

# WINTER FEELS GOOD: Health, Fitness, Social Benefits of Snow Sports



**WINTER FEELS GOOD** is a comprehensive grassroots program that leverages existing partnerships and builds new relationships to grow participation in snow sports. By highlighting the health, fitness and social benefits of snow sports, Winter Feels Good (WFG) moves beyond traditional industry marketing efforts. It educates and inspires youth through key influencers, including teachers and parents, and through creative connections with education, community and government groups.

#### Program Goals

- Combat the lack of activity in the U.S., particularly in the winter.
- Dispel negative perceptions of snow sports (too complicated, too expensive, too cold).
- Offer information on how snow sports can contribute to a healthy lifestyle.

#### Target Audience

- Parents and teachers—adults that are key influencers of children.
- 40 million adults between the ages of 25-45 who are active but not necessarily involved with snow sports.

#### Examples of Partnerships

*Industry:* National Ski Areas Association; Cross Country Ski Areas Association and more.

*Education:* American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance; National Association for Sport and Physical Education.

*Government:* President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports; U.S. Forest Service; U.S. House of Representatives Ski and Snowboard Caucus.

*Community/Health:* Girl and Boy Scouts; YMCA and YWCA; Parks and Recreation Associations; American Heart Association.

#### Gateway Activities

WFG introduces adults and children to gateway, easy-access winter sports like snowshoeing and cross country skiing.

#### Media Coverage

WFG has capitalized on the public's interest with the growing inactivity and obesity epidemic by launching a national media campaign with positive reasons for snow sports participation. Articles have appeared in Cooking Light, Oprah's Magazine, Fitness, USA Today and many other publications.

#### Consumer Web Sites

##### [www.winterfeelsgood.com](http://www.winterfeelsgood.com)

The Winter Feels Good web site provides consumers with information and motivation to get out and get active during the winter months. Visitors will find a wealth of information on:

- The health, fitness and social benefits of snow sports.
- Tips for dressing and how to select equipment and clothing.
- Programs that get people involved with snow sports.
- A database of retail stores and manufacturers, consumer shows, clubs and more.

##### [www.wintertrails.org](http://www.wintertrails.org)

The Winter Trails web site provides all the information a consumer needs to participate in Winter Trails Day, offered at nearly 100 locations in the U.S. on Jan. 7, 2006. Winter Trails introduces consumers to the world of snow sports with free snowshoeing and cross country skiing.



[winterfeelsgood.com](http://winterfeelsgood.com)

  
An SIA Program

# CASE STUDY

## Fairfax County Public Schools Snowshoe Program

### The Program

Winter Feels Good partnered with Virginia's Fairfax County Public Schools, one of the largest school systems in the country with 170,000 students, to create a pilot program to introduce urban youth to snowshoeing and snow sports. More than 2,000 students participated in the formal snowshoe pilot and an additional 3,000 students were exposed to snowshoeing during field days activities. Organizers of WFG leveraged professional relationships with the county's health and physical education department and the physical education department of George Mason University (GMU) to jump-start the program. Four snowshoe companies (Tubbs, Atlas, Mountain Safety Research and Redfeather) were crucial partners to this program, donating 135 pairs of snowshoes.

### The Method

The Fairfax County Health and Physical Education Department organized a snowshoe clinic during the county's annual in-service training for teachers in September, 2004. An information packet for teachers included a curriculum prepared specifically for Fairfax County by a professor of physical education at George Mason University. It adhered to Fairfax County Education standards and was based on curriculum from WinterKids and Tubbs' Winter Fit program. Teachers from 25 schools expressed interest in the snowshoe program. A limited number of snowshoes kept the program to six schools: three elementary, two middle and one high school.

Additional training was offered to teachers prior to the start of the pilot that ran from November through March. Teachers were offered resources included on the Winter Feels Good web site. During the four-month period, snowshoes were rotated from school to school based on a schedule developed by the Fairfax County Coordinator for Health and Physical Education. Each school received the snowshoes twice.

### Challenges

- Transporting the snowshoes between schools.
- Tight time schedules between snowshoe transfers from school to school.
- Unpredictable weather and lack of snow. Only one school actually had snow on the ground when it had the snowshoes.

### Strengths

- Teachers conducted snowshoe classes on the grass and students loved it!
- Fairfax County was very receptive to new and innovative programming.
- Working with a resources-rich large urban school system made execution very manageable.
- Diversity in Fairfax County offered exposure of snow sports to a wide audience.
- The school system's savvy public affairs department helped publicize program.

### Expanding the Program

The Fairfax County School System Public Affairs Department prepared a short documentary on the pilot program that organizers used to show teachers at the AAHPERD national conference. An abbreviated version of the documentary aired on the educational cable station in Fairfax County. The program received regional exposure through the annual "GET FIT WITH US" Festival in Washington, D.C., and an award for its innovative approach to physical education programs from Melissa Johnson, Executive Director for the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

### Funding

Ideally, each school should have its own set of snowshoes. Grants from the government, private foundations, PTAs and state education departments are sources of funding. Grant writing is time-consuming and requires a great deal of skill. Local sponsorships are another potential source of funding but finding a substantial funding source is a challenge. Funding sources will continue to be pursued to allow for snowshoe inventory for the six schools and for an expansion to other schools. Organizers would like to expand to additional states.

### Measurements of Success

Student performance was measured by schools individually. Pilot organizers plan to develop standard evaluation criteria for Year Two and also plan to introduce the use of heart rate monitors and pedometers in the program. Teachers who ran exemplary programs during the Pilot phase will serve as role models and mentors for other teachers.

### Involvement

Involvement by outdoor companies and retail operations in a program of this nature is limited only by one's enthusiasm and imagination. Physical education teachers continually seek activities for their students that get them out of the gym and outside during the winter. For tips on how to become involved with a program similar to the Fairfax County pilot program visit [winterfeelsgood.com](http://winterfeelsgood.com).



*Despite lack of snow, teachers and students were able to learn snowshoe basics on grass.*