

A LIFE WELL LIVED

**RYAN HAWKS
1985-2011**

Peter Hawks

I have a head full of precious memories of Ryan that I treasure. I will share here a couple which illustrate what kind of guy he is.

-One day I was sitting in the driveway and not doing well in terms of dealing with a mechanical issue involving my bike. Ryan came along, looked down at me and asked me what's happening. I told him and asked for his help and he casually volunteered: "You've got this, Dad; you know the answer." Just the way he said it, calmed me down and, lo and behold, problem solved.

-Ryan also served as my mentor in many ways. Although he recognized the value of money, he never became its prisoner. If ever he loaned money to his friends, repayment was an option and not a requirement. He never let money dictate the terms of his life. My attitude and relationship with money matured immensely because of Ryan.

-Ryan had legions of friends. He could be tough but was also fair. He didn't have a mean bone in his body. He navigated through life and even-keeled, upbeat attitude that stimulated people to want to be around him. Simply put, he had numerous ways, spoken and unspoken, make people feel good. The world was a better place because of Ryan.



Ryan and I were very close. Our relationship was one of the greatest privileges I have had in life and for that I am incredibly grateful. We had a pact that, to the best of my knowledge, we both honored. Our complete trust in each other was generated by our mutual awareness that our trust in each other is based on truth. We were both committed to telling each other the truth on all occasions. I also recognized that Ryan is not a saint. He was smart enough to know what to tell me and what not to tell me. On several occasions I retreated to "ignorance is bliss."

Ryan is no stranger to danger. His mountain biking, mountaineering, and skiing all brought him face-to-face with risk. As a parent I could not help but be concerned. I had one very short conversation with Ryan about risk. I did not want to be the parent who planted seeds of doubt in his veins with the normal cautionary suggestions. I simply told him God gave him a great brain and I expected him to use it. Then I said no matter what the outcome of his adventures and was with him hundred percent.

When Ryan was 11, we packed the car and headed out for a western trip that was focused on touring the Western parks and climbing Mount Rainier with our good friend, Helmut Lenes. Our itinerary was nonspecific and guided by the principle maxing out each day and having fun. Most of the nights were spent in our tent wherever we happened to be. We played a lot of ferocious games of canasta. We succeeded in climbing Mt Ranier in ideal weather. Throughout the entire trip we operated the basis of equal partnership in managing the days' duties and expectations. It is truly remarkable that we went for seven weeks with total synergy and no disappointments or disagreements in terms of what to do, when do it and how to do it. That trip is at the top of my list in terms of privileges I've had in life.

Jackie Hawks

Ryan's mom; although not athletically inclined, she is everything Ryan could want from his mom; her manifestation of love for Ryan and Alicia, as well as Samantha and Lindsey (Peter's 2 children by previous marriage); Jackie's capacity for love is boundless and unconditional; we are all blessed to have her in our lives.

February 2011--

Alicia lived in Denver and Peter was skiing out west with friends. He was going to meet up with Ryan the following week at Crested Butte where Ryan was going to be competing in a free ride world tour event. Ryan and Lars decided to come home to film with Ski the East and also latch on to some more Vermont maple syrup and Cabot cheese.

I was home by myself and was blessed to have Ryan with me every evening for dinner Just the two of us. I don't think that ever happened before.

Ryan got up about 5 AM every morning to head to Stowe to film before the area was up and going. He came home and had dinner with me every night and then was with friends until the wee hours of the morning. Ryan had always been able to function on very little sleep but he admitted to me that he may have pushed it a little too far.



I feel so lucky to have had that special time with Ryan. It was truly a gift. Ryan went back out West and shortly after that, Peter and I picked up Alicia in Denver and drove to Crested Butte to watch him compete and have the chance to meet many of his free ride tour friends. We also got to meet the love of his life, Angel Collinson. Angel continues to this day to be a friend of our family. We had our last family meal with Ryan and Angel in Crested Butte before his tragic passing several weeks later at Kirkwood, California.

Two weeks after Ryan's tragic accident at Kirkwood the FWT held an event at Snowbird. After the competitive activities on Saturday were over, competitors and others who knew and associated with Ryan were invited to a eulogy service conducted by Peter at the top of Lone Peak at sunset.

It was a gray day and, as you can see from the prayer flags, the wind was howling. In spite of the wind Angel's dad, Jimmy Collinson, made arrangements for two tram loads to ferry everyone up to the peak.

Snowbird had set up a powerful sound system. My biggest concern was that the wind would rip eulogy out of my hands. About five minutes into my remarks, the sun poked through a sliver of sky in the Far West. I said, "Here comes Ryan" and stopped talking. Wind aside, there was perfect silence for the 30 to 40 seconds it took with the sun (Ryan) to slip under the horizon and return to his place in the afterworld.

This moment was, for me, and for many others an incredibly powerful and priceless experience for which I will ever be grateful.



Alicia Hawks

Ryan's sister, married to Brad Currier, 2 kids: Ryley(3) and Quinn (2); lives in South Burlington, Vt; manager of Vt Sports Properties at University of Vermont; serves on the board of FRF and runs the Adventure Scholarship Program and the Events.



10 years ago my best friend died. I am one of probably 15 people that would describe Ryan Hawks that way. We weren't always best friends; we had your typical sibling battles and in time (and lots of chocolate chip cookies later) we realized how lucky we were to have each other.

We have made so many amazing memories together, but it's the little things that I miss most: making a stranger smile, bringing people together, the way you were always present, asked, listened and spoke passionately. It devastates me that the girls don't get to know the human jungle gym that I know you would have been. Your name is constantly spoken and your values and way of life will continue to inspire and mold us.

Thank you, everyone that has taken the time to share stories of Ryan. It has meant so much to my family and his army of friends. If you haven't yet, there is no time better than the present.

Samantha Stetson

Ryan's sister, lives in Newtown Square, Pa; married to David Stetson; 2 children Hunter (15) and Hadley (13); serves on the Board of Directors at FRF; director at Facebook.



Sharing a story.....we decided it was time for Hunter to learn to ski (2 years old) and who better than Uncle Ryan to teach Hunter. Unfortunately, Hunter did not think skiing was that great and preferred to play in the snow. Of course, Ryan was game for anything.....and didn't force what wasn't there. Fast forward Hunter fortunately discovered that he liked skiing a few years later



Angel Collinson

Ryan's girlfriend at the time of his passing; lives in Salt Lake; recognized as a world class skier and athlete; sponsored by Red Bull, Northface, Smith, Vokle, TGRand others; passionate environmentalist and self awareness advocate, currently exploring a new dimension by sailing around the world on a 40 foot sailboat with her boyfriend Pete Willauer.

10 years ago March 1st was the most life changing experience I've ever had. This video has some of my takeaways from a decade later of learning and being taught how to REALLY live and come into right relationship with my own life. Thanks to Ryan, his family, his circle, and to all the shining stars who have left us with the most beautiful and hardest lessons to process. One of them being Jim Jack, who I believe is in the background of this photo. Greg Fitzsimmons wrote a beautiful blog on him - link in bio. Also a link to the Flyin Ryan Hawks foundation that his family started, which does amazing things for the next generation, continuing his legacy. Love you all!



Greg Fitzsimmons

A photographer/writer who accompanied Ryan on a trip to Chile in 2010 which was sponsored by Technica Blizzard.



I remember the first time I met him. I vividly recall hearing his laugh and seeing his face for the first time. He hugged me straight away.

(As I write these sentences I laugh. It sounds like the first scene of a rom-com script. But, this is a love story. I loved him...)

Before I share a few memories of Ryan Hawks on March 1, 2021, 10 years to the day after he passed, I want to send love to those who were much closer to Ryan Hawks than I: Alicia, Peter and Jackie, Samantha, Angel, Lars, Silas, and many more. I appreciate these people for keeping his memory going through the Flyin Ryan Foundation, among other things. Ryan Hawks was one of the most amazing people I have ever met.



It was my first international “work trip.” We went down to Chile in August of 2010. I was there to write a few stories for Powder.com (this one and this one). After the Chilean Freeskiing Championships we were scheduled to go to Ski Portillo with a small group to ski, make content and dance in the discoteque. Like I said, it was a work trip.

We climbed up through the SLC-esque inversion layer to El Colorado, Chile. We checked in at the rustic hostel named Blue Tambo at the base of Farellones. Before leaving America, I was given one name to ask for: Ryan Hawks.

Traveling to go skiing in August is a trip. You swap flip flops up north for ski boots in the south. You schlep ski bags, Gore-Tex layers and tons of gear through the airport in Texas, sweating and swearing through the terminal. Then, you land in winter in the southern hemisphere, hear Spanish, eat empanadas during a layover and see the Andes for the first time through the airplane window cloaked in snow.

As we were checking into the hostel and unloading our gear into the bunk rooms, I kept hearing a contagious laugh coming from someone speaking English and trying to communicate in Spanish. The laugh was joyous, full of energy and oozing empathy. I rounded a corner to see the person responsible for the laugh playing a card game in the common room. He was tall, handsome, excited and eager to chat. I asked the players of the card game if anyone knew Ryan Hawks, and the laugher stood up and gave me a hug. It was Hawks

The next week was spent exploring the Andes with an international crew of big-mountain skiers. The roster was deep. It included:

- Ryan Hawks
- Connery Lundin
- Griffin Post
- Angel Collinson
- Drew Tabke
- Jess McMillan
- Robin McElroy
- Yu Sasaki
- Lars Chickering-Ayers
- Jackie Paaso

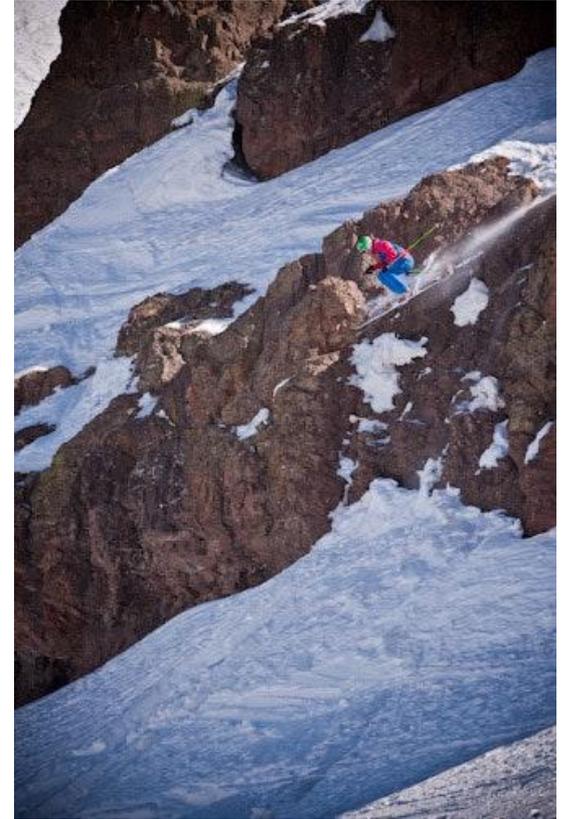
We spun laps on the t-bar linking Farellones and El Colorado, two adjacent ski resorts above Santiago. I couldn't keep up as we wove through Chilean rock formations and couloirs. We inspected the backcountry venue named Santa Teresa by hitchhiking back to Farellones. Rinse and repeat.

Through the entire experience, I hung with Hawks. He introduced me to his crew, he showed me how to ski, he coached me through no-fall zones without any pretens



I remember one experience from that first week of our burgeoning friendship more clearly than anything else. Sitting on bean bags at the base of the Santa Teresa comp venue, Ryan and I watched. Chuck Mumford skied out of the start gate and directly into out-of-bounds terrain, immediately disqualifying himself to ski a consequential couloir because, “I knew I had to ski it as soon as I saw it.”

We watched Connery Lundin and Yu Sasaki ski similar multi-stage lines on the looker’s left side of the venue. Both Connery and Yu skied without hesitation, linking large airs and causing a crescendo in cheers from the crowd as their respective lines got more intense. We watched Jess McMillan navigate “The Maze” with ease, a prominent buttress of rock in the middle of the venue that required meticulous knowledge of the lin



During the comp, I jotted down notes, interviewed athletes and snapped pictures for my recap to be published by Powder. The whole time I sat next to Hawks. And, the whole time Hawks talked quietly about Angel Collinson. She was bouncing around the base of the venue and Ryan couldn't peel his eyes off of her. He was enamored. Later, during our time in Portillo, Hawks talked incessantly about Angel.

He couldn't shake Angel.

Fast forward to the winter of 2011 and I met Ryan, Angel and others in Revelstoke for another "work trip" to cover the Subaru Canadian Freeskiing Championships for Powder. In the time between Chile in August and British Columbia in January, Ryan had asked Angel out. They were smitten. We skied the Selkirks, swam at the rec center pool with more than 100 other international skiers, did donuts in a frozen parking lot with the decked-out van Lars, Silas Chickering-Ayer and Hawks lived in through the winter. We all fell in love with Revy, it still felt underground.



Time shared while traveling with amazing people is like pouring gasoline on friendships' fire. Ryan and I only spent a few months of cumulative time together. However, the experiences are unforgettable, and the connection belied the time spent.

Some things I remember with Ryan

A white-tablecloth dinner in Portillo the day we all skied Super C for the first time.

A mind-blowing bout of food poisoning on the bunk above Ryan in some sketchy Santiago barrio.

Getting Ryan's text when he said, "I'm in love with Angel."

The Maple syrup figurines sent from Vermont with a handwritten note. Apparently, to Ryan the silly little maple-syrup guy and gal represented Brie and I. He was excited to introduce us to proper maple syrup when we could finally visit his hometown in the Green Mountains.

The phone call from Kirkwood notifying me of an accident.

48 hours of prayers sent to the Reno hospital.

The uncontrollable grief that knocked me out of my cubicle when I heard from a friend that "he didn't make it...."

Those crumbling maple syrup figurines still sit in my bedside table in their original boxes, mementos from cherished moments with a late friend.

10 years ago we lost Ryan Hawks. One of the most amazing people I've ever met.

Today, a decade after Ryan's passing, I felt Hawks' energy and spirit while skiing. I went to ski a pre-work lap and scream his name towards the Elk Mountains as loud as I could. This morning was cold. There's no new snow in the immediate forecast. But, skies were blue and the skiing was fun.

Tonight, I will talk to my boys about Ryan Hawks before I put them down. And, I'll continue to talk about Hawks as long as I'm a skier (forever).



Marcus Hicken

Part of Ryan's core crew at UVM; lives in Seattle; married to Meghan Colkitt; mechanical engineer at Electroimpact.

Ryan Hawks broke me.

I used to not be able to do anything without a plan, details of where I'm going, what I'm doing, what happens and when. Ryan woke me up from the hallway I was sleeping in in Victor, ID and said "lets go ski the village, they got a foot last nig.t. We jumped in Sugar (Ryan's trusty old Subaru) and rallied over the pass, met up with Ryan's buddy Chris Tatsuno, then had a fantastic day skiing nothing but powder and pillows. When our legs were shot, I figured we'd head back over the pass to the house. I was incorrect. Ryan wanted to go see some friends in town and figure it out from there. "Ok, I'm game" I thought, assuming we'd grab a beer, maybe a burger then head back home. Again, I was incorrect



Without my knowing Ryan negotiated a couple couches for us to crash on (ok, one couch, it was cozy) and we'd ski again the next day. I was unprepared, didn't have extra clothes or any sort of plan for this. I'm not sure whether Ryan knew this was slowly breaking me, or if he did and knew it was the best thing he could do for me. We ended up doing this for three days. Live out of Sugar, ski, find somewhere to eat and drink, couch surf, rinse and repeat (no showers included). After three days of this I no longer cared about having a carefully crafted plan and schedule for my day. We were just living, figuring it out as we went. This, more than any other time during our friendship, was the greatest gift he gave me.

What I should say, is that my dear friend Ryan set me free. Ryan was also my boxing partner; one I truly miss.





Philip Bruno

After graduating from UVM in 2012, Phil moved to Seattle with his now-wife Emily, to explore endless Cascade peaks and pillow lines amongst ancient evergreen forests. For many years, Phil moonlighted his day job and worked as a ski tour operator, bringing groups on ski trips including UVM SSC across North America. He is now working full-time in the tech sector, while volunteering his time with the UVM Alumni Association, skiing under the night lights in Snoqualmie Pass, and loving married life with Emily. It snows a whole lot in the Cascades, and their doors are always open for visitors.

I first knew Ryan at UVM thanks at first to his ever-presence around UVM SSC and the ski scene. Ryan was a few years older than me, and I thought it was so cool when he'd stop to say hello and share his unmatched stoke for winter! In December of 2009, a massive dump hit Vermont and in classic "Zero-to-Hero" fashion, Mad River Glen announced their opening day plans.

Unexpectedly, Ryan invited me to join him and his friends for an early-ups style ski adventure; I couldn't believe it! The snow would be too deep to boot pack, which had been my go-to for self-propelled ascents in the Green Mountains (keep in mind, this was in 2009), and I remember scrambling to Ski Rack and picking up a pair of Trekkers and climbing skins.

I could share more about that day, but I think more importantly would be to state that this experience changed my life, and how incredible it is to think about this small example in the broader context of how Ryan lived. In fact, when I consider everything about that day in the context of Ryan's Principles for Living, I realize perfect alignment. Ryan lived his Core Values each and every day, and before his values were even formally known to all of us, Ryan impressed those values onto others through modeled behavior.

The reason why everybody wants to "Be Like Ryan" is because Ryan knew how to live life. And it is for this reason that Ryan's life continues to Expose adventurers to growth; Inspire self-realization; and Act upon one's character and values. Ryan, thank you for helping me realize who I am today, and the person that I aspire to be tomorrow. Over the years I've written, revisited, and refined my principles, while always keeping yours in mind as well.



Mad River Glen

Ryan served as a freeride coach at Mad River; single chair 78 is dedicated to him; The Flyin Ryan Freeride event is dedicated to him each March.

Ten years ago, we lost our friend to a tragic ski accident. As his father says, "we may have lost his body that day but his spirit carries on within all of us."

The Flyin Ryan Hawks Foundation was formed to honor his legacy as a person and continues to exist in order to challenge students, athletes and others to independently explore what is important to them and to take ownership of those ideas by composing a set of Core Values to serve as the basis for their daily attitude and decisions

Joanne Heidkamp

Mother of Stephan Demers; lives in S. Burlington, VT, patiently withstood all the pranks and shenanigans that Ryan and Stephan concocted.



I have a vivid memory of Ryan coming over to sit on our back porch, sweaty and tired after a day at the Vermont Tent Company. He takes a couple sips of beer, glanced over toward the garden along the fence line. “Are those raspberries?” One minute later all I could see was his head and chest as he bobbed among the bushes, eating raspberries as fast as he could pick. Later that night, after Ryan headed home, Stephan Demers showed me Ryan’s photo of the week in Sports Illustrated. Ryan hadn’t mentioned it. (If I was in Sports Illustrated you can bet that I’d be wearing the image on a t-shirt, and I’d be offering autographed copies to total strangers). When I think about Ryan, I remember the joy he took in simple things - fresh raspberries - and how down-to-earth and modest he was about his accomplishments.



Hannah Davis

UVM classmate, Lives in Boulder, CO; program Director at Techstars.

Two of my fav pictures with Ryan Hawks that both express my love for him. Taken from a sailing trip in Maine where I remember my mom could not get over how much food Ryan and Lou consumed over the weekend. She was so worried we were going to run out of food after the first day.



Ryan had many passions, but two that stand out to me are cookies & milk and strawberry milkshakes. Not going to lie, I think there was a moment in our relationship that I was jealous of a milkshake.

Something as simple as a milkshake would bring SO much joy to Ryan, even when it would seem impossible that anyone could fit any more joy into them.

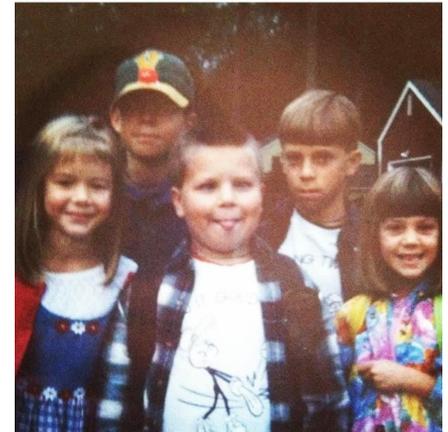
10 years later, Ryan is still teaching me that joy is always available to feel and to give. And spreading joy is the best gift one that can give



Dan Cherouny

Younger brother of Matt Cherouny (one of Ryan's closest friends); talented saxophonist; currently living in Sweden and working for Spotify; in a relationship with Lindsey.

My childhood was filled with days like this where we were fooling around doing God knows what in the Hawks' living room. Somehow Ryan was always right in the middle of the shenanigans, but also was also the one waking up super early to go to the mountain, hockey practice, or whatever other sport he was better at than everyone. As a kid, I didn't understand how rare it is for someone to be completely dedicated, immensely talented, and a great person to be around, but he really was all of that. 10 years on and I still want to be like Ryan Hawks.



John Condon

Neighborhood pal and high school lacrosse teammate; married to Jackie; lives in Hingham, MA; works at New Balance.

Of the many memories that Ryan and I shared, this was always one of our favorites to look back on...

In about 6th grade, Ryan and I were playing bocce in his front yard with the normal neighborhood crew. Somehow or another, the idea of Ryan and I racing around the block came up. It was nothing overly competitive, but neither of us ever backed down from a challenge, so we tightened up our laces and officially faced off. We both charged up to the top of Quail Run together and made the turn down Pheasant Way. We passed my house still neck and neck, but by the time we approached Tara Niedermeier's house I was sucking wind and starting to lose ground. Ryan was only a few feet ahead as we passed the trees next to Tara's house. Then, her driveway came into view.



We saw Tara with a helmet on. She was practicing her rollerblading skills while she had her golden retriever on a leash. When the dog saw us Tara was barely able to control it. Ryan and I were both on full alert as we passed her driveway with the dog barking and aggressively dragging Tara closer to the sidewalk. Ryan got past her just in time, but I didn't. The dog cut me off and I ran out into the street. I used this opportunity to cry "Ryan! Ryan! We have to call it off!" Ryan kept right on running, holding his stomach in laughter as he went on to win the race.

I eventually made it back to his house completely unharmed. We all laughed about what happened for a long time and I always told him that the dog was the reason I lost, but I think we both knew that dog was my scapegoat.

Honestly, there are so many fun memories that come to mind when I think of you, Ry. This week I've thought of as many as I could. The first time I met you, you just showed up at my house wanting to play a game. I remember you bouncing the basketball in my garage and wondering "who is this kid?" All the different memories of our young childhood- playing kick the can, capture the flag, games on the trampolines, boating on the lake, calling girls from our basements, backflips on snowbanks, makeshift golf courses, and so many more.

As middle school and high school came along I started hanging out with different groups of people for a while, but the bond of friendship that we created as young kids was so strong that it always felt like we naturally picked up where we left off. It was actually more than that for me as years went by because I started to realize in college that when I saw you and some of the others from early childhood, I felt like you all made me the best version of myself. In some sense, you were able remind me of who I really was (and you always will). It was at that point that we started to connect a bit more again.

Once we were older, going to Martha's Vineyard on the 4th of July to visit Kevin in 2010 was a special trip. You called me with about an hours' notice (you must have been driving already for at least 2 hours!) and we were able to take the ferry ride together with a 30 rack of beers and watch the fireworks go off as we arrived. What I would give to do that again with you. We caught up on everything. One detail that I remember specifically was asking how Alicia was doing and how you spoke so proudly of her and her job with the Broncos and that you really liked Brad. When we arrived in Martha's Vineyard it was a ghost town. That was because we took the ferry to Edgartown which shuts down early, but Kevin was in Oaks Bluff. It was hard to get back up the island, but we figured it out.

I can't believe it's been 10 years. I miss you Ry- a lot. But your legacy is alive and well, not only through the foundation, but also through the impact of the lives that you touched while you were physically with us. You've helped shape my life in many positive ways and I'm so thankful and blessed to have had you as a good friend. People will always talk about how good of an athlete and a skier you were. I will remember you with those traits too, but above anything else I will always remember you best as a great friend.

Stephan Demers

Neighborhood pal and ski companion, post high school spent a season as a “liftie” at Vail with Matt Cherouny and Ryan; now serves as a supply chain manager at Facebook; lives in San Francisco.

In 2001, me, Ryan Hawks, Matt Cherouny, Mike Collins, James Unsworth, Hillary Anderson, Bretton Gardner, and Dan Cherouny went to New Orleans with the Lake Champlain High School Sailing team to compete in High School sailing nationals. I believe we finished 23rd out of 25.

That did not stop us from having a great time on the water, and in the city. We capsized 3 boats, sang hours of karaoke and gawked wide eyed and the mayhem of Bourbon street.

As we approach 10 years without Ryan, I would love to hear your favorite memories Bretton Gardner, Hillary Anderson, James Unsworth, Mike Collins and Dan Cherouny.





James Unsworth

Traveled to Louisiana for a sailing regatta with Ryan, Matt Cherouny and Mike Collins; another neighborhood friend.



@meanwhileinportland posted a picture from our trip to New Orleans in high school to sail the Great Oaks regatta. While it wasn't a national championship, it was a super fun trip. Ryan Hawks was a huge reason the trip was so memorable! Ryan's attitude was positive no matter the situation. Stephan was right...we all blew it on the water (except for the Colchester boys, who I think got 3rd) but it didn't stop us from having a killer time! I've included some other pictures from that event here. I remember driving to Manchester, NH for our flight. We got out of the van and we're helped by a young woman who Stephan, Ryan and I all agreed should be memorialized in (actual) film!



I can't believe it's been a decade since we lost Ryan. I remember vividly the last time I saw him, in Victor, ID headed to the #knottypinesupperclub to see a reggae band. The impact Ryan had on everyone he interacted with was always so great. I rarely saw him without a smile. An infectious happiness

Cara Sengebush

I can't believe it's been 10 years without you. You have always been an inspiration on how to be a good friend and good human. I'll never forget the time we spent all night sitting on the corner of Church and Main talking about life and watching all the people go by. You may be gone but I know your spirit lives on.



Ashley Maxfield

Ryan welcomed her to the Freeride World Tour when she first came on. She is now serving as a Freeride coach at Smugglers Notch.

10 years... it feels like yesterday... Thank you for every minute that you have changed my life. Every day I check myself, and every day I try harder... I cry lots that I'm here and you're not. I'm so glad that I have all these memories. You were this amazing person and I'm trying so hard to fill your shoes... but I miss you so much, but thank you for every day you make me a better person!!



Derek Diluzio

Ten years ago my friend Ryan passed away in a tragic ski accident. We weren't super close, but he had a profound impact on my life. His spirit and love for life was one of a kind. This is flyin' Ryan on one of our many shoots. He was an absolute joy to collaborate and think creatively with. Almost every day I reflect on his life. Ryan had a core set of principles he lived by. I wrote them down 10 years ago and they have been taped to my computer monitor ever since. I do my best to live by them each and every day.



Dragonfli Media/Mountain Sports International

10 years ago, our community lost Ryan Hawks - an incredible and passionate athlete and friend. His charisma, work ethic and tenacity continue to live on through the Flyin' Ryan Foundation. The foundation works to promote his values, educate others on the decision-making process in the mountains and award adventure scholarships to young mountain athletes.

Matt Cherouny

Close neighborhood pal, fellow liftie, sailing companion; married to Laura; twins soon to be born; graduated from UVM as a mechanical engineer; worked at Tesla and recently moved back to Burlington to become director of manufacturing at Beta; Beta is about to produce an electric airplane with vertical takeoff capacity, a 300 mile range, and no carbon footprint; they have orders from UPS, Amazon, and several other major companies.



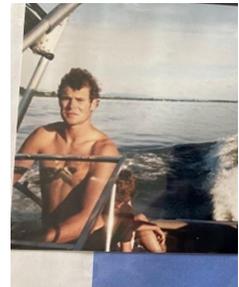
When I first met the Hawks family, they had a sweet boat with a cuddy cabin. Both of our families would go out on it and watch the fireworks and tube and do all the Lake Champlain stuff. Eventually my family got one too (I'm sure Peter Hawks and Jackie Hawks had quite a bit to do with that) and I fell in love with the water. This led to all sorts of other loves like surfing, sailing, etc. But it all started there. Ryan and I would often play hooky from high school on nice days and get some wake boarding in when the lake was smooth. More summer days than I could possibly count were spent with my and the Hawks family, not to mention many others, on the lake. Memories I will certainly have and cherish forever.



Here are a few pics of us out with some friends wakeboarding. Also, I found a picture of Ry in "the diaper" which is when you put a life jacket on upside down and you can float like a lounge chair in the water. It's awesome although admittedly out of the water not the best look. Makes it easier to drink beer...always necessary.



When out on the open water, sometimes we all need a trusted buddy to be able to take the helm so we can let our guard down and have a little fun. It was incredible to have that person be one of the individuals (Dan Cherouny and Alicia Hawks included) you grew up learning with and trust more than anyone. There's a metaphor in there somewhere but for right now, I just mean having fun on the lake.



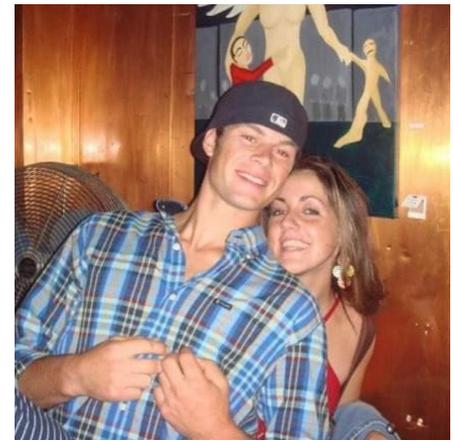
Ryan Mead

High school classmate; lives in Brooklyn, N.Y.

I first met Ryan in preschool!! I loved him, and our moms would joke to us that Ryan and Ryann would end up together someday I have this one memory of him wearing a Superman cape to that preschool - maybe that's one of those old memories you make up, but ... I suppose either way, how fitting for him.

Time passed, and we ended up in different elementary schools. Then middle school hit, and my family and I moved to his neighborhood. I was nervous to live there and wasn't sure I'd make friends. As soon as we got there, Ryan, who I hadn't seen since preschool, came over to my house and was like (paraphrasing) "Ry! I'm so glad you live here! You've gotta come hang out with us!" He welcomed my awkward self to the neighborhood I came to cherish and make TONS of memories in (shout out Mike Collins, Matt Cherouny, Scott Seward, Suzanne Minall and John Condon and of course Alicia Hawks!)

Most kids that age wouldn't necessarily have had the self-confidence to bring a new friend into the loop, but that was Ry! He just simply wanted everyone else to join in on the FUN that life had to offer.



He was always galvanizing his crew to get into all sorts of neighborhood ruckus, and it was SUCH a blast. Those guys had some kind of magic to them, and Ryan was really a leader of it.

I never once heard him say a bad word about anyone, and I have countless memories just like this where he selflessly gave, heartily encouraged, laughed SO hard and just appreciated everything and everyone. And so many cookies and glasses of milk. He was out of this world. Miss you all the time buddy and very much carry you with me. It's surreal it's been 10 years. I still wanna be like Ryan Hawks.

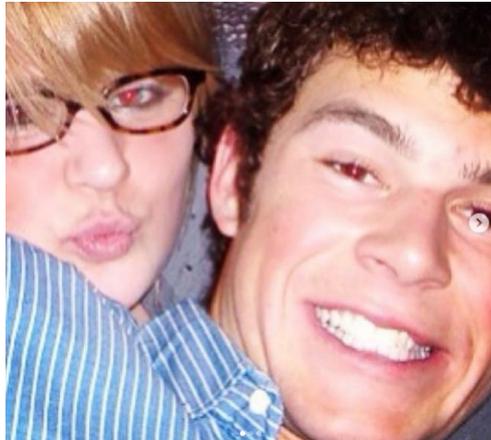
Alicia Hawks

One of my biggest accomplishments... being the first Hawks to do a backflip on the tramp. After hours of jumping and landing on my back with Matt Cherouny, at dinner that night, I told Ryan Hawks I did a backflip, his response "let's see it." Plan backfired. Until I got on the tramp and just did it. Ry was doing backflips by the end of the night and became his signature move. Ryan trained for skiing all year long, whether it was manual labor at Vermont Tent Company, being guinea pig as he prepared to open Champlain Valley Community Fitness, taking photos and analyzing ski lines prior to trying them, and of course time on the tramp with the neighborhood crew.

Katie Wilhite

S. Burlington, Vt; boundless energy, in the circle of Ryan's close friends; fabulous raffle ticket seller at the Akes/Flyin Ryan Annual Golf Tournament (8 years now); talented artist.

March 1st is a tough day, it will always be a tough day. It's a reminder that another year has passed without one of our favorite people. Ryan was just a fricken gem. He was the funniest, kindest, silliest, most caring (and let's be honest, most good looking) person ever. His laugh made bad days better - it's a laugh I really wish I could hear today. However, one of the biggest bonuses of being friends with Ryan, was becoming friends with his family. I am so thankful for these people and their ability to continually keep his spirit so alive.



Hans-Dietrich Jenny

Hans' son, Jade, and Ryan were close friends; they both excelled at Downhill Mt Bike racing; Hans was the coach of the team and has subsequently been one of Peter's mt. bike companions; Hans is the founder of the local mt. bike trail construction and advocacy group, Fellowship of the Wheel, which now boasts 1200 members and supports a paid trail maintenance crew.

Ryan always felt like part of our family. Still does. we've known Ryan since he was a wee one. My son, Jade, and Ryan, became close friends early in grade school. Ryan was always a welcome visitor to the Jenny home, and the Hawks' always made Jade feel totally at home in theirs.

One extended family, which was augmented when we created the Earl's Jr. Mtn Bike Race Team. Ryan was integral and pivotal. A key member in making the team grow and become, Bliss Racing. While most of the kids on the team raced cross country, Ryan and Jade spearheaded downhill racing, and became two of the best Junior Expert riders in the country.

Through all the years I knew him, Ry always had a tremendous gusto, and boundless enthusiasm. Achievements aside, what I loved most about Ryan was his way. From a very young age, he was polite, kind, thoughtful, compassionate, and endearing

A particularly fond memory was when Ryan was at our home for a BBQ, and stepped in and took command of the barbequing. The grill immediately became the center of activity, and Ry was ringmaster. Everyone crowded around swapping tales, laughing infectiously while Ryan coaxed the flames and the revelry.

Beyond his uniquely personal humanity, Ryan was incredibly passionate, endowed with never-ending positivity. A downright eagerness for all life has to offer. When his life came to an abrupt end, it was crushing to all of us. I remember feeling as though a truck had been dropped on my chest. I still tear up often thinking of this wonderful young man. But he left so much in his incredible wake.

All who knew Ryan, and now many who never had the opportunity (through the incredibly important work of the foundation and Ryan's core values), will continue to be inspired by him throughout our lives. We couldn't have loved him more, and he couldn't have loved us more. No reason for that to change. Let's keep honoring and remembering

Diane Farnham

Ryan's 2nd grade teacher

Peter and Jackie,

I appreciate your recent connection to rekindle some of my memories in honoring the 10th anniversary of Ryan's passing.

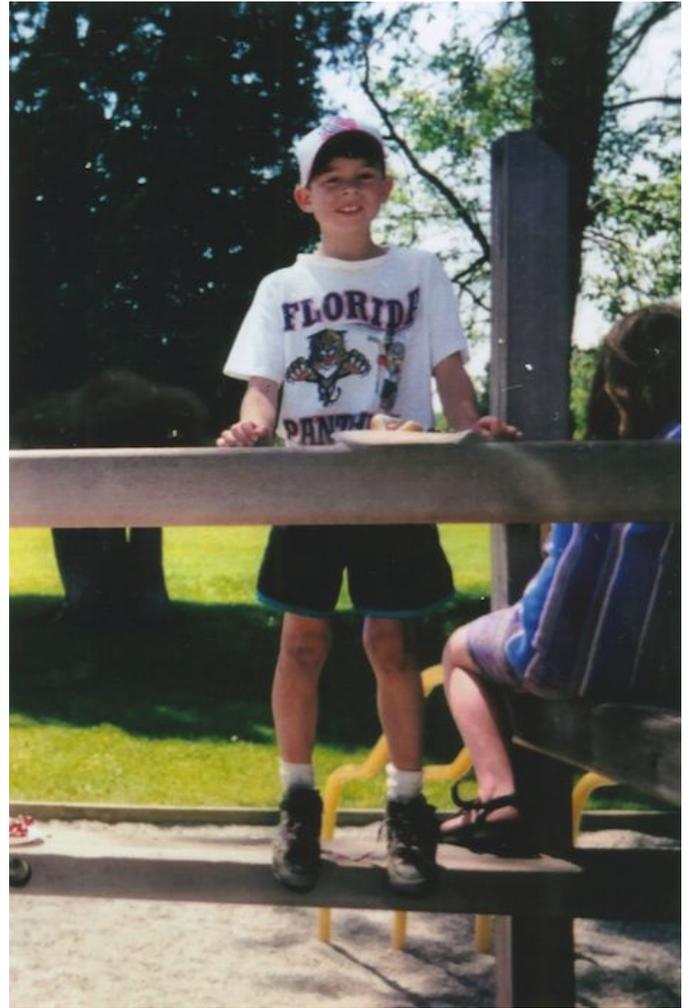
The Flyin' Ryan decal has been on my kitchen window for all these past 10 years warming my heart and keeping his sunshine in my life everyday.

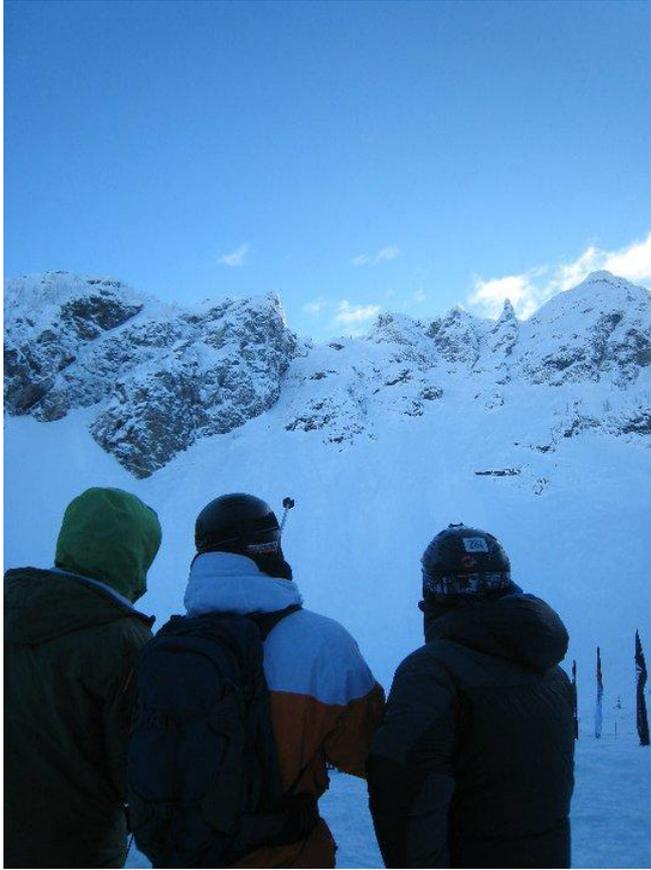
I enjoyed digging up some old pictures that I thought you might also enjoy along with his second grade writing that hold treasured memories as well.

I'll always think of him as the Piped Piper a magnet for all, leading everyone with his passionate curiosity and lighthearted, kind and inclusive personality.

I may have been, as you mentioned, one of his favorite teachers through the years but I hope you know that is a two way street. He was and always will be one of my most treasured students.

My love to you both, and to Alicia as well. Thank you for sharing Ryan with me and for allowing us to keep his sunshine alive!







Kyle Ambusk

Played lacrosse with Ryan for South Burlington H.S.

Ryan Hawks was the undisputed Captain of our lacrosse team. Our fearless leader. The go-to guy. As Captain, he led mostly by example which fostered a great team culture of hard work and also fun. He was humble, he was extremely talented, and he was amazing to watch in action. His responsibilities as Captain and the level at which he set the bar for the rest of us seemed effortless to him.

Ryan was without a doubt an impressive player, but I remember he would make a point of letting you know when he was impressed by your efforts as well. He genuinely shared in wanting others to succeed and would celebrate loudly for your accomplishments too. The ultimate teammate. As a lacrosse player he had the perfect combination of hard work, athletic skill, calmness under pressure, and what many might call "the clutch gene." I'm pretty confident that Alicia Hawks has this too..



Late in some of our most important games, with everything on the line, we found ourselves completely drained from sheer exhaustion. Drenched in freezing rain, covered in mud, lungs burning for oxygen, and your brain questioning whether your legs were still attached to your body, it seemed unfathomable to run up and down the field any more. We were physically beaten down. With time running out, and our team facing certain doom, Hawks would find an impossible reserve tank of extra energy deep within himself. He somehow, somehow, would rally to give just a little bit more of himself, lifting us up, and often score goals for our team when we needed it most. That's what he would do. He would give of himself for his teammates, and his friends. When it seemed like there was nothing left to give, Ryan found a way to give more. He inspires the best from within you that you didn't know you had. What an incredible role model and friend, and I will forever strive to be like Ryan Hawks.

Adam White

Staff writer at the Burlington Free Press when Ryan passed; wrote an incredible tribute which ran as a front page story in the Burlington Free Press; passionate skier; now serving as communications director for Vail Associates for eastern region; married to Clover; 3 kids (skier of course).



Ten years ago, on Feb. 27 2011, Ryan Hawks, a 25-year-old freeskiier from South Burlington, Vt., launched into legend. Hawks was competing in the North American Freeskiing Championships at Kirkwood, Ca., an event that pitted some of the best freeskiiers in the world against each other in the rocky terrain of the High Sierra.

Hawks had his run planned as he skied off a cliff estimated to be between 50 and 70 feet high. He went all-in, did a mid-air backflip and “stomped the landing” in the words of his father. But rather than landing in soft, forgiving snow, Hawks came down hard on a patch of ledge hidden just below the snow. He was airlifted by helicopter to a hospital in Reno, N.V. Two days later he succumbed to internal injuries.

But part of Flyin Ryan the most important part, according to many who knew him took flight during that jump and has been soaring ever since.

“We lost his body, but his spirit is as strong as ever,” said his father, Peter Hawks, during a break in skiing at his home mountain of Sugarbush a few days before the tenth anniversary of his son’s passing. “Ryan is very much a current event.”

Shortly after his death, a relative found on Ryan’s computer a list of “core values” that provided a kind of roadmap for navigating life. They ranged from basic principles (Work hard Live Easy Look out for others) to a strategy for fulfillment (Never stop exploring life Never lose my adventuresome attitude Play like I’m 13).

“People were visibly moved and favorably impacted by exposure to this collection of values,” Peter Hawks said, “but that wasn’t really changing anything. We needed an action plan.”

That plan took shape as the Flyin Ryan Decisions Program, an exercise in reflection and self-discovery that culminates in participants composing their own personal list of core values. It was also the start of the Flyin Ryan Hawks Foundation, a nonprofit launched a month after his death.

The foundation's logo a silhouette of its namesake soaring against a red, yellow and green "rasta" backdrop is seen on helmet stickers and hoodies all over the Green Mountains, anywhere skiers and riders drop into lines in search of the kind of adventure that Ryan was constantly after.

"The foundation is designed to serve one purpose: To extend the impact of the life of Ryan Hawks," Peter Hawks said. "He just had such a positive impact on everybody, far and near, with whom he came in contact.

"He had the rare capacity to move people all kinds of people. That's one of the great traits that led us to put the foundation together. We wanted to keep that vibe in place somehow."

The Flyin' Ryan foundation accomplishes that goal in numerous ways, all of which stem from Ryan's character and resulting approach to life.

"It gives students, athletes and adventurers the opportunity to connect with their hearts and minds and really engage with their core spirit, and bring that spirit to life," Peter Hawks said. "[They] use that spirit to provide themselves with an answer to the question: Who am I?"

The foundation's aim was to get the Decisions Program implemented in Vermont schools as a valuable exercise for students to explore their identities and build a solid foundation of values for decision making. The logical inception point was Ryan's high school alma mater, South Burlington. His former math teacher John Painter, who is also a passionate skier embraced the idea and became one of the foundation's strongest advocates.

Since its successful launch at South Burlington High, the program has been implemented in whole or part at more than a dozen other schools across the state. Painter said Mount Abraham where his own two children attend school came on board this year, and he is optimistic that in time "more and more schools are going to come to the table" and make his already rewarding involvement all the more worthwhile.

"The two words that come to mind are honor and responsibility, and neither are things that I carry lightly" said Painter of his role with the foundation. "It's been a privilege to work alongside Peter and be a part of his vision for this, and it's also been a pretty big responsibility to maintain this high level of engagement that we've started."

The inclusion of the Core Values program into the Vermont Department of Education's Personalized Learning Planning Process in 2013 paved the way for more widespread participation, though Peter Hawks admits the pace of that growth has been somewhat frustrating

“We’d like to see it in all 70 schools [statewide],” he said. “We have metrics that demonstrate that for one in five students, it’s a game-changer setting that compass for how you engage in life and shape your attitude, so you don’t get distracted by all the nastiness that’s out there that can knock you off course.”

The second phase of the foundation’s work is its Adventure Scholarships, awarded regularly to “acknowledge and encourage the pursuit of passion grounded in Core Values,” according to the Flyin Ryan website. To date, the foundation has awarded more than 120 Adventure Scholarships, with amounts typically ranging from \$500 to \$1,500.

Though the recipient section of the Flyin Ryan website reads like a who’s-who of the most talented up-and-coming skiers, snowboarders, rock climbers, kayakers and other outdoor sports enthusiasts on the scene, Peter Hawks insists that the awards are not based on athletic ability. Instead, the foundation looks for reflections of Ryan’s character in its applicants: A willingness to explore one’s self-identity and pursue interests and passions with the help of a strong moral compass.



“All we want to do is stimulate passion that’s faced with a financial shortfall. Regardless of what the activity or pursuit is, as long as they’re really passionate and committed, we’re all-in,” Peter Hawks said, noting that the foundation has never summarily rejected even a single application. “There is always a finish line, as long as you want it.”

Recipients don’t only receive a check and handshake; they find themselves welcomed into the Flyin’ Ryan family. Aaron Rice, who used the award to finance an avalanche safety course before going on to set the world record for self-powered vertical skiing in a single year (more than 2.5 million feet) in 2016, said that he still feels that bond five years later.

“It’s a really special organization in terms of how much Peter invests in each person and wanting to know who they really are,” said Rice, who now guides the Backcountry Skiing and Avalanche Awareness program at Ryan Hawks’ college alma mater, the University of Vermont. “Whenever I see him, we pick up right where we left off.”

Rice said that even though he didn’t know Ryan Hawks personally, he sees himself reflected in the Core Values that form the backbone of the organization.

“One of them is ‘Live Every Day to the Fullest,’ and that’s something I’ve embraced,” said Rice, noting that he has only missed two potential ski days since the calendar flipped to 2021.



The final piece to the Flyin Ryan Hawks Foundation puzzle is its involvement in freeskiing competitions, of the same type where Ryan Hawks made his fateful jump 10 years ago. The leaders of the International Freeride Ski Association have allowed Peter Hawks to speak to participants on the eve of events, to encourage a more introspective and ultimately, safer approach to competitive freeskiing.

Peter Hawks will give just such a talk on Feb. 26 at Mad River Glen, just before the kickoff of the Ryan Hawks Memorial IFSA Junior Regional Competition.

“The goal is to help kids make good, sound risk management decisions,” he said. “Kids who know who they are and how they’re composed aren’t going to be caught up in the competitive pressures and blindly hucking off cliffs that might be outside of the realm of reason.”

Standing so close to the proverbial edge of the precipice that claimed his son’s life would seemingly be uncomfortable even unbearable for a father, but Peter Hawks has never backed away from it. He says risk management was something he discussed with Ryan from a young age, and that even at that final competition indeed, right up until that ultimate jump his son understood and respected the mountain and all that it could give and take away. Ryan Hawks saw himself as a guest moving through that vertical space, guided by his core principles to stay true to himself. Peter Hawks conveys that same message to the competitors he addresses.

“I tell them that there’s only one way you can win the event: By impressing yourself,” he said. “This is not about the judges, or a score, or the crowd. This is about you and the mountain. You’re the artist; you’ve got the paintbrush and the mountain is your canvas. Put down a line that is within the realm of reason and brings you joy and self respect. How the judges rate it is incidental.”

Now 82, Peter Hawks has welcomed six grandchildren into the world and still gets out for plenty of his own adventure, whether on skis or his mountain bike. He remains steadfastly committed to keeping his son’s spirit alive through the foundation and using incremental change to achieve something monumental in Ryan’s memory.

“We want to make the world a better place, one person, one day, one event, one core value, one decision at a time,” he said. “I call it the power of one.

“All Ryan had to do to have a significant impact moving forward was to live there is no question about it. Now, it’s up to us to keep the stoke going on his behalf. It’s been an absolute privilege to have an opportunity to extend that legacy in a meaningful way.

