

## Streets To The Slopes

By Michael Cherico

Take a kid out of the hood and onto a chairlift with a snowboard strapped to their feet, and watch the miracle that is snowboarding. Bill Clinton has stated that two of our greatest tools in the fight against child abuse are knowledge and compassion. He forgot to mention snowboarding.

Do you know how many abused children end up in foster-care homes each year? I'll save you from the figures—let's just say a lot. Through hosting snowboard camps across the United States, *campCARE* has been able to connect with a few delicate, young lives and share with them the sport of snowboarding. Targeting children who are underprivileged and/or abused, the program attempts to remove the ills from the kid by sharing with them a new and unique environment. Their philosophy is that by sharing nature, snowboarding, and quality role models, neglected youth adopt a fresh attitude that will have a positive influence on their future. Burton, Dub, Forum, Vans, and Volcom are some of the companies that have donated snowboards and

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—Bobby Meeks



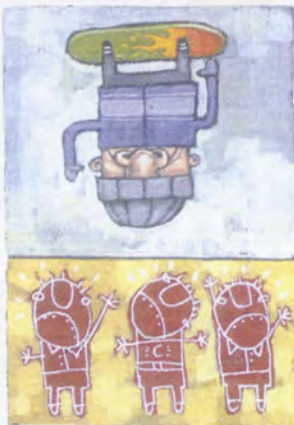
When Lael Gregory isn't boosting out of the pipe, he's helping boost kids' self-esteem. Photo: Embry Rucker

the necessary head-to-toe gear, and have kicked down cash as well to ensure that the camps have a solid support system. Thanks to these big dogs in the industry, the kids get to learn how to shred the gnar on gear they get to keep.

Anatwan Singletary is one of the many inner-city youth to learn valuable life lessons while participating in *campCARE*. Because he lacked parental guidance, Anatwan's high school counselors utilized unconventional methods in an attempt to reverse his negative attitude toward traditional education. Anatwan traveled from North Carolina across the country to Crested Butte, Colorado and learned, “There’s a whole big world out there I didn’t know existed. I want more of it for me.” Disadvantaged youth like Anatwan often gain an improved outlook on their personal potential after their snowboarding experience. His school counselors’ gamble paid off, restoring Anatwan’s optimism in continuing higher education. He is currently attending college and plans on pursuing a professional nursing career.

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Strengthening *campCARE*'s bond with the kids are big-name coaches: Megan Pischke, Jason Charfield, Todd Franzen, Lael Gregory, and Bobby Meeks are among the many pros/riders teaching kids how to ride. Pro coach Bobby Meeks volunteers his time to the program in order to inspire kids from broken homes. Bobby says he's had "a lot of fun with the kids," remarking that many of the kids involved in the camps are deceptively fragile: "Like eggs, they have a hard shell to crack, but on the inside they're all soft."

Lael Gregory says, "It was cool seeing the kids' smiles while sharing a new experience with them. Some of them have had insanely crappy lives. It makes how I grew up seem like cake.

"Mount Hood Meadows deserves a big thanks also," continues Lael. "They contributed a lot. Especially between the park, pipe, and crew." Lael says the experience has reminded him, "You've gotta be stoked on what you have."

Generous resort families—those that live, own and maintain snow-resorts—make up another support link, key to the success of *campCARE*'s operation. The Howat family at Mount Baker, along with the Pate family in Lake Tahoe and many other resort families,



On the count of three, everybody say, "FREE!" Photo: Embry Rucker

have hospitably opened their doors to the campers. Gwyn Howat, spokesperson for Mt. Baker, says, "*campCARE* provided an opportunity to share the environment that has had such a positive impact on my life. Mt. Baker is not about selling lift tickets. We are about providing a memorable experience. *campCARE* was a special chance to give back through offering what we have, which is so unique."

By now you've got to be thinking, "How can I get dialed into a *campCARE* session?" Unless you are an abused teen who resides in a group treatment home, you're unlikely to benefit from the generosity of everyone involved. What can Joe reader do to become part of the magic? Play the part of a role model and share snowboarding with someone young and special to you.

If you would like more information about *campCARE*, contact Heidi Landau via e-mail: [campcare@hotmail.com](mailto:campcare@hotmail.com), or FAX: (802) 885-1130.