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## Disabled youth, adults learn to ski at Pico Mountain in Vermont

Posted on April 2, 2014 by Richard Irwin



By Marlene Greer

Vasu Sojitra sped down the hill with abandon. He skied backward with ease. He maneuvered through the trees and even managed a helicopter turn or two.

The teenager, pictured above with the author, learned to ski on his one leg nine years ago through Vermont Adaptive Ski & Sports. He skis on one fat ski using specialized poles with skids. And as happens with most people who learn to ski when they are young, Vasu seems fearless.

We took a day off from skiing Killington and headed over to nearby Pico Mountain, a 10-minute shuttle ride from the Killington Grand Hotel. There we met Vasu, an intern for Vermont Adaptive.

Vermont Adaptive has its headquarters in the newly completed Andrea Mead Lawrence Lodge at Pico. Its programs serve nearly 1,300 children, youth and adults with disabilities. Vasu is one of 400 interns and volunteers who assist in teaching those with disabilities how to ski using specialized equipment. He's also one of the program's many successes. Keeping up with him was a challenge.

Pico is a much smaller mountain than Killington – only 468 skiable acres with 57 trails and seven lifts. But its abundance of intermediate terrain, short gladed trails, and wide, green groomers make it a great place for a day of casual skiing and an ideal hill for Vermont Adaptive students to experience the thrills

of skiing.

But there was nothing casual about skiing with Vasu. He joined us in an afternoon exploration of the mountain and tore down everything he encountered. A couple of times we took the easy route and met up with him at the bottom of the hill.

We asked the New England native what he loved most about the sport.

“Backcountry skiing,” he said without hesitation. “It’s the best.” This brought up another question of how he manages the uphill in the backcountry. He explained how he attaches small snowshoes to the feet of his poles, giving him the ability to walk in the snow.

It seems nothing will keep a skier from doing what he loves.

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