

## Believe it—skiing is alive and well here in Iowa

**DES MOINES (IDPA)** — Mention the sport of skiing and images of the Rocky Mountains are conjured up. However, the sport is alive and well here in Iowa also.

There are 13 ski areas in the state, according to information obtained from the Iowa Development Commission. They are all relatively small operations, with the majority relying on man-made snow to create their skiing base.

The ski season in Iowa lasts from approximately the beginning of December to the beginning of March, depending upon snowfall and temperature.

**THE NUMBER** of skiers at a given area varies from day to day. Kay

Bryan, owner of the Fun Valley ski area in Montezuma, said her area attracts 400 to 700 people on weekends when there is good snow. She added that it is "often quiet during the week."

Ms. Bryan said that Fun Valley attracts people from all over Iowa as well as places such as Kirksville, Mo. and Lincoln, Neb. She said however, that the area does not try to compete with the large ski areas in Colorado and Utah. "We get new skiers. They learn here and then go to Colorado," she said.

Barry Ramaeker, owner of Winter World in Humboldt, said he mainly attracts people within a 30-mile radius of the ski area. During the week, physical education classes from

schools in Humboldt, Eagle Grove, Clarion and Fort Dodge come to Winter World to learn to ski.

Winter World is one of the state's oldest ski areas. Started in 1960, the area was "put in when skiing didn't amount to anything" in Iowa, Ramaeker says.

**THE NOR-SKI** Runs in Decorah was also opened in 1960. The area is one of two in the state which is publicly owned. It is run by the Decorah Parks and Recreation office. It is the only ski development in Iowa which does not use snow-making equipment.

Iowa's other publicly owned ski area is Horseshoe Bend in Milford. The area is under the supervision of the Dickinson County Conservation Board. Unlike other areas, the skiing at

Horseshoe Bend is free of charge.

Those areas charging for their skiing vary widely in price. For example, adult weekend rates range from \$4 at 'Nor-Ski' Runs and at Veterans' Memorial Park in Dubuque to \$13 at Sundown in Dubuque.

Some ski slopes, such as those at Sundown, are natural. The majority, however, are not. Small hills are built up to create slopes suitable for skiing. The highest ski slope in the state is at Crescent Hills in Crescent and has an elevation of 2,000 feet.

While Iowa's ski slopes are small in comparison to those found in places such as Colorado and Utah, they offer one feature not found at many Western ski areas — night skiing. All 13 areas are equipped with powerful lights

which allow them to stay open in the evening.

**AS THE NUMBER** of skiing facilities in Iowa has grown since 1960, a state organization for skiers, the Iowa Ski Club, has also grown. In its 21-year existence the club has come to include more than 1,000 members.

Al Garson, president of the club, said it began with 100 skiers "supportive of each other." He said the purpose of the club is "to promote the sport of skiing."

Garson said that when the club began, it was mainly a "self-serving" organization. In its tenth year, however, the members "decided to lend a hand to those wanting to learn to ski." The club now conducts clinics for

beginning skiers.

**IN ADDITION**, the club arranges half a dozen trips to ski areas in the Midwest and five to six trips to areas in the West each year. The arrangements for these trips include the cost of lodging, lift tickets and transportation. The group rate the club is able to get for such a trip is 25 percent lower than the same trip would cost an individual, Garson said.

The majority of the members of the Iowa Ski Club live in Des Moines. Garson said that 75 percent of the members are singles under the age of 30.

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