

FORD SAYRE MEMORIAL SKI
COUNCIL AND THE DARTMOUTH
SKIWAY HELP LOCAL KIDS
REACH THEIR SKIING POTENTIAL

FAST FRIENDS



LEFT
A group of independent young skiers approaches the Winslow quad chair from Pass Fail Trail.

ABOVE
Skiers ride the Holt's Ledge double chair.

STORY BY **Lisa Ballard**
PHOTOS COURTESY OF FORD SAYRE MEMORIAL SKI COUNCIL
AND THE DARTMOUTH SKIWAY

Riding the chairlift at the Dartmouth Skiway, it's a skier's nature to watch everyone on the slopes below you. It's impossible to ignore the caliber of the school-aged skiers. They are faster than average, etching perfect arcs in the snow or whacking the gates on a course. The Skiway is home to the Dartmouth Ski Team, but the team shares the hill with a younger, enthusiastic group—the members of the Ford K. Sayre Memorial Ski Council.



DARTMOUTH SKIWAY BY THE NUMBERS

- | | | | |
|------|--|--------|---|
| 1.25 | Length of Papoose, the longest trail, in miles | 285 | Cost of a season's pass for kids, ages 6 to 12, in dollars |
| 4 | Number of lifts | 305 | Cost of a season's pass for teens, ages 13 to 18, in dollars |
| 30 | Number of trails: 25% beginner, 50% intermediate, 25% expert | 968 | Vertical drop, in feet |
| 35 | Number of instructors on the Skiway staff | 1,943 | Summit elevation, in feet |
| 70 | Number of paid and volunteer ski patrollers | 1957 | Year the Dartmouth Skiway opened |
| 70 | Percent of terrain with machine-made snow | 3,300 | Uphill skier capacity per hour |
| 104 | Skiable acres | 16,000 | Size of the McLane Family Lodge, the area's day lodge, in square feet |

WHO WAS FORD SAYRE?

In 1936, Ford Sayre, a Dartmouth student from Glen Ridge, New Jersey, learned to ski at the college long before the Dartmouth Skiway opened. He fell in love with the sport. During the Great Depression, he worked at the Hanover Inn where he got the idea to teach ski lessons with his wife Peggy to the children of guests. At the same time, Ford also wanted to help local children who couldn't afford the gear learn to ski by setting up a ski school at a hill in Hanover Center.

Sadly, during World War II, Ford Sayre died in a plane crash while serving in the Army Air Corps. After the war, Peggy Sayre and other locals established the Ford K. Sayre Memorial Ski School. Hundreds of children participated. Then, in 1950, a number of other youth ski groups in the Upper Valley merged under the Ford Sayre umbrella to form the ski council that continues today.

FORD SAYRE PROGRAMS TODAY

This winter, Ford Sayre has about 550 kids in its various programs. Of those, 250 are alpine racers from grade school to high school, a hundred are recreational skiers who spend Wednesday afternoons in a learn-to-ski program, and the rest are freestylers, cross-country skiers, and jumpers. Regardless of whether a kid is trying to figure out a basic pole plant or qualify for the US Ski Team, Ford Sayre is the go-to ski club in the Hanover area to become a better skier.

The program has a long track record of placing its alums on college teams and on the US Ski Team. Olympic gold medalists Mikaela Shiffrin and Hannah Kearney were in Ford Sayre when they were young. Another Olympian, Ralph Miller, a Dartmouth standout in the 1950s and the first person to break the 100-mile-an-hour barrier on skis, was in Ford Sayre, as were jumpers Jeff and Chris Hastings and Nordic stars Dorcas Wonsavage and Joe, Jim, and Mike Holland.

Dorcas Wonsavage and Mike Holland coach at Oak Hill every week, training the next generation of Nordic skiers and jumpers. The credentials of its alpine coaches are just as impressive, a who's who of collegiate All-Americans and former US Ski Teamers living in the Upper Valley due to a Dartmouth connection, a job at one of the ski companies located in Lebanon, or because they grew up in the Upper Valley and are now raising a family here.

OPPOSITE
Clockwise from top left: Skiway visionary Howard P. Chivers, Dartmouth '39. Slalom racing on Holt's Ledge. Undated photo. The Holt's Ledge Poma lift, circa 1960. Dartmouth Skiway by the numbers. The Skiway has always been a family friendly place to ski. The Duer family enjoys a day on the slopes, circa 1958-1960. Historical photos courtesy of Dartmouth College Library.

THIS PAGE
From top: A very young skier masters the magic carpet in the Skiway's beginner area. Youth skiers take on the challenge of moguls.



Smiles and skiing are a natural combination at the Skiway!



IT TAKES AN ARMY

In addition to Ford Sayre's 40 paid coaches and 175-plus volunteers (mostly parents), the Dartmouth Skiway contributes extensive resources to ensure that its slopes are ready for Ford Sayre's training and racing programs. "We're not just here for college-affiliated skiers," says Doug Holler, director of the Dartmouth Skiway. "We welcome skiers and riders from all over the Upper Valley and beyond, anyone who wants to come."

Doug characterizes the Skiway as more "racing amorous" than most other ski areas. It puts up over two miles of safety netting along its two race trails, Worden's and Thomas. Unlike other ski areas, which put up and take down their nets, the Skiway leaves theirs up to allow ongoing protection on these two training venues, which are used five to seven days a week during the winter.

When Ford Sayre hosts an event, the Skiway makes sure the snow on the hill is groomed and ready, the timing is in place, and the communications system is wired, which isn't as straightforward as it sounds. Worden's alone has several start and finish lines to accommodate different ages and ability levels, all of which need timing and communications. For this winter, the Skiway has added 4,000 feet of speaker wire and 3,800 feet of timing wire, among a number of improvements that the average skier won't notice but that allow the ski area to maintain its excellent skiing and racing facilities.

And if 10 inches of snow falls the night before a race, the Skiway makes the mammoth effort to push it off the race hill. "It's tough as a ski area manager to take snow off a hill, but it's necessary to hold an event," says Doug. "It can be a long push. It's a quarter-mile to Green Pastures, which is the closest trail to Worden's. . . . But we have a reputation as a race venue. It's a tradition here."



“Ford Sayre is different from other ski clubs in New Hampshire and Vermont,” says Michael Holmes, chair of the board and father to four alpine racers. “We’re a bunch of locals. Our kids see each other on the soccer team, in math class, and on Main Street, as compared to kids with second homes at ski areas who just see each other on weekends during the winter. We live in an athletically minded community. It rubs off. We’re also blessed with a wonderful coaching staff, most of whom are parents of the kids in the program and who are also former World Cup or Olympic skiers. The average Ford Sayre parent is not your average parent.”

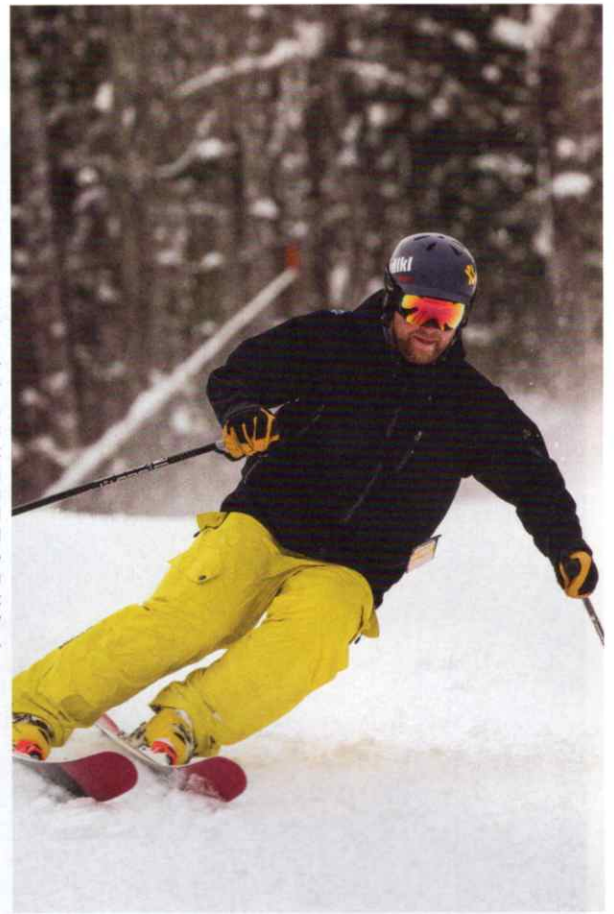
DARTMOUTH SKIWAY ADVANTAGE

Having the Dartmouth Skiway in Ford Sayre’s backyard is also a big factor in the success of its alpine programs, allowing its junior racers to practice not only on weekends but also midweek. “We live where we ski,” says Michael. “We’re at the Skiway as soon as it opens, usually by early December. We love skiing there! We ski other places too, but it’s a pleasure to have our own mountain where we can park next to the lifts and the lodge.”

The fact that the Dartmouth Ski Team trains and races at the Skiway is another advantage. The Dartmouth skiers are exceptional role models for the Ford Sayre kids, who can watch them up close and sometimes ride the lifts


OPPOSITE
From top:
Snowboarders
on Worden’s
Schuss. The
Skiway welcomes
both skiers and
riders. Skiers
start young at
the Skiway: A
parent coaches
her child in the
beginner area.

THIS PAGE
Skiway
Snowsports
School Director
and Upper Valley
native Sean
Norton enjoys
the slopes at
the Skiway. Sean
grew up skiing
here and raced
for Thetford
Academy. He
began teaching
snowsports at
the Skiway
in 2008.



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together. Many of the Big Green's team members are either just off or bound for the US Ski Team. Michael likens watching the Dartmouth team train to watching the World Cup at Killington but in a more casual environment.

AFFORDABLE SKIING

If Ford Sayre the man were still alive, he would be happy that his namesake ski council is still providing less expensive skiing opportunities for local kids, especially for kids in Lyme, who ski free at the Skiway, and employees of Dartmouth College and the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, who get discounted tickets. Even without a Lyme or Dartmouth affiliation, Ford Sayre's programs are less expensive than similar programs at larger ski areas. What's more, the council has awarded an average of \$13,500 each year in scholarships over the last three years.

Ford would also be pleased to know that one of the ski council's overarching goals is to develop a lifelong love of snowsports among the kids who participate in its programs. The Dartmouth Skiway is certainly part of that. "The Skiway is small enough that even the youngest kids can ski confidently without their parents," says Michael. "They learn to explore the whole mountain. It gives them the illusion of independence, which is so thrilling to young kids." Ford Sayre and the Dartmouth Skiway—it's a partnership with the Hanover community at its heart. **H**

FOR MORE INFO
Dartmouth Skiway
skiway.dartmouth.edu

Ford Sayre Memorial Ski Council
fordsayre.org

ONLINE EXTRA

Find information on Ford Sayre Ski Programs and more photos online at www.hereinhanover.com.