

RECREATION

Winter camp brings teen amputees together

Snowboarders catching air and skiers dropping into fresh powder are common wintertime sights in Utah's Wasatch Mountains. Thousands of people flock annually to resorts east of Salt Lake City to test their skills on "The Greatest Snow on Earth." Earlier this year, patients from Shriners Hospital for Children — Intermountain joined the tourists and locals at Snowbird Ski Resort for an innovative winter recreation camp for amputees. The Un-Limb-ited Ski and Snowboard Camp brought 10 teens from Utah and Colorado together with expert instructors and peer-level counselors for four days of skill building, goal setting, teamwork and social activities. When the powder finally settled, each camper had gained a greater understanding of skiing, snowboarding and themselves.

Un-Limb-ited

The Un-Limb-ited group was formed seven years ago by Intermountain Shriners Hospital Physical Therapist Matt Lowell and Child Life Specialist Carolyn Bergquist. Lowell had noticed that his prosthetic patients weren't trying new activities.

"These kids could walk on a level surface, but they seemed too intimidated to try soccer or dance. We wanted to give them a forum to participate in activities with all the other kids," Lowell said.

The group was originally conceived as an outpatient socialization and support group for young amputees and their siblings. Toddlers and teenagers alike, along with their families, came together at the hospital to compare notes and share experiences.

"These kinds of fun, informal interactions with other children can be very therapeutic," observed Bergquist.

From meetings at the hospital, the group expanded to providing more comprehensive recreational outings. Un-Limb-ited group members have since tried ice skating, water skiing, swimming, rock wall climbing, horseback riding and other fun, challenging activities with much success. Recreation therapists and prosthetists from the hospital joined

the group's staff, lending a wealth of interdisciplinary experience and peer-level support.

Still, organizing a four-day, overnight winter recreation camp proved to be a bigger challenge than imagined.

Planning

"Organizing the ski and snowboard camp was a massive undertaking," said Bergquist.

It was Un-Limb-ited's most comprehensive activity to date, involving hundreds of hours and nearly a year of planning and fundraising.



Ready for a day of winter sports activities, Ken Kozole, seating specialist at the Intermountain hospital, and Julian eagerly await the end of their ride on the ski lift.

