

Kern on skiing: Life is good at the Double H Ranch

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By BECKY KERN, For The Saratogian

With all of the negative news that we are bombarded with each day we often have to look around to find inspiration, for something that lifts us up. Something that reminds us that there really are good people in the world. Last Saturday, I had one of those moments.

Instead of skiing, I put my kids in the car and we headed up the Northway to the opening of the Adaptive Winter Sports program at the Double H Ranch in Lake Luzerne. What an amazing place this is.

The Ranch provides specialized camping and year-round support for children and their families dealing with life-threatening illnesses. Founded several years ago by Charles R. Wood and Paul Newman, the Ranch's purpose is to enrich their lives and to provide camp experiences that are memorable, exciting, fun, empowering, physically safe and medically sound.

In the winter they offer an outdoor program for kids ages 6-18 who are afflicted with chronic and/or life-threatening illnesses the opportunity to participate in various winter sports. Activities include alpine and nordic skiing, as well as snowboarding and snow shoeing.

Each participant is matched up with at least one volunteer instructor and all of the necessary equipment is provided free of charge. These volunteers are tremendous people, sharing their passion and love of skiing with these kids. If you know one, or every get to meet one of these volunteers, be sure to thank them, as they are very special people.

When we arrived we saw kids riding up a double chair lift and skiing down the hill, all with smiles on their faces. None were whining they were cold, or complaining of equipment malfunctions. They were present in the moment and enjoying every minute. The thrill of being on a pair of skis and the exhilaration from the freedom that offers could be heard by their laughter and shrills of delight. The joy was contagious and was one of those teachable moments we all look for to share with our kids.

Later in the afternoon kids were inside warming up in the lodge by the fire, enjoying hot chocolate and playing games. It was the same picture at any other ski lodge on a Saturday afternoon. Happy, tired kids at the end of a long day on the mountain. Life doesn't get any better than that.

To find out more about volunteering or donating to the Ranch go to their Web site at www.DoubleHRanch.org.