

# VOLUNTEER CORNER

Name: Susi Lippuner • Organization: Adventure Risk Challenge (ARC) • Residence: Squaw Valley

**T**ell me about ARC. It is an intense, immersion outdoor education adventure program that teaches at-risk youth literacy, leadership, outdoor competency, compassion and teamwork.

## How long are the children in the program?

Forty days, alternating between base-camp here at Sagehen (Sagehen Creek Experimental Field Station) and three- to five-day adventures. There is no contact with parents or family.

## What is your title?

I'm a community volunteer and counsel member here, focusing on tutoring as a writing coach, working on writing, reading, essays — language skills. The kids just finished a project, and they will have their first teaching experience, giving a presentation to the Boys & Girls Club. The ARC children are 14 and 15 years old.

## How do the children get into ARC?

Self referrals, teachers, counselors, resource teachers. They are children with potential and motivation, but may have behavior or educational issues. They are all really strong in their own ways.

## Where do the children come from?

Truckee, North Tahoe. We have a second ARC in Santa Barbara, and a third is going to be in Yosemite. We are looking to include Incline in the future.

## How did you get involved?

I am currently disabled. I came to Sagehen last year and loved it. I wanted to do something with my life that did not revolve around my disability. I began with ARC doing letter writing, then was recruited to the advisory council, and I developed resources for the training manual and grant seeking.

## Tell me about your disability.

I am sensitive to just about everything — chemicals, fragrance, food, plastics, pollen. I became disabled and formally quit employment in '97 or '98. I had increasing problems since my early 20s, and was misdiagnosed so many years. I had an acupuncturist send me to Dallas, to see a doctor of environmental medicine in 2001. It was the first time I felt better in years. A lot of people have health issues, and there are ways of living to reduce our toxic load.

## What are they symptoms of your disability?

A lot of fatigue, tremendous gastrointestinal problems, the last of which to heal is malabsorption. Depending on my exposure, extreme muscle tightness, the wobbles, imbalance, memory problems, inability to focus.

## How does ARC accommodate your disability?

I work outdoors, the more contained the environment the bigger the toxic load. They have even switched

to an environmentally safe, biodegradable soap, without fragrance or chemicals. I'm allowed to set my own schedule, depending on energy or fatigue.

## How do you feel now?

I was sick for such a long time. It was hard to feel like I had anything to offer — hard to be part of the world. I couldn't see a movie, concert, or even read. New books have toxins, old books with lingering fragrances or molds. I feel like I am finally a part of the world, in a meaningful way. The kids here are finding their voices, and I am part of that. I am able to be here in this most beautiful setting, volunteering in a program I really believe in, where I am able to make a contribution, and my needs are respected. This is a really special place.

## What are your thoughts about volunteering?

I'd like to emphasize everybody has something to offer, no matter what our self-perceived limitations are — we are all able to be of service to make the world a better place.

*The Sierra Sun's Amy Edgett interviewed Susi Lippuner for this week's "Volunteer Corner." For information about ARC, please contact Katie Zanto at (530) 205-5649. Please send your suggestions to aedgett@sierrasun.com, subject Volunteer Corner. For volunteer opportunities in the North Tahoe Truckee area, visit [www.handsontahoe.org](http://www.handsontahoe.org).*

