

# Deb Armstrong

1984 Olympic GS Gold Medalist



Debbie Armstrong will be joining us again at the 2003 FWSA Convention in Rancho Mirage. The bouncy, effervescent Debbie was a surprise winner in the women's giant slalom at the 1984 Winter Olympics. A fine athlete, she began skiing at the age of three and starred in basketball and soccer in high school. After graduating in 1980, she concentrated on ski racing.

She was named to the U. S. downhill team to take part in international competition, but a broken leg in training ended her season. Debbie was relatively little known going into the Olympics, although she finished second in the U. S. national combined in 1983. Her best World Cup finish was a third place in a supergiant slalom early in 1984.

At the Olympics, Debbie had the second fastest time in the first run, .1 second behind teammate **Christin Cooper**. Debbie had only the fourth best time in the second run, but Cooper's run was fifth best, allowing Armstrong to win the gold. Asked by a sportswriter what she'd had to sacrifice to become a champion, she replied, "Nothing. Skiing is my life. That's what I love to do. It's fun."

Since retiring from skiing competition after the 1988 Calgary Olympics, Debbie has made significant contributions to her community — tackling issues such as drug abuse and bringing skiing to the disabled "Returning home, after I won my medal, I asked myself how can I use my 'celebrity' to make my community a better place to live," said Armstrong. "Skiing enabled me to not only lend my name, but to actively participate in some very important endeavors and I look forward to being involved in other projects."

- In 1987, she founded the "Debbie Armstrong Say No to Alcohol and Drugs Campaign" in partnership with the Washington State Substance Abuse Coalition. The program started at her old high school and expanded to include more than 150 schools across the state. Over six years, more than 200,000 young people pledged in writing to say no to drugs and alcohol.
- In 1988 **Governor Booth Gardner** appointed Debbie to the Washington State Governor's Alliance Against Drugs.
- Also in 1988, Debbie founded the "Walk with Debbie Armstrong" campaign which has raised over \$100,000 for the SKIFORALL Foundation, a non-profit in Washington State dedicated to providing skiing and other outdoor sports instruction and activities to persons with disabilities.

Debbie's involvement in non-profit organizations has been far reaching. Debbie returned to Sarajevo, where she won Gold, as a member and spokesperson for Global Releaf Sarajevo, an organization involved with the reforestation of Sarajevo following the loss of trees during the Bosnian war. The program will replant 300,000 trees on the war-ravaged hillsides around Sarajevo and 3,000 trees on the streets of the ancient city. For details, click on [www.americanforests.org](http://www.americanforests.org).

Debbie is currently a member of the Ernie Blake Ski School at Taos Ski Valley. We are pleased to have her back with us because she is a notable Olympian and because her causes are close to each of our hearts – the environment and the Olympics. Not to mention, Debbie has become of favorite of ours and a true friend of FWSA. ■

