

## **Flyin' Ryan Scholarship Application**

### **Ellie Huff and Rippin' Ladies**

#### **Personal Essay/Story:**

#### **The WHY (Background about myself/skiing and inspiration for film)...**

Hello, my name is Ellie Huff. I come from a small town on the Front Range of the Colorado Rockies. We live on a small farm in Longmont, CO. "We" meaning my mother, father, brother (Porter) and my sister (Morgan). We grew up driving two hours every weekend to our little condo in Winter Park, CO. What we like to call the "Land Yacht." Doing this with three small children was not for the faint at heart. We grew up going through ski school. My parents were determined for us to learn how to ski well. I LOVED skiing. I remember the pizza and hot chocolate we would always eat at the lodge. And I remember always trying to keep up with whoever was the best skier in the group. I was thirteen years old when I finally made the move to the Competition Center, which was old for ski school kids. I remember always wanting to be a REAL skier and compete, but I always had this feeling of being "too old" and "too late" to become a competitive skier. My brother who is five years younger than I am was always the best skier in his group. And coaches were pushing him to become a competitive skier.

Finally, one year we were able to convince our parents to make the switch. I joined the Winter Park Big Mountain Team thanks to one of my friends, Sofi Thoms. My brother made the switch to mogul skiing. I remember I had just made the move to middle school as well. I went to a new school with none of my close friends from elementary. I felt like a nobody. Then I joined the team. I was so nervous on the first day. Questions like... "Am I good enough?" circled through my mind. There were so many people that looked really good when I first walked up to the team. We split off into different groups. I was put in an all girls group, with everyone around my age. Our coach was John. I immediately felt like I had a second family. Every weekend it was an escape. I got to go shred around with my best friends... What could be better than that? My parents were hesitant to let me do competitions at first, so I did just one competition at Winter Park. I was so nervous. It was my turn to drop. I was so nervous I was shaking every turn I made. I hit my air, crashed, and my ski popped off. I was so embarrassed. I wanted to cry. When I arrived at the bottom of the run, I thought everyone would be disappointed. But instead I got hugs and high fives. It was like no other sport I had done before. I didn't win, yet I felt like a winner. That's when I knew I was addicted. There is a sense of family and friends that you get in freeride that is like nowhere else. The next year groups were mixed male and female. I instantly felt a part of a group of friends that I was not used to at school. I was never part of the "popular" crowd. But when I was skiing, I felt like I mattered. I made some of the closest friends I have ever had. They pushed me every weekend to do things that I never imagined myself doing. Not only did I find my second family, but I finally felt proud of myself.

That year I got my first podium spot. I could feel my confidence in my life start to grow. I also played competitive soccer, and I was constantly told to be more confident. I remember becoming frustrated and put down when coaches would say that, because I never really understood what they meant by it. I was also not very confident/outgoing in school either. However, my freeride family taught me that I matter. My words matter. My actions matter. Skiing taught me how to believe in myself and to strive for my goals. I never thought that skiing would have such a profound impact on my life. If I can encourage other female athletes and younger girls to reach their potential and gain a sense of self through skiing or any athletics, it will be greater than anything I can do within my own ski career.

Through my ski career I have also learned the power of what a girl can do and accomplish. For example, this summer I went to Momentum Ski Camp for a week. I met two girls that pushed me to do something I never thought possible - we all got our first backflips on snow. I remember the incredible feeling that we got once we finally stuck them to our feet on the last day of the camp. The pain and whiplash felt TOTALLY worth it. We screamed, high fived, and hugged. I truly believe I could not have done it without my two lady friends there (Claire McPherson and Kenny Katnik), and the idea that if they could do something, I could do it as well.

The power of females was also very inspiring to me this ski season. I met some of the best lady skiers I know this year. Which led a few of us to an idea...

## **The IDEA...**

Recently, IFSA (International Freeskiers and Snowboarders Association) realized that the number of younger girls in our sport is decreasing at an alarming rate. So, the IFSA created the "Rippin' Ladies" program for older female competitors to mentor and inspire the younger female competitors within our sport. It's just starting, so the program currently only exists in the Rocky Mountain region. Since it's so new, they've only hosted one meeting with a group of 15-18 female competitors, asking how we could help spread positivity and enthusiasm to the ladies 14 and under to keep them in the sport we love so much. And we thought, what better way to do that, than to create a film showcasing the Rippin' Ladies!

Just to give you a little background, we are all female big mountain skiers (16+) from all around North America. We have been competing against one another for years, as well as shredding with one another during our downtime at the various venues. While stuck in quarantine, a few of us had the idea after being inspired by several all female films that shared similar values to what we want to create. We are thinking we would like to create our own film of Rippin' Ladies - by Rippin' Ladies - to spread the love and the passion we have for Big Mountain to younger girls. We want them to feel just as we did while watching the all female

films- that feeling you get when you watch other athletes do something and you think, “Wow, I wanna do that too.”

We want the film to spread the love and the passion we have for Big Mountain to younger girls.

We had this idea to create a film for women, by women after Maisie Wagner (Steamboat) and I, Ellie Huff (Winter Park), traveled to the Big Mtn National Comp in Big Sky this March, each as the only girls from our team. We joined Lucy Hall (Telluride) and Claire McPherson (Canada) and together we made our own team and ripped up the mountain! Caroline Ungar, Makayla Meyers and Lindey Labough from Vail all joined us, along with a few girls from the Summit team. Even though we weren't in Colorado, all the RMFS girls got together like one big family and had a great time skiing and competing together. We feel the Taos gathering with all the Rippin' Ladies brought us closer together and inspired us to join as a team in Big Sky.

We were planning to film next season and possibly have a premiere of our film at the end of next ski season. We thought a small group of us could meet somewhere next ski season and create the film with the focus primarily of inspiring young Big Mountain girls, as well as filming at an event focusing on the women skiers. Currently we are working on raising money for the film, and looking for sponsorship as well, so we can pay anyone that helps out with the film. IFSA said they would match the grant given by your Flyin' Ryan Foundation. Our film will be sharing very similar values to Ryan's. Such as sharing the ideals to young women to “never stop exploring,” and “working hard” and to overall enjoy the sport and the outdoor enthusiast spirit.

That is why we have decided to reach out to you for help with this process, as it is no easy task. Ryan Hawks put as one of his core values “don't be afraid to ask for help,” this will take a village to pull off, anything helps.

Thank you,  
Ellie Huff, and the crew behind Rippin' Ladies

As for myself and my personal role in this film, I am planning on making it my Capstone Project for the Leadership Program I am a part of in High School (Silver Creek Leadership Academy). Capstones are a multifaceted assignment that serves as a culminating academic and intellectual experience for students, and helps the community/a certain group of people. Which would young girls and minorities within the sport and extreme sports in general. I also would like to try and help with the majority of the film production with many mentors that I look up to in the ski industry, such as Laura Obermeyer. I would like to do this because it is a look into what I want to

do with my future career and it has that creative component, which has always been one of my favorite components of skiing. I would get the chance to truly experience what is going on behind the scenes/lense.

## **Ellie Huff**

### **Short Biography:**

My name is Ellie Huff. I am a 17 year old Big Mountain skier. My home resort is Winter Park, CO. I was born and raised in Longmont, CO. I grew up with the mountains as my playground. At a very young age me and my siblings learned how to enjoy the outdoors and their beauty. My parents put us on skis as soon as we could walk. I started competing in Big Mountain competitions for IFSA when I was a freshman in high school. Now I am a senior, getting ready for whatever chapter is next. Skiing and Big Mountain has given me the opportunity to travel to so many amazing places and has allowed me to meet so many incredible people. Aside from skiing I enjoy creating things, from art to edits. I love how there is a component of creativity within skiing that reminds me of art and painting.

### **Core Values:**

1. Inspire through creativity
2. Fully commit to every task
3. Don't just talk, act
4. Don't just say, show
5. Don't just promise, prove
6. Dance when in doubt
7. Balance being with doing
8. Appreciate the beauty around you
9. Connect with those around you
10. Don't take life too seriously