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News Release

The Adaptive Sports Program at Mountain Creek Keeps its Promise

Vernon – It was a beautiful day on the slopes of the Mountain Creek Resort. While thousands of visitors to the Resort enjoyed ideal spring skiing conditions, a special visitor named Nick Cerrato made history by being the first Vernon resident to enjoy the Sugar Slope as a student in the Adaptive Sports Program at Mountain Creek resulting in the fulfillment of a promise to Nick made four years earlier by two local skiers, Buffy and John Whiting.

In 2014 the promise was made to take on the challenge to explore what it would take to develop an adaptive ski program so that he and other special athletes might ski. With the discovery that there was no formal program available at Mountain Creek that would meet Nick’s needs, an effort was kicked off get an adaptive ski program started at the Resort so that he might fulfill his dream to ski. On Friday, March 23rd that promise to Nick was kept.



Nick Cerrato along with the Adaptive Sports Program at Mountain Creek Team headed for the Sugar Slope to Ski. Back row: Nick’s Mom, Patti Cerrato, John Whiting, Tim Stone, Mike Holt, Buffy Whiting, Eileen Andreassi. Front: Nick Cerrato and Caryn Balacky.

Adaptive Sports Program at Mountain Creek Keeps its Promise

On June 26, 2014 the Advertiser News published an article entitled “Area skiers work to provide adaptive ski program at Mountain Creek” documenting the startup of the effort required to make the program a reality. With the blessing of then Mountain Creek ownership and President Bill Benneyan a plan was developed and approved detailing the steps required to make Nick’s dream a reality and fulfill the promise made by the Whiting’s.

Following a change in ownership and management a recommitment to the program was made by the new Mountain Creek owner Jeff Koffman and Resort President Joe Hession to provide the support required to make the program a success. A group of local skiers including David Rowan, Charles Wallace, John Swartwood, Dan Monzo, Buffy Whiting, John Whiting joined by Resort employees Tim Stone and Suzanne Ebling organized into the Adaptive Sports Program at Mountain Creek Advisory Committee and took responsibility for making application to the IRS for non-profit 501(c)(3) status. The application was approved in July of 2016.

A relationship was established between the Mountain Creek Resort and the Helen Hayes Hospital for Rehabilitation. It was determined that the program’s day-to-day operations and delivery of program services would be the responsibility of the Adaptive Sports Program at Mountain Creek’s Operation Committee including Tim Stone Director of Snow Sports School from the Resort and Eileen Andreassi, Director of Recreational Therapy at Helen Hayes Hospital.

With the formalization of the Mountain Creek Resort and Helen Hayes Hospital Partnership the administrative policies, programs and operational plans were developed and the recruitment of program instructors and volunteers for the program began. To help provide financial support for the program donations were made by participants in the Annual Hidden Valley Closed Golf Classic and other contributors.

Under the expert guidance of founder and member of the Board of Directors for the Adaptive Sports Program at Mountain Creek John Swartwood, a PSIA Adaptive Instructor and Examiner training of volunteers and instructors was carried out. This included meetings and on-snow training sessions with instructors and volunteers over a two year training period to ensure safe, fun and enjoyable instruction to those special athletes like Nick Cerrato and others who were anxious to experience the fun associated with skiing and snowboarding.

In conjunction with the training efforts and under the direction of Tim Stone and John Swartwood, an assessment was made of the adaptations needed in snow making, grooming and lift operations to make it possible for the special athletes served by the program could safely engage in the program, gain access and exit the chair lifts and have fun on the slopes.

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After four years of hard work by the Adaptive Sports Program at Mountain Creek Team, it all came together on Friday, March 23, 2018 at 1 PM when Nick Cerrato and his Mom Patti arrived at Mountain Creek for his scheduled on-snow session.

After an orientation and preparation for the session the Instruction Team then lead Nick to the base of the Sugar Ski Slope where he was transferred from his wheel chair to the bi-sled which would carry him down the ski slope. The group then moved on to the chair lift to load Nick on the chair using the techniques they had practiced over and over to ensure his safe use of the lift.

Upon arrival at the top of the Sugar Slope the real fun began. It was a dream come true for Nick as he in his mono-slide was guided down the slope by his team of instructors who controlled the direction and speed of the sled by a tether connected to the sled as other team members provided a perimeter of space to ensure the safety of Nick and the other skiers enjoying runs on the slope.



Nick Cerrato enjoying a run on the Sugar Slope with Program Board of Director and Instructor Tim Stone

Friday, March 23, 2018 will be a special day of memories for Nick, those responsible for the startup of the Adaptive Sports Program at Mountain Creek and the trained instructors who have worked so hard to make the day possible. It is hoped that the fun on the snow enjoyed by Nick will be duplicated by many other special athletes, young and old who have a desire to experience the fun and joy associated with skiing and riding at the Resort, and that the program will eventually be expanded to include summer activities including hiking, riding, and the other recreational activities provided by the Mountain Creek Resort.

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At the conclusion of this historical startup session, Nick was awarded a certificate of achievement to memorialize the special day and recognize the importance of the kick off of the Adaptive Sports Program at Mountain Creek.



Nick Cerrato receives a Certificate of Achievement from the Adaptive Sports Program founders and Program Instructors

If you would like more information or volunteer or make a donation to support the Adaptive Sports Program at Mountain Creek visit the program’s website at www.aspmc.org. You can contact the program by sending an e-mail to info@aspmc.org or by contacting the Mountain Creek Resort at 973-827-2000.

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