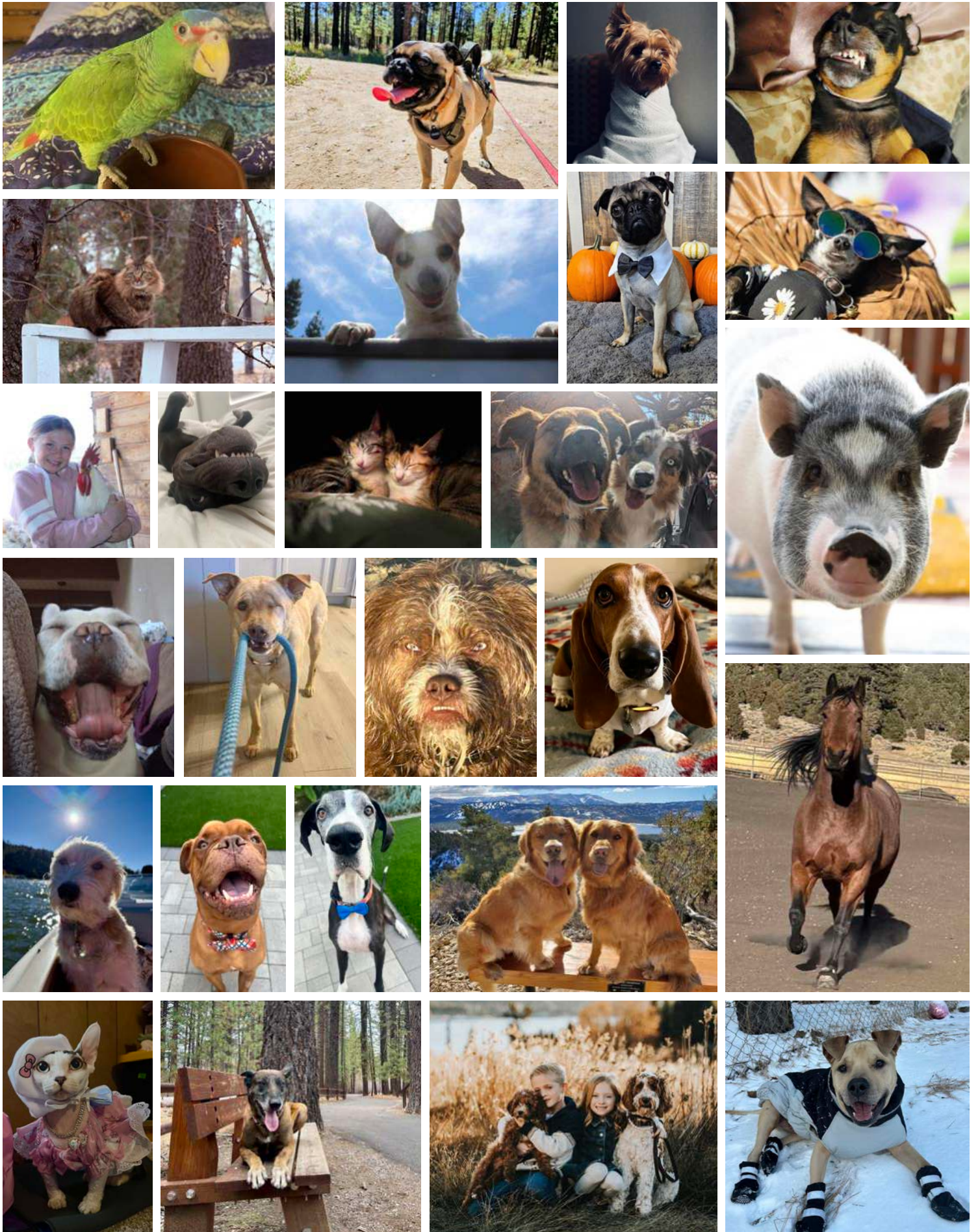
*T-Bone
& Brisket!*

*With faces and fur like that,
how could we resist?*

*A huge thank you to all who entered - Big Bear
sure has some pawsitively adorable pets!*

FROM THE WINNER

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MOUNTAIN YOGA CENTER

Celebrates Ten Years of Harmony, Balance, and Community

By Jessica Nemeth



Dana Andrews
Owner, Mountain Yoga Center

Ten years is a beautiful milestone, one that speaks to dedication, community, and the inner strength that comes from following your purpose. For *Dana Andrews*, founder of *Mountain Yoga Center* in Big Bear Lake, these ten years represent far more than running a business. They mark a decade of shared movement, connection, and heart.

Dana first discovered yoga in 1995, when college life and work demands left her searching for peace of mind. What began as a tool to manage stress quickly grew into a lifelong journey of self-discovery. By 2002, she was teaching full-time at *YogaWorks* in Orange County after earning her certification from the *Ashtanga Yoga Center* under the guidance of the renowned Tim Miller. Her devotion led her across the globe to India, where she studied with *Ashtanga master Sri K. Pattabhi Jois*, his daughter *Saraswathi*, and his grandson *Sharath*, an experience that deepened her understanding of yoga as both a physical and spiritual practice.

In 2013, Dana followed her heart to the mountains of Big Bear. Surrounded by pine trees and fresh mountain air, she felt an instant sense of grounding. At that time, there was no yoga studio in town, so she began teaching at a local gym, gathering a small but devoted group of students.

When an old stationery store became available for rent, Dana saw the potential immediately.

“I knew it was time,” she recalls. “I wanted to create a space that felt peaceful and welcoming, somewhere people could connect, unwind, and simply be.”

That vision became *Mountain Yoga Center*, which opened its doors in 2015. Since then, it has blossomed into a sanctuary of peace and connection. When the pandemic forced her to move classes online, the community Dana had nurtured only grew stronger.

“We became a support system for one another,” she says.

“Through the screen, we stayed connected.”

Today, the studio continues to thrive with a team of gifted instructors who each bring their own energy and expertise. *Stefanie Ruland, Taylor Denner, Amanda Carlin, and Emily Gerhardson* lead a range of yoga classes that balance strength, mindfulness, and flow. *Kasey Powderly* offers *Pilates mat classes*, and *Rosie Velasquez* guides deeply healing *sound baths* that fill the space with vibration and zen.

Dana’s own teaching blends her *Ashtanga* roots with modern *Vinyasa flow*. Her classes are for all levels and emphasize breath-linked movement with a rhythm that feels meditative yet empowering.

“Yoga grounds me. It brings me back to myself, and I love sharing that experience with others.”

Looking ahead, Dana envisions the next decade as an opportunity to grow even deeper roots. She hopes to expand the studio’s offerings and create *mountain retreats* where students can immerse themselves in nature, healing, and self-reflection.

As *Mountain Yoga Center* celebrates its 10th anniversary, it stands as a gentle reminder of what is possible when passion, purpose, and community come together to breathe as one.



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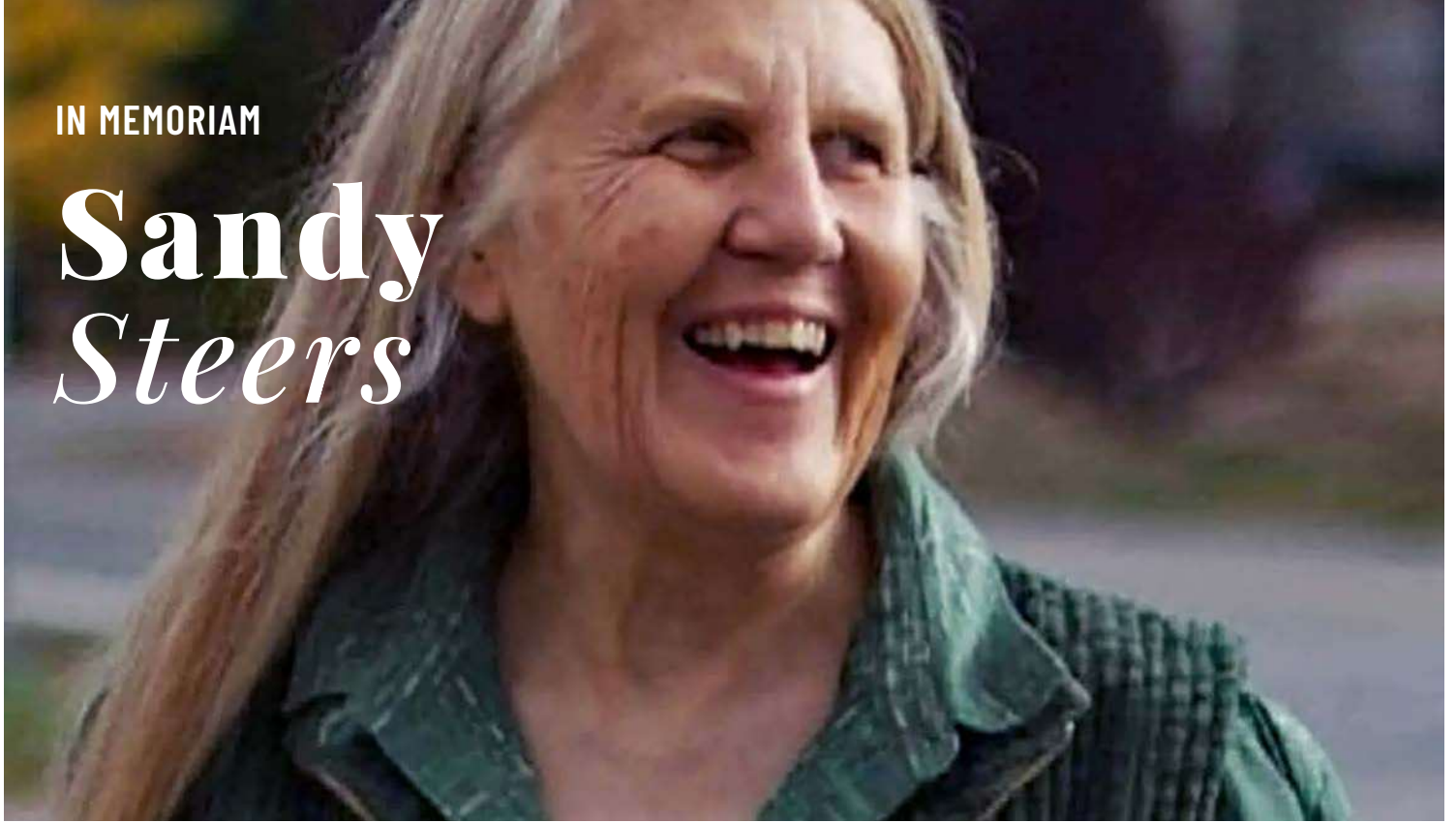
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IN MEMORIAM

Sandy Steers



By Jenny Voisard

Friends of Big Bear Valley

Sandy Steers, the woman responsible for the Big Bear Bald Eagle Livestreams, lived an extraordinary life. She passed away on February 11, 2026. Sandy was the Executive Director of the nonprofit Friends of Big Bear Valley (FOBBV). She helped design the eagle nest camera system a decade ago. Today it streams Jackie and Shadow's lives to the world. Blending science and storytelling, Sandy chronicled what was happening in the nest, bringing people closer to nature and each other. FOBBV's social media channels have over 2.4 million fans.

Sandy's path to Big Bear Valley was special and unique, just like the rare plants she protected. At first, she believed she wanted to be an astronaut and she began her career in aerospace engineering at NASA. Knowing it was not for her, she earned a biology degree from UCLA instead. It was the right path. She spent her days leading tours on the Galapagos Islands and saving turtle eggs, fascinated by nature and touched by the connectedness of it. Later, she owned a tech company and learned the ways of Shaman and energy healing. When nature called to her once again,



she sold her tech business and moved to Fawnskin. While there, she focused on her spiritual healing practices and became a volunteer Bald Eagle observer, helping out a USFS biologist pal.

Sandy was part of a group of neighbors opposed to a proposed luxury housing and marina development, on an undisturbed shoreline named Moon Camp, less than a mile from the nest. It is where eagles perch and forage for food and it also supports a rare and endangered plant species. The group of neighbors eventually formed into FOBBV. With Sandy at the helm, they ensured that projects in the valley followed the laws. She worked tirelessly to preserve the area's critical biodiversity for 25 years.

Sandy tried to save Moon Camp from development until she died. She believed it would be harder for Jackie and Shadow to raise chicks, and the destruction and disturbance would drive them out of their habitat altogether. She negotiated a limited purchase agreement for the San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust to buy the land for permanent conservatorship.

There is massive effort to raise the money by July 2026. To learn more about Sandy's work, and to help Jackie and Shadow, visit [Friends of Big Bear Valley.org](https://www.friendsofbigbearvalley.org) and [SaveMoonCamp.org](https://www.savemooncamp.org).





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TIME TO TAKE THE PLUNGE

By Jennifer Evans

Director of Development: Riverside & San Bernardino

APRIL 18, 2026

Big Bear Lake to Host 2026 Polar Plunge in Support of the Special Olympics

Big Bear Lake, CA - April 18, 2026 - The iconic shoreline of Big Bear Lake will once again be the setting for one of the region's most anticipated and meaningful traditions as the 2026 Polar Plunge returns on Saturday, April 18. Community members, law enforcement officers, athletes, and supporters will take a bold leap into the icy waters to raise critical funds for Special Olympics, supporting year-round sports training and competition for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

This long-standing community event is proudly led through the continued support of the Law Enforcement Torch Run and the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Office, whose partnership has been instrumental in advancing the mission of inclusion and acceptance throughout the region. Officers and deputies from across San Bernardino County will once again plunge alongside community members, demonstrating unity, courage, and commitment to Special Olympics athletes.

New for 2026, the Polar Plunge is raising the bar through an expanded partnership with Hotel Marina Riviera, introducing elevated experiences for top fundraisers. Participants who raise \$5,000 or more will be eligible for exclusive perks, including a VIP overnight stay at Hotel Marina Riviera the night before the plunge, offering a premier lakeside experience as part of their fundraising achievement. Organizers also anticipate expanding this partnership in 2027 with plans to host a fully immersive VIP Plunge experience at Hotel Marina Riviera, creating the ultimate plunge weekend for supporters who go above and beyond.

The 2026 Polar Plunge is made possible through a strong coalition of community partners, including Visit Big Bear, the City of Big Bear Lake, Cole Vocational, Ontario Reign, and Community

Church, all of whom play vital roles in bringing this event to life.

In addition to the plunge itself, participants will be celebrated for their fundraising achievements and team spirit. Awards will be presented to the largest team, the top fundraising team, and the highest-fundraising individual, recognizing the incredible effort and generosity that fuel Special Olympics programs. Attendees can also look forward to the always-anticipated Spirit Award, honoring the most creatively dressed and spirited team - adding fun, personality, and friendly competition to the day's festivities.

For those unable to attend the plunge in person, the community can still participate and show support through a village-wide Polar Plunge fundraiser. In the weeks leading up to the event, select restaurants and businesses throughout The Village will sell Polar Plunge bear icons, allowing supporters to donate any amount starting at \$1. Participants will have opportunities to win special prizes while visibly showing their support for Special Olympics and the athletes it serves.

For decades, the Polar Plunge has been a beloved staple in the Big Bear community - bringing together residents, visitors, first responders, and athletes around a shared mission of inclusion, empowerment, and opportunity. Whether plunging into the lake, fundraising as a VIP, competing as a team, or supporting through local businesses, the 2026 Polar Plunge offers everyone a way to be part of something impactful.

Registration details and additional announcements will be released in the coming months. Community members are encouraged to mark their calendars and prepare to take the plunge—for inclusion, for courage, and for Special Olympics.



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"Tuesday Night Music Club" circa 1993.
Brian, producer Bill Bottrell, David Baerwald
Dan Schwartz, Sheryl Crow, Kevin Gilbert

Creating a Life Together in Big Bear

by Mary Troy Johnston

Nature is essential to the creative experience of this immensely talented couple. Brian remembers the first time he learned about the Japanese experience of forest bathing that originated in the 1980s as an antidote to the stressful impacts of the modern day workplace. Although *Shirin-yoku* is a big attraction for recent converts, it is an ancient tradition known to *Shinto* and *Buddhism*. Going into the forest and heightening all five senses to connect with the natural surroundings, we slow down the churning of thoughts and open a space to discover *yūgen*. The Japanese word refers to a state or wonder in alignment with the greater order of things spelled out in nature under close examination. When creatures tap into this deep well of positive feeling, they experience a source of creativity which Brian and his artist wife, Irma, recognize in themselves.

Irma delved into this satisfying natural connection throughout two decades collectively of being an animal keeper at the Los Angeles Zoo and in more recent years at the Big Bear Alpine Zoo. It is a feeling that goes back to her childhood, a sort of original feeling, when she was inclined to seek refuge in her room drawing animals. This intuitive love blossomed into a career that saw her experientially bond with animals as she shared close contact with them, for instance in weighing snow leopards. Now the couple

draws on the nurturing environment of Big Bear to infuse their respective arts.



Before coming to Big Bear, Brian had established himself as a legendary studio drummer who also found the back and forth flow of musicians in the studio as creative inspiration. He misses those days as musicians' congregating in the studio no longer has to happen with new sound technologies. Brian describes his drumming as doing whatever it takes to make the song better. He knows what it seems to take instinctively. Of his drumming on the Christina Aguilera song, "Beautiful", he says, "You almost cannot hear me" and considers that subtlety "the perfect drumming". As I watched him perform at *The 572 Social*, one of our favorite places of congregating in Big Bear, with the local band, *Mojo Blanc*, I noted that he presented as underwhelming and subtle until the song required more. Then, the drumming became more pronounced or flourished, perhaps, a strong drumbeat or surprising roll at the end or a more embellished sound brushing the cymbal. He also demonstrates the rare treat of a crescendo where he really struts his sticks. Irma noted that Brian's drumming is "very athletic". I called him a "full-bodied drummer" as he bowed into the drums, dipped a shoulder into the swings, bouncing knees as he rapidly raised and lowered his drumsticks. Of the trio *Mojo Blanc*, he is the only one who is not a vocalist whereas Wil Roberts and Matt Workman excel equally in the amazingly smooth and lilting quality of their voices. Brian emphatically transforms the percussion into the third vocalist. Apparently, he has the great talent of giving the drum his distinctive voice.

One might call it a creative moment. Irma and Brian Macleod for a decade had the cabin in Big Bear while their working life as zookeeper and studio drummer and touring drummer (Tears for Fears) was down the hill. The shift started gradually with Irma retiring in 2016 and started working part-time at our beloved rescue zoo in Big Bear. They both began to feel the pull of this mountain community. Brian talked of how he had begun occasionally to finish a recording session in LA and drive up the same day to Big Bear. Both avid skiers and nature lovers, they became more and more immersed in what life this environment has to offer. Then, Brian, after a day of skiing, stopped at the *Copper Q* before returning to Glendale. The thought really hit him like a drum beat, "I really want to live up here." Another couple of beats, "I really think we should retire up here. I need a sign, something to force me to do it." Momentously, the sign arrived in the form of a song played in the background at the *Copper Q*, "*Everyday is a Winding Road*."

It was the very song he, along with Sheryl Crow and Jeff Trott, had created after a winding drive to his parents' cabin outside of Colterville where they had gone to bounce energy off each other for lyrics and melodies. Brian likens the song to an abstract painting, saying the verses contained "riddles" which contributed to the "craziness of the song". According to Brian, "You will hear a person traveling and discovering the twists and turns of life." The artist Prince, who rarely did covers, was attracted to the mysterious vagaries and performed it on his 1999 album, *Rave Un2 the Joy Fantastic*. When "*Everyday*" manifested as a sign, Brian



knew the next stop on the road ("get a little bit closer") was full-time in Big Bear.

Irma's fascinating career path looks as if it were informed by "*Everyday*". She worked in the music industry in sales and marketing for some fourteen years during which she and Brian met. Among her notable stints was her tenure as National Marketing Director for John Tesh (GTS Records) during his Live at Red Rocks album project filmed in Morrison, Colorado. However, her passion for exotic animal care kept calling her, causing her to leave the music business to fulfil her dream of becoming an animal keeper at the Los Angeles Zoo which lasted for fifteen years. She continued her vocation at the Big Bear Alpine Zoo for an additional five years after moving permanently to Big Bear. The winding road to Big Bear also set her on another creative path that harked back to her childhood where her favorite thing to do was draw in her room while listening to music. Irma and Brian decided to add a studio for her art behind their mountain home. It is the first time she has had a studio of her own. It is the first time, as Irma says, "I am able to leave everything up, close the door, and the creative mojo stays in the room. And, it develops." She finds herself missing it and going back to it. Big Bear provides her with "the living creative energy that comes out of nature." Among the surrounding trees connecting and nourishing each other, Irma realizes "nothing is blocked in the flow of creative energy".

The artist's creative range is reflected in both forms and colors. I spied unexpected shapes in her paintings, for example, upside down chalices and an eye within a pyramid, also known as the Eye of Providence, a sign of the presence of the divine. Many of the colors derive from a psychedelic scheme, shocking pinks, reds and malachite greens. She is inspired by the Viennese artist Gustav Klimt who upended conservative traditions in art with the Vienna Secession movement. Its motto was, "To every age its art, to every art its freedom". The use of real gold leaf in his works became a defining as well as precious feature of Klimt's work extolling the subjects he valued, especially women. The pairing of various shades of gold with middle yellow, also a psychedelic color, create different light effects in Irma's works as well as imbuing a formal element. It is as if a free style has been given the golden seal.



With her photo-realistic and natural colored paintings of wildlife, Irma engages with a polar opposite art than the Klimt style. Her comfort level with these creatures great and small is evident. The impression is that she has a refined knowledge of them, even a kinship. The sepia-toned rhinoceros suggests this knowledge and familiarity. The playfulness with which she renders the ears, pointing this way and that, suggests the significant friendship between artist and animal.

Their artistic endeavors in Big Bear seem to have brought out the passion they remember as children. Brian recalls pouring over drum catalogues and waiting for the day he would have his own. His parents asked him to practice for a year on a drum pad before he could have his own. After a year of steady practice, he received when he was eight his first drum kit for Christmas. Irma remembers around the age of ten liking to play with the boys but always pulling herself away to sketch exclusively wildlife and play her accordion. She has enjoyed rediscovering the solitude in her studio here. Their passions are as alive as ever in Big Bear. For this happy stage, they also credit the community accessible in a small town and the close community that has developed around live music at *The Social*. The owners are so committed to supporting local musicians and expanding listening opportunities, they are trying to figure out how to host live music every day of the year. So many are working at creating a life together in our charmed community where *yūgen* (wonder) abounds.

Local band *Mojo Blanc* can be heard at *The 572 Social* Wednesdays, evenings 5:30-8:00.

To learn more about the band, visit Mojoblanc.com.



THE SPORTS OFFICE · BIG BEAR LAKE

THE FUTURE OF ALTITUDE

How The Sports Office Is Positioning Big Bear Lake as a National High-Performance Hub

6,752

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AND JUST GETTING STARTED.



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WHAT IS THE SPORTS OFFICE?

THE HUB BIG BEAR DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS MISSING.

The Sports Office (TSO) Big Bear is not simply a facility operator or sports tourism promoter. It is an ecosystem - and more importantly, a central hub.

Founded by its parent company, Hueco Tanks, and led by CEO Damien Navarro alongside Olympian and Ironman world record holder Cameron Wurf, Director Johnny Burnham, and Camps Manager Sydney Caruso, The Sports Office integrates elite performance, youth development, sports science and longevity, community access, and land stewardship.

But its purpose runs deeper.

For decades, Big Bear has produced remarkable athletes - high-altitude lungs, durable bodies, mountain resilience. Ask any parent in town and you will hear the same refrain: the talent is [here](#). The infrastructure has lagged behind.

Momentum is building, including the development of the new high school stadium and renewed energy around organized sport. Yet meaningful gaps remain: community pools, dedicated training facilities, year-round courts and fields, and structured pathways for young athletes who aspire to compete beyond the valley.

The mountain builds capacity.

Facilities unlock it.

Globally, billions are invested each year in sports infrastructure and performance hubs. Professional and Olympic organizations commit long term only where facilities, lodging, and environmental stewardship align.

What Big Bear lacked was not natural advantage.

It was coordination.

At the center is the *High Altitude Training Center*, positioned with direct access to lake training, mountain terrain, endurance routes, and year-round outdoor opportunity. *The Sports Office* was created to connect these assets intentionally and strategically.

Its mission is long-view: to build a sustainable altitude ecosystem supporting Olympic pipelines, professional camps, youth athletes,



and the local community - while reinvesting proceeds into community-driven projects and infrastructure.

The recent vote by the *Big Bear Municipal Water District* approving U.S. Rowing's altitude training commitment represents more than logistics. It reflects trust, environmental alignment, and civic collaboration.

That moment also honors community leaders such as Sandy Steers of *Friends of Big Bear Valley* and *Water District Board Director* Bob Rehfuss, who championed responsible, low-impact growth and believed in protecting the lake while allowing thoughtful evolution.

Sandy understood something fundamental: not all tourism carries the same footprint. Responsibly structured athletic camps generate economic stability without overwhelming infrastructure. They bring midweek occupancy, repeat visitation, and long-term relationships rather than weekend spikes.

The Sports Office exists as a North Star - aligning performance, community development, and environmental responsibility.

This is performance aligned with permanence.

And it is only beginning.



UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP

A 16,000-Square-Foot Reinvention at 6,752 Feet

The High Altitude Training Center Enters a New Era

At 6,752 feet above sea level, the High Altitude Training Center (HATC) is entering a new chapter - not as a renovation, but as a reinvention.

Spanning more than 16,000 square feet, the facility once operated at only a fraction of its potential. Under new ownership, the entire footprint has been activated and reimagined into a multi-level performance campus designed to maximize Big Bear's altitude advantage.

The transformation is both structural and philosophical. The upstairs loft and performance space have been revitalized. Showers and upgraded dressing rooms now support high-intensity training, and the downstairs bathrooms have been fully renovated.

A dramatic two-story atrium opens the training floor, creating light, visibility, and energy. The main entrance has been relocated to improve flow and accessibility, while outdoor gathering areas foster community connection. A catering kitchen supports camps and events, and an in-house café and retail shop add daily vibrancy to the facility.

What was once underutilized now operates from morning through evening.

Today, HATC functions as a multi-discipline hub rather than a single-use gym. Strength and conditioning, endurance and altitude performance, boxing and fight camps, youth athletic development, breath-work, recovery, and longevity-focused mobility training operate side by side.



The respected *Fight Syndicate* has been integrated under the HATC umbrella, strengthening combat programming, youth classes, and expanding access to high-level coaching.

New additions include dance programming, guided meditation, visiting clinicians, therapy specialists, and community-led workshops. The result is a layered performance environment where elite athletes train alongside youth competitors and community members rebuilding strength. Altitude levels the playing field - and HATC meets people where they are.

Launching alongside the expansion is **Club 6752**, a membership model that extends the altitude experience beyond the gym walls. Members gain access to curated wellness and recovery experiences through resort and hotel partners, including spa amenities, pools, and contrast therapy environments. Performance extends beyond workouts. Recovery and restoration matter.

Access as a Core Value

HATC remains committed to accessibility, offering special membership pathways for:

- Seniors
- Students
- Veterans
- First responders
- Residents facing financial hardship

Under the leadership of General Manager Turoa Tahauri, the goal is not exclusivity - it is durability for athletes, families, and the broader Big Bear community.

This is not simply a gym expansion. It is the activation of a 16,000-square-foot performance engine built for Olympic preparation, youth development, and long-term community health.



THE OLYMPIC PIPELINE BEGINS

Why Big Bear Matters on the Road to LA28

In May, **U.S. Men's and Women's Rowing**, led by Josy Verdonkschot, begins Year One of a three-year altitude commitment in Big Bear Lake.

This is not a camp - It is a pipeline.

The *LA28 Olympic Games* are projected to draw more than 10 million spectators to Southern California, generating billions in global media exposure and bringing tens of thousands of athletes, coaches, and support staff into the region during multiple years of preparation.

But the Games do not begin in 2028. They begin now.

Olympic programs operate on multi-year performance arcs. Physiological adaptation, foster development, and international qualification cycles require stable, repeatable environments. Big Bear's 6,752-foot elevation sits within the optimal adaptation window - high enough to stimulate red blood cell production and aerobic gains, yet low enough to maintain training intensity and quality.

Elite programs do not gamble on environment. Their presence signals validation.

The three-year commitment from *U.S. Rowing* represents the first structured Olympic training pipeline hosted locally. It creates repeat visitation, national and international credibility, and extended athlete residency blocks. More importantly, it establishes a foundation for future Olympic-aligned programs.

And this is only the beginning.

The Sports Office is in active conversation with additional endurance, combat, and hybrid sport organizations exploring altitude blocks between 2026 and 2028. As proximity to Los Angeles becomes increasingly valuable in the lead-up to the Games, Big Bear is uniquely positioned to serve as a preparation hub, recovery destination, media-content backdrop, and brand activation site.

For the next three years, the valley has an opportunity to play a strategic role - not as a satellite, but as a contributor.

Current work includes facility upgrades aligned with Olympic standards, multi-sport scheduling integration,

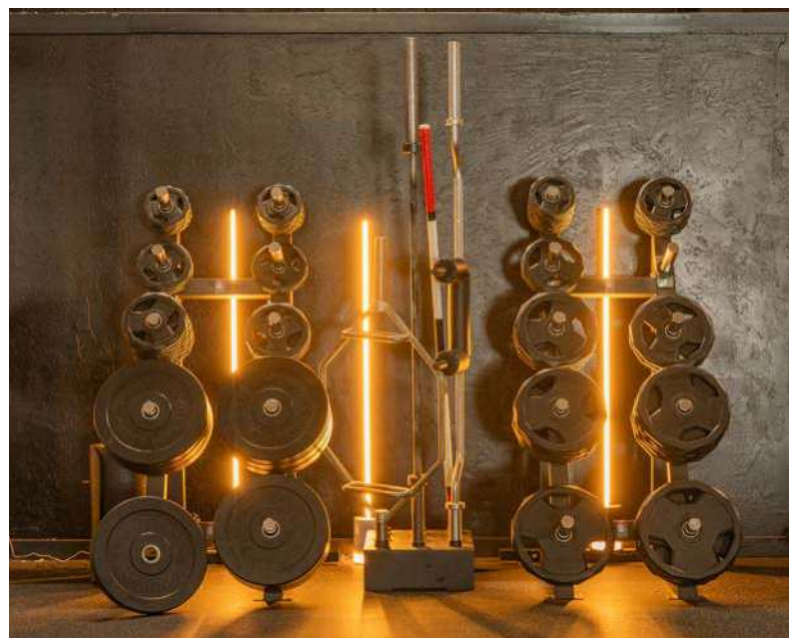


lodging partnerships for repeat training blocks, performance science expansion, and youth pipeline alignment with elite exposure.

Community benefit remains central. Multi-year Olympic blocks create consistent midweek occupancy, long-term vendor relationships, and predictable economic engagement. They also bring expertise into the valley - coaches, sports scientists, and operators willing to mentor young athletes and share performance knowledge.

This is not a one-summer story.

It is a three-year runway - and it does not end in 2028.



ONE MOUNTAIN. MANY DISCIPLINES.

*Altitude does not belong to one sport.
It belongs to anyone willing to work.*



Earlier this year, UFC contender Marlon “Chito” Vera completed a high-altitude fight camp at the *High Altitude Training Center* in preparation for his February 28 bout in Mexico City.

Combat sports demand resilience under oxygen stress. Altitude sharpens that edge - forcing adaptation, deepening endurance, and reinforcing mental durability.

But fight camps are only one chapter.

Big Bear is emerging as a multi-discipline altitude campus capable of supporting professional and Olympic training blocks, collegiate team camps, international endurance groups, youth development programs, hybrid and combat preparation, and multi-sport festivals and competitions. The goal is not specialization within a single vertical; it is integration across many disciplines under one unified performance environment.

Spring brings back Mountain biking, along with the arrival of the 3-day festival, Big Bear Peaks to Pines fest, including the TransRockies Stage Race and the Classic Holcomb Valley Trail Run. Lake-based endurance training intensifies, competitive fishing heats up, and The SkateBoard Association launches its first competitive season.

Conversations are also underway with international organizations - including Dragon Boat federations - exploring the possibility of large-scale team competitions on *Big Bear Lake*. The combination of altitude, water access, and contained geography creates rare logistical advantages that few regions can replicate.

This is not event stacking.

It is ecosystem design.

Single camps evolve into annual commitments. Annual commitments evolve into long-term infrastructure partnerships. Infrastructure invites investment, innovation, and broader participation.

Altitude becomes the common denominator - the shared training advantage connecting seemingly different sports. The vision is not to be narrowly defined by one discipline or season. It is to become altitude-agnostic: a place where rowers, fighters, cyclists, paddlers, runners, skaters, and youth athletes can coexist, train, compete, and return year after year.

One mountain. Many disciplines.

A unified performance environment built on elevation, resilience, and repeatable excellence.



Building Bridges, Not Silos



The Sports Office was never intended to stand alone. From the beginning, its purpose has been rooted in alignment - supporting and strengthening what already exists in *Big Bear Lake* rather than replacing it.

Growth here is shared.

The Sports Office works in partnership with civic leaders, environmental stewards, and economic stakeholders to help ensure that sports tourism contributes positively to the community throughout the year.

Key partnerships include Visit Big Bear, the Big Bear Chamber of Commerce, Care For Big Bear, Open Air, and San Bernardino County Parks & Recreation.

Through its parent company, Hueco Tanks, *The Sports Office* has helped modernize the storytelling around signature events while thoughtfully expanding audience reach across cycling, trail running,

combat sports, endurance programming, and youth athletics. The goal is steady, sustainable activation that supports the mountain beyond traditional tourism seasons.

Corporate & Lodging Alignment

A thriving sports ecosystem depends on strong relationships with hospitality and local businesses.

The Sports Office collaborates with lodging partners such as Sessions Retreat & Hotel, The Burgundy Hotel, Sierra Blue Hotel & Swim Club, Hotel Marina Riviera, and Destination Big Bear to support athlete camps, midweek training blocks, and extended stays. These partnerships help distribute visitation more evenly across the calendar, creating balance and consistency for the local economy.

Real estate leaders, including RE/MAX and Keller Williams Realty, are also part of the broader conversation. There is a shared understanding that long-term investment in health, performance, and infrastructure contributes to property value, livability, and overall community vitality.

Community Health & Access

Beyond competition and events, *The Sports Office* is in ongoing dialogue with the local school district, veterans groups, and nonprofit organizations to expand access to health and wellness resources.

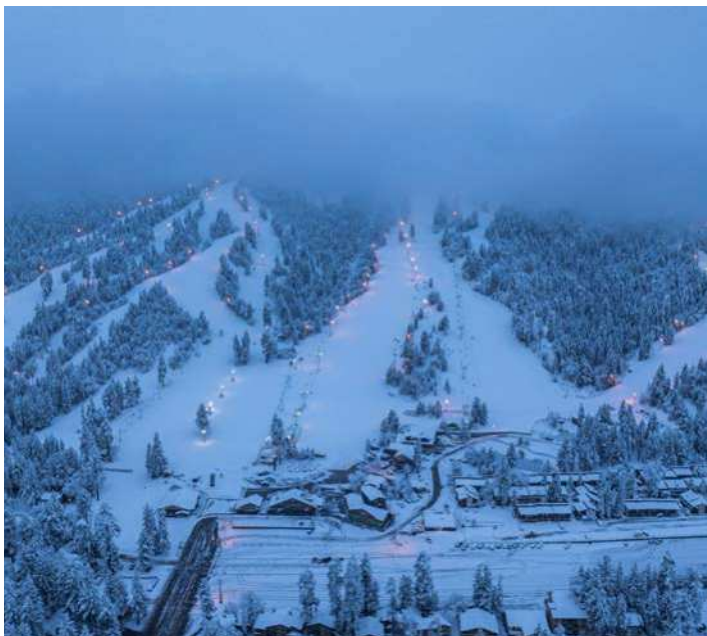
The mission is simple and inclusive:

Open doors - not only for elite athletes, but for seniors, students, first responders, veterans, and families who want stronger, healthier futures.

The belief is that when performance culture aligns with civic leadership, hospitality partners, environmental stewardship, and youth opportunity, the entire community benefits.

Not separately.

But together.



Youth, Ambassadors & The Next Generation

Altitude has its greatest impact when it supports young people.

The *Local Athlete Ambassador Program* was originally launched under the leadership of *Travis Scott, CEO of Visit Big Bear*, with a vision to highlight homegrown talent and connect young athletes to the region's performance identity.

Today, that vision continues to evolve under the direction of *Johnny Burnham, Director of The Sports Office*. The program has grown into a more structured and supportive pathway, incorporating mentorship, coordinated training alignment, and long-term athlete development designed to encourage steady, sustainable progress.

Among the current ambassadors is *Ronnie Mancilla*, a disciplined and determined young boxer from Big Bear. Ronnie trains at the *High Altitude Training Center*, where his program blends strength, conditioning, and technical fight preparation within a consistent performance environment. His work ethic reflects both personal dedication and the quiet resilience often shaped by mountain life.



Siena Harmon represents the off-road cycling community. Raised on mountain terrain, she has developed endurance, technical skill, and mental toughness through training across Big Bear's varied elevation and trail systems. The landscape itself has become part of her preparation, offering both challenge and advantage.

Trey Lanza brings a different but equally important dimension through skateboarding. Recently selected and signed by the *Skateboard Association (SBA)*, Trey reflects the continued growth of youth skate culture in Big Bear. His signing marks a meaningful step toward more formalized development opportunities for young riders. His style blends athleticism and creativity with steady progression and the grit that comes from growing up in this environment.

All three athletes were raised in this community, shaped by its terrain, and are now being supported by it in return.

Through the alignment between *Visit Big Bear and The Sports Office*, ambassadors receive structured access to altitude training facilities, integrated strength and conditioning programming, and ongoing mentorship and performance guidance. They are also provided thoughtful visibility across regional and national platforms, along with connections to broader competitive pathways that may support their long-term goals.

The philosophy behind the program is grounded and inclusive.

As Big Bear's national visibility continues to grow, its youth should grow with it. Altitude is not reserved solely for visiting professionals. It is equally meaningful for those who call this mountain home.





A DIFFERENT KIND OF TOURISM

Big Bear Lake has long been sustained by traditional tourism - weekend travelers, holiday visitors, and seasonal recreation. That rhythm remains an essential part of the region's character and economic health. Sports tourism does not replace that foundation; it simply operates alongside it in a different way.

Unlike short-term vacation travel, structured athletic programming tends to follow a steadier and more distributed cadence. Teams, training camps, and competitions often arrive midweek, book during shoulder seasons, stay for extended training blocks, and return year after year. Rather than concentrating activity into a handful of peak weekends, this model helps spread visitation more evenly across the calendar, offering a layer of stability for lodging partners and local businesses.

That distinction is meaningful.

Athletic groups typically travel with defined goals and predictable schedules. Their presence supports hotels, restaurants, grocery stores,

recovery services, and retail in a consistent manner rather than in brief surges. Many programs return annually, building familiarity and long-term relationships within the community. Over time, these repeat visits foster trust and shared investment rather than one-time transactions.

The benefits are not only economic. Sports organizations often look to build lasting partnerships, contributing to facility improvements and performance spaces while sharing coaching knowledge and sports science expertise. Visiting athletes and staff frequently connect with local youth programs, offering mentorship and encouragement that can have a lasting impact on young competitors.

This is less about volume and more about value.

Traditional tourism brings vibrant energy during peak seasons and remains vital to Big Bear's identity. Sports tourism can help support continuity - distributing visitation, encouraging thoughtful infrastructure development, and creating meaningful engagement across multiple seasons. When aligned responsibly with partners such as *Visit Big Bear*, *the Chamber of Commerce*, *Care for Big Bear*, *Open Air*, and *County leadership*, this approach can complement existing efforts without overwhelming the mountain's character.

Big Bear is not shifting from one model to another. It is layering them carefully and intentionally.

At 6,752 feet, adaptation rewards patience and long-term thinking. Progress here, much like performance at altitude, is built through steady commitment rather than sudden spikes.

This is not a surge in visitation.

It is a strategy for resilience.

Your body can do anything,
it's your mind you have to convince.



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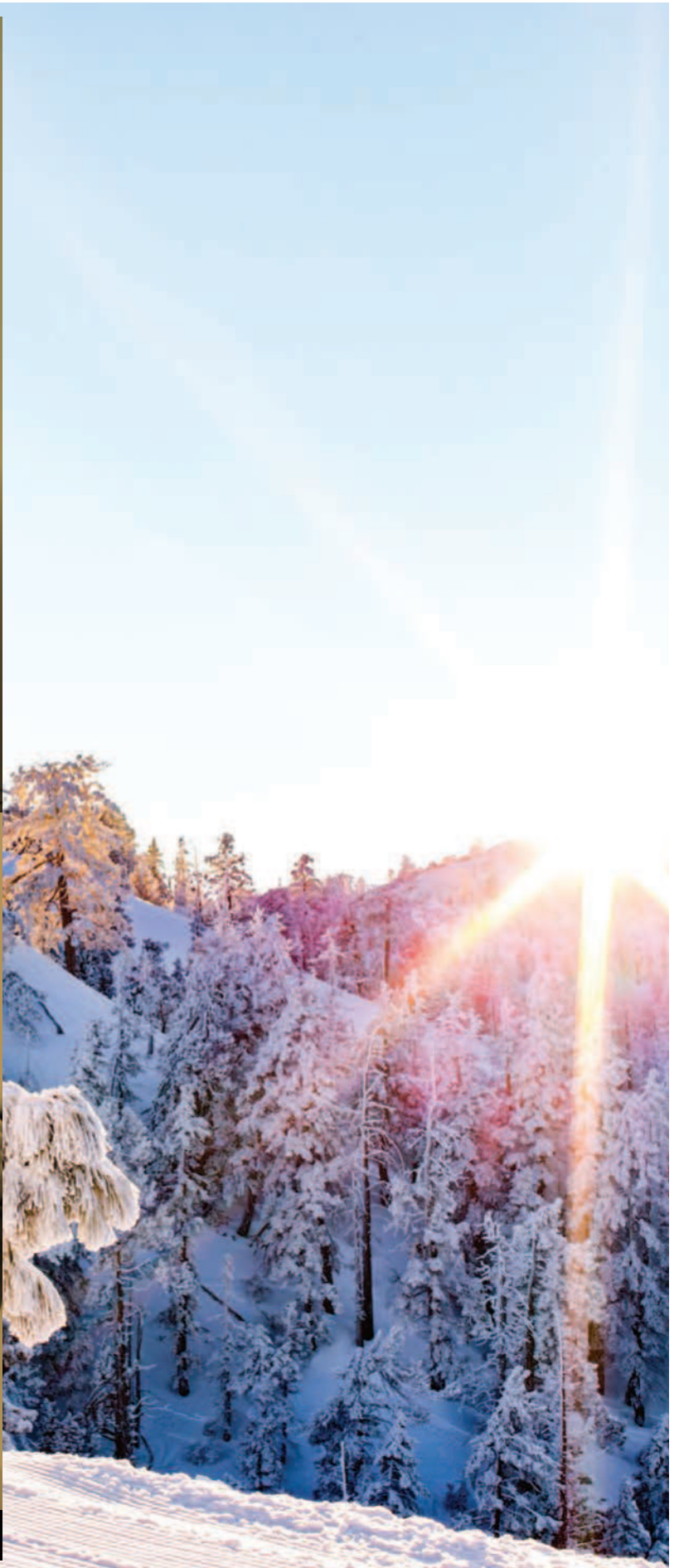
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Care for Big Bear invites volunteers of all ages to help protect Big Bear's shoreline, trails, parks, and recreation areas on select Saturdays in 2026. Together, we'll clean up our community then head to a local eatery or bar to relax, connect, and enjoy one complimentary drink, courtesy of Care For Big Bear.

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