



Saint Viator Students Take to the Slopes for Charity



The Martin Luther King holiday turned into a working vacation for a group of Saint Viator High School students. Skiing down the Big Powderhorn Mountain in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, more than 140 students banded together to heighten awareness for a charity focused on finding cures for serious childhood diseases.

On Saturday, they all wore matching T-shirts that promoted the mission of their classmates' Alpine Children's Charity. Their shirts read: "Skiing for Solutions and Boarding for Breakthroughs."

The logo refers to the charity's major fundraiser, a ski-a-thon held each year over spring break in Vail, Colorado. It raises money through pledges, individual donations and corporate donors.

Since its inception six years ago, the charity has raised nearly \$850,000. This year, its youthful organizers hope to reach \$1 million. Saturday's "Alpine Children's Charity Day" on the Big Powderhorn Mountain, kicked off their ambitious campaign.

Former Saint Viator students Nick and Jack DeTrempe of Barrington and their cousins conceived the charity in 2004, shortly after Jack had been diagnosed with juvenile diabetes.

"We were thinking of what we could do to help," says Hank DeTrempe, a Saint Viator junior who inherited leadership of the charity once his brothers went away to college. "I think we always hoped to raise a lot of money, but I don't think we ever dreamed of raising this much, this fast."

In their first year out, with the support of Vail Resorts and live television news coverage, they raised \$150,000, followed the second year by raising \$250,000.

"We typically have around 100 people participate in the ski-a-thon in Vail," Hank DeTrempe says, "but the bulk of the participation comes through individual donations, with as many as 500 contributions coming in a year."

Alpine Children's Charity now raises money for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, the Children's Heart Foundation, Bear Necessities Pediatric Cancer Foundation, and the Red Ribbon Project, which promotes AIDS and HIV awareness among middle and high school students.

Hank DeTrempe serves as president of the Alpine Children's Charity junior board, which also includes his younger brother, Luke, a Saint Viator freshman, as well as teens from Barrington and New Trier high schools.

"We're definitely out there trying to find a cure," he says. "But it's also about kids helping kids and fostering a lifetime commitment to service and charity."