Ski enthusiast

With the largest ski resort in the Pacific Northwest down the road from his boyhood home in Sandpoint, Idaho, it’s not surprising that David Rust is a skier. In fact, he was on Schweitzer Mountain by age 2, and he and his siblings skied many times a week throughout their childhood. “That’s just what we did growing up,” he says.

Now an orthopedic surgeon at St. Luke’s Orthopedics and Sports Medicine in Duluth, Rust still loves skiing, and he’s found a new way to be involved in the sport. Last year, he became medical director for the Spirit Mountain ski patrol. “I don’t know that it gets me on the slopes more, but it gives me a reason to be involved more in the community atmosphere of the ski area,” he says of the volunteer position.

It also gives him the opportunity to help ensure that anyone injured gets the best care possible from Spirit Mountain’s first responders, as he helps review their policies and advises on medical care. “We have created policies for stabilizing boot-top tibia fractures and using traction splints for hip and femur fractures,” he says. They’re also finishing a study to determine the safest way to transport skiers and snowboarders with suspected head and neck injuries.

To get on the slopes himself, Rust skis weekly in an adult race league. And in an effort to pass along his passion to his kids, he gets his family out two to three weekends a month. He and his wife, pediatric hospitalist Erin Rust, got their son Paul, 4, on skis when he was 2. This year 2-year-old Marie joined them. Baby Lucy will sit out the season.

Rust says having an outlet is essential for physicians. “It would be pretty easy to let work and the day-to-day things you do in life take over.” And although his first love is skiing, he enjoys almost any activity any time of year and in any weather, as long as it involves being outdoors. “My philosophy is, if you’re motivated, you don’t have to let the weather slow you down.”

Having skied most Monday nights last winter in record cold, that philosophy was tested. “A couple of nights,” he says, “it was just a victory to brave the cold weather and get through the race course.”

– CARMEN PEOTA