



*For Immediate Media Release:*

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## **VISAS's Veteran's Learn to Ski Festival keeps growing with a record 23 Vets on the slopes this year**

**Courtenay, January 3, 2012** - They're coming back this month for another chance to conquer the slopes of Mount Washington. An expected 20 Canadian and three Australian wounded and ill veterans will be attending the fifth Veteran's Learn to Ski/Snowboard Festival from January 29<sup>th</sup> through to February 3<sup>rd</sup>. "We've had 40 veterans participate in the Festival over the last four years," said Glen Hooge, the Festival coordinator. "And the support and interest keeps growing, with participants coming from across Canada and once again from Australia."

Hosted by the [Vancouver Island Society for Adaptive Snowsports \(VISAS\)](http://www.visasweb.ca), Mount Washington Alpine Resort, and the [Soldier On](http://www.soldieron.ca) program, the Festival introduces injured and ill veterans to adaptive skiing and snowboarding.

"VISAS provides a phenomenal opportunity for injured Canadian Forces members and veterans to challenge Mount Washington despite serious injuries, said Ben Henwood, a bi lateral amputee who has attended the event twice before. "The support provided by the VISAS volunteers and Mount Washington staff is very caring, and understanding of our needs and exceptional in delivery. The comradeship, being outdoors learning a new sport, and with other injured service men and women are beyond measure," added Henwood.

Major financial contribution this year comes from True Patriot Love Foundation, a national foundation that supports and honours members of the Canadian military and their families, as well as donations from several branches of the Royal Canadian Legion on the island. "This program, while challenging, has also proven to have wonderful therapeutic values," said Hooge. "Many who thought that this form of activity was now beyond their abilities have left with an enhanced outlook as to how much more they can comfortably achieve."

"We've seen people's lives change in the course of a few sort days," added Hooge. "Our volunteer instructors are proud to be part of the Festival, and know that the challenges and accomplishments experienced by the Veterans are deeply meaningful."

Over 40 volunteer VISAS ski and snowboarding instructors are involved in the week long program that also welcomes many family members of the veterans to come share in the experience. Last year a film crew working with the CNN Channel traveled to Mount Washington to cover the Vet's Festival and produced a video. To view this video clip and other highlights from previous Vet Festivals visit VISAS's Facebook page.

For more information on the Veteran's Festival, VISAS, and/or to enter a team for Herb Bradley Pepsi Challenge Fundraiser on Sunday, the 12<sup>th</sup>, or for donations visit [www.visasweb.ca](http://www.visasweb.ca) and follow [VISAS on Facebook](#).

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Photos:

- 1) Canadian and Australian Veterans at the 2011 Veteran's Festival



- 2) Veterans – Eric Payne, Paul Franklin and Brett Rickard – attached
- 3) Veteran skier – Bruce Henwood