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Personality Profile

Charlie Sturgis: Executive Director, Mountain Trails Foundation

Co-founder of Mountain Trails Foundation and 44-year Park City local

When Charlie Sturgis opened White Pine Touring in Park City, Utah, it was 1972 and mountain biking was, at best, an idea. When he helped found Mountain Trails Foundation in 1992, mountain biking was a hobby for downtime between ski seasons. Bike trails were few and far between, and the idea of an extensive and maintained trail network wasn't even a blip on the radar.

Some 20 years later, Park City boasts an immense and complex infrastructure of bike trails, and has earned the International Mountain Bicycling Association's (IMBA) first Gold Level Ride Center® designation. From more than 30 miles of paved rail trail, to the full spectrum of cross-country (XC) trails, to downhill and freeride-specific trails, Park City's network of more than 400 miles of trails has become the world standard.

According to James Clark, IMBA's director of Trail Solutions, Park City's world-renowned status stems from a commitment to master planning. "The sheer number of miles of trails is fantastic, but what's really important is that they function as a cohesive network, with signage and trail connections that create an enormously rich mountain bike experience," he says.

The persistent work of Sturgis and the Mountain Trails Foundation has been the driving force for this transition and for the ultimate vision since day one. Even back when there was only one bike shop in town—organizing trail work, leading work-to-ride groups, and even selling saws—Sturgis understood the need for a more structured organization driving trail development. With structure provided by the Mountain Trails Foundation, and the efforts of countless volunteers, the digging since has been nonstop.

Sturgis's vision has become a model for mountain biking organizations throughout the world. "At the heart of it all, Mountain Trails Foundation pulls mountain bikers into a true mountain bike community and keeps them energized with new trail projects, and by enlisting the support of the resorts and other local businesses. It all works together in Park City, and that's what's pushed them to being the gold standard," said Clark.

Now that the groundwork has been laid, the goal moving forward is to focus on rehabilitating the classic trails while addressing the wants and needs of the growing freeride scene. The buzzword in mountain biking these days is "flow," and Mountain Trails Foundation is committed to facilitating the progression of flow trails and freeriding, while maintaining the integrity of some of the "old school" original trails.

This past fall, Mountain Trails Foundation was awarded extra money for having the most donors during the Live PC Give PC charity event. The Foundation chose to give \$500 back to Live PC Give PC to help increase involvement next year. They also gave \$1,000 each to the South Summit Trails Foundation and the Wasatch Trails Alliance. Charlie Sturgis is glad to be able to help other local trail groups. He says "Mountain Trails' motivation has been to be helpful and to help shore up and create excitement with our other neighbors. Getting Wasatch County and the East Side of Summit County involved is a really big deal toward the continued success of our trail system here in Park City."

As a dedicated rider himself, Sturgis doesn't want his vision to be limited to just Park City. "Perhaps one of the things that I'm most proud of with regard to the Gold Ride Center designation is that we will be

working with IMBA as the standard bearer for their program. We've agreed to host other communities that want to become Ride Centers. We'll show them what we've done and introduce them to people in town who help coordinate all the various aspects that support mountain biking here so they can see how to further biking in their communities. We'll also be speaking at IMBA conferences across the country and potentially around the world to help further the sport. It's kind of a cool place to be in, and we're proud on behalf of the whole community," says Sturgis.

ABOUT IMBA

The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) is a 501(c)3 non-profit educational association. Its mission is to create, enhance and preserve great mountain biking experiences. Since 1988, IMBA has been bringing out the best in mountain biking by encouraging low-impact riding, volunteer trail work participation, cooperation among different trail user groups, grassroots advocacy and innovative trail management solutions. IMBA represents its members, supports its chapters and its work benefits the mountain biking community. Learn more at IMBA.com.

The Ride Center™ designation represents IMBA's Model Trail recognition for large-scale mountain bike facilities that offer something for every rider. The recognition is rated on a system of bronze, silver, and gold levels.

ABOUT MOUNTAIN TRAILS FOUNDATION

Founded in 1992, Mountain Trails Foundation is a nonprofit organization based in Park City, Utah, whose focus is on the development and maintenance of local trails for non-motorized, recreational use. The Executive Director, Charlie Sturgis, is an original cofounder of the foundation, and has lived in Park City for over four decades. Since its creation, the mission of Mountain Trails Foundation has been "to advocate the building and improvement of trails while working with local governments, private landowners, developers, and the general public in an effort to educate these groups on the benefits of a non-motorized, outdoor recreational amenity." Mountain Trails Foundation, with the help of extensive volunteer efforts, now maintains 400+ miles of summer- and winter-use trails in Summit County, Utah, with Park City as the epicenter of the trail network. Working closely with both the Snyderville Basin Recreation District and Park City Municipal Corporations, Mountain Trails Foundation has developed the trail system of the world's first IMBA-designated Gold Level Ride Center. The long-term goal of Mountain Trails Foundation is to provide the greater Park City community and its visitors with diverse recreational opportunities utilizing a seamless, year-round trail system.

For additional information, please visit mountainbikingparkcity.com and pcala.org.