

GUIDE

BULLETIN

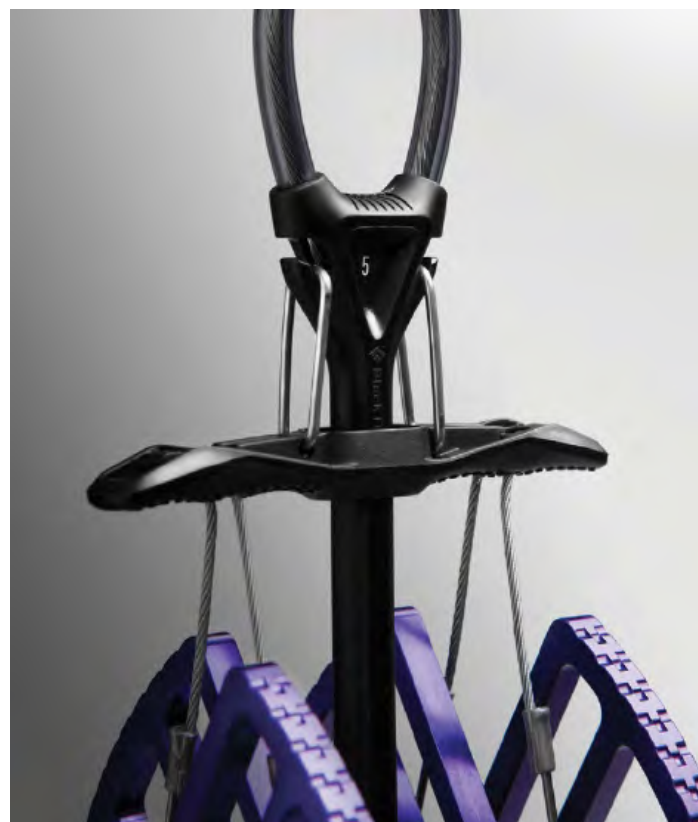


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AMGA IMPACT REPORT:
AN IN-DEPTH LOOK

VINCE ANDERSON:
THE GUIDING LIFE



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An in-depth look, by the numbers, at the AMGA membership, the guided public, and the impact of guiding and instructing in America

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On the cover: American Mountain Guides/IFMGA Guides Geoff Unger, Karen Bockel, and Erin Smart on the North Ridge of Forbidden during an AMGA Advanced Alpine Guide Course. **PHOTO BY JEFF WARD (AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA GUIDE)**

This page: Micah Rush and Jeff Ward (both American Mountain Guides/IFMGA Guides) on a 2014 Alpine Guide Course in the Tetons. **PHOTO BY MIKE POBORSKY (AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA GUIDE)**

GUIDE

BULLETIN

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“TO BE THE LEADER IN EDUCATION, STANDARDS, AND ADVOCACY FOR professional guides and climbing instructors.” That’s AMGA’s new, future-oriented mission statement, which the board of directors approved recently. This represents a shift from, and is broader than, our former mission: “To inspire and support a culture of American mountain craft.”

Our new mission reflects an evolution of AMGA’s role—one that is already well underway. With a new focus on advocacy, we are no longer on the political sidelines. Instead, we helped guide the critical House and Senate introduction of the SOAR (Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation) Act, which would streamline permitting and increase guided access opportunities. Advocacy also means supporting our members in other arenas, such as our recent launches of a disability-insurance program and the “Speak Up” hotline for addressing Code of Ethics and Conduct concerns.

AMGA has long sought to set professional standards and bring the best international practices to the U.S. through our guide and instructor-education programs. We are taking another significant step toward professionalizing American guiding by introducing Scope of Practice, which will be mandatory starting in 2022. Also underway is a new standard-setting project that aims to improve risk management for guides and instructors and advance guides’ ability to work within America’s complex workplace-safety framework.

I have long known that AMGA is the leader in guide and instructor education, and it’s wonderful to confirm this with firsthand experience. This year, I’ve taken two exceptional courses—an Ice Instructor Course led by Dale Remsberg and a Single Pitch Instructor Course led by Ron Funderburke. Our current leadership is exceptional, and we’re still striving to improve. New course manuals, fresh tech videos, and expanded Instructor Team training are just a few of the advancements underway.

In the last issue of the *GUIDE Bulletin*, we celebrated our 40th anniversary and remembered the people and milestones that brought us this far. In this issue, we look to the dawn of a bright and bold future. Our new mission statement reflects the progress AMGA has made, and will continue to guide our evolution.

Onward,

Alex Kosseff, AMGA Executive Director
alex@amga.com
(303) 323-8731

THE TETONS, BIRTHPLACE OF THE AMGA, SHOW OFF PERFECT LIGHTING.

PHOTO BY JAYSON SIMONS-JONES (AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA GUIDE)

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Angela Hawse — **FEATURE** — Ridgway, Colorado

Angela is the AMGA President, an Instructor Team Lead, and an AMGA/IFMGA Mountain Guide. She makes her home in Colorado with her wife, Monke, and their cute dog, Grommet. She's a co-owner of Chicks Climbing & Skiing, teaches with the Silverton Avalanche School, and is actively engaged in the IFMGA Environmental and Access Commission. Angela has a master's degree in international mountain conservation.

Alan Oram — **ASK ALAN** — Victor, Idaho

Alan has been climbing since before camming devices hit the market. He took a break for medical school and residency. Now, he practices emergency medicine, works as an American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide, and serves as medical advisor to the AMGA and many private guiding companies.

Monserrat Alvarez — **EQUIPPED** — Boulder, Colorado

Monserrat Alvarez (AMGA SPI) is the AMGA's Membership and Inclusion Coordinator. She lives and works in Boulder, though she calls North Carolina home, by way of California by way of Mexico. Monserrat has presented on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at conferences like PGM ONE and AORE, and facilitates DEI trainings through Brown Girls Climb. You can find her at AMGA's national office cuddling all the office dogs.

Lyra Pierotti — **EQUIPPED** — Vashon, Washington

Lyra Pierotti (AMGA Rock Guide, Apprentice Alpine Guide) lives and works in the Pacific Northwest. Her roots are in California, where she cut her teeth on the coarse granite of Joshua Tree National Park and lapped a lot of granite rock routes for Yosemite Mountaineering School. Lyra is also an avalanche educator, fitness coach, and writer. She serves on the AMGA Board as Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee.

Vince Anderson — **THE GUIDING LIFE** — Grand Junction, Colorado

A third-generation Coloradan, Vince Anderson (American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide) climbed his first mountain at age five and started skiing at eight. Since 1994, Vince has guided thousands of happy clients on climbing adventures across the world, including the Canadian Rockies, the Alps, Alaska, the Himalaya, the Karakoram, and the Andes. When he is not out guiding, he can be found on his bike with his wife and three sons in Grand Junction, Colorado.

PHOTOS BY [TOP TO BOTTOM]: JAYSON SIMONS-JONES, ALAN ORAM, MICAH SAULS, MARTY DEMERS, COURTESY OF VINCE ANDERSON



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AMGA IMPACT REPORT

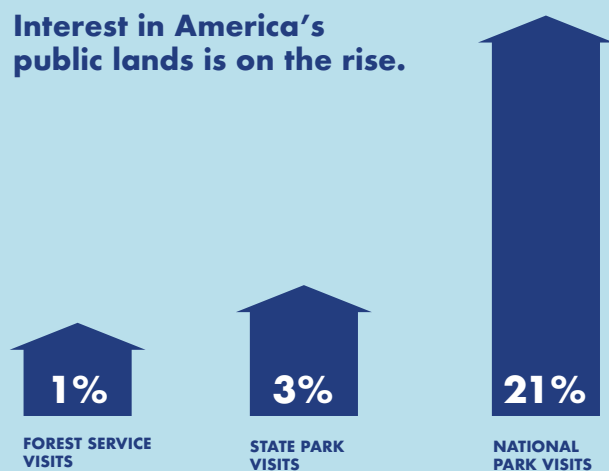
The AMGA is America's first and most influential organization of professional guides and climbing instructors. Whether it's climbing indoors for the first time, or experiencing the magic of our public lands through a guided ascent of the Grand Teton, AMGA guides and instructors have an important role to play in introducing people to America's Vertical Landscapes. The membership, accredited businesses and guided public alike look to the AMGA to maintain standards for guide training and certification, and to act as a champion for access to our vertical places.

This report presents an in-depth look at the AMGA membership, the guided public, and the impact of guiding and instructing in America. It's a benchmark for industry trends when compared against the last AMGA Impact Report (formerly, the State of the Guiding Industry Report), released in 2013. Benchmarks like this help the AMGA to support the professional growth of our membership and carry out our mission: to be the leader in education, standards, and advocacy for professional guides and climbing instructors.

America's Vertical Landscape.

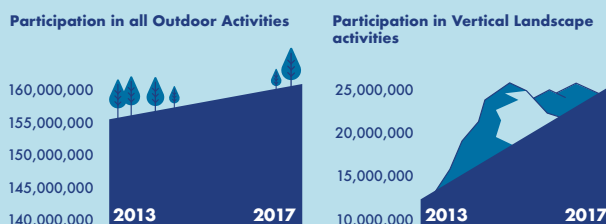
America's Vertical Landscape includes the mountains, glaciers, canyons, gorges, rock formations and boulders where people experience climbing and skiing, where enthusiasts go to recreate, and where guides practice their craft. The eight core Vertical Landscape sports include: traditional climbing, mountaineering, bouldering, ice climbing, indoor climbing, backcountry skiing, alpine touring, and nordic skiing. The AMGA has a unique role in introducing people to America's Vertical Landscape and serving as stewards of the places we all enjoy.

Interest in America's public lands is on the rise.



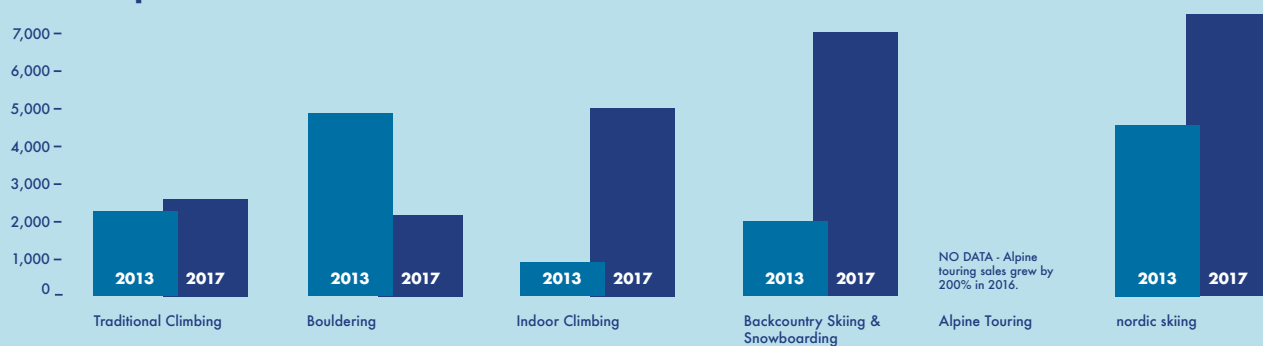
Interest and engagement in America's Vertical Landscape is also exploding.

The number of participants in Vertical Landscape activities is up 78% since 2013.



Percentage of total outdoor participation that took place in Vertical Landscapes nearly doubled from 2013 - 2017, from 8.8% to 15.1%

Indoor climbing and backcountry skiing lead growth in Vertical Landscape activities.



The AMGA within the Vertical Landscape.

Guides and instructors believe in AMGA advocacy.

61%

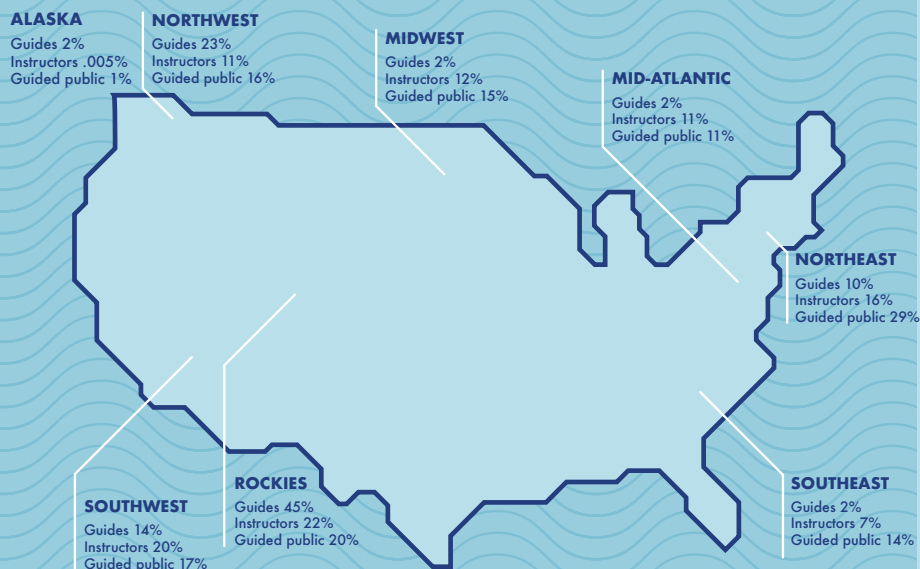
Most guides and instructors (61%) feel like their businesses have been hindered by access constraints.

85%

74% of guides and 85% of instructors believe that the AMGA Advocacy Program is helping to improve access opportunities.

AMGA members & clients by region.

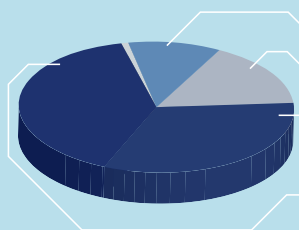
The Rockies are home to the highest number of AMGA guides and instructors, and have experienced the most growth since 2013. The Northeast is home to the largest client population.



“Mountain sports are evolving more and more into popular sports. This development can be observed above all in the increasing urbanization of typical outdoor sports and the emergence of new training platforms.”

– Stephan Hagenbusch,
Vice-President of International
Sales, Black Diamond

AMGA membership by highest level of training.



- 502** Individual Certified Guides
(AMGA Rock, Alpine, Ski, and/or IFMGA; AMGA Rock Instructor, and/or Ice Instructor)
- 730** Individual Apprentice, and/or Assistant Level Guides
- 1499** Individual Certified Instructors
(AMGA Single Pitch Instructor, Climbing Wall Instructor, or combination)
- 1832** Additional members who have completed the SPI Course, or have yet to take an AMGA program
- 28+** Accredited Businesses

AMGA average length of membership.

7 years

(Guides)

70% of guides have been members for more than 6 years

3 years

(Instructors)

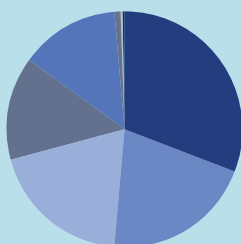
85% of instructors have been members for less than 6 years.

AMGA membership grew 75% from 2013 - 2019

75%

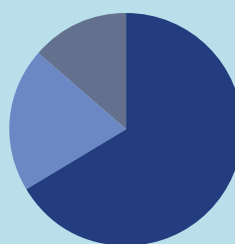
(2,606 in 2013 vs. 4,563 in 2019)

Number of Certified Guides and Instructors by Discipline.



Typology of an AMGA Certified Guide

- Rock 300
- Ski 199
- Alpine 186
- IFMGA 137
- Rock Instructor 132
- Splitboard 8
- Ski & Splitboard 2
- Ice Instructor 2



Typology of an AMGA Certified Instructor

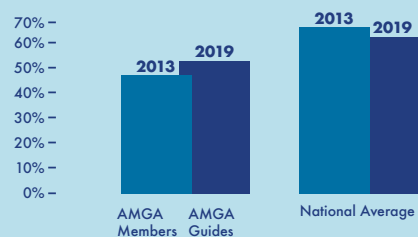
- Single Pitch Instructor 1269
- Climbing Wall Instructor (Lead) 384
- Climbing Wall Instructor (TR) 258

Guides on the rise.

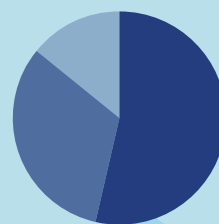
Guides tend to be more established in their careers, lives, and education than instructors.

Home ownership.

Home ownership is declining for the average American, but not for guides.



Marital status and families.



50% Married
30% Single
13% Long-term partnership

1 in 3 guides have kids or dependants

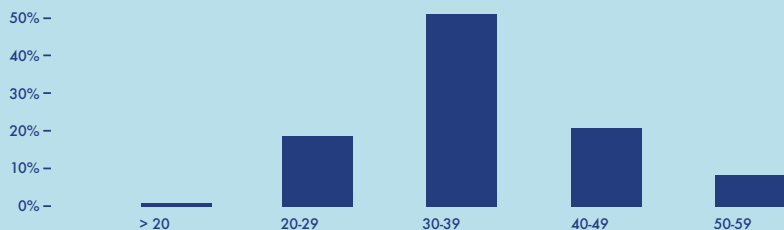
"I value the training I have received, and believe it has made me a better guide."

- AMGA
Ski Guide,
age 35, Rockies

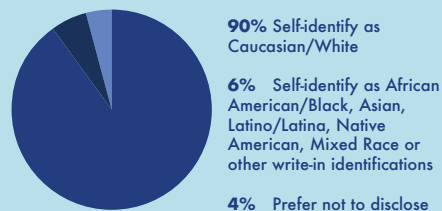
PHOTO: KAREN HILTON

Age.

Half of guides are in their 30's. Average age: 38.



Ethnicity.



Gender.

87% MALE
12% FEMALE

>1% gender-non-binary
>1% prefer not to disclose

The AMGA was my educational body. Today [AMGA] has maintained status as an IFMGA country so my guides license is valid. It also provides me support in dealing with land management issues locally. It has also provided a cultural basecamp for professional guides going through the same issues I am as a practitioner. The AMGA is our only advocate in a massive spectrum of professional challenges.

- AMGA/IFMGA Mountain Guide, age 45, Northwest Region

On the job.

The average tenure of guides is increasing despite relatively consistent wages.

Working days and years.

Median years guiding: 9 YEARS

76% guiding for more than 6 years
18% guiding for more than 16 years

Worked an average of **78 DAYS** in 2018. **96,096 days** as an industry.

Guide wages

\$201 PER DAY AVERAGE
\$25-\$100 TIP (44% of guides report receiving tips 75-100% of the time)
26K ANNUAL EARNINGS

Ladder up:

1232 guides x 78 days/year
x \$201-330/day

In total, AMGA guides bring in between \$19 to 31 million in income per year.

How they work it...

1 in 2 work full-time
3 in 5 work year-round
1 in 2 works as part of an AMGA Accredited Business

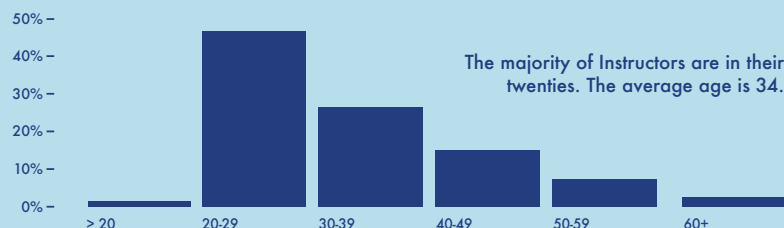
16% more guides now believe that guiding is a sustainable career than the AMGA membership reported in 2013.

58% vs. **42%**
"It is sustainable" "It is not sustainable"

Instructors learning the craft.

The majority of instructors are focused on building their skillset and furthering their education to develop as professionals.

Age.



Gender.

**76%
MALE**
**22%
FEMALE**

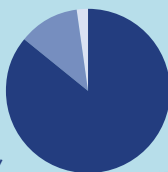
>1% gender-non-binary
>1% prefer not to disclose

Ethnicity.

86% Self-identify as Caucasian/White

12% Self-identify as African American/Black, Asian, Latino/Latina, Native American, Pacific Islander, Mixed Race or other write-in identifications

2% Prefer not to disclose



"The AMGA gives me the confidence to approach prospective employers with the knowledge that we both understand my level of training and experience. I think it also helps with client confidence in my abilities."

—AMGA SPI,
age 35, Northeast

On the job.

Instructors work half as much, and earn half as much as guides; but are drivers of continuing education within the AMGA.

Instructors see guiding as a more sustainable career than instructing.

43% vs. 61%
"Instructing is a sustainable career."
"Guiding is a sustainable career."

Continuing education.

50% of instructors are considering applying to the Rock Guide Course. (Only 28% and 13% note wanting to pursue the Alpine and Ski disciplines, respectively.)

Working days and years.

Median years instructing: **5 YEARS**

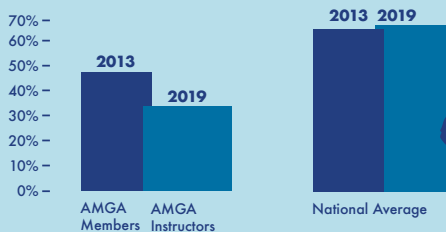
33% instructing for more than 6 years

Worked an average of **39 days** in 2018. **129,909** days as an industry.

PHOTO: AUSTIN SCHMITZ

Home ownership.

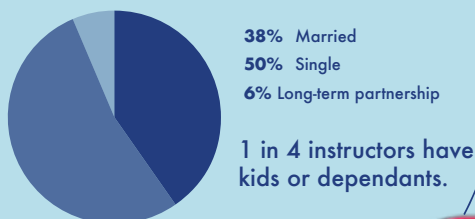
33% own a home (vs. national average of 64%)



Vehicle ownership.

90% of AMGA instructors own or lease a vehicle.

Marital status and families.



Guides and instructors - How they're similar.

Guides and instructors are more educated than ever before, and more than the national average.

Four-Year Degrees or more:

Guides 2019: 85%
Instructors 2019: 75%
AMGA Membership in 2013: 52%
National Average: 33%

Advanced Degree:

Guides 2019: 25%
Instructors 2019: 25%
AMGA Membership in 2013: 5%
National Average: 12%

They believe...

...that the guiding industry is growing (90% of guides and instructors agree)

... that demand for AMGA trained and certified guides and instructors is on the rise (guides 66%; instructors 52%; up from AMGA membership belief in 2013 of 40%)

And yet...

...six percent of guides and instructors receive health insurance through their guiding company

...many guides and instructors have another job besides guiding (67%)

...fewer guides and instructors believe that AMGA certification results in higher earnings than not being certified (guides 60%, instructors 48%, down from 72% of AMGA membership in 2013)

Typical earnings are about half that of guides.

\$100 PER DAY AVERAGE **9.5k** ANNUAL EARNING

About **2/3** of instructors say that instructing-related income accounts for less than **15%** of their annual income.

<\$50 tip. (84% report receiving tips 0-25% of the time)

How they work it...

1 in 5 work full-time
2 in 5 work year-round
1 in 6 works as part of an AMGA Accredited Business

Ladder up:

3331 Instructors x 39 days per year x \$100-240/day

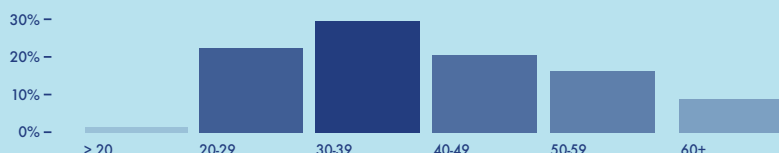
AMGA Instructors bring in between \$12 to \$31 million in income per year.

A new look at the guided public.

The guided public are approaching middle-age, active and affluent individuals wanting to explore new areas of Vertical Landscapes away from home. They are AMGA-aware and enthusiastic, and look to those they hire for safety and skills instruction.

Age.

Most of the guided public is in their 30s and 40s.

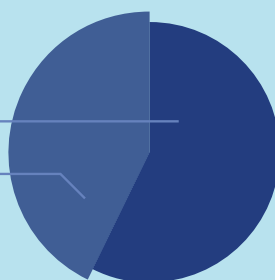


Marital status and families.

50% Married

37% Single

44% have dependants or children



Gender.

72% MALE **28% FEMALE**

They are as educated as their guide and instructor counterparts.

89% have completed a four-year degree or higher.

45% have completed a post-doc or higher.

They're active outdoors.

Avg. 78 days recreating outdoors, annually.

78 DAYS

Guides and instructors report having more beginners (19%), more women (34%), and more repeat customers (19%) as their guests in vertical landscapes.

The guided public believes in AMGA certification.

They are more aware and concerned about AMGA certification than guides and instructors realize.

Guided public's belief in the value of AMGA certification:

87% care about it

51% ask for it

Guides' perception of their clients' beliefs in the value of AMGA certification:

53% care about it

12% ask for it

Instructors' perception of their clients' beliefs in the value of AMGA certification:

38% care about it

8% ask for it

"I recommend AMGA certified guides to other people as I trust their certifications and professionalism. I also look to the AMGA to learn new skills and techniques as they evolve."

- Guided public, age 35, Rocky Mountain Region

They hire a guide or instructor because they:

- #1 Want skills training
- #2 Want the safety that they believe a professional offers

95% believe value-to-cost of a guided or instructed experience is high.

59% believe value-to-cost is on par
36% believe value outweighs cost

They aspire to something new and exciting.

Single day (38%) vs. Multi-day (18%) vs. Both (44%)

Somewhere new (92%) vs. Somewhere familiar (8%)

Local (36%) vs. Away from Home (64%)

Alpine & Mountaineering (38%) vs. Skiing (28%) vs. Rock Climbing (27%) vs. all of the above or other (7%)

The economic impact of the guided public is inspiring.



The average guided public spends annually...

\$532 lodging/transportation

\$711 gear/clothing/equipment

\$100-\$330 guided or instructed experience

Total Impact: \$1343 - \$1,573 per guided client

Considering the number of guides and instructors, over 226,005 members of the guided public will interact with the AMGA, and may have the following economic impact in 2019:

Over **\$74.6** million on guided or instructed experiences

Over **\$120** million on transportation and lodging

Over **\$161** million on gear and equipment

The total economic impact of guiding and instructing will be over \$355 million dollars in 2019.

At current costs and levels of increase in Vertical Landscape participation, growth in another five years could be

\$573 million.

PHOTO: JAYSON SIMONS-JONES

The economic impact of guides and instructors on the outdoor industry.

Eighty-eight percent of guides and instructors expect to put the same amount or more of their resources into their guiding and instructing careers in the next five years.

GUIDES

**Spend
\$2,090**

per year on gear, on average

INSTRUCTORS

**Spend
\$1,076**

per year on gear, on average

The average amount spent on gear by both guides and instructors is \$1,350.
This is similar to the amount spent per year in 2013 (\$1,391).

GUIDE IMPACT

- 1232 AMGA guides
- Spending \$2,090/year
- Total economic impact of

\$2.6 million
on the gear industry

INSTRUCTOR IMPACT

- 3331 AMGA instructors
- Spending \$1,076/year
- Total economic impact of

\$3.6 million
on the gear industry

COMBINED IMPACT.

**Total economic impact of AMGA guides and instructors
on the gear industry will be \$6.2 million in 2019.**

*If membership growth continues at current estimated rates of 10% per year, the AMGA will have a \$9.9 million economic impact on the gear industry in 2024.

PHOTO: JAYSON SIMONS-JONES

The AMGA has an indirect economic impact of over \$167 million on the gear industry annually.

Regional Economic Impact of the AMGA

Guides, instructors and their clients represent a powerful economic force across the United States, with the Northeast and Rockies showing the most dollars attributed to guiding and instructing.

ALASKA

Guides \$51,498
Instructors \$17,921
Guided public up to \$3,555,059

\$3,624,478

NORTHWEST

Guides \$592,222
Instructors \$394,257
Guided public \$56,880,938

\$57,867,417

MIDWEST

Guides \$51,498
Instructors \$430,099
Guided public \$53,325,880

\$53,807,477

MID-ATLANTIC

Guides \$51,498
Instructors \$394,257
Guided public up to \$39,105,645

\$39,551,400

NORTHEAST

Guides \$257,488
Instructors \$573,465
Guided public up to \$103,096,701

\$103,927,654

SOUTHWEST

Guides \$208,916
Instructors \$680,247
Guided public \$60,435,997

\$61,325,160

ROCKIES

Guides \$1,158,696
Instructors \$788,514
Guided public up to \$71,101,173

\$73,048,383

SOUTHEAST

Guides \$51,498
Instructors \$250,891
Guided public up to \$49,770,821

\$50,073,210

In the U.S., guides, instructors and the guided public spend over \$443 million on gear and costs associated with guided and instructed experiences.



PHOTO: MICHAEL WACHS

Methodology.

In January of 2019, the AMGA hired a third-party to conduct an online survey of guides, instructors, and guided public. This report comprises learnings from third party research and 1,357 voluntary and anonymous responses, including an impressive 24% of the AMGA membership (314 guides, 781 instructors), and 262 members of the guided public.

Survey nomenclature & distribution:

- The guide survey was distributed to AMGA members that have completed training in the mountain guide program (Apprentice, Assistant, and Certified Guides)
- The instructor survey was distributed to AMGA members that have completed training in the SPI and CWI programs, or have not yet taken an AMGA Program
- The guided public survey was distributed to clients of AMGA Accredited Businesses

Sources.

2018 Outdoor Foundation Participation Report
 2017 Snowsports Industry Association Winter Participation Study.
 2013 Guide Industry Report



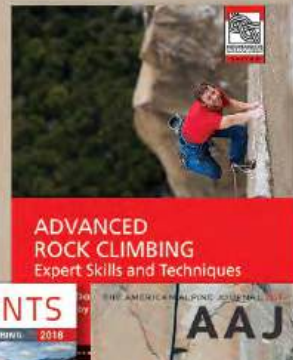
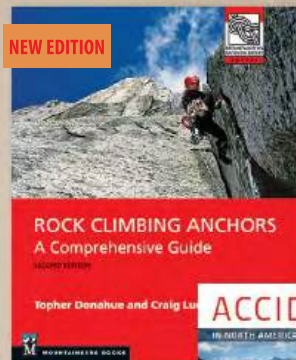
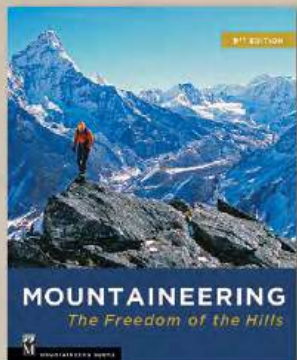
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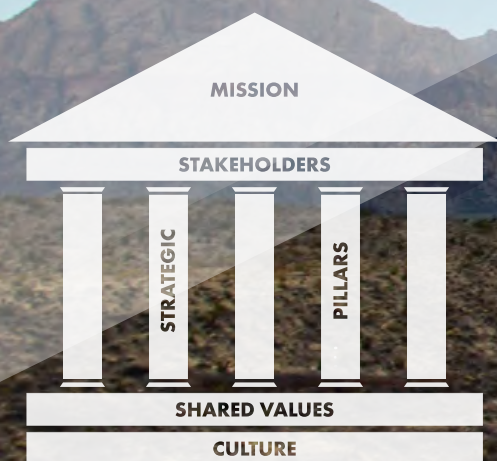
WINTER 2019-2020

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COLORFUL PAST, BRIGHT FUTURE

THE AMGA BEGINS ITS NEXT CHAPTER

By Angela Hawse



AMGA STRATEGIC PLAN STRUCTURE

MY JOURNEY TO THE AMGA PRESIDENCY WAS wildly different than Doug Robinson's—for one thing, I wasn't present at the historic Moose Bar meeting. I cut my teeth working for Outward Bound and Prescott College's Adventure Education program. During those early days, I also devoted every spare day to rock and alpine climbing throughout North America and the Himalayas with my boyfriend and mentor, Mike Goff. In 1993, I left OB to work for the American Alpine Institute.

During those first weeks of guide training with Mark Houston and SP Parker, I knew I'd landed on a career path that was *the one*. I stuck with it, and I've never veered.

Mark and SP were highly influential in my decision to become an IFMGA guide, as was Kathy Cosley—the first (and, at the time, only) female IFMGA guide via AMGA. Their passion for guiding and the fluidity with which they moved over terrain was compelling. Their engaging instruction laid out clear expectations and high standards, while clearly conveying the goal of client and guide security, and producing high-quality rewards.

I hung onto their every word, tip, and story of guiding in the greater ranges. I wanted to be just like them. So I followed their path, aspiring to their humility, character, and courage.

I took my first AMGA course in 1994. It was an Advanced Alpine Guide Course taught by Mark Houston, SP Parker, Marc Chauvin, and Dave Staehli. Karl Klassen from the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides was an observer as part of the ACMG's sponsorship of our candidacy into the IFMGA (which we later achieved in 1997). Bela Vadasz and Peter Lev audited the course to become "grandfathered" in as Alpine Guides. As you might imagine, there were

some curious dynamics on the course. It was an exceptional experience that left me with a burning desire to eventually become a member of the AMGA Instructor Team.

AMGA training opened all kinds of doors for me. Abundant opportunities followed: international guiding, pursuing my own climbing expeditions, and IFMGA certification. In 2005, my long-term goal came to fruition when I became the first female to join the AMGA Instructor Team.

Aside from never having to compete for a bathroom, it was business as usual—I was never tokenized or treated differently as a woman by my mentors. I was hired to perform a job that I was competent to perform, and had confidence in my ability to do so. My colleagues, much like SP and Mark had been, were supportive—they had high standards and clear expectations. There was no sugar-coating.

Since then, AMGA guide training has made up nearly a third of my work. It's also provided me with some of the greatest rewards imaginable. I've had the honor to work with many of you over the past 14 years, and I can't tell you how proud I am when I see you in the field with your clients.

I served two terms on the AMGA Board of Directors, where I learned the ins and outs of the AMGA and developed working relationships with many fine individuals who were as dedicated to guiding our organization as they were to guiding their clients. When I was approached two years ago and asked if I'd consider serving as president, I was thrilled—I also had to pause and summon the courage to take on this important role. I am humbled to have the opportunity to use my experience, passion, and work ethic to serve you and the AMGA in this leadership capacity. I take it very seriously and aspire to make you proud.



THE INAUGURAL ALL-WOMEN'S SINGLE PITCH INSTRUCTOR COURSE IN RED ROCK CANYON NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA. PHOTO COURTESY OF IRENE YEE

At times, it's easy to lose sight of the big picture and become disgruntled with the frustrations and challenges of our work. We live and work in a vastly different climate, both literally and figuratively, than our founders did when they got together and created the Moose Bar Charter. The world and mountains have changed more than those folks ever could have imagined, and so has the AMGA. We've grown into one of the largest, most respected, and credible guide associations in the world. Sure, that doesn't solve all our day-to-day problems as working guides—but it does put us in the game as major players in shaping our profession, setting standards, and being effective advocates for our members and their interests.

The AMGA's work has many parallels to that of guides and instructors pursuing AMGA training and certification. Countless hours go into laying the groundwork and planning for the aspirational results. Our foundation, experience, skill sets, and drive prepare us for the rigors and challenges ahead. Partnerships and alliances help fine-tune and support our efforts. As an educational organization and disciples of our craft, a healthy outlook of life-long learning maintains our commitment and capacity for growth. Honest self-evaluation, sometimes painful feedback, and checks and balances help us learn from mistakes, celebrate success, and—if we stick with it—ultimately realize our potential.

As an organization, it's critical to formalize this process. Over the past two years, the AMGA Board of Directors, with considerable insight and direction from our executive director and staff, produced the Strategic Plan you'll learn more about in this issue. This framework provides vision, structure, and handrails to guide us. It's a tool to serve all AMGA stakeholders: guides, climbing instructors, accredited

businesses, supporters, and the public. Every component of the plan supports carrying out our mission, and aims to bring us together as a community with a very unique culture and shared values.

In addition to the goals set forth in the strategic plan, I have some personal goals I'd like to share with our membership:

- 1. Improved member benefits and increased communication around what they are and how to use them.**
- 2. Support for ongoing advocacy and access initiatives—nationally, internationally, and environmentally.**
- 3. Improvements in professionalism, inclusivity, and respectful dialogue, and more resources to help support our continued professional development.**
- 4. In the next 10 years, I'd like to see women make up at least 30% of our certified guides and climbing instructors.**

We have evolved significantly. These days, operations run smoothly and the AMGA is fiscally sound. Our increasingly diverse membership, exceptional staff, and a dedicated board of directors ensure we stay the course in moving forward to represent you and our profession in a positive light.

The future of the AMGA is bright, and our 40th year is a particularly exciting time to be involved. There is much to celebrate—and much work to be done. We've gotten a solid belay from many of the colorful characters of our past. Now, it's our turn to step confidently into the future.



THE RISING TIDE:

WHY STANDARDS ARE ESSENTIAL TO GUIDING

By Geoff Unger

GUIDES OFTEN HAVE A HARD TIME ACCEPTING standards. As a young guide, I regularly worked outside my training and certification level. I was a talented climber—how hard could it be? Guiding clients in terrain where I had spent little time was certainly a way to gain experience, and I dove in headfirst.

In my first year of alpine guiding, I onsite-guided the North Ridge of Mount Baker. By technical standards, the route is not very difficult. However, it has a few features that make it complex: difficult glacier travel, the length of the climb, steep alpine ice, and a descent that does not follow the line of ascent. Because of those complexities, the route is actually now used on AMGA Alpine Guide Exams to test candidates for certification in that discipline. The guiding day was a success, but just barely.

Today the practical application of experience, mentorship, training, and certification standards for the guiding industry is written into the AMGA Scope of Practice document. Standards and Scope of Practice are things I wish I'd had as tools to manage risk as I approached the complicated task of guiding early in my career. I sometimes felt like I was in over my head, but I had no benchmark to point to. So, off I went. Having taken training courses prior to that first season of guiding, I was one of the more qualified people where I worked, but I was still under-prepared for the work I was doing.

The benefits of standards—and the potential ramifications of operating outside a set of standards—are well documented in industries outside guiding. Medical professionals, for example, adhere very strictly to standards and scope of practice. A responsible doctor would never consider operating outside the scope of practice—a pediatrician wouldn't perform an open-heart surgery, and a Registered Nurse wouldn't prescribe medication. Doing so could expose them to liability that would make it impossible to continue working in their profession. So why are many folks in the guiding industry comfortable with guides working outside a generally accepted set of standards?

The history of climbing and guiding in the United States provides some perspective on why our industry is resistant to standards. Climbing has always had a reputation as a free-spirited endeavor that allows people to express themselves—and American guiding is no different. Traditionally, different

climbing areas required a climber to develop specific techniques suitable to each area. Universal movement standards, or any other kind of nationwide standard, didn't really make sense in the early days. However, as the sport grew, the best climbers traveled to different climbing areas and excelled in a variety of terrain. Their skills extended beyond regionality and a local bias toward one way of doing things.

Similarly, the standards we have now, which have been derived from a broad perspective, help us to reach our potential as guides in our home terrain and beyond. With increased ease of travel and information-sharing, the guiding industry has moved beyond regional differences and developed as a cohesive group of guides who have overcome regional bias in order to create the industry-wide standards we have today.

Today the AMGA's Scope of Practice document and accreditation program are tools for the industry to manage risk in ways that benefit both employers and guides. By following the accreditation guidelines and hiring guides trained or certified for the terrain, employers can be confident in their guides' skill levels. This helps to accelerate (but does not fully replace) in-house training for new staff. Trained and certified guides can use Scope of Practice as a tool to manage risk by only accepting work that is within their scope.

The cost of operating outside my experience and certification levels in the early days of my guiding career was that it exposed me to greater risk. The physical risk is obvious, but the financial, programmatic, and other risks are more abstract. In hindsight, I realize I should have had more experience and mentorship in the terrain—as well as an AMGA certification—before approaching certain routes. If I'd had access to the Scope of Practice back then, I would have had a broad range of guiding objectives that were within my ability and experience level.

Thanks to that document, guides today can expect more structure and support in their professional development and clients can expect a higher level of professionalism and excellence. By hiring trained and certified guides, clients can expect a level of professionalism and excellence. These positive client experiences with trained and certified guides will help shift cultural perception and grow the profession of guiding in America.



STUDENTS LEARNING THE CRAFT ON THE FIRST EVER WOMEN'S ROCK GUIDE COURSE, SPONSORED BY THE NORTH FACE. PHOTO BY KAREN HILTON (AMGA APPRENTICE ROCK GUIDE)

EDUCATION

KNOW THE ROPES:

EDUCATION IS CENTRAL TO AMGA'S NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

By Dale Remsberg

I STARTED GUIDING IN THE LITERAL WILD WEST—I grew up in the Western-themed town of Winthrop, Washington, where cowboys and rodeos were a common scene. There was a culture of “going big,” and working long, risky days.

I spent my first days of guiding alone—and without formal training—on the remote peaks of the Pacific Northwest. I’m lucky to have survived those formative years. Hindsight is 20/20, and as I look back at my guiding career, it has become crystal clear to me that it is not OK for inexperienced guides to be asked to take on work that they are not trained for.

But even for experienced guides working well within their comfort zones, education is important. It’s true that guide education does provide guides with better risk-management practices, but the reality is that guiding in the U.S. has not been fraught with accidents.

So why is all this coursework important? The real reason for guide education is the client experience: Better client experiences lead to return clientele, which in turn leads to

sustainable careers for our members. Plus, climbing and skiing are growing at somewhat alarming rates, and better-trained guides will help us take care of our precious planet by showing our growing clientele the wild landscapes that are worth taking care of.

As the Technical Director, my main focus is on our core pillar of education: training guides and instructors. As I grew as a guide and eventually got hired as an instructor for the AMGA, I figured out that our systems and processes were clunky. That was OK when our membership was under 1,500. Now that we have more than 4,000 members, our approach to education needs to adjust and adapt.

The excellent education I eventually pursued came from the dedication and skill of the guides who ran my programs and from their infectious appetite for integrity in the mountains and at the crag. We continue to have skilled and enthusiastic instructors, but as expectations change, we need to give them more resources to succeed. More staff training,

better technologies for communication, and more training in areas like diversity, equity, and inclusion are necessary as we strive to include underrepresented populations in our community, for example.

Now that many guides start their instructing and guiding careers with AMGA training, we are on the right path. Today, more than 70% of AMGA Rock Guide Course participants are certified Single Pitch Instructors. This is a fantastic trend. By better integrating the instructor and mountain guide programs, our community will be able to work together more effectively.

And as the guiding industry matures, we need to constantly re-evaluate how the AMGA can leverage its strengths to improve education. We know that our time in terrain with instructors is our strong point, and we know that if we can increase that time, the educational product will be enhanced. In the past, students generally came to us with more guiding experience, but now the average Rock Guide Course student has no actual guiding experience. This is great—we want folks to get training before they're working in the field. That makes field time even more important. Taking advantage of new learning platforms by

focusing our energy into videos and e-learning also will help us increase the value of field time.

We have been successful with technical videos that better prepare students for programs and give them a resource to look back at post-program. We are looking at online learning that will allow for more application in the field and also better harmonize lessons like navigation and professionalism. The instructor team has been taking on implicit-bias training, and we are excited to expand into other areas such as diversity, equity, and inclusion and to train our staff to communicate more effectively. These are areas in which the AMGA has not traditionally focused.

We also are learning about guide communities and populations that have been underrepresented. Soon, we'll launch new programs like the Multi-Pitch Instructor and Glacier Instructor. With that comes a real risk of further slicing the educational pie and confusing our members and the public. We must apply careful consideration and address bumps in the trail ahead. Now that we have a larger membership with ever-evolving needs, the AMGA is not as nimble as it once was. But with an office and field staff ready for the challenge, we continue to constantly adapt and improve.



CERTIFICATION

THE VALUE OF CERTIFICATION:

WHY DO WE NEED CERTIFICATION? A Q&A WITH VICE PRESIDENT GEOFF UNGER

EVERY SO OFTEN, a post will pop up on the AMGA Professional Members Forum that highlights a new program or certification that is unaffiliated with the AMGA, or features a well-known (but uncertified) guide who has made a big splash in the media.

"This undermines our certifications!" many members say. It's an understandable concern. AMGA certified-guides go through a challenging process to earn their credentials, and it's frustrating when others bypass that hard work and yet appear to be competing for business.

The reality, though, is that the AMGA is the only organization in the United States that's recognized by the International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations (IFMGA). This means that, unlike any other certification out there, an AMGA cert meets a consistent set of international standards. In other words, it's the most legitimate credential out there for mountain guides.

In that sense, certification is the backbone of the AMGA. It's how we know our guides and instructors have the appropriate skills. Certification is why, over the last 40 years, we've emerged as the preeminent voice of guides in the United States.

As we round the corner into the next chapter of AMGA's history, the *GUIDE Bulletin* sat down with AMGA Vice President Geoff Unger to learn more about certification and its significance. —*GUIDE Bulletin Staff*

Geoff Unger: Certification is one of the very foundations of AMGA. The Mountain Guide Program makes up the bulk of our operating budget. Of course, it's all linked together—you can't have certification without education and standards. That makes the certification piece the backbone of the organization.

GB: When guides get certified, they hear a lot about the Scope of Practice (SOP). How are they tied together?

GU: The different certification tracks are really the basis for the SOP. Without having solid training and certification programs, we wouldn't have been able to create the SOP. Right now, the SOP is tied to rock and alpine commitment grades—there are commonly guided routes that fit within each level of training and certification. Of course, those grades are very subjective, and guides need to know which routes they'll need supervision on.

Here's a recent example. I have a guide candidate who just took her Rock Guide Course and wants to make sure she understands what terrain she is allowed to guide and what she's not. Her home area is Smith Rock. At Smith, there's only one route that's bigger than a Grade II. So without actually being certified yet—in order to gain experience before her exam—she can conduct her guiding in Smith almost without limit. The SOP is not meant to be limiting—it's meant to empower guides. We want aspiring guides to feel comfortable and confident as they're moving through the program: SOP is there to help you. If you look at it closely, it's a fairly liberal document. The limitations aren't that dramatic.

GUIDE Bulletin: The new strategic plan is made up of five pillars. Why is certification important enough to be one of them?



KEEPING A GUIDE'S NOTEBOOK IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF PREPPING FOR THE FIELD AND REFLECTING ON THE DAY. PHOTO BY JORDAN MYNATT

GB: What are some common misconceptions about certification?

GU: The biggest misconception is the idea that when you get certified, you're done learning and growing as a guide. The thing about certification is that it's a very precise, limited set of experiences—it needs to be paired with a guide's own personal background and experience in the field, plus continuing professional development like further avalanche education, weather courses, and seeking mentorship and supervision. In other words, the big takeaway is that you're really never done learning as a guide. Certification may be the backbone, but it's also a piece of the puzzle.

Another one (and this is closely related to SOP) is the idea that when you're on the certification track, you're expected to be out on-site guiding all the time. The better client experience comes from your experience in the program and your certification, and also your familiarity with the route and the local terrain you'll be guiding. It's a matter of bandwidth. If you've met the standards for a certification, that means you have the base level of technical skill. The best way to increase your bandwidth is to gain experience in your home terrain. Then you get to know the geology, the history, the current conditions of the route you're guiding. We're not just there to put the rope up for guests—we're there to help them have the best possible experience.

THE SOP IS NOT MEANT TO BE LIMITING—IT'S MEANT TO EMPOWER GUIDES.

GB: What will certifications at AMGA look like in 10 years?

GU: The future of this program is that eventually more guides will be certified than not. That means certification will become the baseline for the industry. The more professional, certified guides we have, the better visibility and consistency we'll have throughout the profession.

In my local guiding community, there are other guides just finishing their American Mountain Guide/IFMGA process. Whether or not they work for the same company I do, I want to be supportive of them—we're all better off the more certified guides there are in the community. I have greater trust that these guides will provide a consistent product and excellent experience for my guests.



ALPINE GUIDE COURSE STUDENTS PUTTING THEIR SKILLS TO USE IN ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK. PHOTO BY MIKE POBORSKY



ADVOCACY

UNLESS SOMEONE SPEAKS OUT: THE FUTURE OF AMGA ADVOCACY

By Matt Wade

PLACE MY BACKPACK ON THE CONVEYOR BELT AS I move through security and enter the building. Once on the other side, I straighten my suit and double-check my kit to make sure everything is in order: water and snacks, notebook with objectives and a plan, and a handout to solidify my points. I will be using my guiding skills today—educating, leading, and solving problems—but with different tools and in a different environment. In am in Washington, D.C., on behalf of the members of the AMGA, and I'm here to build a brighter future for the guiding industry.

In the history of guiding, there has been one challenge that has underpinned all others: access. Guides have shifted their work schedules and lives around access. Can't guide in your backyard? Go somewhere else—another state, country, or continent—to pursue your livelihood. Struggling to start your guiding business? Chances are, access is holding back your aspirations. Trying to expand your company's offerings or fulfill a client request, but the land agency can't issue the permit? Same old story: Come back in a few years.

It's time to fix these problems, and the AMGA is instituting a targeted advocacy strategy to do it. As a central pillar in the new AMGA strategic plan, advocacy efforts are positioned to have a significant positive impact on the guiding landscape. In the coming years, the AMGA advocacy arm will be taking decisive action to increase guiding opportunities and enhance the livelihoods of AMGA instructors and guides.

At the forefront of advocacy-program objectives is a complete overhaul of the permitting systems of federal land agencies. To accomplish such a significant and important task, the AMGA is partnering with stakeholders across the outdoor industry to pass legislation in Congress, called the Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation Act (SOAR Act), that will reform the permitting process and make permits easier for guides to obtain. This work holds great promise for the guiding industry to realize deep, fundamental changes in access across the country.

Looking forward, the AMGA Advocacy and Policy Program also will continue to support instructors and guides with specific access issues at the local level. Unfortunately, many sought-after destinations remain mired in unnecessary limitations on guiding or are threatened by proposals to reduce guiding. To ensure local guiding opportunities are protected and expanded, AMGA will continue to collaborate with local guides to organize a strong, collective voice when advocating with land managers. This includes coordinating group comments on land-management proposals and organizing meetings with key decision-makers such as district rangers, forest supervisors, and park superintendents. Areas of focus over the next five years include Yosemite National Park, Denali National Park, Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park, and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

LOCAL ADVOCACY AT SEQUOIA-KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARK (SEKI)

In 2015, Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park (SEKI) adopted a new Wilderness stewardship plan that placed new limits on commercial activities in Wilderness. The AMGA Advocacy Program reached out to guides and guide services affected by the changes to clarify the issues, identify solutions, and develop a strategy to advocate for improvements. Under the leadership of the AMGA, nine local guide services came to a consensus on a set of recommendations. The group provided these recommendations to park officials by submitting two formal comment letters, arranging two meetings with the superintendent, and attending a public listening session with concessions staff. The group also ran an opinion piece in the *Fresno Bee*. As a result of this advocacy, SEKI has made numerous changes to the commercial-use program that significantly improve operating conditions and increase opportunities for guides.

As recreational use of public lands grows, it is increasingly important for guides to be viewed by land managers and the public as advocates for the preservation of recreation landscapes and as stewards of the environment. Advocacy work in this area will include coordinating with land managers to organize guide-specific stewardship events across the country. AMGA will also be supporting agency initiatives that create opportunities for permit holders to offset permit fees with stewardship work. Engaging in these activities will build positive rapport with land managers while simultaneously preserving the places that guides depend upon.

After clearing security and getting our bags, Jason Keith, AMGA Senior Policy Advisor, and I are ushered into a spacious conference room where the meeting would be held. We sit down with three high-level forest service officials, exchange business cards, and get straight to work. We discuss recent stewardship projects, the status of permitting legislation, and the recently signed AMGA-USFS Memorandum of Understanding. Everyone is collegial, and things are going well. I sense an opportunity to take the conversation further, so I take it.

"I have one quick question to ask if we have time," I said. My query was met with nods of approval, so I proceeded. "Are you aware of the forest-wide guidance on the Shoshone National Forest that is preventing permits from being issued on a regular basis?" Puzzled looks and questions opened the door for me to share more information.

I described the situation, sharing guides' stories and articulating the difficulties they are facing on the Shoshone. I explained that guides are being issued permits only every other year, making it difficult to serve repeat customers and grow their businesses. When guides put in requests for additional service days, they are routinely declined. And to top it off, I pointed out that the every-other-year policy is plainly at odds with national directives that authorize permits to be issued every 180 days. As the circumstances became better understood, a high-ranking attendee interjected and said, "This sounds like something we should look into. Thanks for bringing it to our attention. We'll follow up with the regional staff and get back to you."

Three weeks later, I received several emails, within hours of one another, from local guide services who had just been informed by the Shoshone National Forest that their permit applications and service-day requests had been approved. They were elated. I also received a call from a colleague at the Forest Service, checking to see if I had heard the news. I explained I had, and I thanked him. He quickly reciprocated thanks, expressing his gratitude for helping him to identify an opportunity to better align local and national policies.

He admitted his agency is big and slow moving, and he explained that issues can go undetected unless someone speaks out. His last words hung in the air and resonated with me: *Unless someone speaks out*. As the AMGA Advocacy and Policy Program looks to the future, above all else, this is exactly what we're going to do.



DOUG WORKMAN (AMGA ASSISTANT SKI GUIDE, APPRENTICE ALPINE GUIDE) LEADING PHILIP JONES AND LISA VAN SCIVER (BOTH AMGA ROCK GUIDES, APPRENTICE ALPINE AND APPRENTICE SKI GUIDES) NEAR THE SUMMIT OF THE MIDDLE TETON. PHOTO BY MIKE POBORSKY.



MEMBERSHIP

THE LONG HAUL: LIFELONG GUIDING CAREERS

By Sarah Carpenter

HOW DOES ONE BUILD A SUSTAINABLE guiding career? It's a question I've asked myself for years.

I love moving through wild places and unlocking these wild places for others. And I've had seven knee surgeries and one ankle surgery. This question of sustainability is personal.

MEMBERSHIP MEANS OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW

The focus of the membership pillar is two-fold. First, to build and **expand membership**💡(1) among guides, instructors, aspiring guides and instructors, and supporters. Second, to build and expand member support and **resources**💡(2), **inclusivity**💡(3), and **ethics and professionalism**💡(4).

Striving for mastery in the art of guiding and moving through the certification process are building blocks for a sustainable career. Other building blocks include a network of personal and professional support, a connection to future

employers and co-workers, and an environment where **learning continues throughout your career**💡(5). This network and place of learning continue to grow and expand at the AMGA. Personally, I have found tremendous value in the clinics offered at the AMGA annual meetings, along with the informal social time during which I can connect with members from across the country.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO KEEP GUIDING FOR DECADES?

"Without passion, you don't have a long career." This is one comment that stuck with me from my conversation with Nat Patridge, owner of Exum Mountain Guides, about building a sustainable guiding career.

I agree with Nat, that one has to be passionate. One also has to be fit and injury free. Guiding full-time puts wear and tear on your body. For me, when I was 4 to 5 knee surgeries and one ankle surgery in to my life in the outdoors, I had to face the fact that a full-time career working outside was not sustainable for me. I needed to adjust my thinking about sustainability in the outdoor industry. For me, owning and running the American Avalanche Institute and guiding part-time in the winter have provided a continued connection to the guiding industry, as well as a less painful existence.

I HAD BIG DAYS IN THE MOUNTAINS WITH FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES TALKING ABOUT THE ART OF GUIDING.

“A sustainable guiding career involves **diversity in terrain** (6), season, and clientele,” adds Dale Remsberg. “For me, this means guiding rock, alpine, ice, and ski terrain, because my goal is to have clients I can train into all the terrain types and then set goals around the world for them. I have about 15 long-term return people, and we are always planning the next adventure.”

As guides and instructors, we are the AMGA. We have chosen a life in the mountains and at the crags. AMGA membership is an opportunity to understand and meet industry standards. It’s a chance to refine a skill set in the mountains. It is also an opportunity to network and build community. As an AMGA member, one gains a network of peers and mentors—people who can help you train for courses and exams, connect you with work opportunities, and act as sounding boards for career ambitions and dreams.

MENTORSHIP IS CRUCIAL

The **formal and informal mentorship** (7) processes that take place on AMGA courses, as well as during the time spent training for courses and exams, are essential. “I gave myself time between courses and exams to practice and develop my guiding skills,” says Nina Hance. “Mentorship, apprenticeships, guiding experience, and personal time in the mountains were key to successful courses and exams. I was fortunate to have a mentor to work closely with for course and exam prep, from setting skin tracks, to crevasse rescue, to exam stress tactics.”

I asked Christian Santelices (American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide) the same question. His advice was, “Enjoy it! I’ve found that if folks are having a good time, it generally means the stress level is low. Come open to feedback and with a growth mindset. As an instructor and someone who has been guiding for almost thirty years, I think it’s extremely important to stay open to learning throughout your career.”

As I moved through the ski guide track, I found opportunities to learn from my peers and share what I knew. I spent days studying technical systems with friends who understand rope management far better than I do. I set up rescue scenarios for my exam partners after a day of touring in Alaska and talked through the latest transceiver technology and rescue strategies. I had big days in the mountains with friends and colleagues talking about the art of guiding, the beauty of a well-set skin track, and the magic of sharing wild places with others. I found tremendous value

1

Our membership is growing. At press time, we have around 4,500 members. This is a significant increase from 3,378 in 2016.

2

The American Mountain Guides Association is committed to building and supporting a diverse community of guides and instructors. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are integral to the future success of our mission, vision, and profession. The AMGA has a variety of DEI initiatives taking place including a thriving DEI committee, affinity programs for underrepresented groups, training for staff and providers, and much more. Check out our website for more info: amga.com/diversity-equity-inclusion

3

Inclusivity is hugely important to the AMGA—see page 36, where an AMGA staff member and board member from the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee have laid the groundwork for making your guiding practice more inclusive

4

This fall, we have launched our Speak Up resource for members. AMGA members can now report any code of ethics violations to our hotline by phone or webform. All reports will undergo intake by a 3rd party human resources firm working with the AMGA to effectively address concerns and complaints.

5

The AMGA is committed to helping guides further their professional development, whether it’s through continuing education, technical clinics at regional events and annual meeting, mentorship with other AMGA guides, or learning through our Tech videos. We’re also planning on an online learning management system to make it easier than ever to learn in your precious free time. Stay tuned for more info!

6

The ability to guide all sorts of terrain all over the country is predicated on our ability to access that terrain. That’s why one of AMGA’s membership benefits is to provide resources and educational initiatives on permitting: We want to make sure you know how to navigate those systems and have the tools to advocate for your interests so the places you depend on to guide remain accessible.

7

We know it’s key to have a mentor you can trust not only as you move through your courses and exams, but also once you’re a certified guide. That’s a huge motivation behind our regional events, online forum, and other networking opportunities.

in having my skills evaluated and critiqued by others. And I found incredible friendships and learning opportunities on the path through the courses and exam.

BALANCE AND DIVERSIFY

“When you’re looking at a career in guiding, you’re relying on your body to make money, and **you’re not looking at massive paychecks**💡(8). You don’t often have the benefits that come with mainstream employment, such as a retirement account or **health benefits**💡(9),” says Don Carpenter (AMGA Ski Guide), American Avalanche Institute owner and my husband. “Start setting aside money for an emergency fund and long-term savings—that can help set you up and create a path to a sustainable career.”

Working for an established business can help. Patridge explains that Exum fits into a sustainable guiding career. “It’s our hope at Exum to provide a couple months of reliable work at a fair wage,” he says. “Guides can come together to collaborate and replenish their client base. We want to work in concert with someone’s year-long career—introduce them to clients that they can take elsewhere for the rest of their work.”

“For me, balance is important. I found a way to mix guiding with other work. This balance keeps me refreshed, healthy, and enthusiastic,” says Hance.

As for me, I have found balance and sustainability in part-time guiding, in addition to running the American Avalanche

8💡 We want to support guides in making a living and we make sure you get the the best gear on the market. One major benefit to AMGA membership is access to pro-deals, which means you get deep discounts on cutting-edge equipment and apparel. Learn more at amga.com/pro-purchase-program

9💡 Our membership department is rolling out Life, Disability and Accident Insurance group rate benefits available exclusively to AMGA members. Head to amga.com/insurance-amga-members for more details.

Institute. I have a joy and excitement that I didn’t always have when working full-time in the mountains on less-than-perfect knees. My favorite guiding work right now is my ski group that goes out once a week all winter long. I have the opportunity to show a group of Jackson locals a few of my favorite spots. This encourages some creativity and curiosity in route planning, as well as information sharing with my peers and mentors in the Teton guiding community. I have the opportunity to truly get to know this group of people and have meaningful conversations each week. And I get to continue my guiding career, seven knee surgeries later. «

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Geoff Unger - Mammoth Lakes, California
Geoff Unger (American Mountain Guide/IFMGA) is the Vice President of the AMGA Board of Directors. He is also the Operations Manager for the Certified Guides Cooperative, which has supported

credential-based guiding in the United States since 2005. In his spare time, Geoff enjoys flying his paraglider and riding his mountain bike along the Eastern Sierra.



Dale Remsberg - Lafayette, Colorado
Dale Remsberg (American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide) is the AMGA Technical Director. He also works with guests to help them achieve their dream climbs. Areas like

Red Rock in Nevada and thin ice drips in Canada’s Ghost River are his specialty. Whatever his endeavor, Dale’s quiet determination and love of the mountains mean there’s generally a smile on his face.



Matt Wade - Louisville, Colorado
Matt Wade is the Advocacy and Policy Director at the AMGA. His role involves monitoring and acting on national policy developments, collaborating with land-management agencies, and assisting guides

and guide services with local and regional access issues. Matt is also an AMGA Rock and Alpine Guide.



Sarah Carpenter - Victor, Idaho
Sarah Carpenter (AMGA Ski Guide) has spent most of her life on skis. She is the co-owner of the American Avalanche Institute, and teaches avalanche courses and ski guides throughout the west. She

loves skiing with clients, and wears a grin from ear to ear as she shares the outdoors with others. Sarah started her snow science career as a ski patroller at Bridger Bowl in 1998. Sarah is an AMGA Board Member.

PHOTOS BY: [TOP TO BOTTOM] EMILY MORGAN, HEIDI WIRTZ, COURTESY OF MATT WADE, CHRISTIAN SANTELICES



THE BARE NECESSITIES

Items every guide should have in their first-aid kit

By Alan Oram

I'M OFTEN ASKED WHAT I CARRY IN MY FIRST-AID kit. When I build my kit, I put some thought into the contents: What's necessary *and* realistic to carry while guiding?

Commercial first-aid kits are fine for most incidents; it's the specific problems that we run into in mountain settings that we need to prepare for. What follows is not an exact recipe, but a basis for building your own kit with some fundamental tools we all should be carrying.

Consider where you'll be, how long you'll be out, the geography and season, as well as the number of folks whom you might have to assist. Obviously, you cannot carry everything, and I don't advocate for this. Rather, I build a small foundational kit and then add or subtract items based on where I'll be and what I'm doing.

In addition to the basics in this checklist, there are three medical problems common to mountain environments that require immediate response to save someone's life. What you carry in your first-aid kit (and in your brain) is critical to addressing these problems. (See checklist on page 33.)

What I have listed here and on the following pages

is bare bones. For longer and more remote trips, I carry additional supplies as well as more advanced items in keeping with my level of medical training and certification. An important note here is that dispensing prescription medications to a client is not legal—period. In other words, I'd lose my medical license if I prescribed medications to a guide knowing that they planned to administer that prescription to a client in the field. I don't recommend that guides dispense prescription medications to clients unless it's truly life saving and emergent. Basecamp kits should be specific for the geography and location as well as the duration of the trip.

In the end, knowledge and assistance are critical. Communication technologies such as InReach satellite devices are becoming standard of operations and may be the one item that saves the day. Having the proper mindset and training is also essential. What you carry is often just as important as how much you know, and how resourceful you can be in the field. Keep your knowledge and certifications current, and act within the scope of your training.



Weight matters.

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*Pronounced "soorry" in Canada.

TIP: Commercial super glue can be used in a pinch. I have even seen guides successfully use Crazy Glue to temporarily reapply detached dental crowns.

If you carry a small vial of betadine, dilute at least 10:1.



TIP: This is cheapest at a vet supply or home and ranch store. It sticks to itself when wrapped; make a tab on the end so it's easy to pull off.



Current CPR recommendations suggest compression-only CPR, but there are instances when providing rescue breaths is critical to survival, such as after an avalanche burial. In this case, you need equipment that's easy to use, helps provide a good seal around the mouth, and protects you from blood and secretions.

TIP: Foam sleeping pads and pack contents, like aluminum pack stays or parts of ski poles, might be a better choice.



TIP: Also functions as gauze for large wounds.



THE BASICS

This is what I carry in my kit for day-to-day use for day trips and short overnights. This kit will help you handle cuts, bruises, strains, blisters, nausea and vomiting, cold-weather injuries such as frostbite and hypothermia, as well as altitude illness or heat illness.

WOUND CARE

- ☐ Dressings
 - ☐ (2) gauze pads, 2" x 2" or 4" x 4"
 - ☐ (1) roll non-adherent dressing
 - ☐ (1) large gauze pad (also called trauma pad)
- ☐ (1) roll Kling or Kerlix wrap, 2" or 3"
- ☐ (1) package Steri-strips, 1/4" (you can also use tape configured in butterfly formation)
- ☐ (1) roll Coban wrap, 1"
- ☐ (1) package Quik Clot (or equivalent) for control of bleeding

BLISTER CARE

- ☐ (1) roll white athletic tape, 1" or 2" (same type you'd use to tape hands for climbing)
- ☐ (2) Moleskin or commercial-type blister pads
- ☐ (1) bottle Betadine (can substitute cleaning swab x2)

SPLINT MATERIAL

Be creative and think this one through. If the contents of your pack have materials that will work, plan to use them, and leave the SAM splint behind.

- ☐ A SAM splint has limited use, but a short one can be handy for stabilizing fractures, especially for winter guiding, when sprained or broken wrists are common.
- ☐ Ski straps and your normal kit should be adequate for temporary splinting

OTHER

- ☐ (1) small survival blanket
- ☐ (2) pairs latex gloves
- ☐ (1) bottle tissue adhesive such as Dermabond (medical-grade Crazy Glue)

PHOTO BY MICHAEL ALLEN

Significant bleeding from an open wound (for example, after a fall or crush injury) can result in rapid death if the bleeding is coming from a large blood vessel. Commercial tourniquet devices are the standard of care in severe bleeding. Apply rapidly and appropriately to prevent excessive blood loss. The likelihood that you'll use it is low, but if you don't have it, you will be ill-prepared to save your client's life.



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EQUIPPED: INCLUSIVE GUIDING AND INSTRUCTING

What is DEI, and why does it matter for your guiding practice?

By Monserrat Alvarez
and Lyra Pierotti



AN INCLUSIVE SPACE MAKES FOR AN IDEAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT. PHOTO BY KAREN HILTON

The first time I heard the word “beaner,” I was eight years old. My mom had just driven us across the country in search of better opportunities in North Carolina. I started third grade halfway through the year; I was one of just two Mexican kids in our class. Never before had I experienced the sense of othering I did when I moved to North Carolina. My friend and I would often sneak Mexican candies under our desks and whisper in Spanish, trying not to draw attention. She had just arrived from Mexico and did not fully understand English, so I was her personal translator—like I was everyone’s personal translator in my family. That’s the responsibility of every first-generation English learner.

During the last week of school, we were speaking in Spanish when a classmate turned around and snapped at us: “Go back to your country, you dirty beaners,” he told us.

Years later, in 2013, I was introduced to rock climbing. I remember the first time I belayed someone, the first time I took a fall, my first trad lead... And the first time I heard someone use the word “biner.” I heard it in passing when we were reviewing a gear list for a day of climbing with students.

I was taken aback and convinced myself that I was hearing things. Then I heard it again. And again. And again. I quickly realized that it was a common colloquialism—a shortening of “carabiner”—in the climbing world. And although these climbers weren’t saying “beaner,” like my third-grade classmate, my inner eight-year-old was taken back to that moment every time.

My wish is that people will understand how much words matter and the impact they have on someone’s learning and ability to stay present.

—Monserrat Alvarez, Membership and Inclusion Coordinator

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI) WORK has become prevalent in the outdoor industry recently. The authors want to acknowledge the movers and shakers in our industry who laid the foundation for these conversations over the past decade. We believe the AMGA is ready to have these internal dialogues and use our industry’s momentum to shape the future of guiding and instructing in the United States. So what is DEI, exactly?

There is no single answer for why this work is important. There are many approaches and schools of thought to the work. At the core of it all, we are guides and instructors who serve a diverse population with diverse needs and interests. Our organization has made a commitment to figuring out how best to make our profession and services more equitable, inclusive, and diverse. And that means that we are committing to a lifelong journey: an adventure that is non-linear, collective, individual, never ending—and always worth it.

WHAT IS DEI?

- › **Diversity:** Not simply the act of being diverse, but the desire to incorporate diverse perspectives and ideas. It means de-centering the norm in our organizations or spaces.
- › **Equity:** Providing the resources according to the individuals’ needs. Instead of thinking about equality, where everyone gets the same things, we consider that individuals start in different places and thus have different needs.
- › **Inclusion:** Not only bringing diverse perspectives and ideas to the table, but taking the extra step to include them at the foundation of your work.

HOW CAN BUSINESS OWNERS MAKE THEIR OUTFITS MORE INCLUSIVE?

Incorporate DEI training as part of your staff training.

Normalizing conversations about DEI helps create a work culture in which people feel safe asking questions and learning together. You can bring in outside facilitators to help with these conversations and provide resources for continued learning. This also takes the burden of the teaching role off any particular individual within your organization. Consider videos or webinars, reading materials, and in-person trainings.

Develop genuine relationships with community organizations that work to engage diverse communities.

Many national and local organizations are doing this work, including Outdoor Afro, Latino Outdoors, Brown Girls Climb, Flash Foxy, and Unlikely Hikers. Developing authentic, reciprocal relationships that seek to avoid tokenizing people is key. Consider offering discounted group rates for outings, recruiting volunteers for events, including volunteers on SPI assessment days, and collaborating on events. You also could host networking potlucks where prospective guides and instructors from local organizations can connect with you and your staff.

Recruit, train, and invest in diversifying your guides and instructors.

Working to engage people of various backgrounds and experiences within your instructor and guide pool enhances your service and broadens your audience. Perhaps create a scholarship for an AMGA program or collaborate on a skills day with community organizations. To ensure enjoyment and retention of guides from underrepresented groups, you can do a lot by listening intently. Listen to their experiences, suggestions, and feedback—and take action to support them.

Encourage and incentivize mentorship. Invest in aspiring guides and instructors by providing financial support for professional development. Incentivize your guides to organize mentorship days. Encourage dialogue among guides that goes beyond technical-skills practice. Some guides appreciate affinity-based (e.g., women-only) guide trainings, which can be a valuable opportunity to network, model, and experiment with guiding styles, discuss how some strategies may be different for women in the field—and provide a safe space to discuss issues. Of course, just because guides share a common social identity does not mean they want to work exclusively with each other or will automatically work well with each other. Be sure to ask your underrepresented staff how you can best support them.

Acknowledge and actively work to address your organizational bias (conscious and unconscious). We all carry personal biases based on stereotypes and lived experiences that inform the way we operate our organizations—it's what we do to address them that matters. One observation from the business sector that has gotten some attention recently is that women are

Encourage dialogue among guides that goes beyond technical skills practice.



BRIE CHARTIER AND SZU-TING YI (AMGA ROCK GUIDE, SPI ASSISTANT PROVIDER) ON THE NOVEMBER 2019 WOMEN'S SPI.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRIE CHARTIER

often promoted based on past experience, whereas men are promoted based on potential. The AMGA's Scope of Practice is a useful road map for assigning objectives to staff according to certification and training levels. It can be easy to staff guides who are more outwardly confident and willing to take risks on more difficult objectives—even those that might be outside their ability level. Other guides prefer to preview an objective several times with a lead guide or mentor before leading it themselves. Attention here will help managers encourage guides who may need a gentle push, and promote professionalism and improved risk management among those more willing to push limits beyond their current skills.

Be intentional about your staffing choices. Playing into our personal biases, we can make staffing decisions based on convenience or lack of awareness. It can be easy to pigeonhole a guide to work only with a certain demographic or to discourage reporting inappropriate behavior. Guides that hold underrepresented identities often don't get to work with each other—they may be separated to “diversify” instructor teams. Prioritize what your guides and instructors need for their professional and personal development. Don't assume—ask them what would be helpful to further their professional development.

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For the first decade of my guiding career, I didn't see some of the ways men behaved inappropriately toward me. When one of my guide managers started staffing me with other women guides, I saw clients behaving toward my colleagues in ways that stunned me. With an external view, I could hear the way that some clients would change tone when talking to a woman guide. Sometimes clients questioned them more critically, teased them, and cracked awkward jokes. At times, clients would even invoke insulting or sexist stereotypes. And I could see my colleague's body language change and hear her canned laughter or verbal deflection. Then I realized that I was sometimes treated the same way. I had learned to ignore it and move on.

Trying to wrap my head around how to say something about it was even more daunting. The impacts that felt and sounded so clear to me are so easily deflected by the simple comment: "But that wasn't my intent."

Further complicating things in my mind is the awareness that I operate in a service industry: We're supposed to serve our clients! Speaking up could reflect poorly upon me—maybe even affect my future work prospects. But sweeping things under the rug is not a sustainable option. The intention may have been benign, but the impact was belittling and insulting, time after time. Like a thousand paper cuts, these words add up to be much more than one offhand comment.

The clarity I gained from this outside view was enough to push me to figure out a way to draw a hard line of the respect my female colleagues and I expected—while framing it with as much kindness as possible. Setting clear, firm boundaries is the best response.

On one instructional mountaineering course I worked with another woman on Alaska's Pika Glacier, a male client had come strictly to check the "Denali Prep" box. He immediately launched into questions about what the weather would be like when he summited Denali. He had little outdoor experience and was not interested in our instructional modules, such as navigation—and he didn't have the requisite skills. He regularly commented that he thought the climbing would be more challenging, though we explained the limitations given the current active avalanche cycle.

There's no way to prove that his behavior was rooted in a gendered brand of disrespect. But it seemed exaggerated, and stood out to both of us. It felt like he was trying to undermine our expertise and strength.

We also noticed that the group had stopped having conversations. It didn't seem like anyone was having fun. I stopped the whole group at the base of our climb and spoke about expedition behavior and teamwork. I explained the importance of showing respect for the mountains and your partners by arriving prepared, appropriately skilled, and well conditioned. The rest of the clients nodded, and raised their eyes from their downcast gazes.

As we launched into our climb for the day, conversations—and smiles—returned. That evening, an older gentleman on the course approached me individually and thanked me for my leadership.

—Lyra Pierotti, AMGA Rock Guide, Apprentice
Alpine Guide, and Assistant SPI Provider

HOW CAN INDIVIDUAL GUIDES AND INSTRUCTORS PRACTICE DEI, WHEN THEY ARE OUT WITH GUESTS AND BEHIND THE SCENES?

Commit to your own learning. There are countless resources, tools, and organizations holding conversations on DEI. Commit to your own education and remember that it's an ongoing process, not just a few tasks to be checked off your ticklist. As guides and instructors, we know it's more about what we learn in the process of accumulating experience that really makes us shine on a course or exam. DEI work is similar. Great intro resources include the books *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo, *Men Explain Things to Me* by Rebecca Solnit, or any work by author bell hooks, including *The Will to Change: Men Masculinity, and Love* and *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Or Google the reading list "10 Books About Race To Read Instead Of Asking A Person Of Color To Explain Things To You," or look up the "Gender Unicorn" and "Genderbread Person."



JAPHY DHUNGANA (AMGA ROCK GUIDE, ASSISTANT ALPINE GUIDE, SPI ASSISTANT PROVIDER) ON AN AMGA IIC.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JAPHY DHUNGANA

Listen with intention. This is more than simply listening when someone offers advice or feedback. Listening with intention means taking the time to approach a conversation with an open heart. Remove your own needs and emotions from the matter, and just take time to *listen*. Making the conscious decision to take other perspectives into account is a step toward learning how our words and actions can impact those around us. Missteps and mistakes will happen; keep trying anyway. In short: Know your *intent*, own your *impact*. Check out the book *Thanks for the Feedback* by Sheila Heen and Douglas Stone for strategies to help you listen intentionally next time you debrief a course.

Learn from your mistakes. People often don't know where to start with DEI because they are scared to mess up or say the wrong thing. While that's understandable, experimentation is a necessary part of growth. You're a strong athlete; you're already skilled at managing discomfort. Moments of awkwardness, anger, frustration, and pain are inherent in this work. We don't become better guides and instructors by shying away from challenging objectives for fear of falling, the possibility of failure, or the likelihood we will make a mistake. For example, integrating pronouns (e.g., "I'm Lyra, and my pronouns are she/hers") into introductions takes practice. Check out Devon Price's article "The When (& How) to Ask About Pronouns" for more.

Unlearn harmful language. "Man up," "biner," "You're pretty good for a girl," "Hey, you guys"—these are expressions or words that can negatively impact people, just like you read in Monserrat's story above. Along with listening to why these words are harmful, let's change our language—and teach others around us. If you're not sure *why* these words are harmful, do some research. If you're not sure how to talk about it with others, initiate conversations with others around you who are also working on it. Exploring this topic in the comfortable company of close friends and colleagues allows you to be vulnerable as you sort through your own questions

around why it matters, and what these things mean to others. I suggest Monserrat's article "But we've always said 'biner'! Exclusionary words in outdoor recreation and education."

Establish collective group norms with clients. Start with your own example: "I expect everyone to let me know how they are feeling as we ascend to higher altitude." Then ask clients to contribute to the list. Ask your group to share their expectations for their teammates; be sure to share your expectations for them, too. Ask your group to share their expectations for the guide team. Encourage them to be very honest. Thank them for their thoughts. Write expectations down so you can refer to them later.

Uplift movers and shakers in the industry who are not white men. We all have our default heroes (and she-ros) in the industry, and let's be honest—most of the folks who get the spotlight are white men. Spend some time learning about movers and shakers in our industry who can better represent the diversity that we wish to build. «

FIVE THINGS EVERY GUIDE AND INSTRUCTOR CAN DO TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE:

- › Be aware of your stereotypes and biases when interacting with co-guides, clients, and the general public—and work to address them. (Unlearning biases and prejudices takes time and practice.)
- › Check in with your colleagues on how best to support each other. Easy and open dialogue helps address and diffuse issues that arise due to inherent power dynamics within your guide/instructor team. Discuss how differences in gender, age, experience, or level of training may affect your team.
- › Incorporate pronouns into introductions with clients and co-guides. Be aware of considerations to have when incorporating pronouns.
- › Learn about the land you are guiding on and do a land acknowledgement when welcoming clients into the space. See <https://native-land.ca/territory-acknowledgement/> for a starting point on how to do this and why it's important.
- › Discuss the social and professional expectations of both you and your group before the outing by establishing group norms (and writing it down somewhere), which lines out:
 - Client/student expectations for each other, and
 - Client/student expectations for the guides/instructors

ADRIAN BALLINGER SUMMITS K2 SANS OXYGEN

Adrian Ballinger (American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide) recently became the fourth American—following in the footsteps of Ed Viesturs, Steve Swenson, and Scott Fischer—to summit both Mount Everest and K2 without supplemental oxygen. Ballinger also summited Everest earlier this season.

The vast majority of teams who attempted to climb K2 this year were turned back by snow deeper than the peak had seen in decades—above 7,800 meters, the snow was chest-deep.

Ballinger, founder of Alpenglow Expeditions, waited for a weather window. His and partner Carla Perez's patience paid off when a late-season wind event cleared a great deal of the high-altitude snow, and celebrated Himalayan climber Nirmal "Nims" Purja (a Nepalese mountaineer who climbed all 14 of the world's 8,000-meter peaks in six months and six days opened the route for the season using supplemental oxygen. Ballinger and Perez reached the summit on July 24.

WMS UPDATES ALTITUDE ILLNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

The Wilderness Medical Society (WMS) recently updated its guidelines on preventing and treating acute altitude illness. (The organization first published its guidelines in 1987, and has done five updates since then.)

Conventional wisdom holds that the best way to prevent altitude sickness is to ascend gradually. At 10,000 feet and above, WMS guidelines recommend increasing one's sleeping elevation by no more than 1,500 feet per day. They also suggest scheduling an extra day to acclimatize every three to four days—a departure from other organizations' more conservative guidelines.

In 2019, WMS' recommendation for preventative medicine for acute mountain sickness (AMS) and high-altitude cerebral edema (HACE) is acetazolamide (Diamox), which they suggest starting at 125mg every 12 hours the day before beginning to ascend and continuing to take until two days after you start descending. (Dexamethasone is the recommended substitute for those allergic to acetazolamide.)

Supplemental oxygen and hyperbaric chambers are reasonable countermeasures for HACE and high-altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE). Dexamethasone is recommended for HACE treatment; nifedipine is recommended for HAPE treatment. The 2019 guidelines also explore a handful of other possible treatments, including chewing coca leaves, ginkgo biloba, and Viagra to treat HAPE; the evidence in those cases either doesn't exist or is conflicting, so none are recommended. Instead, as usual, the primary recommendation for treating altitude illness is descent.

CMS INSTALLS NIFTY NEW VENDING MACHINE

Colorado Mountain School (CMS) has been in the business long enough to know precisely which items its guests are most likely to forget. There are only so many reminders one can send, so

CMS has come up with a genius solution—a vending machine for those frequently-forgotten sundries.

"Our customers appreciate the convenience of purchasing last-minute items for their adventures at any hour of the day," says CMS Sales Manager Troy Kellenberger. CMS guides, too, are thrilled with the new development. When guests show up without enough food, Kellenberger says, "guides can now have their customers buy energy bars from the vending machine, hassle-free."



THE NEW COLORADO MOUNTAIN SCHOOL VENDING MACHINE STOCKS SUNDRIES AND BRANDED APPAREL. PHOTO COURTESY OF CMS.

Items currently stocked in the machine include WAG bags, snacks, freeze-dried meals, toiletries like sunscreen and Dr. Bronner's, batteries, hand warmers, chalk blocks, and CMS branded gear. "We plan to learn what items sell best in our vending machine and make adjustments as needed," Kellenberger adds. The vending machine accepts both cash and credit cards.

TEN-YEAR-OLD SELAH SCHNEITER CLIMBS THE NOSE

Many guides take their own kiddos climbing. Mike Schneiter (AMGA Rock Guide, Apprentice Alpine Guide, SPI Assistant Provider) is taking it to new heights—he and his 10-year-old, Selah, summited El Capitan via the *Nose* in June, making daughter Selah the youngest person to climb the route. *Alpinist* describes Selah's outing as "a casual five-day ascent with her dad, Mike Schneiter, and their close family friend Mark Regier." Yes, casual!

The record is certainly impressive, but it wasn't part of either Schneiter's motivation for doing the climb together. Selah led *Pine Line*, the 5.7 variation to the route's original start, as well as the bolt ladder from Texas Flake to Boot Flake and the last (fourth-class) pitch. Her dad also estimates that she cleaned 80% of the route.

The Glenwood Springs, Colorado-based pair also FaceTimed Selah's mom, Joy, a handful of times. Upon finishing the route, Selah declared that she had been dreaming of getting a pizza. «



PHOTO COURTESY OF JON OTTO

XING LIU

By *GUIDE Bulletin Staff*

PHOTOS OF XING LIU SHOW A MAN AT EASE IN the mountains—leaning on his ice ax as he leads a team of climbers up a slope littered with crevasses;

smiling as he carries a laden climbing pack, craggy peaks in the backdrop and his arm around a fuzzy pack donkey.

It's not hard, given those images, to picture Xing on the upper reaches of Riwuqie Feng (also known as Mount Grosvenor), a 20,918-foot peak in Western China's Sichuan Province.

"The place offers serious potential for alpine-style new routes on little-known and highly committing peaks," wrote Bruce Normand of the remote Minya Konka range in the 2011 *American Alpine Journal*. Riwuqie Feng is no exception. Its first ascent was in 2003, and it didn't see another until 2010, when Normand and Kyle Dempster put up a new route on its northwest face.

In the fall of 2018, Xing, an AMGA SPI, and his partner were near the top of the 2010 route, a central couloir that had stopped at least two other attempts.

"We don't know exactly what happened," says Jon Otto (AMGA SPI), Xing's friend and longtime Sichuan climber. He explains that Xing collapsed near the summit, recovered briefly, and collapsed a second time and died on the rappel.

"We buried [him] on the glacier on the backside of the mountain," Otto says. "It was a big shock for all of us." «

INSIDE AMGA > WINTER 2019-2020

AMGA NOW OFFERS MOUNTAIN GUIDE PROGRAMS FOR VETERANS

In 2018, the AMGA combined forces with the American Alpine Institute (AAI), an AMGA Accredited Business and an approved provider of educational programs in the Veterans Affairs system. Through this partnership, the AMGA is able to offer entry-level guide programs for veterans who wish to use their VA benefits to pay program tuition costs.

Last year, we offered a pilot Alpine Guide Course for veterans, and in 2019, we expanded to offer an Alpine Skills Course, Alpine Guide Course, and a Rock Guide Course. These courses served a total of 22 veterans. AMGA and AAI will offer these courses again in 2020, and we hope eventually to offer a Veterans' Ski Guide Course as well. All veterans are eligible to apply and participate on the Veterans' programs; however, veterans wishing to use their VA benefits have priority enrollment.

There are a few limitations to this partnership. For example, programs have to be run in Washington State and must be first-level programs without a formal exam. The outcome, however, is that AMGA now has an avenue for veterans to be able to use their benefits to begin their AMGA course work. A huge thank you to AAI and Jason Martin (AMGA Rock and Alpine Guide), who worked for many years to bring this to fruition.

HELP US WELCOME OUR NEW ACCREDITATION MANAGER

We are excited to welcome Ted Teegarden to the team as the AMGA's new Accreditation Manager. He works with and supports current and prospective accredited guide services, climbing schools, and school and university outdoor programs. Ted (AMGA Rock Instructor and Apprentice Alpine Guide) splits his time between working as the Accreditation Manager and guiding for Mooney Mountain Guides in New Hampshire. He guides both rock and ice climbing and teaches AMGA Single Pitch Instructor Programs.



HOW TO BECOME AMGA ACCREDITED: GUIDE SERVICES AND INDIVIDUAL GUIDES

Are you—or is your guide service—considering AMGA Accreditation? There are two options for accreditation:

1. For guide services with multiple employees
2. For American Mountain Guides/IFMGA Guides who own an independent business.

The process is simpler than you might think.

Step 1: Visit the Accreditation page on the AMGA website to learn about prerequisites and benefits and to download the appropriate Accreditation Manual.

Step 2: Contact Accreditation Manager Ted Teegarden to discuss eligibility and ask any questions you might have.

Step 3: If your business is eligible, you'll complete and submit the Accreditation Self Assessment Questionnaire, all supporting documentation, and the review fee.

Step 4: AMGA reviews your business, provides official feedback, and requests that the business responds to the feedback.

Step 5: If all standards for Accreditation are met and all required changes are made, the business is awarded AMGA Accreditation.

AMGA Accreditation can take up to six months depending on the size and scope of the business applying. Questions? Contact Ted Teegarden at ted@amga.com.

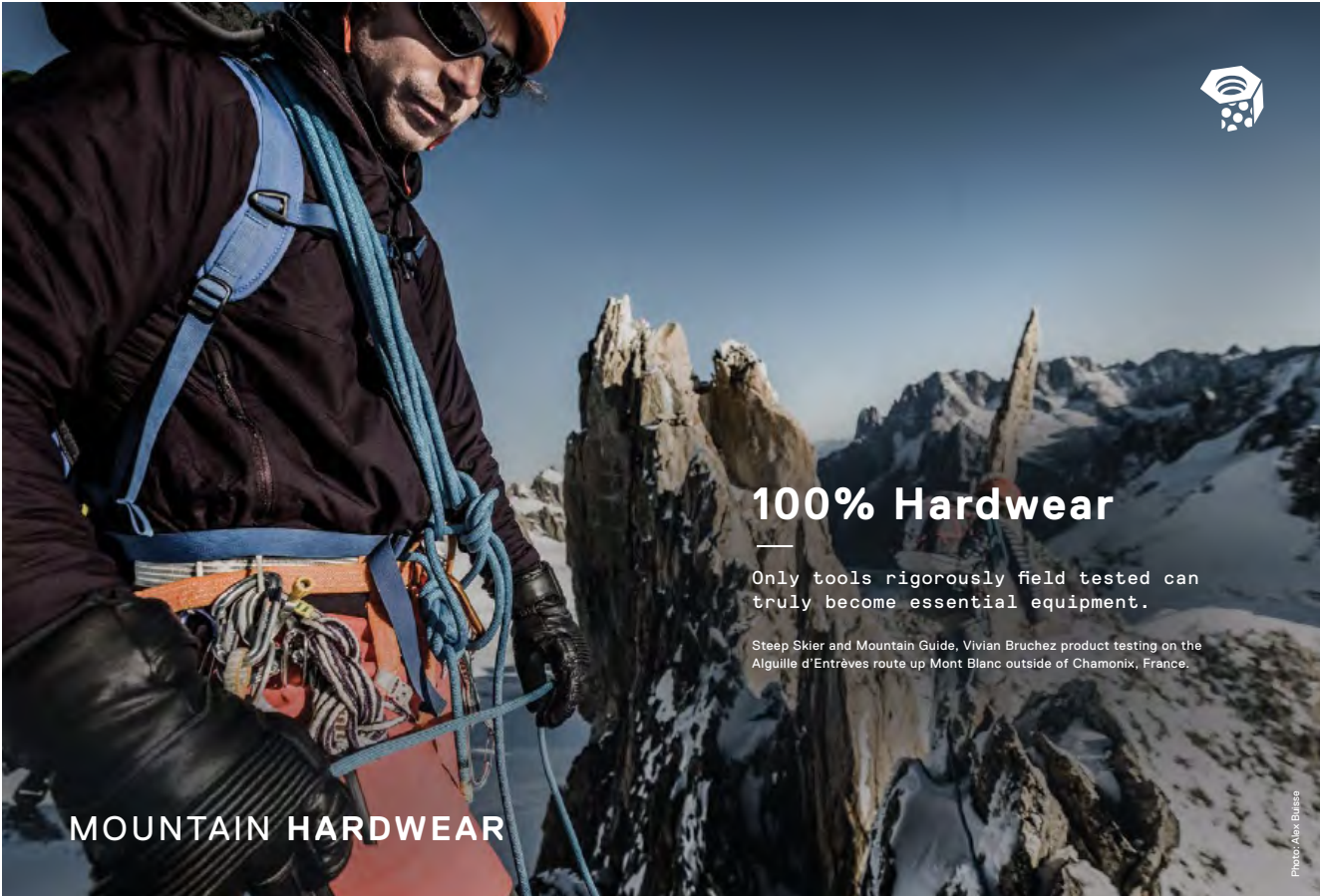
BRANDING TIPS: ACCURATELY REPRESENTING YOURSELF AS A GUIDE OR INSTRUCTOR

Representing yourself as an AMGA Guide or Instructor is an important part of your professional image. It's crucial that you represent yourself accurately, and doing so reflects well on AMGA's public image. It also benefits

guides and instructors when guests choose guides and guide services based on training and certification. Here's a quick checklist to help you represent your training and certification levels accurately.

Do:

- ✓ Include 'AMGA' before your training or certification level (i.e., AMGA Ski Guide).
- ✓ Use the term "Instructor" after the terrain discipline in which you're certified (Climbing Wall, Single Pitch, Multi-Pitch, Rock, or Ice) if you have passed an Instructor-level exam. (i.e., AMGA Ice Instructor)
- ✓ Use "AMGA Ice Instructor Course completion" or "AMGA Single Pitch Instructor Course completion" to communicate your training in these programs.
- ✓ Use the term Apprentice Guide if you have successfully completed ASC, RGC, AGC or SGC. (i.e., AMGA Apprentice Rock Guide)
- ✓ Use the term Assistant Guide if you have successfully completed ARGC, ASGC, or AAGC. (i.e., AMGA Assistant Alpine Guide)
- ✓ Use the term Certified Guide if you have successfully completed RGE, AGE, or SGE. (i.e., AMGA Certified Rock Guide)



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Steep Skier and Mountain Guide, Vivian Bruchez product testing on the Alguille d'Entrèves route up Mont Blanc outside of Chamonix, France.

MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR

Photo: Alex Buisson



“Never once in those 10 days on the course did I feel like I didn’t belong.”

TING TING AND ART MOONEY HAVING A FUN CRISP DAY ON INTI WATANA.

PHOTO BY ART MOONEY (AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDE/IFMGA GUIDE)

- ✓ Use the term Aspirant Mountain Guide if you have successfully completed ALL three advanced level courses/exams. (i.e., AMGA Aspirant Mountain Guide.)
- ✓ Use the term American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide if you are certified in all three disciplines.

Questions? Refer to the Scope of Practice and Brand Use Policy documents available under ‘Member Documents’ on your myAMGA web-dashboard.

2020 AMGA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT ROUNDUP

This August, the AMGA was thrilled to offer 31 scholarship opportunities—14 of which were women-specific—for the 2020 program year. The increase in scholarships for aspiring female guides was thanks to generous donations from First Ascent Charitable Foundation, Arc’teryx, Patagonia, and Outdoor Research.

Szu-ting Yi, AMGA Rock Guide | 2019 Arc’teryx Scholarship Recipient

“I am an immigrant. Twenty-one years ago, when I flew to Philadelphia from Taiwan to pursue a computer science PhD, I didn’t think I’d guide professionally in the States. I felt like an outsider until I started recreating outside and gained like-minded friends. I enjoyed climbing the most, and it was so captivating that I decided to pursue a career in climbing full-time. I then realized the professional field in guiding was even more statistically male-dominated than the tech field. I was goal-driven, so I worked hard but still stumbled on seeking relatable role models and was under constant internal pressure to perform beyond the standard.”

Lizzy VanPatten, AMGA Single Pitch Instructor and Apprentice Rock Guide | 2019 First Ascent Scholarship Recipient

“In all of the instructional courses I have taken up to this point, I had never experienced a safe space to learn. I had never felt comfortable admitting that a specific skill is difficult for me, that I don’t actually understand how to calculate mechanical advantage, that sometimes it’s difficult being a 5’2” woman trying to get adult men to respect my expertise. But Geoff, Mike, and KC changed that. Never once in those 10 days on the course did I feel like I didn’t belong. I am so grateful to the First Ascent Charitable Foundation for sponsoring my scholarship. This course was career-altering, and reaffirmed my passion for guiding and commitment to further certification with the AMGA.”

Kel Rossiter, American Mountain Guide/IFMGA Guide | 2019

“While my formal learning journey may have reached an end-point with the IFMGA certification, I know that many miles of learning and development remain on the guiding journey. I know that with conscientious effort, reflective practice, and continued mentorship, I will continue to grow and develop as a guide. As I continue that journey, I know also that the AMGA will continue to grow, develop, and strengthen—and I look forward to being a part of that process.”

All scholarship recipients are required to submit content after their courses, and we have received some inspiring and exciting stories and photos from our 2019 participants. The content that flows in every year reminds us how powerful and important our scholarships are for our members—and inspires us to continue offering and expanding these programs.

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DANIEL JOHNSON (AMGA SPI, APPRENTICE ROCK GUIDE) ON THE SPRING 2019 ROCK GUIDE COURSE IN JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK.

PHOTO BY LIZZY VAN PATTEN (AMGA SPI, APPRENTICE ROCK GUIDE)

In order to apply for a scholarship, you must be a current AMGA member and be applying for a Mountain Guide Program. There is no scholarship application fee. The 2021 scholarship cycle will open in May 2020.

REMINDERS FROM THE MOUNTAIN GUIDE PROGRAM OFFICE

- › The professional/recreational split in avalanche education will affect many guides this year. The 2019–20 season is the last opportunity to take the Pro 1 Bridge. If you have an older Level 2 avalanche certification and plan to go down the Professional track, this is your last chance to convert your Level 2 cert to a Pro 1 cert.
- › Plan ahead! Now's the time to start thinking about your Ski Guide Course movement video. amga.com/ski-guide
- › You can access all Mountain Guide Program Resume templates via www.amga.com/member-documents. Fill in your resumes as you complete new objectives.
- › Your input is valuable! Please take the time at the end of your program to provide your instructors, examiners, and the AMGA with feedback.
- › Update your health statement and personal information via the online portal every 12 months. This is immensely helpful.

If you have questions related to the Rock, Alpine, or Ski programs, direct them to Jesse Littleton at jesse@amga.com.



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MATT WADE PROVIDES TESTIMONY AT THE HOUSE HEARING ON THE SOAR ACT. PHOTO COURTESY OF MATT WADE

AMGA HEADS TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

The annual Climb the Hill advocacy event in Washington, D.C. brings together over 60 members of the climbing community to educate members of Congress, policymakers, and top land-management administrators on the importance of public lands, outdoor recreation access, and improved climbing management. This year, AMGA members Geoff Unger, Alex Kosseff, Lindsay Fixmer, and Matt Wade teamed up with NOLS and the American Alpine Club to advocate for outfitting and guiding access to public lands and the SOAR Act. Their message was well received, and four additional members of Congress have since cosponsored the SOAR Act (Cook R-CA8 and McClintock R-CA4 Huffman D-CA2, and Cortez-Masto D-NV). Good job, team!

During the same week, AMGA Advocacy and Policy Director Matt Wade testified before the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands on the SOAR Act. In front of numerous members of Congress and a packed audience, Wade introduced the AMGA, described the need for guides to have better access, and pointed out provisions in the SOAR Act that would improve access to public lands for guides. There was good support for the bill among the members of Congress present and all six witnesses. “This was a major step forward for issues that are important to guides,” Wade says. The AMGA is working toward passage of the bill in 2020. «

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Patrick Kingsbury rides The Mechanical Bull, Sedona, Arizona. Jeremiah Watt © 2019 Patagonia, Inc.

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MARGO TALBOT

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IFMGA Grads 2019

Tim “Kel” Rossiter (141)
 Tod Bloxham (142)
 Ryan Huetter (143)
 Sam Hennessey (144)
 Ian Havlick (145)
 Dave Stimson (146)
 Zachary Novak (147)

American Mountain Guide

Victor McNeil

Ski Guide

Jessica Baker
 Alex Banas
 Tod Bloxham
 Christopher Brown
 David Bumgarner
 Andrew Eisenstark
 Casey Graham
 Sam Hennessey
 Ryan Huetter
 John Mletschnig
 Tim “Kel” Rossiter
 Philip “Britt” Ruegger
 David Stimson
 Mia Tucholke
 Michael Wachs
 Ben Zavora

Splitboard Guide

Jason Champion

Alpine Guide

Clifford Agocs
 Jared Drapala
 Ron Funderburke
 Ian Havlick
 Micah Lewkowicz
 Max Lurie
 Victor McNeil
 Zachary Novak
 Matthew Shove
 David Stimson

Rock Guide

Qing Xin Cheang
 Christian Chilcott
 Ben Coryell
 Tim Dobbins
 Wesley Fowler
 Elliot Gaddy
 Thomas Gilmore
 Kai Girard
 Anthony Guagliano
 Fischer Hazen
 Sheldon Kerr
 Surachet “Add” Kongsingh
 Nicholas Malik
 Jeffrey Mascaro
 Victor McNeil
 John Mletschnig
 Nik Mirhashemi
 Simon Moore
 Jordan Mynatt

Andrew Plagens

Jesse Ramos
 Matthew Sellick
 Crest Simeon
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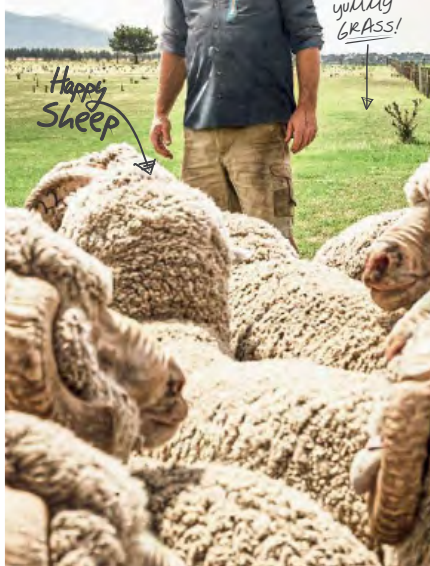
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SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE *By Vince Anderson*

WHEN A STRANGER ASKS ME WHAT I DO FOR A LIVING, I like to tell them, “Transportation—I take people on trips.”

At the beginning of my guiding career, I was a dirtbag, though I never thought highly of that term. I was willing to make major sacrifices to support my passion. WI5 was still considered hard and 5.10 was not the intermediate climbing grade it is today. Fat, 80mm skis and single-antenna transceivers were new-school. Skiing down 50-degree couloirs was Type Two fun.

On the surface, guiding is a dream job: I get paid to go climbing and skiing in some of the world’s most beautiful places. The allure of this lifestyle attracts countless aspiring guides. The most successful ones are the dyed-in-the-wool climbing bums. They’re also the ones who tend to have no shortage of fulfilling work opportunities. Genuine desire and passion for climbing—not just the job they beget—are rewarded by a wealth beyond any financial returns.

In many ways, it’s easier to guide now than ever before. Climbing used to attract the misfits and outliers; those willing, for worse or better, to take significant risks. We used to make decisions based on gut feelings and intuition. But information is empowering. Now, we have access to a wealth of it, which changes the way we practice. The sport has gone mainstream. To tell a Yosemite climber of the 1980s that climbing would one day be an Olympic sport would have drawn bewilderment (and, perhaps, disgust) at Camp Four.

But the mountains themselves by and large remain the same, requiring the same set of intangible skills to make reasoned decisions amidst the ocean of chaos they often challenge us with in deciphering their paths of egress. Would you rather traverse under that serac or go up the

wind-loaded 40-degree slope today? Would you rather do the well-protected 5.11+ direct finish or the 5.9 R slab traverse to topout? These decisions are the same as they ever were, and there’s never just one right answer. You still don’t have to always make the best decision. It just has to be right enough to get your job done.

Mountains are my home, my place of worship. I am as much a guest in them as my clients are, and not a day goes by that I don’t feel grateful for the opportunity to earn a living in them.

Climbing and descending mountains are still very much crafts—some may argue art forms—and guiding them, by default, is too. Mountains are my home, my place of worship. I am as much a guest in them as my clients are, and not a day goes by that I don’t feel grateful for the opportunity to earn a living in them. Every day that I get to look over the vast openness from a high viewpoint is a day that I won. So far, I have a winning record. Yes, I’ve had to sacrifice much, but I’ve received so much more in return.

Nobody told me this career would be easy—just that it had great views. «

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