

## ***Personal Essay: Eli Derrick***

In my life I have been very privileged to be able to find skiing and to fall in love with it. This is especially amazing because I live in Virginia where we only have a few resorts and not a lot of snow. I just happened to be lucky enough to live close to a resort.

Growing up I would always look forward to winter. One reason is because when I ski I am more relaxed and I find myself leaving my stress and worries behind. I feel like I don't have to worry about much when I am out skiing. Another reason is because of the second family I created. Some of my best friends are the people I skied with. My ski team has always been my second family.

This past year I took a giant blind leap and decided to move up to Maine for the winter to train and see if I could be competitive on the FIS level in ski cross. I attended Carrabassett Valley Academy at the base of Sugarloaf Mountain. Along with taking classes there I trained 5-6 days a week on the hill or in the gym before and after classes. I traveled with the skicross program to compete in FIS and NorAm races. Traveling and training with the team was an amazing adventure because they pushed us to be independent when we are traveling and competing with the support of our coach to help us where we need help. I felt like I learned so much last winter, about myself, about skicross and about the traveling the world. It truly was an amazing adventure.

The move up to Maine was a good step in the right direction. With the amount of on snow time I was able to get and the coaching really helped me improve my skiing overall. My greatest challenge was learning how to turn without losing speed and gaining energy to timing on features for skicross. At the beginning of the season I was not very competitive on the NorAm circuit, but towards the middle I was starting to beat people into heats and by the end of the season I ended up going to Jr. Worlds and placing 4th at USASA Nationals for Open class skicross.

I would like to continue my adventures and chasing my dreams. This winter I will have the opportunity to return to CVA to train with the team. In addition to competing on the NorAm circuit I will have the amazing opportunity to represent the US as the only US skicross athlete in the 2020 Lausanne Youth Olympics. My goal is to be standing on the podium in Switzerland in January.

I don't take lightly the sacrifices my family have made to give me these opportunities. The cost of private school, along with my race travel is a lot. I have had to selectively choose opportunities due to cost. When I got the amazing (and unexpected) email inviting me to attend Junior Worlds in Austria at the end of last season I was very humbled when my family and friends all chipped in to support my trip. This summer I was chosen for the USSA Project Gold team but was unable to attend the training camp due to cost.

I am working construction this summer in order to contribute to my travel costs. I am hoping to save at least \$3000 from working. My goal is to cover the costs of my race travel myself this season. Last season my race travel, which included airfare, coaching fees and race entries, was just over \$10,500. If chosen for the Flynn Ryan Adventure Scholar I would use the funds to help cover the rest of my travel costs.