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Charlie Reynolds '86 Has Worked at Colorado Resort for 26 Years

Thousands of skiers travel to the majestic snow-covered mountains in Steamboat Springs, Colo., to experience a memorable day on the slopes. Beginners are focused on staying upright, but the experienced want to feel the rush of gliding down the trail. Charlie Reynolds, a Gardner-Webb University alumnus, is a member of a ski patrol team that keeps them all safe.

In 26 years of helping to patrol over 2,000 acres at Steamboat Ski Resort, Reynolds has seen how quickly a person can get into trouble. He has experienced many rescues, ranging from dramatic life-saving events to simply giving a tired skier a ride down the slope. Once, a group of 11 were skiing on powder in the backcountry, outside of the ski area, and came to the edge of a cliff with no way down. His team used ropes to lower them to safety. "Every day is different," Reynolds observed. "With 15,000 people skiing, you never know what is going to happen. We use a team approach. You train for it and always have somebody backing you up."

In all aspects of his job, Reynolds is required to study his surroundings, collaborate with his colleagues and determine the best course of action. All are skills he developed through Gardner-Webb's liberal arts education. "Having a global picture of what is around me—that started in college," Reynolds asserted. "Courses in anatomy and physiology helped me with Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training. My physical education training also prepared me for the job, because they want a healthy, fit person who is able to perform at a high level in a difficult environment."

Reynolds received a bachelor's degree in physical education from GWU in 1984. While completing his master's, he was a graduate assistant and coached the GWU men's tennis team from 1985-86. The son of missionaries, Reynolds went to high school in Belgium. A family friend had graduated from GWU and recommended the University to him. "I had never heard of it, but I respected him and decided to go," Reynolds shared. He easily adjusted to new places, because his family moved around a lot. He made friends quickly, admired his professors and felt at home on the campus.

After graduation, Reynolds taught and coached a winning tennis program at a small college in Eastern North Carolina. He was

Charlie Reynolds rappelling

there four years and decided it was time to follow his dream of living in Colorado and working in a ski resort. His second year in Steamboat Springs, he was put on ski patrol and began specific training to learn about outdoor emergency care, lift evacuation, avalanche control work and technical rescue.

The most miraculous incident he's ever witnessed involved a skier who was immersed in six feet of snow. When Reynolds arrived to the scene with a defibrillator, another ski patroller and skier had just uncovered the man's face by digging him out with their hands. The man was blue from lack of oxygen. They cleared snow from his mouth and suddenly he took a breath. Within minutes color returned to the man's face, and everyone celebrated. "It was an incredible experience," Reynolds recalled. "When you are a part of a life-saving effort—that's a big day—that is winning."