

Beginning Thanksgiving week, we've published a comprehensive list of resorts, most of which hadn't opened for skiing when we began. Turns out, our list was too comprehensive.

The Skyline Ski Resort and Country Club near Grayling, a place where generations have learned the ropes on a hill friendly to novices, is closed to winter sports.

We had listed the resort as scheduled to open on Dec. 26. It says so right on its homepage at its Web site. But that was the day after Christmas *last year*.

Who knew? Not many of us until a small item in the local paper mentioned that Skyline had sold its trail-groomer and other equipment to nearby Hanson Hills. Phone messages to the resort resulted in a recorded message saying Skyline "is closed for the winter" and requests for a return phone call to the Times were not returned.

"It's unfortunate," said Tim Zigila, executive director of the Grayling Regional Chamber of Commerce. "It definitely hurts.

"Skyline is in the same lines of Hanson Hills. They're both great places for people to learn to ski, for kids to get their start. That's what hurts the most. These were great beginner hills. You need an alternative like that to places like Boyne. Those are tough places to learn."

So much for a favored playground among not only locals but those from as far away as Bay City, 100 miles down I-75. The place on Skyline Road six miles south of Grayling boasted all-natural snow groomed daily, slopes (14 runs) carved out of the woods, a family-oriented atmosphere, uncrowded lifts and a lodge at the top of the hill offering beautiful views.

So Hanson Hills Winter Sports Park, which lays claim to the title of Michigan's oldest downhill ski area, now has a monopoly in the area on casual downhill skiing, as well as snowboarding and tubing.

Hanson Hills opened in 1929, when it was known as the Grayling Winter Sports Park, where thousands of people once arrived on flatbed trucks after riding Michigan's famous "snow trains" to get to the once-renowned lumber town.