

# Skiers waiting to head for the hills

By SANDRA L. LATIMER  
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Susan Newland sits in her sales office at the Holiday Inn in downtown Columbus just waiting for cold weather. And when it arrives for good, she'll be heading for the hills with her skis.

Ms. Newland has been skiing for the last 15 years, most of that as part of a club.

"It's no fun to be cold alone," she said. "It's worthwhile with friends."

She recalls that a friend asked her to go skiing, and now admits "it got into my blood." But she said she skied about once or twice a year for a few years before she decided to join a club.

Ski clubs in Columbus are active all year round to help skiers get in shape for the season when the slopes are ready, Ms. Newland said.

She said the clubs have organized volleyball and softball teams and she has played some racquetball and some tennis.

She has even gone on whitewater rafting trips with the ski club during the summer. And during the ski season, the club plans trips to resorts, not only in Ohio, but in top ski states.

"Skiing is good exercise for endurance and you've got to be ready so you don't huff and puff at the bottom of the hill," she said. "You can really work up a sweat at 20 degrees."

Ms. Newland has done some racing and she also likes to compete in the "fun races" — a course with several obstacles.

She also likes to ski with a group because it improves her ability. She says group games of follow the leader, for example, present a challenge to everyone who play.

Ohio has eight ski areas patronized by ski club members, often on weekends: Boston Mills at Peninsula and Brandywine at Northfield, both in Summit County; Alpine Valley at Chesterland in Geauga County; Clear Fork at Butler and Snow Trails at Mansfield, both in Richland County; Mad River Mountain at Bellefontaine in Logan County; Sugar Creek at Bellbrook in Greene County and Echo Hills in Logan in Hocking County.

When temperatures remain below freezing, each area can make snow even if Mother Nature doesn't.

Alpine Valley has a new 1,600-foot Alpine trail and crosscountry skiing this year. Boston Mills and Brandywine have special beginner packages.

Clear Fork has nine slopes and the greatest vertical drop in Ohio. Mad River Mountain has improved and enlarged its snow-making system this year.

Echo Hills features 20 miles of prepared cross-country ski trails in addition to its downhill slopes.

Ski hills are also found at Meadowridge Farm in Huntsburg in Geauga County; Ridge Top Cross Country Ski in Medina County; Hidden Hollow Ski Touring Center in Bellville in Richland County and Pleasant Hill in Perrysville in Ashland County.

Atwood Lake Lodge Resort in Carroll County and Mohican State Park Lodge in Richland County offer family packages that include downhill skiing.

Cross-country skiing is available and equipment can be rented at Cleveland's Highland Park Golf Course and four Cleveland Metropark facilities; parks in the Columbus and Cincinnati areas; the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area between Akron and Cleveland; Dawes Arboretum in Newark, and Malabar Farm State Park in Lucas in Richland County.

Skiers who have their own equipment can ski at more than 50 other state parks in Ohio.

Cross country ski clinics are held at many state parks in January and February. Punderson State Park in Ashtabula County has a race Feb. 13 and Snow Trails, where it all began in 1961, has a Winter Carnival in February that includes a bikini race.

Ski conditions are available 24 hours a day by calling the state's toll-free travel information number: 1-800-BUCKEYE.

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