



camp care

Mountains become motel hills

PHOTOS AND STORY BY COLIN ADAMS

Every once in a while someone makes you an offer you can't refuse - an opportunity to do something a little different from the norm. In this case it was a chance to help balance the scales of give and take. In the 'me generation' that balance seems to be a rarity, and I'm not preaching, I'm simply stating a fact. With so much deception in the world, it's hard to know what's real. Hell, it's safer to look in the other direction than it is to do something about it! One person who has done something about it is Heidi Landau, the founder of Camp Care.

Founded in 1997, Camp Care brings the fun and challenge of snowboarding to those who don't have the resources to try it on their own. It's a non-profit foundation dedicated to creating positive life experiences for abused children living in residential treatment homes. The camps help the kids rebuild their trust and self-esteem by learning how to snowboard. Instruction is provided by certified snowboard instructors as well as guest pro riders.

MT. BAKER PROVIDED A PERFECT SETTING FOR CAMP CARE.

Child abuse is a widespread problem that crosses culture, class, and income. In 1996, Child Protective Services (CPS) investigated an estimated two million reports involving the abuse of approximately three million children. CPS estimates this statistic to be increasing at a rate of 18% per year. Camp Care exists because of this statistic. It also exists because kids are easy targets, and most importantly, because they need to realize their potential and have positive experiences. Snowboarding can offer something important to these kids, and considering the growth and nature of our industry, giving back is something that needs to occur more often.

Mt. Baker and Camp Care played host to a group of kids from Washington state for five days in April. Joining them were instructors and pros from Vancouver, Whistler and Washington. It seemed an omen when everyone awoke to fresh snow and clear skies on the first day of camp, but it wasn't all roses as the kids apprehensively learned the basics. The instructors seemed to be looking over their shoulders every time a hoot or holler came from further up the mountain, know-



CAMPERS AND COACHES SHARE THE STROKE.

various snowboard companies and kept by the kids at the end of camp) and headed off to their accommodation in the town of Glacier. Those with energy left had time to build a jump, do a speed run or hike to some of the fresh snow. The feeling of accomplishment and fulfillment couldn't be summed up better than the words of one of the campers: "I feel like I can do anything now!"

The camp couldn't have gone better, but there was still a dose of reality to deal with. A normally exciting and happy event for most young girls wasn't so joyous for a member of the camp. It was her 18th birthday on the second last day. For most, turning 18 means your parents might turn a blind eye when you come home drunk, but for her it meant that she was no longer under the care of the state. She was on her own. After years of support and aid, she was now considered an adult and would be cut off at a time when she probably needed help the most. This is the reality that these kids are dealing with, and exactly the reason why Heidi Landau started Camp Care.

"The system is stale!" was the reaction by one of the instructors, and lead us all to the conclusion that dumping someone onto the streets is only going to bring them back to the system in some form or another.

Using professional sports and some of its high-profile stars to bring awareness to social concerns is nothing new, but with snowboarding it seems different. The riders themselves aren't much older than the kids they're trying to help, and considering that the growth of snowboarding largely depends on our youth, the relationship is symbiotic. The same can be said for Camp Care, where the kids learned about snowboarding while the instructors and pros learned about the kids and their need for help. Everyone involved left with positive feelings, but many critics will question how the kids will feel when it's all over and they return home. The answer? Tired and sore, but inspired by the experience. In proving to themselves that they can overcome their challenges, they're in turn showing others why these opportunities must be created.

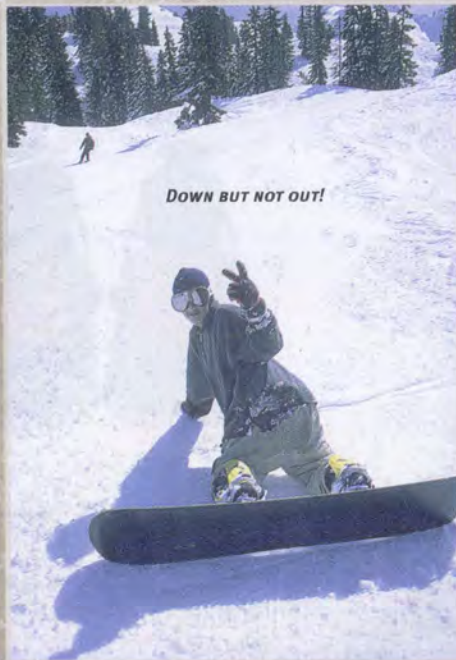


SHANDY CAMPOS LENDS HIS HELP.

ing that everyone else was riding a foot of fresh snow. Well aware of their purpose, they tried to concentrate on helping the kids strap in and ignore the fun that others were having. It honestly wasn't as hard as you'd think. Considering the season we just had, the sight of fresh snow was like seeing a coffee shop in Seattle, but for some of the kids, it was their first glimpse.

As the days passed the good weather held, making for an easier transition from the t-bar to the chair-lift. The whole scene was one big metaphor for their lives. The kids slowly gained confidence in themselves and the strangers who out-numbered them almost two to one. Out of everyone in the group, only a few had tried snowboarding, but by the end almost everyone rode the chairs and linked their first few turns. The physical and mental challenges facing them slowly eroded away. Their smiles and laughter replaced their fear and uncertainty as they settled into their new environment.

At the end of each day the group met to exchange stories. The kids and their counselors packed away their gear (all generously donated by



DOWN BUT NOT OUT!

A NOTE OF THANKS FROM CAMP CARE FOUNDER HEIDI LANDAU TO HER VOLUNTEERS:

"I'm so proud of everyone who makes our Camp Care team so awesome. You've challenged yourselves to take on some of the most difficult issues of our time - child abuse. You help young victims in a healing experience which reaches beyond sports into spirit. You've experienced the reward of having a child find joy and feel good about themselves.

As our team member Sarah Fennell said to me, 'These children have experienced so much pain, suffering and anguish - it's time young people take a stand for kids! Go out there and do something to help.'

You're all insightful, compassionate, dedicated, fun and full of positive energy. I admire and care for you all so much!

I would like to acknowledge these awesome young Canadians who make Camp Care's vision possible: Sarah Fennell, Colin Duncan, Oliver Roy, Danielle Piche, Ben Roy, Shandy Campos, Caine Heintzman, Andy Cantelon, Jeremy Shelford, Chosin Cousins, Josh Smith, Andrew Payne, Marc Andre Tarte and Anders Wine-Edward. Thanks also to Sen Smillie and Colin Blake for professional advice."