



# UPSLOPE



## Newletter of the **NORDIC Ski Touring Section** of **PATC**

Visit Us On the WEB at <http://www.patc.net/chapters/ski/> and at [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PATC\\_STS](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PATC_STS)

February 2012

### Upcoming Attractions In The Spring UPSLOPE

- Report from the Apres Mtg.
- Winter Stories
- Destinations

## **Thin Snow, Foggy Hiking, and a Hidden Glacier; Canaan Valley, January 2012.**

By Doug Lesar

My wife and I always seem to be drowning in paper at home, and one of the reasons is that I tend to keep a lot of records regarding past STS trips. During the recent Canaan State Park cabin trip in late January, I wondered aloud how many years this trip has been running under my auspices. A quick check of the files shows that the first time I led this trip was in February 2000. Good heavens, 2012 was the thirteenth anniversary!

Two years ago, this trip occurred in the middle of Snowmageddon (or was it Snowpocalypse?), and to avoid a return trip through uncleared and impassable DC streets, we stayed an extra day and enjoyed the snow that had stayed in the mountains where it belongs. One year ago, the trip enjoyed decent snow conditions allowing a classic tour into the southern fringe of the northern Dolly Sods. This year, the crocuses already poking out of the ground in our yard in mid "Juneuary" did not bode well ...

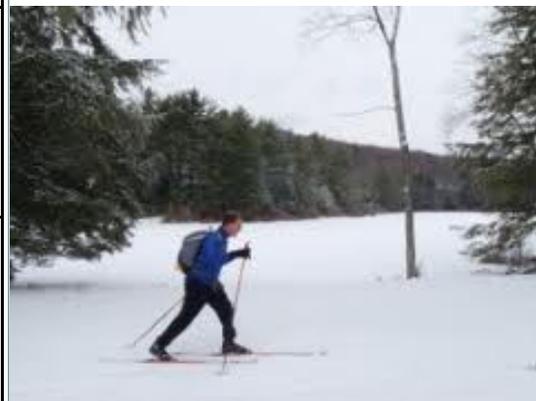
This is a no-cancel trip, and those who sign up need to accept skiing conditions as they come. In the days before the trip it was apparent that a Dolly Sods tour was going to be impossible this year and I informed the participants thusly. Nevertheless, six out of the seven STSers other than me were able to make it, and I know they would be a cheerful and resourceful group. They did not disappoint.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## **Cool Relief From Crystal Lakes PA**

By Greg Westernik

On the last Friday in March 2011 three STSers were getting a bad case of end-of-winter ski blues. We starting searching for local snow relief. Our search found no place else in the mid-Atlantic hills looked skiable except at Crystal Lakes STC where they reported 7 inches of base with no new snow and temperatures expected to stay below freezing thru noon the following Sunday. A call to manager Anna Alford confirmed the base information. So the three of us (John Tichenor, Lucrecia Darling and myself) took a leap of faith and left town ISO spring snow at Crystal Lake STC, a



former, regular STS public ski trip destination until the new millennium.

Crystal Lake STC is a good 4 hr drive from the metro DC area northeast of Williamsport PA. The STC is located in a bowl at the top of a mountain in Lycoming County PA, part of the Allegheny/Endless Summer mtns. Long-time STSer know when you don't find skiable snow in the rest of the mid-Atlantic hills, you occasionally find a sweet spot at Crystal Lakes STC.

*(Continued on page 4)*

### Inside this issue: (blue links are live)

Your STS Officer	2
Contacts	
From the STS Chair	2
Thin Snow, Foggy Hiking and a Hidden Glacier.	3
Cool Relief From Crystal Lakes, PA	4
Outta State, Man	5
Cortina, Italy	6
Ski Fair 2011	7
Membership Form	9

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**From the Slopes-Chair Notes**

What kind of winter is this? As of the end of January, we have had only negligible snow through the mid-Atlantic region. Only four of the Ski Touring Section's trips thus far this year have actually taken place and had skiable snow. The remainder have either had to be cancelled, or if the participants were signed up for a trip where the lodging could not be cancelled, the skiers have gone on winter hikes instead.

There are several theories circulating about this winter that thus far has not been very wintry. General global warming always a suspected cause, though in this year the vagaries of the jet stream as it swings across North America seem to be even more the cause for our often balmy weather. But don't despair. February has in the past often brought our biggest snowfalls to Canaan Valley and other nearby locations. And most of the vegetation in the region has not reacted yet to the unseasonably warm weather. Plants large and small know that it would be foolish to assume at this point that winter is over.

If you have not yet gotten your ski "fix" for the winter, there are still some ways to do so. In February and early March the Ski Touring Section has several trips lined up to places with good chances of skiable snow. Peggy Alpert is leading a trip to Stowe, Vermont from Feb. 16 – 21. Greg Westernik is planning to ski in the Tug Hill region of New York (north of Syracuse) March 1 – 5. The lake effect snow in that region often lasts well into spring and allows great late-season skiing. I'll be leading a week-long trip out to southern Colorado (Pagosa Springs) for a full week in late February, and the snow has been plentiful there since mid November.

And for those who want to stay more locally, there is always the annual Ski-Dance weekend over the Presidents Day holiday weekend (February 17 – 20). The skiing part may or may not occur, depending upon the weather over the next few weeks, but the dancing is guaranteed. If interested, contact Eliot Applestein. The contact information for all these trips is in the Trip Schedule on the Section's web site -- <http://www.patc.us/chapters/ski/>.

So don't despair, and keep those skis close at hand. You may be needing them sooner than you think.

Finally, you will notice an announcement from Mariamalia Araya in this issue that she will be unable to continue editing our Upslope newsletter after her baby is born. If you want this newsletter to continue, now is the time to volunteer to take her place. We will provide whatever training you require."



In Snow,  
 Rob Swennes, Chair

## Thin Snow, Foggy Hiking, and a Hidden Glacier....(Continued)

Our Thursday evening arrival went smoothly; unlike in past years when the key cards to our Canaan SP cabin did not consistently work. Ellen and John were already comfortably settled when Carl and I arrived, and the trio of Susan, Patricia, and Margery were already prepared with their quick Subway sandwich dinners allowing them a spin on ice skates at the Park's rink before closing time. The rest of us enjoyed fine oceanfront dining at the Golden Anchor where the crash of the waves and the cries of the gulls lent ambiance to our dinner (just kidding on the maritime environment part).

Blessed by the 2 to 3 inches of snowfall that came down while we slept Thursday night, we resolved to ski while there was skiing to be had. During a pretty Friday, Carl, John, and Ellen took to the nearby Canaan SP trails, while the yellow SUV trio and I paid a visit to White Grass, my own personal favorite skiing spot on the whole eastern US. Although this has been a year of no-base skiing on effervescent fluff that packs down to almost nothing, we were able to get all the way to the Bald Knob viewpoint and even go a little beyond. Conditions were definitely conducive to rock skis and given some very thin spots and occasional exposed debris the downhill stretches were "exciting". The narrower and steeper trails in the woody part of Bald Knob were, sadly, off-limits, and in regards to tree skiing; a big New York forget-about-it was the answer. However, photos taken by Susan and Margery on Round Top and Baldy recorded the presence of skiable snow, and here is proof:

At the end of the day, Carl's skis, exhibited on the cabin front porch for all to see, were in a dismal state, with the entire bottom detached from one ski and peeled back like a banana skin. Delaminations can't get any bigger than this! This massive failure holds a lesson for all: NEVER STORE YOUR SKIS OFF-SEASON IN A HOT ATTIC! Carl expressed optimism that repair with a bit of epoxy (well, a lot really) may be possible; I for one am skeptical. Notwithstanding the weather radio report that promised disastrous warmth and rain the next day, we consoled ourselves with a fine cabin dinner and an abundance of spirit, some of which is bottled but the rest coming from within.



True to the forecast, drizzle and dense fog prevailed on Saturday, and the snow that looked so beautiful the day before had descended into a state of decay. Considering that the woods trails in the area were going to be a messy blend of ice patches, snow remnants, muck, standing and running water, and slippery wooden deadfall, we opted to follow the Allegheny Trail south from the Park up to a prudent turn around point and then hike back. This would entail mostly road-walking, but given likely trail conditions this would be an advantage. It would also allow us to see some sights in a deeply rural area that we would not otherwise ever see. Accomplishing something like a six mile round trip, we were able to view a few cattle farms (one of which housed the plus ultra of curious cows), converse with the neighborhood canines, pass by an endangered rural post office (Red Creek), ponder the past purpose or present utility of a mysterious roadside concrete basin, and study gravestones in a churchyard. The pea soup fog hardly let up all day though the drizzle abated mid-morning. Returning to the cabin with ample time before dinner, we took in a couple of television movie

fragments, napped, talked about matters all and sundry, or soaked in the Canaan Lodge hot tub and witnessed several lessons in effective tub-side parenting. Dinner at White Grass café that evening was superb as always. After that, Susan and Patricia had enough left in the tank to view a show at the Purple Fiddle, but the rest of us called it a day in front of the fire.

Sunday dawned sunny and chilly, and the customary 10 am "snowshoe tour" of the Canaan Wildlife Refuge seemed like a logical and educational activity before heading back to the big city. The "snowshoe" part was not to be, but with Dave Savile as chief guide and Chip Chase as co-guide, the walk was a treat. The main subject matter was the public lands of West Virginia; what they are, where they are, and the history and mission of their owning agencies. Several easy-to-overlook natural wonders were also featured, including fossil stones, the various evergreen trees of the area, and the Chaga fungus, a purported elixir of life when prepared as a tea.

During the tour, Chip photographed the STS party plus the other nature walkers posed atop the White Grass Glacier, location a closely guarded state secret:

*(Continued on page 8)*

## Cool Relief From Crystal Lakes PA (continued)

Crystal Lakes STC boasted all 30 km of trails were opened, but we found they did not groom about 1/3 of their trails when we were there. The ungroomed stuff was very fast hard pack and not suitable for intermediate+ skiers without metal edges in the steepest sections. The groomed sections were outstanding and we met some ski patrollers along the way. The trails as expected were very uncrowded most of the time we were there.

The photo below shows Lucrecia and me waiting for John to finish his fast run down Zig Zag trail from Big Fern to Boardpile trail. Zig Zag had a washed out section to add to the ambiance.

The former alpine slope at Crystal Lake STC is still a magnet for telemark practice. The trails on the South Ridge (Big Sit, Lookout and South Ridge) are now marked as private property belonging to a local hunting club, no longer part of the STC.



Alas, the call of stunning views of ridge and valley from the top of South Ridge was irresistible. It was "don't ask, don't tell" time, so we crossed the line. We met another familiar face at the STC, John Manifold. John originally designed the STC trails and has returned to do the grooming. A few of the groomed trails had small, washed out sections where fast water crossed and a diversion was needed. We were able to hop over or ski around these distractions as well...until the groomer decided to rehabilitate the spot.

The Ski Center had discounts on maxiglide, ski and snowshoe rentals and waxes. Their rental stock had adult classic and skating skis and kid skis, but no metal edges. Lucrecia took advantage and restocked her maxiglide stuff. The manager Anna told us that snacks and warm soup were available lunchtime in the main hall. We saw some folks renting space at least one of the cabins on site. Most cabins were vacant this weekend. Anna mentioned that she planned

to double the capacity of her B&B (Bellevue Cottage B&B) business in the next year on the mountain approaching the STC.

My recollections of the scenery and the frozen ponds I passed were just as I recalled, as you can see in the next photo.

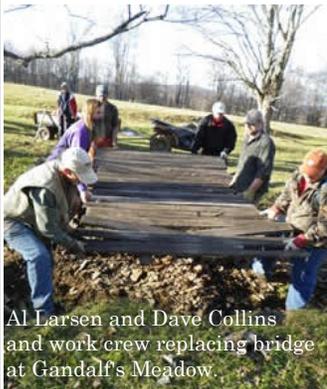
The Loyalsock hiking trail of Lycoming County is also accessible from Crystal Lakes STC property, but we did not try any snowshowing for this trip...maybe next time. On the ride back to DC area, I made one of my classic driving blunders, a wrong turn in Harrisburg. All part of the Crystal Lakes experience... a worthwhile trip that I am planning to repeat again this winter in a public trip!



## OUTTA STATE, MAN

By Al Larsen

My wife Anne and I were saying goodbye to Chip Chase, owner of White Grass XC Ski Center, at Canaan Valley WVA. We had just completed the annual Ski Touring Section work weekend at White Grass, to help prepare it for the soon-to-arrive ski season. We mentioned to Chip that we had lived in Oregon for over 20 years, and that when we returned to the East coast, we were looking for places to go XC skiing--and people kept mentioning White Grass. Chip said to us, you know, a few years ago some folks told him that White Grass reminded them of Oregon in the 1970s. Anne and I nodded approvingly to each other. A very apt observation, that. The Oregon of the 1970s had a Republican governor leading the nation with legislation to require a deposit on beverage cans and bottles to cut litter and reduce waste, and land use planning to preserve farms and forests from indiscriminate development. A very diverse population of Oregonians, from far left to far right, got along and thought more about making it a better place and a better life, and not looking for reasons to hate or pull things apart. So to us "Oregon of the 1970s" is not some frozen in time style of dress or granola dieting caricature that the Wall Street crowd would like to mockingly invoke. It was and can remain a set of priorities, and attitudes, and a caring for each other that just strikes us as something we could use a little more of right here and now. So, after spending the weekend at White Grass, getting to know it on its own terms, we told Chip that there truly was a sense of place and community there that captured the best of that Oregon of the 1970s. From first-hand experience, we can attest unequivocally that this is a good thing.



Al Larsen and Dave Collins and work crew replacing bridge at Gandalf's Meadow

But, let's back up from our farewell chat to Friday afternoon, November 11 as a baker's dozen of STSers converged on Canaan Valley from the DC/Baltimore area, and other points throughout the mid-Atlantic. This herd of kittens had been rounded up by our leader Lynn Yates for the purpose of providing the hands and muscles for executing Chip's pre-season to-do list. I don't mind saying that, even though politically incorrect, it is nice at this stage to be wanted for my body. The crew consisted of Doug Lesar, Erma Cameron, Jack Kangas, Steve Gray, Barry Weston, Peggy Alpert, Steve Brickell, Anne Larsen, Al Larsen, Bert Finklestein, Dalia Melzer, and Dave Collins. Most of us stayed at the house of Jim Norton, who so graciously provided that great accommodation that looks right up the hill at the Timberline downhill ski area. Thanks, so much Jim.



Doug Lesar, contemplating how much snow will surely be on this spot in January.

Barry had arrived Thursday evening, and spent a half day working at White Grass on Friday. The rest of us headed over first thing Saturday morning. Chip had organized three work groups, with tasks for each. The STS crew was augmented by again that many other individual volunteers and small groups. We spent a full day spread out all over the White Grass trails, trimming out tree sprouts that had come up in the middle of trails, sawing out downed trees and branches, reinstalling and repairing foot bridges that cross streams or "weeping" ground spots, clearing glade runs, etc. Chip and the White Grass folks prepared lunches and big soup pots for the work crews. At the end of a hard day's work, they had a terrific lasagna waiting, along with a keg of beer. The food at White Grass, both pre-season and during the season, is tasty and healthy--worth the trip just by itself.



Steve Brickell, Trail Blazer

On Sunday morning, we were back at it. Once again, we split into three crews (this time with less augmentation from other workers), and finished off the list that Chip had for the weekend. When we had arrived on Friday, there was snow on the roads. Approaching Canaan Valley from Davis, looking right at the two downhill areas and White Grass, the hills were white and it looked as though the place was primed for skiing rather than working. Of course, we knew it was just a pretty illusion. Sure enough, by Sunday, pretty much any trace of snow was gone--because the weekend had been a beautiful, sunny, 45-50 degree made-for-outdoor treat.

As we pondered the weekend--feeling good about giving back something to STS and the venues we like to ski, the good feel that we all have experienced from a vigorous workout, the cheer of the sunshine on our shoulders, the camaraderie with friends and new acquaintances in the club--Anne and I talked about how White Grass was for us no longer just a venue, a place to go find snow and ski around. Chip and friends have made it a community, focused on skiing to be sure, but so much more than that. I don't know if Thomas Wolfe was right or not in observing, "You can't go home again". I guess I don't even ponder that question. What I do know is that you can create a good vibe, just as it existed elsewhere, if the people are of good heart and good intention. We consider ourselves fortunate to have discovered such a vibe at White Grass--and if it captures some of the best of Oregon in the 1970s, so much the better. Out of State, man.



Jack Kangas, Steve Gray, Steve Brickell (back), Erma Cameron and Peggy Alpert getting organized (or procrastinating)

## International Destinations: Cortina d' Ampezzo, Italy

Cortina d'Ampezzo is located in northern Italy in the heart of the Dolomites in a wide Alpine valley at an altitude of 1224 meters. It is one of the most famous Alpine and Nordic ski destinations in the world. It is famed for hosting the 1956 Winter Olympics and has been featured in many memorable movies, including "The Pink Panther" and "For Your Eyes Only" with James Bond as Agent 007. The "Queen of the Dolomites" is a member of the association of the 12 most famous ski resorts of the Alps and remains the venue for important sports events, such as the Ski World Cup, the Cortina Winter Polo Cup, the Italian men's curling championship, a stage of the Tour de Ski World Cup, and ice hockey games. Cortina is known for its prestigious shops along Corso Italia and its night entertainment spots.



For those who prefer cross country skiing, the Ampezzo basin offers 70 kilometers of tracks, all clearly signed as to name, number, difficulty, ski technique permitted, total distance, and remaining distance. The Fiammes Sport Nordic Center is located just 3 kilometers outside the town of Cortina and served by a ski bus. The 11 ski tracks lie within a national park, the Dolomiti d'Ampezzo



Nature Reserve, and begin at the starting point of the Cortina/Dobbiaco route, site of an international cross-country ski marathon. There is artificial snowmaking to guarantee snow cover on 7 kilometers of tracks, and two have lighting for night skiing. There are two Nordic ski schools, ski rentals with waxing service, changing rooms, and a snack bar available.



For downhill enthusiasts, there are 70 ski runs, up to 7 kilometers in length, serviced by 37 lifts, including 6 cable cars and 24 chair lifts. Half the runs are rated blue (easy), 35% are red (medium), and 15% black (difficult). There is snowmaking on 95% of the 140 kilometers of downhill slopes, all part of the Dolomiti Superski circuit available on a single ski pass.

A ski trip to Cortina, with an extension to Venice, is scheduled for Friday, March 23 to Monday, April 2, 2012. Participants will stay 7 nights at a three-star hotel (double occupancy with private bath) on the central square in Cortina. The hotel has a sauna and Jacuzzi and is located close to the Faloria ski lifts. Daily buffet breakfasts and a dinner at a local restaurant in Cortina are also included. A two-night extension in Venice at an historic hotel on the Grand Canal is included in the basic trip price. Round-trip flights are on KLM/Delta from Washington Dulles to Venice, with airport ground transfers to the resort. A group travel insurance plan is available. This trip, though not sanctioned by STS, is available at only \$1895 through the STS member listed below, who can supply further information and take reservations. The trip payment can be made in interest-free installments with a \$500 deposit to reserve space. Call or e-mail for details. This enticing trip allows a mix of skiing, culture, sightseeing, and shopping in Europe at a fabulous price.



Harvey Walden

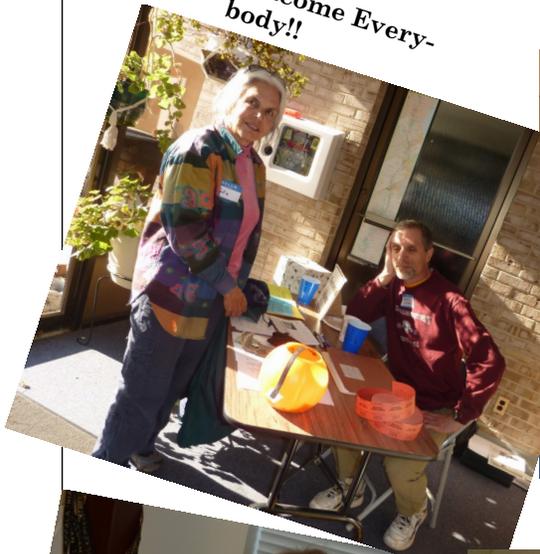
[mdcrc@yahoo.com](mailto:mdcrc@yahoo.com)

(301) 588-0262

# Ski Fair- 2011

The 2011 Ski Fair, held on November 5th, was a real success. Our event was made possible with the help of all participants which in one way or another, either bringing snacks or organizing the event, made it possible. Thanks to all of you!!! It was an afternoon to learn, to shop and to socialize. Here are some memories captured.....

Welcome Everybody!!



Dress warm, be comfortable!



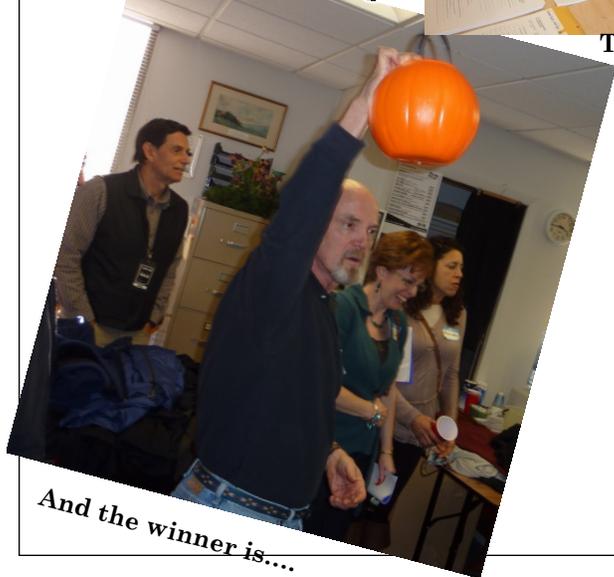
Where do I go next???



Trip organizer!



love Germany.!



And the winner is....



The shop is open...

## Thin Snow, Foggy Hiking, and a Hidden Glacier....(Continued)

The thirteenth annual STS Canaan cabin trip may not have had the best ski conditions possible, but the group that came made the most of the long weekend and enjoyed what the Canaan Valley outdoors had to offer, white and wintry or otherwise. May the fourteenth trip also have such a resourceful crew!



## House for Sale

### Best Location in Stowe, VT

Home For Sale 3 BR, 4 acres nestled in private location with river frontage and views. Hike, bike and ski, 2 miles from Mt Mansfield lifts, direct access to Von Trapp Trails, Rec Path and walk to Topnotch Spa. Adjacent permitted lot included. For information, maps and photos contact [plagakis@stoweaccess.com](mailto:plagakis@stoweaccess.com)



## Volunteer Wanted

Upslope is looking for a new editor. Our family is increasing by one, and my time will be taken by the little one. Being the editor is a great way to stay current with ski events and places to go. I highly encourage people to apply for it. Please contact Rob Swennes if you are interested (H: 703-532-6101, email: [robertswennes@hotmail.com](mailto:robertswennes@hotmail.com)).

PATC-Ski Touring Section  
c/o Doug Lesar  
2507 Campbell Place  
Kensington, MD 20895

February 2012



To:

## PATC Ski Touring Section Membership Form

The PATC/STS provides quality services and benefits to its cross-country skiing members while promoting and supporting the PATC and cross country skiing in general. Whether a novice, recreational, citizen racer or telemark skier, STS has something for every XC skier. Imagine yourself floating on the snow, climbing across hill and dale in the quiet of winter, stopping for lunch in brilliant sunshine on a vista with a view of snow-covered ridges and valleys stretching to the horizon, and then making a descent back to home. Our membership enjoys ski touring in the hills with the comradeship and safety of a group. When you become a member, you receive all issues of the club's newsletter UPSLOPE and other useful information. UPSLOPE is published six times a year by PATC/Ski Touring Section, a non-profit, educational and recreational group of cross-country skiing enthusiasts based in the Maryland, DC, Virginia, PA and West Virginia areas. UPSLOPE provides information about STS trips and events (e.g., Learn-To-XC-Ski weekends, Telemark instructional clinics, and mini-week ski trips). One year membership runs from October 1st through September 30th of the next year. If you join in April or later, your one year membership will run through September of the next year. To insure uninterrupted membership for more than one year, you may provide advance dues for up to three years. To join, select your desired membership category and term from the table below, complete this Form legibly, and send it with a check appropriate to your membership choice (payable to PATC Ski Touring Section) to:

PATC-Ski Touring Section, c/o Doug Lesar, 2507 Campbell Place, Kensington, MD 20895

### Membership Classes

<u>Membership Categories</u>	<u>1 Year Only</u>	<u>2 Years</u>	<u>3 Years</u>
Individual	\$ 9	\$17	\$25
Family	\$13	\$24	\$35

PLEASE PRINT or TYPE THE INFORMATION BELOW !!!

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Request is for: - NEW Membership: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_ - New Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ - Renewal: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

- Add me to Annual member directory but do not list my: Home Ph.: \_\_\_ ; Work Ph: \_\_\_ ; Email: \_\_\_;Postal Address: \_\_\_
- If checked, add me to STS LISTServ so I can get infrequent, adhoc announcements of local XC Ski activities: \_\_\_
- If checked, add me to STS Bulk Email list so I get official club announcements important to all STS members: \_\_\_
- NEW: If checked, send my UPSLOPE only electronically (no paper copy) to save the club copying and postage: \_\_\_

STS is an all-volunteer organization. We cannot function without the assistance of our members. If you are interested in volunteering to help STS in any of the following areas, please check the box and you will be contacted:

Web Content Assistant

STS Officer

XC Ski Instructor

Ski Trip Leader

Publicity

Special Events Coordinator