



"ALWAYS BE PREPARED FOR ANY SITUATION, WHETHER IT'S SUMMER, WINTER, OR WHEN YOU'RE DRIVING. ALWAYS STAY ALERT."

Brandon Irwin
Osler Bluff Ski Club



SAFETY
AWARDS
2023

IMPACT AWARD

A Strong Safety Mindset Saves a Life on the Slopes

As a Lift Operator at Osler Bluff Ski Club in Blue Mountains, Ontario, Brandon Irwin proved that a vigilant safety mindset can save lives on the slopes. His unwavering focus on customers, along with a life-saving outcome from his prompt safety actions, has distinguished him as the winner of the TSSA Impact Award 2023.

At Osler, staff members are well-trained in safety protocols. New operators undergo training in recognizing urgent situations, such as frostbites, severe weather conditions, and passengers requiring assistance. In case of emergencies, the operators are backed by experienced full-time and volunteer ski patrol teams that include former paramedics, firefighters and some doctors.

Brandon, who was hired for the 2022-2023 season, consistently demonstrated his commitment to ensuring the safety of skiers and snowboarders visiting the club. Richard Burrows, Outdoor Operations Manager of the ski club, describes Brandon as friendly, compassionate, and customer-focused. "Brandon has great customer service skills and a positive attitude, which goes a long way when educating passengers on the safe use of a chairlift," said Richard.

Brandon's life-saving intervention unfolded on Family Day, on the morning of February 20, 2023. While working at the top of the Poplar chair, Brandon noticed a passenger in distress. When the passenger's chairlift was approaching, Brandon observed that the passenger was not paying attention, moving, or showing signs to unload.

Realizing that the elderly passenger was pale and in need of urgent medical attention, Brandon immediately called for Ski Patrol assistance and then stopped the chairlift on the unloading ramp. He attended to the 76-year-old passenger and assured him that help was on the way. "For a serious situation like that you have to stay calm. You want the person who needs help to understand they are in good hands," Brandon explained.

The Ski Patrol, which included several retired medical professionals, arrived in just four minutes. They could tell the passenger was likely experiencing a stroke based on the symptoms the passenger was showing while being examined. The man was transferred to the bottom of the hill where the ambulance was waiting to rush him to a nearby hospital in Barrie. The passenger was immediately airlifted from there to Toronto for emergency surgery, during which a clot was successfully removed. The man recovered from the incident without any long-term effects.

The entire process, from Brandon's initial call to the transfer to Emergency Medical Services (EMS), took only 21 minutes. In emergencies like this, time is of the essence. Brandon's focus on passenger safety, along with his quick thinking and acting, saved the passenger's life.

As a safety champion, Brandon advocates taking precautions whenever possible. "Always prepare for the worst. Like that day, I was never expecting to have a man come up the lift and have a stroke," he said. "Always be prepared for any situation, whether it's summer, winter, or when you're driving. Always stay alert."