

british columbia

HEIDI LANDAU, CAMPCARE, WHISTLER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Snowboarding—let's face it—has an image problem: loud, rogue punks bouncing off anything frozen solid or nailed down with little or no regard for who or what's around them. But through the dedicated efforts of one woman, another side is beginning to show through, one marked by conscience and the ethic of giving back to the community. Along the way young lives that have been shattered are put back together and made whole.

Using her contacts in the snow sports industry, Heidi Landau created *campCare*, a nonprofit group that uses mountain sports and pro snowboarder role models to help

PHOTOS (LEFT TO RIGHT): GEOFF ANDRUIK / COURTESY OF CAMPCARE



Left to right: Heidi Landau with *campCare* kids / Landau

neglected and "at-risk" youth. Along with her assistant, Shawna Olsten, Landau lives by the *campCare* motto: *Helping kids who have seen too much and lived too little.*

The premise of *campCare* is as simple as it is effective: Help children who have had a difficult life, through no mistake of their own, find faith in themselves and others through mountain sports and culture. Working out of Whistler, British Columbia, and Springfield, Vermont, *campCare* pairs up professional snowboarders one-on-one with young kids to help boost their esteem through building their snowboarding skills. "The kids who benefit are products of life experiences that don't lead to opportunity," says Landau.

Courses at the three- to seven-day camps focus on a few fundamentals besides just learning how to snowboard, namely the value of setting goals and of believing in the future, themselves, and one another. The kids get involved in more aspects of mountain life than just the sport of snowboarding—climbing, snowshoeing, and tubing for example. "We have art, journal-writing workshops, and ceramics. We expose the children to as many of the hobbies and values of our lives as we possibly can."

Landau founded *campCare* in 1997, after she volunteered to take children in North Carolina out for a day of snowboarding. "These were abused kids in protective custody.

They hadn't done anything wrong, but were bearing the scars all the same. Some were so closed down, with this little light locked inside—and at the end of the day it was shining through. That's when I decided I'd had a really good life, and wouldn't it be the right thing to help these kids have a good life, too?" Soft spoken, and almost painfully passionate, Landau is generous in her praise of everyone involved in her program: the sponsors, the athletes, and most of all the children.

Currently, *campCare* helps about seventy-five children per year at resorts such as Mount Hood Meadows and involves almost a hundred professional athletes. Sponsors like the Fairmont Chateau in Whistler come through with lodging, equipment, and lift tickets. *CampCare* relies on tax-deductible donations and grants; and when things have gotten really tight, Landau's family has pitched in to help make the camps a reality.

"We use the things we know and love so passionately—snowboarding and the mountains—to help kids who need nothing more than to be believed in and to be loved," says Landau, adding, "It doesn't matter what you do or where you live; the important thing is to share the joy you have in your life with the kids who need happiness the most." Help *campCare* continue to reach youth by contacting Heidi at campcare@yahoo.com or learn more at www.campcare.com.



Spirits tend to run high at *campCare* snowboarding sessions