

Doing GOOD

Philanthropist Warren Lichtenstein is committed to bringing back the fun in sports, including the local ski racing scene.

By Sue Hostetler
Photography by Karl Wolfgang

ALPINE
ALTRUISM
Lichtenstein is
the patron saint
of The Aspen
Valley Ski and
Snowboard Club.

In a town full of generous philanthropists and leading social innovators, where organizations like the Aspen Institute and the Aspen Philanthropy Group thrive, it's not particularly easy to stand out. Warren Lichtenstein does.

Through his Steel Partners Foundation, Lichtenstein, who splits his time between Aspen and Los Angeles, supports causes not only close to his heart, but those that have significant impact on this community. Not only was Lichtenstein an early and instrumental supporter in helping to develop the Chabad Jewish Community Center on Main Street, as well as the Aspen Art Museum, both of which opened new buildings in 2014, he has positively influenced generations of locals through his patronage of the beloved Aspen Valley Ski and Snowboard Club.

The Valley's oldest and largest youth nonprofit, celebrating its 80th anniversary this year, AVSC enriches the lives of children and teens by teaching winter sports and providing scholarships to a third of participants. AVSC's emphasis on building the values of character, integrity and teamwork resonated with Lichtenstein.

For years, Lichtenstein sponsored the mountain day program for all Aspen Elementary School students, so they could ski with their parents. "The kids were happy; the parents were happy; and the faculty at the school was happy," he remembers. "Mark [Cole, longtime executive director] did a terrific job shaping the program, putting together a board, building a new clubhouse. The outreach is great. It's an amazing program."

Another charitable organization supported by his foundation is the Positive Coaching Alliance, which helps develop a positive experience for youth athletes. "I realized when my son started playing organized sports that youth sports in America are kind of screwed up," he offers.

"The No. 1 reason that kids drop out of organized sports—and the dropout rate is 70 percent by age 12—is that they're not having fun. Sports are so dominant in our culture. You can change things through sports, and there are a number of life lessons that can be taught: resiliency, humility, perseverance." 300 AVSC Dr., 970.205.5100, teamausc.org