



# The Spirit

Fall/  
Winter  
2014-15

of the United States Adaptive Recreation Center

## Wow, what a Summer!

If you have been to Big Bear recently, you may have noticed the lake level is dropping. Right now, the lake is approaching 12 feet below full, Baker Pond has practically dried up, and everyone is watching their water usage. Did this affect the USARC summer program, you ask? No way! The USARC summer program kept going as scheduled, right up till Labor Day weekend, but just barely!  
(See pg. 7)



## Wow, what an Athlete!

Liz Hughes has been coming to the USARC for over 20 years, both in the winter and summer seasons. During the former, she not only skied for fun with her family (who got into winter sports because of Liz) but also attended race training camps to improve her skills with US Adaptive Ski Team coaches.  
(See pg. 3)



## Wow, what a Ride!

The 20th Annual Peak to Peak Pedal (P2P20) was certainly one for the ages. Not only was it the twentieth iteration of this amazing adventure, but several unique milestones were noted this year. For starters, the ride traveled the opposite of its typical route, departing Mammoth and finishing in Big Bear, the USARC's home town.  
(See pg. 4)



## Now, what about Winter?

It is early November as this issue goes to press and everyone is wondering the same thing; what will this winter bring? Will there be the long hoped for and much needed El Niño, or will we have a winter like last year, or will it be something in between? Unfortunately, no one knows the answer, and as Tom likes to say, "I'll believe it when I'm shoveling it." We do know that winter is coming, be it big or wimpy, with snow from the sky or machines, and USARC is already in top gear and ready for you!  
(See pg. 7)



# A Note from the Executive Director

So anybody who knows me knows I am a faithful fan of the San Francisco's two eponymous sports franchises, the 49ers and Giants. The fact I hail from those particular environs, regardless of the region in which I have found myself living, has engendered in me an unrelenting loyalty and faith that someday we will win another championship. While my Niners continue to struggle, it turns out October really is orange and black, as the Giants won their third World Series in five years.



**Tom Peirce**  
USARC Exec. Dir.



United States Adaptive Recreation Center

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Perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects to this year's championship is that the Giants' success was not prevised. Never having the home field advantage, the Giants began their title run as the lowest seeded team, beating the Pirates in a one-game, winner-take-all wild card round, then battling through this season's other best teams, the Nationals and the Cardinals, to earn the right to face the Royals in the World Series.

The Giants won some and lost some, although after each defeat they didn't turn into clubhouse crepehangers. Instead, they regrouped with stunning pitching, created a winning mindset and, with the support of their teammates and coaches, they manufactured hits and base runners and runs little by little, all prior to being taken right to edge by Kansas City at the end of game seven before winning it all.

While I know that one reason I write this little panegyric is my sense of pride in the athletes representing my home town, it's also because I see the inevitable metaphors reflecting life itself and the struggles we all face, especially those of the people and families served by the USARC. No matter the setback, they alter their mindset, regroup, accept a little coaching, and turn challenges into achievement.

With the right blend of principles, perseverance and people, nothing is out of reach, because we all become giants. 

## Ensuring Access and Excellence

Thanks to the sponsorship of Disabled Sports USA (DSUSA,) the USARC staff traveled to the Atlantic coast for conferences and clinics designed to improve and enhance the USARC's programs, events and behind-the-scenes operations.

Sara and Shelly attended a seminar in Washington, DC geared toward streamlining event registration and coordination, as well as providing support for event participants. Tom attended an adaptive water skiing clinic in Connecticut and returned with new skills and knowledge regarding the latest in instructional techniques and equipment.



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## Participant Profile: Elizabeth Hughes (cont.)

When not training or skiing for fun, Liz and her family were regular participants in the USARC Ski-A-Thon fundraiser, as a way to give back to a program she says provided some of her best memories. An admitted "speed demon", Liz doesn't need frozen water to push her limits, as she has proven to be equally fearless on the water, skiing fast and carving hard and even jumping the wake at times (always producing a big, beaming smile.) She has been pursuing her Master's Degree as a Child Life Specialist and hopes to complete that soon. While she has had a few recent setbacks, her drive remains the same, and somehow we know we'll be seeing more of her on the snow and water.



**The Spirit (TS):** *Tell us what USARC means to you and your family.*

**Liz Hughes (LH):** The USARC was instrumental in helping me discover my LOVE for snow skiing. For my family, it meant my dad's passion for snow skiing would be reignited, and my brother and mom would learn to snow ski. Because of the USARC I have many fond memories with my family.

**TS:** *Describe something on your bucket list.*

**LH:** I would like to obtain my Master's degree. I have almost all of my classes done to receive my Master's as a Child Life Specialist.

**TS:** *Who is your role model and why?*

**LH:** I don't think I really have a role model. There are qualities I see in a variety of people that I admire, and I try to emulate those qualities to the best of my ability.

**TS:** *How do people react when they learn you snow ski and water ski?*

**LH:** Initially I think some people are surprised and wonder "how" I can snow ski and water ski, but I love teaching people about adaptive sports. If they are close friends or family they know how athletic I am and it really doesn't shock them.

**TS:** *You have the power to change something in the world; what is it?*

**LH:** Violence. I would change the amount of violence I see, whether in person or on TV, news, etc.

**TS:** *Favorite book and movie?*

**LH:** I love all the Harry Potter books but I also like a book called "Whiteout" by Ken Follett. My favorite movies are Sandra Bullock films, most "chick flicks", and Psychological thrillers.

**TS:** *Where would you like to travel and why?*

**LH:** I'd love to travel to Europe and be able to tour different castles. I've also thought it would be amazing to travel to the Alps and go SKIING!

**TS:** *Explain any nicknames you have?*

**LH:** My dad called me "Peanut" because we lived in Georgia. In high school it was "Yakko" because I was always starting conversations!

**TS:** *Describe your choice for your spirit animal.*

**LH:** My cat Abbey. She brightens every single day for me!

**TS:** *What advice do you have for future USARC participants, volunteers and supporters?*

**LH:** To the participants, if you're just starting out, you may get frustrated. JUST KEEP TRYING and NEVER EVER GIVE UP! And HAVE FUN! For the volunteers and supporters, just having a positive, fun-loving attitude can make a world of difference for a participant!



## Hope Floats – The Summer Intern’s Perspective



I had the great pleasure of being summer 2014 “Intern”. My experiences throughout the three months were amazing, to say the least. I learned so much, including learning how to assess participants for proper adaptive equipment, drive and coach from a Jet Ski, as well as how to work with a ton of new personalities. The best part of the summer was being able to see the progression of the participants and the pure joy and smiles on their faces after they reach their goals. Tommy was one of my favorite participants to watch progress. He went from sit-down skiing to skiing standing up. His progress was so exciting and all the staff and volunteers played a huge role in his success.

The best part about working for a non-profit for the first time was seeing the involvement of the community. It really is a team effort, from the volunteers, to the donors, and outreach of everybody involved. It was really exciting to learn how the programs and events are planned and run. Everybody is so enthusiastic and passionate about USARC; that it instills a sense of pride in everyone involved. I’m so grateful that everybody I met was so welcoming and willing to share their knowledge about adaptive water skiing and experiences with working with persons with disabilities with me. The USARC community is like a big family and I am honored to be a part of it.



## P2P20 Rolls into History (cont.)



On top of that, and tying the record from P2P10, 43 riders took to the roads, and in the process raised nearly \$175K in support of USARC programs! A “blood moon” lunar eclipse the night before departure heralded picture-perfect weather with an unusual amount of tailwinds and the first four days were, of course, “all downhill.”

Congratulations to every rider for their efforts on and off the bike, as well as the incredible volunteers who worked tirelessly before and during the ride to ensure the riders’ success.

Our special thanks goes out to Diane Jordan and Linda Grebel, the illustrious and devoted “chuck wagon” volunteers, whose collective culinary acumen will be missed as they ride off into the sunset of their Peak to Peak retirement.

Stay tuned for more photos, top fundraisers and details on P2P21 in the spring issue of *The Spirit*.



# Volunteer Profile – Paul Van Wig

Paul Van Wig came to USARC in 2011 and has volunteered in both the summer and winter programs, as well as this year's Peak to Peak Pedal. As a retired lifeguard, Paul finds himself in the water a lot of the time during the summer months, jumping off jet skis to help teach participants to water ski. Paul has a contagious smile and a "ready for anything" attitude and, along with his wife Allison, are parents to two Wheaton Terriers, Lexie and Reagan, who are frequent visitors to USARC. Please read on to learn more about Paul. . .



*The Spirit (TS): So Paul, how has your experience with USARC been so far?*

**Paul Van Wig (PVW):** My experience has been very rewarding and fun!

*TS: You recently volunteered on the Peak to Peak, how was that?*

**PVW:** It was fun! Some hard work is definitely involved but I will be back next year.

*TS: Great to hear! We would love to have you back. Have any good stories?*

**PVW:** Yes but I can't reveal my sources.

*TS: So, for volunteering what season do you prefer, winter or summer? Why?*

**PVW:** Winter! Teaching, witnessing the joy of 1st accomplishment or a new challenge met. Or the simple joy of the winter mountains.

*TS: If you could travel anywhere, where would you go and why?*

**PVW:** I have an interest in pedaling the west coast, touring the old car factories in England, and there are big chunks of the Sierras I have not backpacked in yet.

*TS: What is your best teaching day?*

**PVW:** One of my visually impaired students was not understanding how to edge until I bent down and physically helped him to flex his ankles and knees. The next day another instructor got him on the next harder run, and that was great because I helped get him to that next step.

*TS: What are your hobbies, outside of volunteering that is?*

**PVW:** My old Morris Minor Woody and other British cars. Also, bike riding, backpacking, sailing & wood working.

*TS: If you were a fairytale character who would you be and why?*

**PVW:** Peter Pan. I never want to grow up, oh and flying is not bad either.

*TS: Peter Pan is a theme around USARC. Lastly, are you hoping for lots of snow this year?*

**PVW:** Definitely! Lots and lots.

*TS: Thank you for taking the time to speak with us! I bet we will see you before you know it!*

**PVW:** Thank you!!



The USARC wants to thank the following cadre of volunteers who helped make summer a season of wonder for each and every program participant.

Robert Allen  
Thomas Ashlock  
Daniel Brown  
Claude Ciocan  
Jack Cooperman  
Jackie Crueger  
Lexie Egerer  
Amanda Egerer  
Katherine Eisenbrand  
Daniel Horner  
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David Smith  
Dan Stormer  
Edward Tran  
Paul Van Wig  
Lucio Villegas  
Santiago Villegas  
George Watson-Jones

# The USARC is deeply grateful for our 2014 fiscal year donors!

If your donation between 7/1/13 and 6/30/14 is missing please accept our apologies and contact us so we can correct our records.

## Anonymous

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Boeing Employees Community Fund  
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## Winter will be here soon! Will you? (cont.)

As most of you have probably heard, Mammoth Mountain and Big Bear Mountain Resorts have joined together. The USARC is excited for any new opportunities this may present, at the same time we are grateful for all the support from Bear Mountain and Snow Summit over the years.

The bottom line is that the recipe for safe, fun learning remains the same, and the USARC is steadily filling up with reservations for the coming winter. If you are thinking about a getaway to the mountains for some fun on the slopes, please call the USARC today, as spaces are filling up fast!



Volunteers are once again needed to play their valuable role in the success of the winter program. They devote many hours and days to ensure the success of each participant, with most agreeing that they get far more out of teaching than they give. The USARC provides free training, slated for December 11-14, 2014 and January 8-11, 2015 for new volunteers. For returning volunteers, the refresher courses will be held December 8-9, 2014, December 13-14, 2014, and January 10-11, 2015.

Participants, volunteers and supporters alike are invited to participate in the annual Ski-A-Thon, sponsored by Anthem Blue Cross Foundation, and scheduled for Saturday, March 7, 2015! It's a day to get out on the slopes while supporting the USARC. Each participant receives a goodie bag, T-shirt, line-cutting privileges, raffle ticket, and après ski party. It's never too early to register and begin your online sponsorship drive at [www.firstgiving.com/usarc/skiathon2015](http://www.firstgiving.com/usarc/skiathon2015). It's FAST, SECURE and PRODUCTIVE! Thank you in advance for helping support the USARC.



## Summer Reigns (cont.)

The fact that the water level at the The Pines/Boathouse Tavern was waist deep at summer's end didn't diminish the fun, but definitely indicated the need for a good winter this year! New crew members (Mikey and Intern) joined a crew of experienced staffers and dedicated volunteers (see page 5) in Big Bear and Long Beach to teach hundreds of lessons to eager water skiers, Jet-Skiers, paddlers, sailors, fishers and campers.

With every session sold out, and some over-sold, the pace readily matched the high fun level, and as fast as summer arrived, all too soon the nights were turning colder and the leaves began turning a warm and luminous shade of gold, the same hue as the countless memories created during the summer. Not to worry, with the right amount of rain and snow this winter (knock, knock) summer will rule next year!



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As noted in our prior newsletter, The Spirit is now being produced and distributed in digital format only. This not only maximizes the resources of the USARC, it also helps protect our environment. Thank you for your understanding and support.



Mark 3/7/15 on your calendar for the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation

## 2015 Ski-A-Thon

Please register or donate at [www.firstgiving.com/usarc/skiathon2015](http://www.firstgiving.com/usarc/skiathon2015)

## Online Survey Saves You \$\$

The USARC provides services for about a tenth of the price that somebody without a disability would incur. The fact that our winter fees have remain unchanged for eight seasons is testament to our successful special events like the Ski-A-Thon and Peak to Peak Pedal, but also by our successful grant writing program, an integral part of which is your opinions and testimonials. Please help us help you by completing a brief online survey at: [www.surveymonkey.com/s/USARC\\_Participant\\_Evaluation](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/USARC_Participant_Evaluation). Thank you for your important feedback!

## Attention Big Bear Real Estate Buyers & Sellers!

USARC staffer and real estate agent, Will Rahill, will donate 10% of his earned commission to USARC if a lead comes from a USARC associate. If you want to sell or purchase a home or property, please contact him at [usarc@willrahill.com](mailto:usarc@willrahill.com), 909.645.1949, or [www.SearchBigBearRealEstate.com](http://www.SearchBigBearRealEstate.com). Property prices and rates are still low, so please help Will help the USARC, thank you.

**USARC Wish List:** Video production services/ New full-size pickup truck/ Breakfast-Lunch crew and RV owners for Peak to Peak Pedal

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

The USARC is recruiting active volunteers to join the extraordinary team of people who can and do change people's lives one ski run at a time! It's not only good for your legs, lungs and mind, but also for your soul! FREE training sessions are held in December and January, so please check out the article on page 7 or click [here for an application](#). Thank you in advance!

## Thanksgiving & the Holidays

are awesome opportunities to grocery shop for the USARC!

For Ralphs patrons, log onto [www.ralphs.com](http://www.ralphs.com) and click on the "Community Contribution" link, then click "Enroll" or "Sign In", whichever is appropriate, and follow the prompts. (USARC's NPO # is 80843).



For Vons and Safeway patrons, log onto [www.escrip.com](http://www.escrip.com) and under "Make a Difference in Four Easy Steps", and follow the prompts! (USARC's group ID # is 152931854).

**Thank you, please tell a friend!**

## What's ahead at USARC?

### DECEMBER

- 4 First day of lessons (weather permitting)
- 8-9 Returning Volunteer Training
- 11-14 New Volunteer Training
- 13-14 Returning Volunteer Training
- 25 USARC Closed

### JANUARY

- 1 USARC Closed
- 8-11 New Volunteer Training
- 10-11 Returning Volunteer Training
- 12 Group Lessons Begin
- 25-26 PSIA So-Cal Session Clinics (Snow Summit)

### MARCH

- TBD PSIA Adaptive Exam Registration Deadline
- 7 2015 Ski-A-Thon
- 21 USARC Winter Volunteer Party
- TBD PSIA Adaptive Exam Week (Mt. High)
- 30 Last day of Lessons

### APRIL

- 4 20th Annual Peak to Peak Pedal Slideshow