

ONE FOR THE RECORD BOOKS?

Guinness bid highlights importance of ski/snowboard lessons. **By Eric Smith**

Mary Jo Tarallo, executive director of the Learn to Ski & Snowboard Month and Bring a Friend initiatives, helped spearhead an attempt by resorts across the U.S. and Canada on Jan. 6 to set a Guinness World Record for the largest (ski and snowboard) lesson. The attempt attracted a record number of “qualifying participants” — almost 1,000 skiers and more than 500 snowboarders — taking a ski or snowboard lesson. But while the numbers are enough to set a new mark, Tarallo said, Guinness has strict verification standards.

The idea of attempting this world record came from Hugh Reynolds of SNOW Operating, who is sending materials to Guinness this week. “We may have the numbers, but the final determination rests with Guinness,” Reynolds said. Organizers expect to find out if they broke the record in the next couple of months.

Snow Show Daily sat down with Tarallo to discuss the world’s largest lesson attempt and the event’s importance for growing skiing and snowboarding as it raises awareness of professional lessons.



Why attempt this record?

The world’s largest lesson is positioned as the unofficial kickoff for Learn to Ski & Snowboard Month. It attracts a lot of attention to our website even before January begins. The Learn to Ski & Snowboard Month site is the only industry site totally dedicated to beginners. The dropout rate (for skiers and snowboarders) is very high — 85 percent — compared to the number of people who take a lesson and stick with it.

How many times have you guys attempted to break the record? How close have you gotten?

This was the second time. We actually had the numbers last year but not the documentation to prove it.

You added Canada this year; was that critical for increasing the numbers?

It was not critical to get our numbers up. The key is submitting the required documentation.

We estimate our overall numbers are about the same as last year on average — about 6,000. A much smaller percentage qualifies.

What’s it like working with Guinness on getting a record verified?

Unless you are willing to pay a fee (\$9,000) you have to communicate with Guinness via their website. So it is tricky.

How does this event raise awareness of the importance of professional lessons?

We get an amazing amount of media coverage for the events all over the country. Most of the publicity is generated by our partners, so this is a collaborative effort. The resorts are the ones that stage this event, and it’s a great way to get the public’s attention. It’s a good hook.

Read more about the industry's efforts to grow participation in the Day 3 Snow Show Daily.