



To whom it may concern:

I am writing to strongly recommend Murphy Branche for the Flyin Ryan Hawks Foundation Adventure Scholarship. My name is Matthew Maitland, and I have had the privilege of coaching Murphy this season. In that time, he has distinguished himself through his determination, integrity, and passion for the sport.

Murphy came into this season with limited experience in organized competitive freeskiing, but it was immediately clear that he had already invested heavily in his own development. What stood out most throughout the season was his persistence. He consistently pushed for extra repetitions, whether that meant taking another hike on the rail line or asking for one more attempt before moving on to a new trick. Even during breaks, he was often the first athlete ready to head back out and keep working. What made that drive especially impressive was that he sustained it while balancing a heavier training load than many of his peers through his participation in the Stratton Winter Sports Club / Burr & Burton Academy midweek program.

Additionally, despite the uncertainty that can come with joining a program alongside new coaches and teammates, Murphy quickly established himself as a role model for many of the other athletes. With a wide age range across the team, creating a true sense of cohesion can be challenging. I was quite struck by how naturally he connected with younger athletes and those newer to the sport. He has a strong instinct for when to encourage, when to advise, when to look out for others, and when to step in and put a stop to lift-line shenanigans.

As Murphy has begun his competition career, he has also fully embraced freeskiing culture. Yes, that includes the unmistakable ultra-baggy pants, but more importantly, he has adopted the values that make the sport distinct. At the top of the course, I often see Murphy talking with the other (non-Stratton) athletes, discussing their runs, sharing tips, and getting to know one another. At the bottom, they wait for each other to ride the lift back up. Although they directly compete, the atmosphere remains remarkably supportive. That sense of friendship is something I find uniquely special about freeskiing, and it aligns closely with the core values of the Flyin Ryan Hawks Foundation.

Murphy's success is a reflection of the effort, joy, and consistency he brings to the sport every day. Within the Southern Vermont Series, he is ranked second in Rail Jam, first in Slopestyle, and first in Halfpipe. Nationally, he is ranked 33rd, 18th, and 5th in those events, respectively. In his very first season competing, he has qualified for USASA Nationals in all three events.

Murphy has shown me that he is curious, adventurous, and deeply committed to our sport. Freeskiing, however, comes with a significant financial burden, making support like this especially meaningful. I am confident that he upholds the Flyin Ryan Hawks Foundation's core values, is deserving of this scholarship, and would make the most of the opportunity it provides.

Sincerely,

Matthew Maitland  
Freeski Coach, Stratton Winter Sports Club