

The logo for the Winter Sports Clinic features the text "Winter Sports Clinic" in a white, serif font on a dark blue rectangular background. To the right of the text is a white graphic of a snowflake with motion lines trailing behind it, suggesting speed and winter sports.

Winter Sports Clinic

# The Place

## Snowmass Village, Colorado

At first glimpse, Snowmass Village seems an unlikely locale for a disabled veterans sports clinic, much less the largest such clinic in the world. Tucked high up in the Elk Mountains of western Colorado and with roads and steeps reminiscent of San Francisco, Snowmass truly is a village perched on a mountain—a massive mountain. But with a supportive community, excellent facilities and resources, and ideal terrain, Snowmass over the past five years has proved to be an ideal location for the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic.

Snowmass Village was founded in 1967 around the nascent ski area and incorporated in 1979. Today Snowmass Village, which is located in Brush Creek Valley only nine miles from Aspen, Colorado, is home to a year-round population of almost 2,000 people. These residents—locals, business owners, and second home owners -- are one of the main reasons the Winter Sports Clinic has remained here.

“They really embrace us and make us feel welcome,” says organization founder and director Sandy Trombetta, who moved the program to Snowmass from Crested Butte five years ago. “They do whatever’s necessary to make it happen. They also do whatever they can to make it accessible.”

Snowmass wasn’t always as accessible as it is today, but that’s changed partly thanks to Challenge Aspen co-founder, Amanda Boxtel. Boxtel, who herself has used a wheelchair for 12 years, took the Snowmass town council to the village mall in wheel chairs over a decade ago. Some of them she even blindfolded. After touring the mall and the village center, their eyes, so to speak, were opened. Soon afterwards the town council gave \$10,000 to build a ramp up to ticket pavilion. Other changes quickly followed, including electric doors at Alpine Bank and wheelchair ramps installed on all Snowmass Village shuttles. Gene Taylor Sports added an elevator to their store, while renowned après-ski spot The Cirque is now accessible with wide-access bathrooms as well.

“The community has totally stepped up for accessibility,” says Boxtel. “The people, our businesses, and hotels very receptively embrace this event. They really jump in, and it hits the town like one big gorilla. Everyone gets involved and pitches in, they just can’t help it.”

What changes haven’t been made permanently to the town are temporarily installed during the Winter Sports Clinic when ramps spring up all over to make everything from restaurants to hotels accessible for wheelchairs. The Silvertree Hotel, for instance, takes doors off to make bathrooms accessible and creates a staging area so that when it gets too cold outside disabled skiers can put on their skis inside and roll out down a carpet onto the slopes. “When you have 200 sit skis at the staging area there, it looks like a boat dock,” says Boxtel.

While the local businesses and hotels do their part to contribute to the week’s success, so to does Challenge Aspen, the host adaptive program which organizes and schedule all on-mountain lessons, activities, and operations and is run right out of the Snowmass Village Mall.

“Challenge Aspen is a first rate ski program that really knows its business,” says Trombetta. “Our clients really look forward to seeing them.”

In 2004, the community also pitched in financially when 12-year ski instructor Neil Camas came knocking. Camas decided to raise money to sponsor newly injured veterans from

**The Place continued**

**Page 2**

Iraq and Afghanistan to the program. With the support and donations of the town and countless generous benefactors, Camas raised \$40,000 or enough to bring 23 disabled veterans and their significant others to the event.

In addition to the supportive community, Trombetta also cites Snowmass mountain terrain as a major appeal. At over 3,100 acres, Snowmass is the second largest ski area in Colorado, and its massive mountain terrain caters to everyone from absolute beginners to daring experts. "It's a great teaching mountain, a caring community, and awesome facilities," concludes Trombetta. "You put it all together, and it makes for a great experience for the men and women who come to spend this special week here."

**For more information, please contact:**

Allison Johnson, Director of Publicity  
Town of Snowmass Village Marketing Department  
(970) 704-9988 (ph) . (970) 309-5485 (cell)  
aj@snowmasspress.com