

variables campCARE

—Leah Jones

I started snowboarding about three years ago on some smaller East Coast mountains. I have come to find out that people take snowboarding for granted. I read some of your articles, and people do not seem to care that they are riding on top of the world. Coming from Maryland, I would do anything in the world to be in their shoes for just one day or even one hour.

*So when you guys are out there on the best mountains in the world, think about all of us little people ... Say to yourself, I am so lucky to be here. Thanks,
Amy Davis*

We get letters like this every day—mailed, faxed, delivered over the Internet—tons of letters. Letters from people who actually have been lucky enough to go snowboarding. But what about all those kids out there who have never been snowboarding and don't envision ever really being able to go?

There are over one-million teenagers in the United States who have been mentally, physically or sexually abused to the point that they are now one of the 500,000 kids who reside in residential treatment facility group homes for abused and neglected youths.¹ Snowboarding isn't even a dream for some of these kids—they're just worried about making it through another day.

A group of professional snowboarders realize how lucky we all are and are working to bring a bit of our joy to some of those who aren't so fortunate. campCARE, in its second year, is a nonprofit organization that provides free snowboard camps for abused and neglected teens who reside in group homes. Founder and Executive Director Heidi Landau believes the experience is important to these young people: "The mountain environment, previously inaccessible to needy youth, brings a sense of belonging, sharing, and acceptance to these kids. When they learn to snowboard,

they also learn how to better meet the challenges of their everyday lives. Insecure youth become inspired by their success on the hill, and this newfound pride and confidence empowers them. Snowboarding becomes these children's symbol for what they can do!"

Landau has gathered 47 snowboarding industry partners, including Burton, K2,

complete their high school education. The Crested Butte Marriott was the first sponsor to offer a job to Mike Presley, one of last year's campers. The volunteer instructors, professional athletes, and sponsors strive to help the kids develop self-esteem, trust in strangers, willingness to try new activities, realize that there is a big beautiful world outside of their stressful and discouraging urban environments, and encourage them to help themselves out of their present situation.

Megan continues, "When I first started snowboarding, what I loved so much is that I forgot about all my problems, the bills I had to pay or that I was grounded—there was nothing but me and the mountain. I hope that I can bring that to people through coaching, and that they can focus on themselves and not worry about all their other problems—have fun!"



Megan Pischke. Photo: Kevin Zacher

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Mervin Manufacturing, Morrow/Westbeach, Northwave, Option, Palmer, Santa Cruz, Sims, and Smith Sport Optics to provide clothing and complete snowboard setups for the kids who participate in campCARE.

During the last three days of camp, each camper gets one-on-one coaching from a professional snowboarder. "I don't look at these kids as underprivileged, a kid is a kid and on the hill," says pro coach Megan Pischke. "I just hope that they have fun, learn patience with themselves, and learn something new."

Campers receive individualized instruction and get to keep their gear. But their experience doesn't stop there—sponsoring companies, through an ongoing mentorship and support program with campCARE, have agreed to offer real jobs to campers who

All instructors, resorts, and athletes volunteer their time and services. The Vans Warped Tour has made campCARE one of its main beneficiaries—a portion of all ticket sales from the tour are donated to help cover the costs of the camps. The '99 campCARE season will include camps at Kirkwood, California in February; Mt. Baker, Washington in March; and at Mt. Hood Meadows, Oregon in April.

If you would like more information about campCARE, please email: campcare@hotmail.com or FAX: (802) 885-1130.

¹ U.S. Government Child Protective Services, U.S. Dept. Of Health and Human Services, National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect.