

Skiing

With Bob Nesoff
ESWA • NASJA

Hunter Mountain Develops New Mountain Sport



While doomsayers project a future bare of ice bergs, dead polar bears and mountains retaining greenery all year round, record snowfalls around the country seem to be kicking white stuff in their faces.

But the truth of the matter is that any weather based sport is at the mercy of...well, of the weather. Factor in the lousy economy of the past several years and you have a perfect storm of problems for ski resorts.

Many of them have begun to expand snow sport opportunities such as tubing and ice skating to bring in extra revenue and maintain the overall operation.

Hunter Mountain, arguably the most popular ski resort in easy driving distance of the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area, has come up with a terrific new idea for expanding its use of the available terrain without impacting on current activities. They are going to build a series of zip lines.

Not just any old zip line, but the longest and steepest in the United States. And not just the most hair raising, pulse generating non-mechanical speedster, but a terrific learning experience for the kids as well...but don't tell them that.

Standing just outside the base lodge at Hunter for the official kick-off (we've covered ground breakings before, but this was the first time we watched a "snow breaking."). Jay Bialsky, president and CEO of New York Zipline Adventure Tours, jammed his golden shovel into the snow and then passed it along to other local dignitaries for their shot at fame.

The project, estimated to cost somewhere more than \$1 million and funded by private and public entities, is expected to drop the first speed-crazed lunatic down the wire in the spring. The longest run will come from the peak of the mountain towering over the base lodge to a point almost within spitting distance of the lodge. Speeds are expected to reach 50 miles an hour.

There will be at least two other runs, shorter and slower, but no less interesting. As with the Costa Rican zip lines, there will be platforms in between support pillars for a respite and educational opportunities.

The cost for these rides will range from about \$80 to the vicinity of \$119, depending on the line you choose. But, much like ski lift tickets, the passes will be good for the day.

For anyone who has never experienced the thrill of a zip line, it could be compared to a controlled jump out of a 60-story building, coming down in near free-fall. It might be great for the 1,000 mile check up of your pace maker.

In places the long line will be some 600 feet off the ground, reaching speeds fast enough to earn a reckless driving ticket. That being said, I expect to be one of the first to try it out.

For information and updates, check out the Hunter web site at www.Huntermountain.com or the Zip site at www.zipline-newyork.com.

Snippets

Smugglers' Notch in Vermont, has prepared two practical videos that show the basics of how to dress children for fun on the slopes and how to prepare young children for winter snow sports. They are easy to find on Smuggs YouTube Channel. Snow Sport University director Harley Johnson and *TREASURES* Child Care Center director Shelley Schaffer share simple tips in their new video, Dress for Success ... Outdoors! From layering clothing to selecting the best style of ski pants, they've got the art of dressing small children covered.

A Metro Feature

Hospice Offers Bereavement Support

Passaic Valley Hospice will be offering a Bereavement Support Group on Tuesday evenings, 6:30 - 8:00 pm beginning February 9th. The group will meet weekly concluding March 23rd.

The sessions will provide understanding and support through the grieving process. The group will meet at 783 Riverview Drive, just off Route 46 in Totowa

To register or for more information, please call Richard Sharber, Bereavement Coordinator at Passaic Valley Hospice, (973) 256-4636, x 7406.

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NIAF News Monthly

A monthly bulletin for Italian American organizations and media outlets, dedicated to promoting the language, culture and traditions of Italians and Italian Americans.

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Italian American Director Qualifies For Academy Awards

Up-and-coming Italian American director Justin Ambrosino recently qualified for the Academy Awards with his short film, "The 8th Samurai." Born in New York City, Ambrosino received his M.F.A. in film direction at the American Film Institute where he was given the Patricia Hitchcock O'Connell Scholarship.

"The 8th Samurai" has gone on to win numerous awards and has been shown at 23 festivals around the world.

Visit www.the8thsamuraimovie.com.



NIAF Scholarships Now Available Online

More than 100 scholarships will be available to students through the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) for the 2010-2011 academic year. The Foundation has awarded millions of dollars in scholarships and cultural grants since its inception in 1976, including more than \$1,000,000 in 2009.

NIAF celebrates its 35th anniversary this year. Since NIAF's inception, the scholarship program has grown from four scholarships of \$250 each to more than 100 annual scholarships ranging from \$2,000 to \$15,000 each in the humanities, medicine, engineering, business, music, Italian language and culture, and other specialized fields. Last year, the average scholarship to students in the United States was worth more than \$3,000.

Applicants either must be of Italian descent, with at

least one ancestor who has emigrated from Italy, or a student of any ethnic background majoring or minoring in the Italian language, Italian studies, Italian-American studies or a related field. NIAF scholarship recipients are selected based on academic merit. Students must have a minimum GPA of 3.5 to apply.

Contributors to the NIAF scholarship program include individuals, corporations, and organizations across the U.S. NIAF will also consider matching scholarships with other organizations.

Apply online for a 2009-2010 NIAF scholarship at www.niaf.org/scholarships. The application deadline is March 5, 2010. To establish a NIAF scholarship, contact NIAF Director of Education and Culture Serena Cantoni at 202/939-3111 or serena@niaf.org.

Winter Festivities In Italy

In Italy, Italians believe in La Befana, an Italian folklore character who delivers presents to children. On January 6 La Befana fills their socks with candy and presents if they are good or a lump of coal or dark candy if they are bad. The child's family typically leaves a small glass of wine and a plate with a few morsels of

food for La Befana.

Carnevale tops the list of festivals in Italy during February. In Catania, Sicily, a big festival held on Saint Agatha's Feast Day is the second largest religious procession in the world. Another festival includes an almond blossom fair.

Wonder What Italians Bought For Christmas?

ANSA, Italy's national wire service, reported that an increased percentage of Italians bought domestic goods this Christmas. Compared to other countries, where populations buy national products at an average of 59 percent, Italians buy at an average of 75 percent according to the Coldiretti Famers Union. These statis-

tics were reported in a survey by the Deloitte Research Group.

An increase in domestic products proved that Italians are confident that homemade products are created through respected environmental norms and labor laws.

Italian Classes For Kids And Adults In California

Registration is now open for the spring session of Italian classes for youngsters and adults by Fondazione Italia in Burbank, Hermosa Beach, Los Feliz, West Los Angeles and Irvine, Calif. Classes start February 6,

2010 and are offered at all levels.

Download a class schedule and pricing information at www.fondazione-italia.org/, e-mail info@fondazione-italia.org or call (310) 739-9350.

New Books To Check Out

• Celebrate Heart Awareness Month

To celebrate Heart Awareness Month in February, the new book "Back to Life After a Heart Crisis" by Marc Wallack MD and longtime NIAF supporter Jamie Colby, correspondent for FOX News Channel, will be at bookstores on February 4, 2010. With all the mentions of red wine and olive oil, you would think this book was written just for Italians. The husband and wife team offers

their moving personal story along with a guide to reclaiming your life after a traumatic heart event. This book shows readers how to not only gain emotional strength, but also heal physically by working through eight important milestones. "Back to Life After a Heart Crisis" helps patients and their loved ones heal hearts and minds. Visit www.backtolifethebook.com.

• The Lady Queen

Joanna I, the fourteenth century queen of Naples and Sicily, had a kingdom that was one of the most prestigious in Europe. It was home to artists and writers of the period in southern Italy including Giotto,

Boccaccio and Petrarch. Nancy Goldstone's new book tells the story of a leader who ruled for 30 years and has been proclaimed "The Lady Queen." Visit www.amazon.com.

• Hungry for Italy?

Eric Dregni wanted to live in a place with the best food in the world. His dream led him from Minnesota to Milan, Italy and finally to Modena: the birthplace of balsamic vinegar, Ferrari and Luciano Pavarotti. In his book, "Never Trust a Thin Cook," Dregni retells

the stories of his travels.

The new release is a funny travel tale full of his unexpected adventures, awkward moments and delicious food. Visit www.upress.umn.edu/Books/D/dregni_never.html.

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Please send your group or city's news of Italian-American exhibits, cultural events, scholarships and special events to Elissa Ruffino at the above address or e-mail elissa@niaf.org.

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