



Janet Franz

Janet Essman Franz is an award winning writer, television producer and fitness instructor in Vermont. She enjoys cross-country and alpine skiing with her husband and son at resorts throughout the East.

CLUB SCENE

A Ski Club may be just what you really are looking for!

I know ski clubs are popular, but I didn't realize how many clubs there are until I started looking. My Internet search of ski clubs found more than 200 in Metropolitan New York, Connecticut, Boston, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. When I expanded the search to northern New England, upstate New York, the Carolinas and the D.C. region, that number topped 300. Each individual club has memberships ranging from 50 to several thousand people.

Skiers and snowboarders join clubs for a variety of reasons: to meet other enthusiasts, save money on skiing, hone their skills and visit places they might not travel to on their own. Most join for the camaraderie and opportunities to enjoy their sport with others who share common interests.

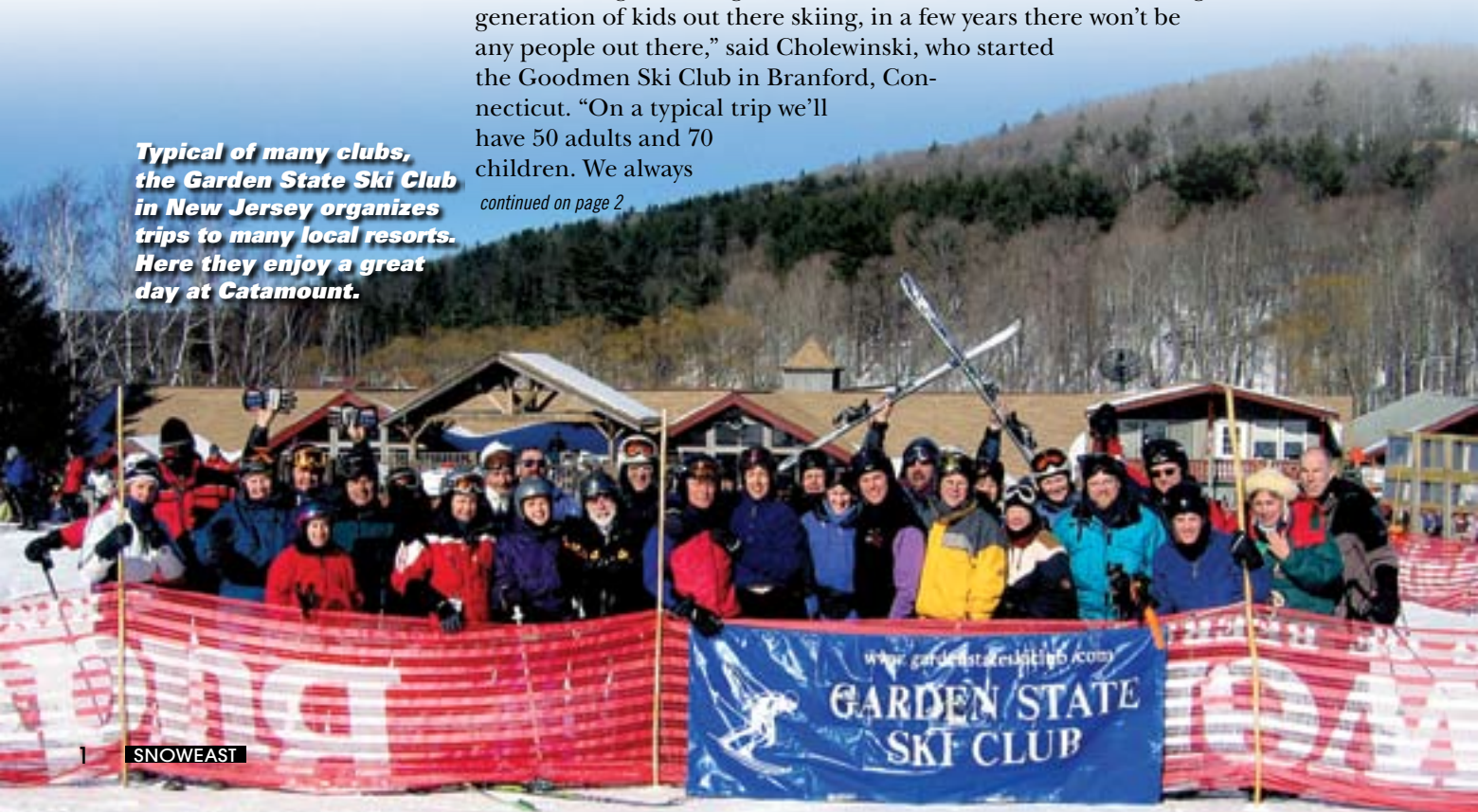
"There's everything from singles clubs to family clubs, clubs for senior citizens, clubs for couples. There's a Swedish Ski Club for people of Scandinavian descent and the National Brotherhood of Skiers for people of color," said Richard Cholewinski, President of the Connecticut Ski Council, which represents 40 different ski clubs totaling 26,000 members. The council hosts 70 discount ski days throughout the season at more than 25 different ski areas in New England. "We have clubs in Hartford, Norwich, Norwalk, New Haven, Danbury, and all over the state. They provide a great opportunity to ski with other people with similar backgrounds."

Jill Hayes of Waterford, New York, joined the 18-Plus Ski Club when she first moved to a new city, and she soon joined two additional clubs. "I wanted a social life. I had just moved here and didn't know many people yet," Hayes said. "I also wanted to get into skiing more. Up to that point I had only gone a few times on my own."

In fact, introducing people to skiing is the mission of many clubs and councils. "One of our goals is to get families and kids involved. If we don't get the next generation of kids out there skiing, in a few years there won't be any people out there," said Cholewinski, who started the Goodmen Ski Club in Branford, Connecticut. "On a typical trip we'll have 50 adults and 70 children. We always

continued on page 2

Typical of many clubs, the Garden State Ski Club in New Jersey organizes trips to many local resorts. Here they enjoy a great day at Catamount.



continued from page 1

**Join a ski club. Make new friends!
This is a Mt Laurel Ski Club (CT)
costume event.**



**Clubs are fun for the kids too!
Just ask the National Brotherhood
of skiers**



have a hospitality suite with a game room for the kids.”

The National Brotherhood of Skiers (NBS) aims to increase participation in winter sports, especially among minorities. Representing 77 urban-based clubs across the country, NBS provides lesson clinics, a race series, ski trips and special events and financial support to competitive athletes of color. Some members join to support the social mission, but most join to support their own, personal recreation, said Dwayne Wilkins, NBS Eastern Region Vice President. Recent NBS activities include multi-day trips to Smugglers’ Notch Resort, Mont

Tremblant and Sunday River. “We bring anywhere from 400 to 1200 people, and up to 100 kids,” Wilkins said. NBS clubs also host golf, whitewater rafting and community fundraising events.

Organized tours to ski areas and discounted skiing are the chief benefits of ski club membership. Most clubs host day trips, weekend or weeklong vacations, and participants receive group rates for lodging and lift tickets.

“It makes skiing affordable. Even if a family wants to ski for one or two days in a season, for a typical membership fee of \$30, they can ski one day at Mount Snow and save themselves \$170,” said Cholewinski. Some clubs also partner with equipment manufacturers and resorts to offer discounts for their members. A club can get better lodging rates in locations that individuals may otherwise not be able to afford. They also handle the arrangements

for meals, equipment rentals and transportation.

Members of the O.C. Ski Club in Albany, New York, relax on chartered buses each weekend for trips to Eastern ski areas. The 2,000-member plus organization often charters two, three or four buses for trips, and as many as 15 busloads attend the club’s winter carnival. Participants can sleep or party all the way to and from the ski area.

Many clubs maintain ski houses near resorts for their members’ use, offering huge savings over staying at hotels or condominiums. Sharing meals and ski stories with fellow members and a familiar place to crash are worth the price of club membership for many skiers and riders.

Ski clubs also provide a venue for people to improve their skills on the snow, through competitive intra-club racing, lesson programs and friends-helping-friends.

“The benefit to me has been to hook up with people of like minds,” said Hayes. They are interested in skiing, that’s what everybody does, and we enjoy doing it together.” ❄️

photography courtesy of Garden State Ski Club, The National Brotherhood of Skiers and The Mt Laurel Ski Club, CT