



**AbilityPLUS Inc.**

# Tracks

The Newsletter of AbilityPLUS Inc.  
A Nonprofit Adaptive Skiing & Recreation Organization

Summer 2004

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## David Skolnick, Volunteer of the Year

David Skolnick wandered into the Waterville office one day inquisitive about the program. How did it work, how much time did one have to commit to, would he ever have to go out alone with a disabled student?

He wore his hesitation and insecurity on his bright red jacket. In our conversation he told me outright that he was nervous around people with disabilities and the sweat on his brow confirmed that.

In a short time he learned the teaching process, learned about the disabilities, but his biggest hurdle was his fear. He worked with mentors, assisted with lessons over and over again, until the day came when we needed him to take his own lesson. Of course he was successful. He knew his stuff. That was last year.

His real breakthrough came this year working with a young girl with Cerebral

Palsy. He somehow connected with Amanda, and realized her potential, experienced her moments of joy and frustration and was so proud of her successes.

He was kind and soft with this little person, who needed a gentle soul. He understood her frustrations, her need for success without constraints and her own joy in her accomplishments.

Honestly I was nervous about sending him out with her but he proved me wrong. It was so wonderful to see the growth from a person too afraid to speak directly to a person with a

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*David Skolnick & Amanda*

## Paralympian & 5-Time Gold Medalist Chris Waddell Endorses AbilityPLUS!

"More than the gold, being included is what winning is all about." says Chris Waddell who has joined forces with AbilityPLUS as a high profile spokesperson spreading the word about inclusion in sports and recreation programs by the disabled population. "I did not win a gold medal during my greatest day in skiing. My greatest day in skiing was the day that I skied with my college teammates and realized that I was finally a peer."

Chris explained in a recent phone conversation from his home in Park City, Utah. One can see from the short bio below why AbilityPLUS is so fortunate to have Chris as its spokesperson.

In 1988 as a freshman ski racer at Middlebury College Chris broke his back in a freak accident on the hill. Three days short of the accident's one

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# Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Margaret Mead said, "Never underestimate the ability of a small group of committed individuals to change the world. Indeed, they are the only ones who ever have." The AbilityPLUS program directors, volunteer instructors and staff that make it all happen are a small group, dedicated to improving the lives of others and are making positive change in the world. These programs would not run without their commitment. It is their energy that drives the growth and development that we have seen. This newsletter is filled with their stories and pictures, and I hope from it you will appreciate and feel their passion and enthusiasm.

All of the AbilityPLUS programs are growing. This past season, Mount Snow held a huge and very successful fundraising event to support their program, Gunstock has a new director and wonderful energy and support from the mountain and Bretton Woods has re-organized with a group of energized and committed volunteers who want to expand their programs throughout the year. Washuett Mountain, Nashoba Valley, Stowe Resort and Attitash have all totally integrated their programs into the regular alpine ski school, true to the mission of AbilityPLUS. For the first time ever, Waterville Valley will be initiating some summer programs through the town recreation department made possible by a grant from the Howard Connor Foundation.

Read the stories, see the pictures, both in this newsletter and on our website ([www.abilityplus.org](http://www.abilityplus.org)) and know that you too are an integral part of the success of AbilityPLUS. In some way, each of you have given to the students we teach. Thank you for your part whether it is directly working with them, bringing them to our program(s) to participate or your donation to make it all possible. I can't express my thanks enough for being a part of our "small group".

Warm regards,  
Kathy Chandler

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## Program Highlights

### Bretton Woods: A New Face

The 2003 season started with a whole new energy at Bretton Woods. It is a great model upon which others can build a program. The group of volunteers knew that the Adaptive Skiing Program had a lot of potential and they set about to make it happen. They were losing their Director of the past few years and someone needed to step up and make the program go.

A group got together last summer, created a committee structure with roles and responsibilities and Cris Criswell, a retired business executive with adaptive experience and certification stepped forward to run the day-to-day operation. I don't think he thought it would be quite so consuming personally, but he made that program thrive with the help of the group of dedicated volunteers.

They trained every moment they could, with the regular ski school and adaptive specialists, worked closely with the other

mountain departments to access their expertise, raised funds for the program, used the resources of AbilityPLUS, and taught more lessons than ever before. Bretton Woods is a perfect spot for a program, with lots of new lifts and trails and a whole new and fully accessible base lodge. The Adaptive Program Office is strategically placed right next to the Ski School desk, visible to so many of the Bretton Woods visitors.

Skiing there with the views of Mount Washington in the distance, lots of great teaching terrain, and the energy and commitment for the whole group of volunteers makes it an ideal location for the growth that is happening in Adaptive Programs.

This summer they are establishing a Steering Committee to govern the growth and development of the program, lead the committees in their designated tasks and work with the Bretton Woods management to create year around programming.



Just a little help with the ski lift.

## New Summer Program

With a grant from the Haward Connor Foundation the Waterville Valley Adaptive Program has initiated a new summer program. True to the AbilityPLUS mission it is totally integrated into the Waterville Valley Recreation Department Summer Program. With one-to-one supervision our students will participate alongside the other campers, go with the on field trips that are appropriate and accessible. In addition to the regular daily activities, our students will receive specialized instruction time for swimming, riding, individualized active games and daily living skills.

Campers will register by the day or week and the camp will run Monday through Friday from June 23rd through August 27th.

If you are interested in attending the Summer Day Camp at The Waterville Valley Recreation Department, please contact Kathy Chandler at (603) 236-4758.

## What's New

Take a look at the new website at [AbilityPLUS.org](http://AbilityPLUS.org). As part of an in-kind contribution from our PR and Marketing partner, Vital and Ryze has helped us to optimize the AbilityPLUS website experience. We have improved the website and now include pictures of our students and volunteers. Chat with other members on the Forums page and get information about upcoming events on the Calendar or go to the Get Involved page to make donations on line.

**For more information about AbilityPLUS, please contact Kathy**

# Support from Foundations, Corporations and Individuals

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# David Skolnick

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disability to this warm, wonderful caring person, who Amanda skied with all winter. He looked forward to her lessons each week. David's accomplishments of this year were a highlight for me. Knowing he had overcome his fears and could really get into the head of his student, feel their fears, understand

their frustrations and help them to reach new heights. He was honored at the end of the year banquet for his accomplishment and we all hope that he can continue to grow as an instructor for people with all sorts of challenges.

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## Paralympian

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year anniversary he started skiing in a monoski. Less than two years after learning to monoski he was named to the US Disabled Ski Team. Skiing Magazine called him one of "The 25 Greatest Skiers in North America." In his career Chris has won more Paralympic medals (12) than any male skier in history. He's a World Champion in two vastly different sports (alpine skiing in the winter and track in the summer). In total he's won 13 medals

at the Paralympics (12 winter, 1 summer) and nine at the World Championships (6 winter, 3 summer). Chris is credited with revolutionizing the sport of monoskiing and conducts camps for aspiring disabled skiers annually and, is available as an entertaining and motivating speaker. As this goes to press, Chris is preparing for the Summer Paralympics in Athens, Greece.



Welcome aboard Chris!

### MOUNTAIN PARTNERS:

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603 293 4341 x165

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978 692 0649

### OUR MISSION:

To offer increased access to athletic and recreational opportunities for persons with physical and mental disabilities that will create freedom, promote independence, support inclusion and help those individuals and their families discover their full social, mental and athletic potential.



**AbilityPLUS Inc.**

P.O. Box 253

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