

HIGH *when nature & minds meet* MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE

SPRING 2024 NEWSLETTER





As we close the book on another academic year we are taking a moment in this newsletter to proudly celebrate the heart and soul of HMI: our dedicated faculty and staff. Whether leading a backpacking expedition or helping an academic subject come alive like never before, the adults of HMI are the crux of the transformational education we offer.

Working at HMI is not always the glamorous experience some alumni envision. Most faculty lead backpacking expeditions for a combined seven weeks each year. That's a lot of sleeping on the ground! Leadville's long winters and the realities of living in a rural mountain town can take a toll on even the heartiest outdoorsperson. And yet our faculty and staff are unwavering in their commitment to making the place *where nature and minds meet* come alive for young people.

Join us as we highlight some of the achievements and impacts of our teachers and administrators. In this edition we will also describe some of the steps we are taking to invest in our employees in order to increase tenure, professional growth, and job satisfaction.

THROUGH OUR LENS



Semester 52 on expedition, skiing at Ski Cooper, and on campus.

Opposite page: Spring 2024 Gap students raft the Futaleufú River in Patagonia, Chile

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TO FOLLOW MORE OF HMI'S ADVENTURES, FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Sam Critchlow



As I approach my one-year mark of being back at HMI, I have marked a number of “firsts” in my new role: first moonlight cross-country ski, first board meeting on campus, first time on telemark skis in twelve years... The year has been full of firsts, as well as first-time-in-awhile reacquaintances. One thing that is deeply familiar to me is the incredible community at HMI, anchored by the adults who live and work here.

The theme of this issue is “celebrating our faculty & staff,” something I could not be more excited to do! Working at HMI is a labor of love. We employ a talented and dedicated staff, with depth and breadth of professional experience, a multitude of graduate degrees, years of experience in the backcountry, and a diverse range of skills, perspectives, and lived experiences. To say nothing of the Leadville Trail 100 race finishes, Grand Traverses, musical performances, publications, and other “extracurricular” accomplishments.

If you’ve attended, visited, or worked at HMI you know this to be true: we employ some of the most hard-working, brilliant, passionate folks around. I hope you enjoy learning a bit more about our faculty and staff, current and past, in the pages ahead.

Sincerely,

A central goal of our current strategic plan is “Supporting our People.”



A central goal of our current strategic plan is “Supporting our People.” We have made significant strides in this area in recent years, taking steps to boost employee retention and contentment. What follows are a few of the steps we’ve taken to better support our faculty and staff:

SABBATICAL BENEFITS

All full-time employees now qualify for a one-month paid sabbatical after seven years of employment and a four-month paid sabbatical after ten years of employment. Two HMI employees are currently enjoying well-deserved sabbaticals as I write this!

ON-CAMPUS HOUSING

With the completion of the three new townhouses this summer, 60% of our employees will live on campus, with those off-campus receiving a stipend in lieu of housing. Our on-campus residences are high-quality and energy-efficient (the same can’t be said about much of the Leadville housing stock!) On-campus housing has allowed us to build a vibrant residential community on our campus while also boosting employee compensation.



PAID APPRENTICES

In fall 2021 we transitioned the HMI Apprentice Program from a tuition model to a paid internship one. Beyond the improved equity in our community, this shift prompted a spike in Apprentice Program demand (over 90 applications for 14 spots in some years!), and has allowed us to attract diverse, highly-skilled apprentice cohorts.

PAID FAMILY LEAVE

As of this year, HMI employees can take up to 12 weeks of paid leave to provide care for themselves, a new child, partner, or other family member. HMI has welcomed two employee newborns in the past three semesters, with one more on the way this fall!

“WELCOME & CULTURE” COMMITTEE

When can I take my ice scraper out of my car for the season? (Answer: never.) Can I go cross-country skiing in the middle of the day? (Answer: yes!) New employees naturally have many questions about HMI’s culture and expectations. Our “Welcome & Culture” committee helps to make the transition to Leadville and HMI easier, and provides a sense of belonging from an employee’s first days.



ON DUTY & OUTDOORS

By Laura Alonzo-Ochoa, HMI Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Coordinator, active Air National Guardswoman

When I was a kid I used to get mesmerized by passing clouds.

I would play outdoors until the streetlights came on. I was not an indoor kid.

My brother used to negotiate chores with me, because he favored indoor chores and I didn't mind pushing the lawn mower. For my seventeenth birthday, my parents took me to Yosemite—just me (no siblings or friends)—and I hiked so far in on a trail that my mom got worried and inquired with a park ranger because I was gone for almost half a day. I was always curious and mildly adventurous.

My career in education now spans nearly two decades and for the past six years I have also served part-time in the Air National Guard (United States Air Force) as a Loadmaster (aircrew). The colliding of these two different worlds blended my excitement for supporting youth and having access and representation to outdoor spaces. It has also led me to believe in something bigger than myself in terms of public service.

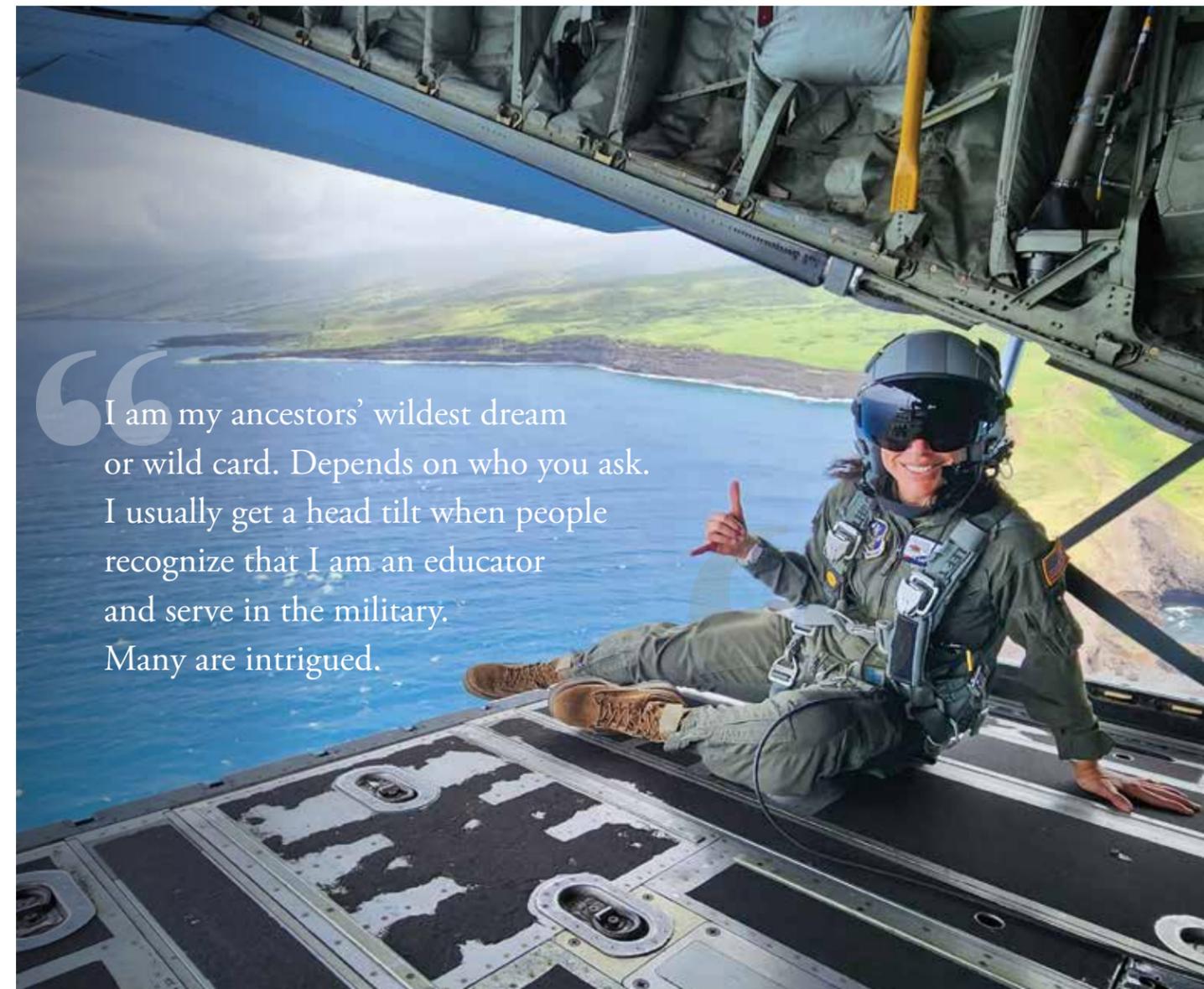
Some might say working with teenagers should include hazard pay just like my aircrew position, however, it's a balance of living out my values in my personal and professional life.

Being a leader in both education and the military is like character-building on steroids. I feel like I can impact change in both realms regarding public service: it's a privilege to watch someone's child grow up in the classroom or in a squadron. In both arenas, community building can take place, and although we can have different viewpoints or backgrounds, we have a mission that needs to be accomplished and collaboration will need to take place. There are plenty of other examples of overlap, but truly I feel honored to help students see the best version of themselves, sans parents/community influence.

When we were growing up we didn't have time or much access from where we lived to enjoy a hike or go for a swim at the beach, and I don't recall having an outdoor recreation role model I could look up to. So I became my own role model, blazed my own path, and prioritized my own interests. I created

space for others to take up space in the outdoors so they can see themselves in it. Being active outside, helping others, and doing things that my parents did not have the opportunities to do has always guided my own pursuits and endeavors to be a role model in my community.

I am my ancestors' wildest dream or wild card. Depends on who you ask. I usually get a head tilt when people recognize that I am an educator and serve in the military. Many are intrigued. I am of the school of thought that you can be more than one thing, because inherently we all are, and we all live at various intersecting identities. I believe I have followed my calling to public service in and outside the classroom. My leadership roles at HMI and within the Guard are similar and very different, more than this newsletter can cover. I will say I am my full self at both places, and feel honored and privileged to serve in both capacities to create safe spaces so others can do the same for themselves and hopefully see themselves in these spaces.



“I am my ancestors' wildest dream or wild card. Depends on who you ask. I usually get a head tilt when people recognize that I am an educator and serve in the military. Many are intrigued.”

THE JACK & JILL OF ALL (HMI) TRADES

Dave Clark-Barol (“DCB”) and Em Powers Ducharme have held a combined 21 different roles at HMI.

They are without a doubt HMI’s most versatile employees! We asked each to reflect on their winding HMI professional journeys—and why they keep coming back for more.



“A jack of all trades is a master of none, but oftentimes better than a master of one.”



DAVE CLARK-BAROL



2011
SPANISH APPRENTICE



2015
RES LIFE FACULTY



2017
GAP INSTRUCTOR



2022
APPRENTICE PROGRAM DEAN

I'm honored to be recognized as an HMI Jack of all Trades. It feels like a natural extension of my life philosophy; embracing seasons, conditions, and whims to do whatever feels fun, rewarding, and interesting, and I see it as a sign of support that HMI has allowed me to apply this approach in my 13 years working at the school.

It is a little-known fact, that the full quote is, "a jack of all trades is a master of none, but oftentimes better than a master of one." In that vein, the surfeit of roles I've held at HMI has given me a unique understanding of the inner workings of programs, course areas, partner organizations, food ordering, faculty housing insulation envelopes, water treatment systems, and more. And while I don't bring all of that to bear on my work on a daily basis, I do feel like it sets me up to support my coworkers, provide perspective, and step in to help with the general functioning of the school.

DAVE'S "TRADES" AT HMI

FALL 2011
Spanish Apprentice

2012 - 2014
Adjunct Wilderness Instructor

SUMMERS 2012 - 2014
Summer Term Faculty

2014 - 2016
Wilderness & Residential Life Faculty

2015 - 2016
Assistant Kitchen Manager

2016 - 2017
Educator at Large

2017
HMI Gap Instructor

2017
Interim Director of the Apprentice Program

2017
Interim Director of Wilderness Programs and Risk Management

2018 - 2019
General Laborer, Downstream Construction (Building HMI Faculty Housing)

2019 - 2022
Director of Summer Programs and Wilderness Coordinator

2022
Interim Director of Programs

2022 - PRESENT
Dean of the Apprentice Program

EMILY POWERS DUCHARME



2002
RMS VIII STUDENT

What a long, beautiful, winding path it's been so far! My timeline at HMI spans 22 years, having first met HMI Founders Molly and Christopher Barnes in 2001 at a prospective student slideshow.

Over the course of all my different roles, experiences, and adventures at HMI, I honestly can't pick a favorite because they've each been so transformative and unique. I had the most pure fun as a student in RMS 8, and can clearly remember every single day of the expeditions I went on, having never backpacked before in my life. My teachers, apprentices, and fellow students at that time influenced me to the core and I walked out of that semester a more confident, adventurous, compassionate, and creative human. I loved my HMI English class so much (thank you Sean Bowditch!) that I decided my next big goal would be to come back to HMI as an English apprentice. And thus, the boomerang mentality was set inside of me before I even left!

Through every role since, I have continued to be inspired by my HMI colleagues and students for their abundant intelligence, ingenuity, competence, and silliness. I got to bring RMS 20 on HMI's first trip to the KOFA, led alumni hut trips to Uncle Bud's

cabin, listened to Danny O'Brien realize he brought two left hiking boots to the canyons, and helped continue in-person programming in the depths of Covid. When I start to think of the list of Legends I have worked with, led trips with, and learned from over all the years, I could fill the rest of this newsletter.

The thing that has kept bringing me back, and what keeps me here currently, is the integrity of the humans here. I genuinely enjoy coming to work every morning because no matter what challenge I face on any given day, I know the people beside me here will always have my back. I've worked in many places at this point in my career, and HMI is where I've been privileged to feel the most supported, challenged, and thus rewarded. I'm excited to get back into the field and continue to help serve as a strategic thinker for a place that has always, always, always felt like home.



2008
ENGLISH APPRENTICE



2009
MARKETING ASSOCIATE



2021
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

EM'S "TRADES" AT HMI

SPRING 2002
RMS VIII Student

SUMMER 2006
High Peaks Adventure/Summer Apprentice

SPRING 2008
RMS XX English Apprentice

SUMMERS 2008 - 2010
The Leading Edge Instructor

2008 - 2010
Marketing & Alumni Relations Associate

SUMMER 2009
Assistant Programs Manager

2020 - 2021
Administrative Coordinator & Registrar

2021 - PRESENT
Director of Finance & Operations

SOUTH POLE TRAVERSE: THE SLOWEST ROAD TRIP IN THE WORLD

By Dan Schieffelin, RMS V



One of the most frequent questions I get asked when people learn that I have spent time in Antarctica is: do you see any polar bears while you're there?

There are no bears, polar or otherwise; Antarctica is the realm of the penguins. Fun fact: the ancient Greek word for bear is arktos, written as arctic in modern times, meaning north. So, arctic = bear, while anti-arctic = without bear.

I have spent 12 austral summers, September through February, and one winter, February through September, in Antarctica or on "The Ice" as it is called within the United States Antarctic Program (USAP). Much of my time has been spent at McMurdo Station located on Ross Island, which is connected to the continent by the Ross Ice Shelf, a slow-moving, floating glacier between 40 and 2,300 feet thick that covers about 190,000 square miles, or roughly the area of France.



Dan Schieffelin
RMS V

- HMI Semester 5 (RMS V); Fall 2000
- Northampton High School (MA) Class of 2001
- Sterling College (VT) Class of 2006

During my time on the Ice I have held several positions, all with the overall aim of supporting science in the highest, driest, windiest, and coldest place on earth. The past three summers I was part of the South Pole Traverse, or SPoT, which is tasked with hauling critical supplies and fuel to the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station, another important science hub.

While driving between McMurdo and the Pole I live with 11 other men and women, who for better or worse are the only people I will see for the 25-35 days it takes to complete the 1,038-mile journey each way. For much of the journey, beyond the 12 of us, the next closest humans are on the International Space Station.

“While not perfect, I have over my years working on the Ice and elsewhere in small groups, developed many of the skills, both hard and soft, that I was first introduced to on the RMS V trips in the Rocky Mountains and canyons of Utah.”

Why does it take so long? For starters, we are hauling loads in excess of 200,000 lbs over soft snow and slick ice, and at times up a steep glacier through the Trans-Antarctic Mountains onto the polar plateau at an elevation of over 9,500 feet. While extremely powerful, our Caterpillar tractors have a maximum speed of 20 mph, but under these loads we are lucky to see 5 mph. Another factor is the weather, which at times produces winds and blowing snow that drop visibility to near zero, and brings temperatures that, on the plateau, can be well below -40 F with wind chills in the -80's F. These temps make mechanical failures common and even minor repairs take much longer than they would if you weren't laying in the snow and could feel your fingers.

There are a lot of parallels between a South Pole journey and an HMI expedition. Besides the technical tasks of driving, tractor maintenance, taking turns cooking for the crew and doing community chores like cleaning and filling the snow melter for our drinking water, there are a lot of other, softer skills, that are needed to make this trip successful. Crew members come from diverse backgrounds and everyone has



their own way of doing things. Some have never been part of a small team and have to learn how to be good community members. While not perfect, I have over my years working on the Ice and elsewhere in small groups, developed many of the skills, both hard and soft, that I was first introduced to on the RMS V trips in the Rocky Mountains and canyons of Utah.

I credit my semester at the High Mountain Institute with setting me on a path that directly lead to my unique outdoor career. After HMI, I graduated from Northampton High School in western Massachusetts, and got my first job in the outdoors on a trail crew in New Hampshire's White Mountains. This in turn led me to Sterling College in northern Vermont, which then led me to Alaska, where I made a friend who had been to the Ice and who piqued my interest in Antarctica, where I have since spent more than a decade living and working, going so far south that every direction is north, and eventually meeting the person who would become my wife.

HIGH MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE

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JULY 14-21, 2024



EDUCATOR'S EXPEDITION

Calling all educators and school administrators! Join us this summer for the HMI Educator's Expedition, a one-week professional development backpacking expedition in the Rocky Mountains. Participants will learn HMI's leadership and experiential education curriculum while connecting with fellow educators who love the outdoors. Could there be a more beautiful setting for professional development?

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT: hminet.org/edex

