

Jimmie Heuga Nomination

DIANNA DIGIANDOMENICO

Nominated by:
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Dianna Digiandomenico has been an inspiration to me and all The Unrecables since we met her on her 1st Mammoth ski trip. She had only been skiing for 7 weeks and skied the whole mountain! We were all in awe! And we still are! Especially after learning that less than 4 years earlier, Dianna was run over, toe to head, by a fully loaded 1-ton truck and its trailer. The damage was unimaginable: Dianna had to be resuscitated 3 times, was given 18 liters of blood, had massive soft tissue damage, broke both legs, broke her pelvis in 8 places, had lower spine and skull fractures and developed abdominal compartment syndrome. She spent 2 weeks in a medically induced coma and 3 months in the hospital.

Dianna had always loved the outdoors and was used to being independent. Now, she sat in a wheel chair with no feeling in her legs, had immeasurable pain and was totally dependent on others. Dianna became negative and depressed, thinking only of what she would never be able to do again. It took many months of rehabilitation and adjustment, before Dianna decided that she needed to get out and “get a life” again. It was a slow road.



photo courtesy Sigrd Noack

Dianna started on her way to independence by taking the bus to her regular hospital visits. It was painful sitting up for the long bus ride, but it also brightened her mood, realizing that she was being independent again. But still Dianna could only see her limitations. It wasn't until she felt a tickle in her toes, that she started to see light at the end of the tunnel, and then there was no stopping her. After many more months of really hard work, she was able to use one of her legs, and soon, with the help of forearm crutches and leg braces, she was able to start walking. Dianna was inspired. As a child, she had always loved sledding, so this seemed like a good start. But traveling to the mountain and sledding on bumpy runs was very painful and wore her out for a whole week! But she did it on her own, and created a way to get up the hill without her crutches sinking deep into the snow. Although she loved sledding, she did not love the hour it took to get up the hill for a 2 seconds thrill speeding down, and after each run, her body required a 30 minute rest. Kids and adults on the hill were amazed and inspired by Dianna's imaginative ways of getting up the hill with her crutches and the sled. Finally some instructors, who were also quite impressed, told her about a much easier way to experience speed on the mountain, skiing with lifts! And thus started Dianna's ski life.

Dianna took her first ski lesson with the Adaptive Winter Sports School at Mt. High. She was excited, a bit worried and really scared! Although she felt excruciating pain while rotating her legs and hips, she fell in love with this new sport. With ski lifts and outriggers on forearm crutches, skiing was the most fun for her! Dianna never fell that first day, so she had to fake a fall to practice getting up. When Dianna got home, she practiced getting up off the floor using her crutches. She booked lessons 2 or 3 times a week. She was anxious to step it up! On her 6th lesson they were skiing nothing but black and blue runs! The whole ski school was in awe, everyone wanted to ski with her and catch some of her natural ski talent. She inspired practically the whole mountain! She says: “While skiing hurts, it actually hurts less and is easier than walking, and I love it. Yes, I could sit on my couch with this pain or I can be daring, take chances and have a super time skiing with the pain!” It was a no-brainer for Dianna. She continued: “I was totally hooked! It has been the best therapy for me both physically and mentally! Nobody could slow me down”. And one day after she was officially certified to ski on her own, she met an amputee, a 3tracker from the Unrecables!

Dianna is beyond anything any of us have witnessed. She is a Wunderskier, an amazing person, and she is a true inspiration to everyone. As Dianna puts it: “The thing I love best is that people come up to me everywhere and tell me that they see me struggle with my braces and crutches or skis/board with outriggers and that I ALWAYS have a big beautiful smile. No matter what I am doing, I try to do it with a smile, and that inspires others, and when they smile back, it inspires me”.