

# A PLACE of delight

## Membership offers much more than just great skiing

By any measure, last winter was a tough time in the skiing and snowboarding world. But you can't tell by looking at photos taken at Alpine Ski Club.

"I look through the photos taken last winter, and I see nothing but smiles," says Alana Mackle, marketing manager at Alpine.

"Everybody is out there with their families, being outdoors and having a great time making memories together. Despite everything, they all look so happy."

That's a remarkable statement, given that "everything" last year included weeks of not being able to ski or snowboard at all. It would have been easy for members to feel disgruntled or upset, frustrated that the provincial lockdown meant they weren't allowed to ride the slopes from Boxing Day until mid-February, and that their robust social calendar of events migrated to virtual gatherings.

Instead, the membership at Alpine responded by embracing everything else the Club has to offer.

**Snowshoeing and more**  
When the chair lifts were shut down, members looked for other ways to enjoy the property. "We had a huge uptick in participation in the non-ski aspects of the Club," says Alana.

Those assets include an incredible and extensive network of snowshoeing and hiking trails that crisscross the stunning Blue Mountains terrain. There are cross-country ski trails at the top of the mountain that snake through Alpine's property and other neighbouring ski clubs. There's

even a skating rink at the base of the mountain. And all of them were used more than they have ever been.

During the lockdown, the Club even created some designated tobogganing runs – and then enhanced them as it became clear just how popular they were with members.

"A lot of our members recognized for the first time how much more we have to offer," says Alana. "Many didn't realize the snowshoe trails, for example, were so robust or so well-kept (thanks to our volunteer snowshoe committee)."

Matthew Diamond had some idea of the trails, but mainly because Nisa, his wife, prefers snowshoeing to skiing. Matthew has been a member of Alpine all his life – his parents took out a membership when he was six, and he grew up spending every weekend on the slopes. Matthew and Nisa took out their own membership so that their children could enjoy the many benefits Alpine has to offer, and

eventually bought a chalet within walking distance of the hill.

A typical weekend, he says, would see him walking to the hill as soon as the lifts open. "I may not be on the first chair going up, but it's usually one of the first ten," he says. Nisa and their three teenage children all make their way over to the hill over the course of the morning and begin skiing, boarding or snowshoeing. The youngsters teach lessons or take them, train with their racing team, ski or board with their friends, and meet up with their parents at the clubhouse for meals or at the end of the day.

The specific activities changed last year – particularly during the lockdown – but the feel remained the same. If anything, Matthew says, there was a renewed appreciation of the joys of belonging to the Club.

"We realized just how important it is to have activities outdoors, and to be able to do things with friends and with family," he says. "Alpine was absolutely a saviour for my family and for many others."

### Gathering with friends

It was particularly encouraging to be reminded of the collegial nature of club membership. Alpine has a long history of welcoming families, offering a place where people can build friendships – deep and intimate, or casual and nodding – that are renewed every winter. The pandemic reminded many members that those things matter every bit as much as the amazing skiing and snowboarding, short lift lines, superb racing program, and excellent terrain park.

"In the absence of those things, we rediscovered the value of just being outdoors, being active, and feeling a sense of community," says Matthew.

Club members are looking forward to a return to a more conventional skiing and boarding season this winter, and to being able to enjoy the magnificent clubhouse. But Matthew says there will be changes, too. Some members have made the move out of the city, allowing them to use the Club on weekdays – and



during the green season as well as the winter. "The local area's hiking and mountain bike trails are magnificent," he says.

The new season will also see a few new faces at the hill, says Alana. "We've had a number of new members join over the past year," she says, adding

that there are still limited membership spots available.

"This past year drove home to many people that there is tremendous value to being part of a private ski club. And we don't see that changing."

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Alpine Ski Club was a vital outlet for members throughout the worst of the pandemic.