

Sierra's slopes cleared of debris, ready for snow



Crushed empties no longer litter the slopes of Sierra-at-Tahoe. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

TWIN BRIDGES – It might behoove skiers and snowboarders to adopt the hikers' mantras of "leave not trace" and "pack it in, pack it out".

More than a ton of trash (2,047.6 pounds to be exact) was removed from the slopes of Sierra-at-Tahoe on Sunday. This was the ninth year the ski resort near Echo Summit put a call out to people to rid the woods of debris. A record number – more than 400 – showed up.



James Gasper of Camino, who has been picking up trash at Sierra every year, says the beginner slopes have the most garbage.

It was a family event on Oct. 11 for the Atchisons of Roseville. Sierra is where they regularly ski.

“It’s paying it forward to Tahoe,” is how Sierra Atchison put it. She was there with her husband, Anthony, and their kids Sidney, 14, and A.J., 10.

“I love this mountain. I want to give back for everything they do for us,” Charlie Plamondon told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The senior at El Dorado High School was with a bunch of his ski-snowboard teammates picking up trash. Sierra is where they train and race.



A lift ticket more than 20-years-old – based on it saying the resort's original name – was found under the West Bowl lift.

John Rice, the resort's general manager, said the cleanup day started as a way for young riders to see what the mountain looks like this time of year when empties are tossed from a chairlift. He told *Lake Tahoe News* this event really hits home and gets people to think twice.

Still, empty beer cans were the dominant items scattered under West Bowl chairlift. Bottles – some intact, some shattered – also littered the slopes.

People had a choice to do an easy, moderate or more advanced route – with West Bowl being the advanced. Everyone rode up Nob Hill chairlift and then dispersed from there.

One guy said it takes six pairs of eyes on any given area to make sure it is pristine. It's easy to miss tiny scraps of paper and plastic do-dads whose purpose only the owner knows.



More than 2,000 pounds of trash were carted off the slopes.

Rylan Thomas, who is out from Roanoke, Va., working for the U.S. Forest Service, hauled in the most garbage for one person, at least by weight. On Dogwood he found a cog for a ski lift. It weighed 95 pounds. He rigged a system with ropes, his belt and PVC pipe to drag it halfway down the mountain.

Two of the nastiest items were a tampon applicator and underwear.

More common debris included parts of bindings and ski poles.

Skis and snowboards that were lost are now recovered. If they aren't claimed, they go the finder.



Kyle Smaine, who rides for Sierra, chills in the chair he found.

A couple oldies but goodies were a Sierra Ski Ranch lift ticket – the name of the resort prior to 1996. A Northstar-at-Tahoe name badge from a guy from Brazil was located. Sierra and Northstar were sister resorts until five years ago this month.

Kyle Smaine, who in January won his first World Championships in halfpipe as a skier for Sierra, appropriately spent the day in the terrain park off Bashful. Instead of flying through the features like he might do in winter, he helped remove some unwanted ones – in particular an Adirondack chair that had seen better days.

Now the resort is waiting for Mother Nature to cover the slopes with white stuff in hopes of having a full ski season.