

At the start of this year I was, to be honest, more than a little worried about what was in store for DSUK throughout the coming year. As with many other charities, it is a very daunting prospect having to survive in this financial climate and it was very scary knowing that many charities were folding each week! I won't sit here and say that everything was rosy and smooth sailing, we had our ups & downs but as I look back and report on our programs and achievements, I can put my hand on heart and say we did ok! I have to give credit to everyone for making that happen, staff, trustee's, patrons, our celebrities, our members, our corporate supporter's, trust and grant foundations and supporter's like you; without you it just wouldn't happen.

Where do I start .....

The expansion of our adaptive ski schools around the country has been moving on a pace under the watchful eye of our development officer Rachel Easton. Rachel has just completed the first year of her 'Children In Need' role and a very successful year it has been. Rachel has increased the access for ski lessons at four of the indoor snow centres, these are Chill Factor in Manchester, Snowzone at Castleford, Snowzone at Brearhead, Glasgow and The Snow centre at Hemel Hempstead. Plans going forward for 2010/11 include introducing two new Adaptive ski schools; these will be situated at Snowzone, Milton Keynes & The Snowdome Tamworth. The increase in demand has meant the need to train more instructors and encourage these instructors to gain their adaptive qualification through BASI (British Association of Snowsport Instructors - more on the adaptive qualification later)

With the expansion of our ski school program we are very pleased to welcome new members of staff to our team. Dave Whitehead; situated at Chill Factor and Castleford, will be known to a lot of our members. Dave worked for the ski school in Andorra for many years and was employed by us to instruct on our Andorra activity trips. We then have Nicholas Hatherley who is our full time instructor at the Hemel slope. Nick has been delivering lessons at Hemel since October 2009. Last but not least is Keira Young who is now our full time instructor based out of Brearhead. Keira has a long history with DSUK (the clue is in the name!) she is in fact my daughter. Under Rachel's guidance they are all increasing the opportunity for more people to get involved with DSUK be it as a skier, volunteer or instructor. I look forward to seeing the opening of the two new centres and the exciting plans Rachel has for some new initiatives that will take place over the coming year.

As in every organisation people decide to move on and we are no different. Amy King our fundraising coordinator received an offer of promotion within another charity which she couldn't refuse. We were very sad to see Amy leave but we all wish her every success in her new position. She still keeps in touch and promotes our cause. With Amy leaving and with the Charity ever expanding it's given us time to look at the skills required within our fundraising team. We realised that although the charity has survived historically from many donations from trust & grants we understood, in the financial climate, that those donations would become more and more difficult to secure. With that in mind we knew that we had to increase the skill set among the fundraising team to capitalise on people expertise. The decision was made to advertise for a trust & grant fundraiser. I'm pleased to report that we have employed Ruperta Melville into this position. Ruperta is from a legal background and worked in the city for many years until she decided on a life change and moved up to the Highlands of Scotland. Ruperta works out of our main office here in Scotland. We also advertised for an events fundraiser. Sarah Bennett was the successful candidate and started working for us in November. Sarah comes with a fundraising background; she worked for 'MedEquip4Kids' in the Manchester area. Sarah has joined Sophie Wood our part-time events fundraiser at our office at Chill Factor in Manchester. They have really gelled as a team and we have already seen some great events being held, one being the DSUK national ski-a-thon which was held in May and was an overwhelming success. I know that the team has some very exciting events planned

for the coming year so keep your eye on our website and newsletters and spread the word - we need as many people as possible to be involved.

In November we were invited by Lord Moynihan to hold a reception at the House of Lords. The theme for the reception was to be the launch of our new DVD. I have got to say I was more than a little nervous having to address such an influential group of people in such prestigious surroundings. It was also a little surreal having to say my Lords, Ladies and Gentleman. The evening was huge success so thank you to everyone who attended and my grateful thanks goes to Lord Moynihan. You can see our DVD online on our website.

Most people in the UK would probably say that last winter was a bad one, with all the snow & ice however everyone up here in the Highlands thought it was fantastic; the best winter for 15 years! So much snow caused us a few problems, not being able to get to the office being one of them and not being able to get onto the hill was another. We had to cancel lessons at the beginning of the season as there was just too much snow - we can never win! However it did mean that we had an extended season and the ski school was still delivering lessons to our members through to May. The ski school instructors delivered over 500 hours of instruction as well as teaching on our overseas activity weeks. I remember Josh our newbie training instructor asking 'is Scotland always like this; if so I'll be back every year?' of course we said yes!!!!!! Thank you to our Cairngorm ski school team, Cath, James, Keira and Josh who all went beyond the call of duty digging the office, vans and cars on more than one occasion.

Our Activity weeks were as popular as ever and booked up quickly. We ran nine weeks including Breckenridge, Big Bear, Niederau, La Plagne, Villars, Bellamonte and Morzine. Like Scotland, Europe had a bumper snow year so everyone had fantastic skiing.

Our links with 'Crystal Ski' became ever stronger over the winter. I travelled to their senior manager's conference to give a talk on the programs that DSUK deliver as well as showing our new DVD. Everyone there was very enthusiastic about our work and many suggestions were given on how Crystal could help DSUK as their chosen charity. One of these suggestions was for all the Crystal staff to do a fundraiser in their resorts at sometime in the season. This did happen and I'm amazed to tell you that £27000 was raised in total! My thanks go out to all Crystal staff in the UK and in resort; you guys are amazing and I know that you have plans to try to raise even more this coming season. I would also like to thank all Crystal customers as again, without you this wouldn't have happened, you make such a difference to so many lives!

So we move onto another year. I will say that I have a good feeling about it as I'm excited about the ventures we have planned. 'What are they I hear you ask' well we have to put some final plans together but we will let you all know about them in our newsletters and on our website, plus if I tell you all about them I won't have anything to write about in my next year's report!

Here's to another snowy year! We can all hope.