

Ski for Light

What it means to redefine winter sports

Every winter, as snow falls in the belts of North America, a unique organization gathers together that blends accessibility, athleticism, and community. *Ski for Light* is a nonprofit organization that, as of this year, has celebrated its 51st anniversary in Granby, Colorado. The annual event brings together those with visual and mobility impairments with sighted guides for a week of cross-country Nordic skiing, learning, and reunions.

Founded and brought to the United States in 1975 by ski instructor Olav Pedersen, an immigrant from Norway, the event follows closely to that of a program in Scandinavia, the Ridderrenn, or “Knight’s Race”. The Ridderrenn now stands as one of the world’s largest annual winter sports events for athletes with disabilities. What began as a small experiment from the heart has grown into an international program that draws participants from around the globe each year. One of the most notable draws is the changing locations

each year, with revisits to familiar favorites such as the 2026 event at YMCA Snow Mountain Ranch. Despite differing locations, a main factor remains the same – the shared sense of adventure and community.

The organization,



*“The feeling of
skiing...
It’s heaven”*

laying it roots in the 1950’s by blind musician Erling Stordahl, has also laid its foundation in partnership which remains the heart of Ski for Light. Visually impaired skiers are paired, typically, one-on-one with trained sighted guides who ski alongside them, offering verbal cues, support, and encouragement. Every year, there are many of the participants for the first time on skis and the guide’s first-time guiding. The experience spans beyond logistical skiing and turns into a deeply collaborative adventure filled with trust, freedom,

and mutual respect.

But Ski for Light spans beyond just skiing. The weeklong program is filled with technique clinics, educational sessions, and social events. As of the 2026 event, some of these are Après Ski sessions and themed events: Western Welcome Night, Night at the Kiva, Silent Auction, and a talent show to name just a few. Let’s just say, excitement and adventure is never lacking at a Ski for Light event.

For many of the participants



and guides who have been coming for 30 plus years, Ski for Light International is more than a yearly event in their calendars. It is a reunion for friends and families in a place considered home. This home changes yearly from its origins of Frisco, Colorado (1975, 1985) to Provo, Utah (2009, 2010,

2012, 2025) to Anchorage, Alaska (1999, 2003, 2014) and more. The event successfully redefines who winter sports are for and proves that adventure, like light, are experiences meant to be shared.

The participants themselves come from a wide range of backgrounds, ages, and locations, but are united not by purely athletic ability, but by curiosity, determination, and excitement. Some arrive with years of skiing experience, and others never having touched skis or snow before, but all filled with the same spirit. The guides too span generations from college students to retirees, many returning year after year. Ski for Light frequently homes couples – both guides and skiers – some even meeting at previous events, along with friends and families. At this year’s event, Ski for Light was joined by a mother skier and guide daughter who is learning to guide so she can ski with her mother post-event.

Beyond the event itself, Ski for Light encourages conversation and understanding of accessibility in sports and life. The impact spans far beyond the snowy settings. Ski for Light is an organization that celebrates what people can do and has many more years in the future.

Alex Winn | Publicity Intern

