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## Class mixes snow caves, sisterhood

*Workshop arms women with skills for winter survival*

**ENNIFER WILLIS**

*Portland Tribune, Feb 26, 2008*

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**On New Year's Eve, Deb Howard was cross-country skiing on Mount Adams. One of her friends fell and dislocated her elbow. Luckily, Mt. Adams Lodge was nearby.**

"We were close to the lodge, but otherwise we didn't have a clue what to do," Howard says.

In the Northwest, we live in such close proximity to the wilderness that it's easy to find yourself in a situation where you can get lost or injured.

It would have happened to Howard and her friends if they had been out in the middle of nowhere?

Mt. Adams Lodge co-owner Julee Wasserman told Howard about the Women's Outdoor Survival Weekend to be hosted at the lodge and taught by Jane Pagliarulo, an experienced search-and-rescue volunteer and Wilderness First Responder, certified in backcountry first aid.

The idea for the course was born from last winter's tragedy on Mount Hood.



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Fay Blackburn (from left), Patricia Barry and Kelly Founteas pitch in to create a snow cave as part of the first Women's Outdoor Survival Weekend at Mt. Adams Lodge.

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Pagliarulo, who lives in Northeast Portland, was leading a group of women on the mountain when they spotted the search planes looking for three climbers – Kelly James, Brian Hall and Jerry “Nikko” Cooke – who had gone missing.

“They were asking me where I thought the climbers were,” Pagliarulo remembers. “And I said, ‘Hopefully holed up in a nice cozy snow cave.’ One of the women said, ‘I wish I knew how to build a snow cave.’ And I said, ‘I can teach you.’”

Six women signed up on the spot.

Pagliarulo teamed up with Wasserman to host the winter survival workshop at the Mt. Adams Lodge, which sits on 80 acres in Glenwood, Wash. – two hours from Portland, outside cell phone range and at an elevation of 1,900 feet with lots of snow – where Wasserman already had been fielding questions from women guests about snowshoeing, hiking, orienteering and winter survival skills.

“There was a need for this,” Wasserman, 41, says. “This can save your life.”

### Girls had no Boy Scouts

Wasserman and Pagliarulo, 44, chose to make the course women-only to provide a more relaxed, less intimidating learning environment.

“Everyone needs to learn survival skills,” Pagliarulo insists. “Men usually learn this from their fathers, or the Boy Scouts. When I was little, the Girl Scouts was mostly about making cookies, so we skipped it.”

“There’s just an energy between a group of women that’s very different than between a coed or male group,” Wasserman says. “It’s more fun. It’s not as competitive.”

And women responded, with participants from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California and Arizona signing up for the first course, which took place this month. The course sold out in three days.

Howard, a Portland resident who works for Nike Inc., signed up with her 31-year-old daughter, Cidney, who lives in Bend.

“She does a lot of things outdoors,” Howard says of her daughter. “Sometimes she does things by herself. She’ll take off and climb Mount Adams by herself, or go cross-country skiing alone. I wanted to make sure that she knew what to do if she ever got in trouble.”

### Compass meets camaraderie

Beginning on a Friday night with a potluck dinner, the 20 women in the course sat inside the lodge by the fire to learn about what to wear outdoors in the winter, with a focus on warmth and functionality.

The next day, Pagliarulo went over “The 10 Essentials” – the items you should always have in your pack that could save your life out in the wild – before taking the group outdoors for snowshoeing in hip-deep snow, into the woods to practice making a fire and building snow shelters.

Once back inside the warm lodge, Pagliarulo covered first aid and treatment of hypothermia before the group enjoyed another hearty potluck dinner. Afterward, some of the women soaked in the hot tub while others strapped on snowshoes for a late-night stargazing hike – definitely not an extreme survival weekend.

“I was a little scared, to tell you the truth,” Deb Howard says. “I thought, ‘Oh my gosh, it’s going to be hard-core, and we’re actually going to sleep in these snow caves and be outside all day and actually build an igloo.’”

The course isn't just for outdoorsy wild women. The February workshop attracted participants with a broad range of outdoor experience, from seasoned kayakers and a hunter to urbanites who rarely venture into Forest Park.

Pagliarulo and Wasserman were careful to create a weekend that would be comfortable and fun while teaching potentially lifesaving skills.

"It's good for women of all levels," says Wasserman, who likes watching the camaraderie build among the participants when they're out snowshoeing. "It's their first time ever learning this. They just feel safer. They're around other people who are in the same boat."

"If you go out on a sunny day and build a snow cave a quarter-mile from the lodge, it's not scary or threatening," Pagliarulo explains. "If they get into trouble on a snowy hill, miles from help, they'll know just what to do."

Sunday's classes focused on learning how to read maps and use a compass, followed by an orienteering scavenger hunt that put the new skills to use.

"If they can learn how to read a compass and a map," Pagliarulo says, "there's no end to the adventures they can have."

After all the positive feedback they received from the workshop in February, Wasserman and Pagliarulo are looking at putting together a Level 2 course. Deb and Cidney Howard already plan to attend.

Deb Howard feels better now about her daughter's safety when she goes trekking on her own.

"Before, I think I was kind of 'Ignorance is bliss' when it came to the outdoors," Cidney Howard says. "Now I know a lot more about what to be prepared for before heading out to the wild."

"It was a life-altering weekend," Deb Howard says. "Obviously, none of us knew how to do a snow cave before. Just coming together and sharing ideas and working as a team ... It was amazing."

The next Women's Outdoor Survival Weekend will be held March 7 to March 9. The course is limited to 20 women. Cost is \$235, which includes two nights' lodging.

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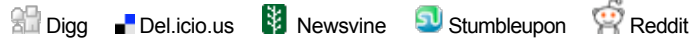
### **The 10 Essentials**

1. Map (topographical maps preferred)
  2. Compass, with declination setting
  3. Flashlight or headlamp, with an extra bulb and extra batteries
  4. Food and water
  5. Extra clothing
  6. Fire starter: must be waterproof
  7. Candle or fuel tablets
  8. Knife: Swiss army knife or Leatherman tool
  9. First aid kit
  10. Signaling device, such as a loud safety whistle or signaling mirror
- (Suggested 11th item:  
sunglasses)

**Women's Outdoor Survival Weekend When: March 7-9**

**Where:** Mt. Adams Lodge at the Flying L Ranch, Glenwood, Wash.

Contact: Julee Wasserman, 1-509-364-3488, [julee@gorgetours.com](mailto:julee@gorgetours.com)



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