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KNOW
BEFORE
YOU GO

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Utah Avalanche Center

ANNUAL REPORT 2009



Know Before You Go Year End Summary 08-09

THE GOOD NEWS IS – avalanches don't strike without warning and most avalanche accidents are preventable. The bad news is - preventable avalanche accidents occur because many people lack even basic avalanche awareness skills. Now you don't need to be a snow scientist to enjoy the mountains during the winter and most recreationists either don't have time or aren't interested in becoming a snow geek. That's ok because in most cases just a little bit of avalanche knowledge can help people make life saving decisions. With this in mind, basic avalanche education is perhaps the biggest single component in keeping winter backcountry users alive.

Launched during the winter of 2004-05 to combat the rise in teen related avalanche fatalities, The Know Before You Go (KBYG) program is under the direction of the non-profit Friends of the Utah Avalanche Center (FUAC). Prior to KBYG's existence, teens were making up the growing statistic of backcountry users likely to get caught and killed in avalanches.

Funding for the program was initially provided by Backcountry.Com, The Utah Division of Natural Resources, REI and The FUAC. The program now boasts over a dozen monetary and in-kind sponsors. ❄️

Preventable avalanche accidents occur because many people lack even basic avalanche awareness skills.



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A Review of This Year’s Highlights

KBYG reached several significant milestones this year. First, it’s been seen by over 100,000 Utah teens.

IN ITS FIFTH SEASON, Know Before You Go (KBYG) reached several significant milestones this year. First, it’s been seen by over 100,000 Utah teens. Second, while the number of backcountry users grows exponentially each year, we’re proud to say not one Utah teen attending a KBYG presentation has been killed in an avalanche. And finally, this year the Utah Board of Education included KBYG in the Health One Core Curriculum, a class taught primarily in the 7th grade. Teachers are encouraged to utilize our on-line curriculum as well as the free, state-wide, assembly presentation.

Last year, two new partners, Recco and Backcountry Access (BCA) came on board to help us with our message. Their additional funding allowed us to give over 120 presentations in Utah to 25,733 participants and re-edit the popular 15 minute KBYG video, adding new footage and a rockin’ soundtrack. We mailed out over 100 copies to avalanche centers and educators both nationally and internationally. This season we gained even stronger support from BCA as they donated 10 sets of loaner packs, beacons, shovels and probes so we can give local Scouts and other outdoor activity organizations “hands on” experience using avalanche rescue gear.

This season, we received two grants which will help to fund the program, enabling us to continue spreading the avalanche gospel. We appreciate all the additional support provided by both the Hans Saari Foundation along with our longtime partner REI. ❄️

The Phenomenal Staff Behind the Program

WE’RE EXTREMELY FORTUNATE TO HAVE SUCH A QUALIFIED STAFF which includes many ski area patrol and snow safety personnel, local guides, and UAC forecasters. With nearly a dozen presenters, we take the show on the road and talk with school groups, usually in an all school assembly style presentation. Many of the presenters will juggle several talks in a day, often speaking to thousands of young adults. Our message is progressive, proactive, effective, and gets national exposure. As a matter of fact, CBS Evening News highlighted KBYG during the programs initial pilot winter of 2004-05. They came back to update the story this winter, airing a segment focusing on the programs amazing success in the past five years.

The program is well represented with snow professionals from Ogden to Payson and Park City to Salt Lake City. Covering the presentations up north are ski patrol personnel from Snow Basin- GR Fletcher and Doug Wewer. In the Salt Lake area Dean Cardinale, Mike Morris, and Ralph Whatley from Snowbird as well as Gabe Garcia and Dave Richards from Alta help to cover a bulk of the talks. Darce Trotter who worked as snow safety and ski patrol director at Sundance for nearly two decades provided immeasurable assistance by handling talks in the Heber Valley, Park City, and Provo areas. In Park City, a natural choice is Jake Hutchinson. He’s the snow safety and ski patrol director for The Canyons. Jake’s local expertise was utilized in both Summit and Salt Lake Counties. In addition, Sam Lee, a veteran ski patroller, helped by adding her dynamic personality along with many years of experience giving the program a fresh approach. Finally, Grant Helgeson returned this season to help Craig balance his overwhelming forecasting and education duties. A young, energetic big mountain skier with a diverse snow and business background, Grant is a unique gift to this program. This dynamic team of dedicated snow professionals deserves a tremendous amount of credit. It is their hard work and commitment to avalanche education that makes the program so successful.

GR FLETCHER

A 15 year veteran from Snowbasin, GR has held the position of assistant snow safety for the past 7 years. His personal professional avalanche education experience includes American Avalanche Institute levels 2 and 3 and AIARE level 3. Not only is GR an experienced climber and mountaineer, he also taught English as a second language to both adults and children in Taiwan for three years.



DAVE RICHARDS



For the past eight years Dave has worked as a full-time Alta ski patroller and a part time helicopter ski guide for Wasatch Powderbird Guides. He is also an avalanche rescue dog handler and member of WBR. Prior to his career at Alta, Dave traveled around the world competing extensively as a professional big mountain free-skier. He has been featured in countless films and magazine covers and brings a vast amount of knowledge and an edgy approach to the KBYG program.

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DOUG WEWER and SYRINGA

Doug started out ski patrolling in Pennsylvania, worked as a winter caretaker and volunteer patroller in Tuckerman Ravine, and then moved to Utah in 2000 to learn about avalanches and, of course, ski real powder. In addition, he worked the medical side of things on the Olympic downhill courses. In the winter, you might find him patrolling at Snowbasin, sending backcountry observations to the UAC, teaching at a Level I course or training his search dog, Syringa. In between storm cycles, he works as an engineer for the U.S. Forest Service in Ogden.



MICHAEL MORRIS

Mike has been in the ski industry for 18 years, currently working as Assistant Ski Patrol Director at Snowbird Ski Resort. Mike is a world traveler and adventurer, working as a guide both in the Grand Canyon and Nepal for 15 years. He was on top of the world in 2002 with a successful ascent of the SE ridge of Mount Everest. When he's not bagging big peaks, Mike enjoys playing with his son Max and the newest addition to the family, his daughter Olive.



RALPH WHATLEY

Ralph started his ski patrol career at Snowbasin in 1985 and has worked as a professional patrolman for 25 years, 21 of them at Snowbird where he is the military weapons coordinator and training facilitator. Before settling in at the 'Bird, he worked in New Zealand and in France, at Chamonix les Grands Montets. Ralph brings a tremendous amount of experience and energy to the program.



GABE GARCIA

Gabe has been a pro ski patroller for 29 years and with KBYG since the beginning. For the first three years of his career he worked at Beaver Creek Colorado, before settling in at Alta for the next 26 years. He's been involved with the snow safety program for seventeen years and avalanche education for eighteen years. In addition to his duties at the ski resort, Gabe is a certified avalanche rescue dog handler with WBR, currently working with his dog Binx.



DARCE TROTTER

Darce worked with the Sundance Ski Patrol from 1979-2001 and was patrol and snow safety director from 1987-2001. After 22 years in the ski business, Darce went back to school and is now a registered nurse. He hasn't left the snow completely and still gets out a few days a week, providing backcountry snow and avalanche observations for the UAC. Darce has spent many years as an avalanche educator, teaching with KBYG since the inception of program.



JAKE HUTCHINSON

Jake is Director of Ski Patrol and Snow Safety at The Canyons, Vice-president of WBR, and the only level 'A' validated dog team in Utah with 5 legs instead of 6. In addition, he's a certified AAA instructor, working for American Avalanche Institute in his spare time. When he doesn't have his face buried in the snow somewhere, he can be found biking, bagging peaks, wandering the desert, or fly-fishing somewhere high in the Uinta's.



SAM LEE

Sam Lee patrolled for eight years at Kirkwood, Whakapapa in New Zealand, and The Canyons. After a year-long sabbatical, Sam is in back at The Canyons and is also in the process of applying to medical school. Along with being a competitive Big Mountain skier, she is sponsored by Alta Ski Area, Roxy, and Surefoot at The Canyons. Her best ski competition result is 3rd place at the New Zealand Nationals in 2005.



GRANT HELGESON

Grant Helgeson joined the team midway through the 07-08 winter, but he quickly got up to speed and was teaching avalanche awareness talks to hundreds of students in no time at all. An active ski mountaineer from Montana, for the past two years Grant lived just outside of Jasper, Alberta, logging hundreds of backcountry ski days. Last year Grant moved to the Park City area, becoming a project manager for Backcountry. Com. We're happy his career path took a different direction mid season and can't wait for him to rejoin the crew this winter. ❄️



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Backcountry 101

TAKING THE KNOW BEFORE YOU GO PROGRAM to a practical, “hands on” level, this year we partnered with Brighton Ski Resort to offer Backcountry 101- a basic on-the-snow avalanche awareness class for lift served backcountry riders. The concepts for the class are simple, giving riders the skills they need to recognize the difference between being in the ski area boundary and venturing into the backcountry, even if it’s just on the other side of the ropeline.



Students dig through avalanche debris to find a buried “victim” during a mock rescue exercise during one of last years Backcountry 101 clinics.



Craig Gordon demonstrates a snowpit stability test.

We team up with members of the Brighton Ski Patrol and start off with an advanced evening lecture that covers weather, snowpack, terrain, route finding and rescue. The next day we meet and conduct easy searches with avalanche beacons before moving onto a mock rescue on the mountain. Like most rescue exercises, the group quickly realizes they want to avoid avalanches all together and after a quick debriefing we jump on a lift and look at snowpack and terrain, while getting a few turns in between.

This season demand was off the hook and we taught two sessions to over 50 local skiers and snowboarders. Plans are already underway with Brighton to offer the program again this year and we look forward to expanding our message, ultimately partnering with other resorts and tapping into the local expertise of their ski patrol and snow safety personnel as well. ❄️

Additional Outreach Projects



A Draper Scout group learns how to successfully search for a buried avalanche beacon.



The group takes five at Snowbird's Rescue Training Center after a morning of practicing with avalanche rescue gear.

KBYG Avalanche Education 2008-09

DATE	LOCATION	STAFF	TURNOUT	# of TALKS GIVEN
10/13/2008	Viewmont High School	Richards	190	4
10/14/2008	Viewmont High School	Garcia	210	3
10/23/2008	West Hills Middle School	Whatley	1043	2
11/5/2008	Park City Academy	Gordon	43	1
11/10/2008	Bonneville Jr. High School	Gordon	950	1
11/10/2008	Park City High School	Lee	210	4
11/11/2008	Park City High School	Gordon	211	4
11/20/2008	Murray High Ski Club	Gordon	11	1
11/20/2008	U of U Freeriders Club	Richards	43	1
11/21/2008	Hillside Middle School	Whatley	611	1
11/23/2008	Goldminers Daughter	Gordon	31	1
11/24/2008	Treasure Mtn. Middle School	Lee	180	4
11/25/2008	Treasure Mtn. Middle School	Whatley	186	4
12/1/2008	Clayton Middle School	Whatley	571	1
12/2/2008	Morgan High School	Whatley	679	1
12/2/2008	Morgan Middle School	Whatley	117	1
12/4/2008	Toole Hikers Club	Whatley	11	1
12/4/2008	Ephriam Middle School	Trotter	345	1
12/4/2008	North Sanpete Middle School	Trotter	361	1
12/4/2008	UVSC	Trotter	9	1
12/9/2008	Rocky Mountain Middle Scholl	Lee	692	2
12/9/2008	South Summit Middle School	Lee	312	1
12/9/2008	Draper Scout Group	Whatley	56	1
12/10/2008	Davis Middle School- Evanston	Helgeson	359	1
12/10/2008	Evanston Middle School	Helgeson	362	1
12/10/2008	South Cache Middle School	Wewer	1140	2
12/11/2008	Olympus Junior High School	Helgeson	855	1
12/11/2008	Itineris Early College	Helgeson	152	1
12/12/2008	Indian Hills Middle School	Lee	1213	2
12/15/2008	Butler Middle School	Garcia	998	1
12/15/2008	Mountain View High School	Morris	216	3
12/16/2008	Mountain View High School	Whatley	218	3
12/16/2008	Central Davis Ski Club	Helgeson	37	1
12/17/2008	South Davis Middle Scholl	Helgeson	400	4
12/17/2008	Bureau of Rec.	Gordon	33	1
12/18/2008	Pine Ridge Academy	Richards	35	3
12/19/2008	U of U Air-Med	Gordon	66	1
12/29/2008	Utah Olympic Park	Helgeson	11	1
1/5/2009	Westminister College	Gordon	23	1
1/6/2009	Churchill Junior High School	Helgeson	248	1
1/6/2009	Willow Creek Middle School	Morris	1421	1
1/6/2009	Summit County S&R	Gordon	88	1
1/6/2009	Canyon Sports	Helgeson	50	1
1/7/2009	Rocky Mtn Power	Helgeson	103	1
1/7/2009	Deer Valley	Gordon	21	1

1/8/2009	Brighthon Ski Resort	Gordon	275	1
1/9/2009	Ethenos Academy	Whatley	23	1
1/10/2009	Draper Scout Grp. Beacon Training	Gordon	19	1
1/12/2009	Wasatch S&R	Gordon	72	1
1/12/2009	St. Ambrose	Garcia	37	1
1/13/2009	REI- 33rd South	Morris	63	1
1/14/2009	Rocky Mtn. Power Field Day	Gordon	17	1
1/14/2009	Sandy Scout Group	Whatley	200	1
1/14/2009	Westminister College	Gordon	13	1
1/15/2009	Steeps Camp	Gordon	15	1
1/16/2009	Timp. High School	Whatley	1449	1
1/16/2009	Lone Peak High School	Whatley	1978	1
1/16/2009	Oak Canyon Junior High School	Whatley	1327	1
1/16/2009	Weber County S&R	Gordon	38	1
1/17/2009	Weber County S&R Field Day	Gordon	41	1
1/22/2009	REI- Sandy	Whatley	67	1
1/22/2009	Uinta County S&R	Gordon	41	1
1/23/2009	Steeps Camp	Gordon	19	1
1/23/2009	Viewmont High School	Whatley	200	1
1/24/2009	Uinta County S&R Field Day	Helgeson	32	1
1/26/2009	Viewmont High School	Helgeson	200	1
1/27/2009	Glenwood Middle School	Helgeson	1000	1
1/27/2009	Brighton Avy 101	Gordon	33	1
1/28/2009	Brighton Avy 101 Field Day	Gordon/Helgeson	32	1
1/28/2009	BYU	Helgeson	23	1
1/29/2009	U of U	Gordon	29	1
1/30/2009	Ethenos Academy	Whatley	29	1
1/31/2009	WBR Avy Awareness	Gordon	12	2
2/3/2009	Kearns Junior High School	Garcia	983	1
2/4/2009	North Summit Middle School	Helgeson	306	1
2/6/2009	Oakley School	Gordon	112	1
2/6/2009	Steeps Camp	Gordon	23	1
2/13/2009	YPO	Gordon	102	1
2/17/2009	Evanston High School	Helgeson	300	1
2/18/2009	Pleasant Grove Scout Group	Whatley	46	1
2/18/2009	Brighton Avy 101	Gordon	19	1
2/19/2009	Brighton Avy 101 Field Day	Gordon/Helgeson	19	1
2/19/2009	Butler Elementary	Helgeson	67	1
2/20/2009	Sundance Ski Team	Helgeson	28	1
2/21/2009	Logan Scout Group	Whatley	35	1
2/23/2009	Ethenos Academy Field Day	Gordon/Helgeson	17	1
2/23/2009	SL Scout Group	Garcia	23	1
2/25/2009	Eastmont Middle School	Gordon	936	1
2/25/2009	Orem High School	Whatley	49	1
3/11/2009	Ogden Scout Group	Fletcher	32	1
TOTAL			25,502	121

Other mountain states have seen our achievements and are adopting similar curriculum, using the successful KBYG template as a model for their programs. *

Future Direction

THE PROGRAM HAS TAKEN ON A LIFE OF ITS OWN and it's remarkable to witness first hand how basic avalanche awareness is a critical component to the avalanche equation. Other mountain states have seen our achievements and are adopting similar curriculum, using the successful KBYG template as a model for their programs. *



Craig Gordon preaches the avalanche gospel



Grant Helgeson shows a group of students from Ethenos Academy how to look for dangerous layers in the snowpack

Press, Testimonials and Notes from Friends

Hi Craig:
Thank you so very much for sending Grant. He was very good, the presentation was great. It was different with a mostly-adult group as we had some back-country enthusiasts that had good experience and good questions. All questions were acknowledged as important or good and were expertly answered. Be safe out there, Paul



Park City

March 13, 2008

Utah Avalanche Center
2242 W. North Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84116

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to thank you for providing a wonderful avalanche safety presentation to our middle school students. Mr. Craig Gordon and his counterpart Derek did an excellent job presenting this serious topic to our students.

I think this presentation is a must for students who live in Utah. As ski movies show how fabulous backcountry skiing can be, students need to know how dangerous it can be. Several of our students talk about how this presentation has affected where they choose to ski at local resorts in Park City. Some have even remembered the slide that happened just out of bounds near the Canyons Ski Resort just a couple of years ago. My students now assure me that they will not be ducking ropes in or out of a ski area any time soon.

I hope that we can arrange to have this presentation every year at our school.

Sincerely,

Mark Nuetzel

Mark Nuetzel
Director of Outdoor Education
Park City Academy

An article appearing in Utah's Salt Lake Tribune recognizes the efforts of three teens and the influence of KBYG, both of which helped save a young man's life.

Hi Craig,

The students and staff raved about your presentation and created lots of productive conversations with the on-snow classes.

I will do my best to make one of these days work for us. I'll talk with Tad to find out which day would be best. Thank you again to extending so much to us.

We are working on a donation for the UAFC for all you do for us. We will make the donation on behalf of the education department of the Utah Avalanche Forecast Center.

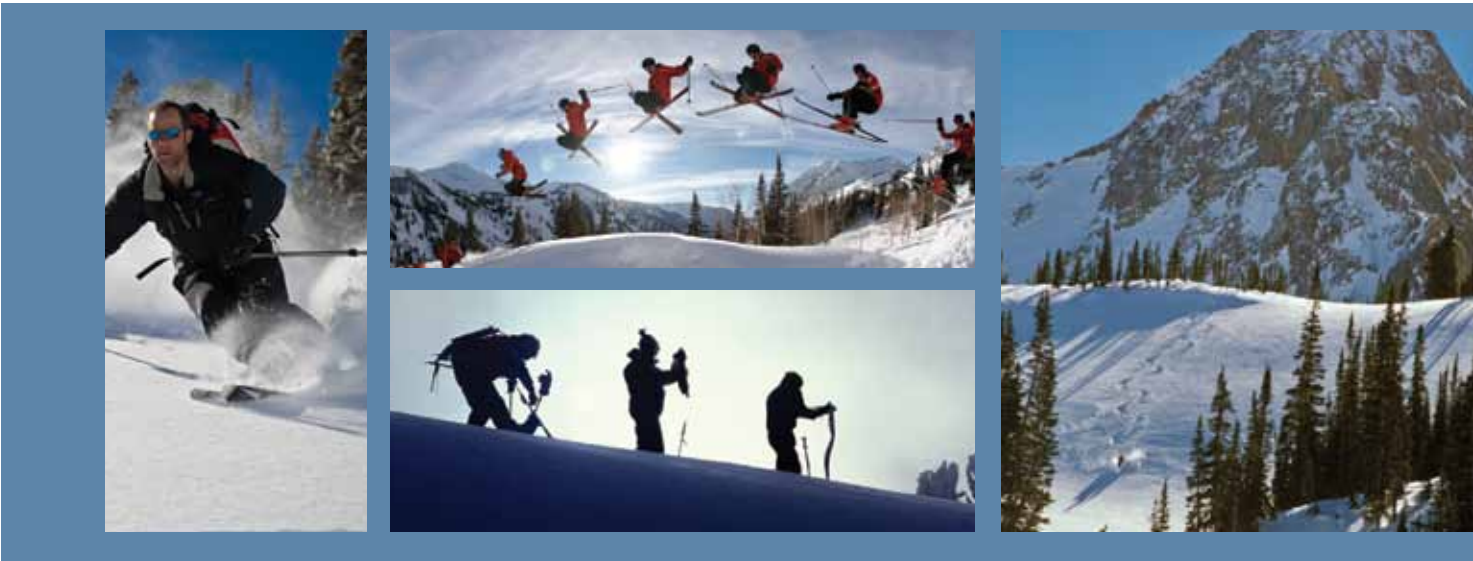
Thanks again and I'll be in touch soon,

Bethany

Know Before You Go is made possible by the generous donations from our sponsors.



The Byrne Family Foundation



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