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the ALASKA nordic skier

MARCH 2019, VOL.20, NO.6

PHOTOS BY **JAN HAZEN**

COMING SOON: A special edition program for the 2019 U.S. Cross Country Junior Nationals, which take place in Anchorage from March 11-16!

Anchorage 2
Eagle River 7
Fairbanks 13
Girdwood 9
Kachemak 11
Mat-Su 10
Statewide 6,8
Talkeetna 6

Anchorage Nordic Skier

Newsletter Of The Nordic Skiing Association Of Anchorage, Inc.

203 W. 15th Ave., #204 Anchorage, Alaska, 99501
Phone — 276-7609 **Fax —** 258-7609
Hotline — 248-6667
nsaa@alaska.net

AROUND THE BOWL

AMH Anchorage Cup recap: A successful, and thankful, season

Last season we made a few changes to the AMH Anchorage Cup schedule and this season we tried to continue those things that seemed to work well. Alaska Winter Stars and APU signed on for another season, and we added Anchorage Junior Nordic as a new cohost. We offered 3K and 5K courses at each distance event again, to give younger and more recreational skiers suitable events. We put out another ski-cross course and worked with Junior Nordic coaches to bring out more youth involvement. And we drew up more fun, new course maps.

We had the earthquake, warm December weather, the course and sponsor changes to the Moose's Tooth Classic, and the UAA race just hours before the Sven. These were all things that asked for a lot of flexibility and patience, both from racers and organizers. So this spring, I just want to say thank you. To everyone who came out to race. To everyone who put in so many volunteer hours to work registration or move v-board. To all the co-hosts and sponsors. To the parents who signed-up, paid for, and drove their kids. These races don't happen without all of you. And it was really great to see so many people out on working, racing, and cheering each Sunday.

Last year, I mentioned the idea that, to me, skiing is about community. Throughout each season of work, I try to keep that idea in mind. Our goal is always to work towards making the Anchorage Cup an event that draws together our ski community – from beginners to Olympians – and puts smiles on faces. So I want to invite everyone to give us your feedback, your ideas, your visions. If there's something you want to see at the Anchorage Cup next season, let us know. Help us work towards making things bigger and better. And we hope to see you all out on the trails again next winter!

– By Branden Fontana

PHOTOS BY **JOAN DARNELL**

Check out these AMH Anchorage Cup highlights!

Going Green and going strong: NSAA's awesome Green Grunts

Hardworking and dedicated. Before, during and after every race, you see them: The Green Grunts. This group is fiercely committed to this Nordic skiing community, and are well-loved and respected by Alaska's young and old skiers. Thank you to our Green Grunts for all your devotion and enthusiasm to Nordic skiing.

The 2018-19 crew of Green Grunts includes: Scott Belyea; David Hulen; Celia Rozen; Anne Billman; Peter Johnson; Tim Samuelson; Tim Brabets; Alice Knapp; Buzz Scher; Ed Brewer; Elizabeth Knapp; Jim Singleton; Tom Brooks; Gunnar Knapp; Ros Singleton; Sally & Jim Burkholder; Dave Kochevar; Dick Snyder; Liz Butera; Robin Kornfield; Bob Stehn; John Christopherson; Ove Madsen; Meg Stehn; Joan Darnell; Patrick McGownd; Tim Stone; Joe Darnell; Iain Miller; Fred Stutzer; Paul Denkewalter; Michael Miller; June Takagi; Rob Dolan; Mike Miller; Bruce Talbot; Georgia Gustafson; Peter Mjos; Tina Tomsen; Colin Hawkins; Steve Morris; Peter Tryon; Lin Hinderman; Diane Moxness; Gail Hoefler; and Molly Mylius.

NSAA's famous, and awesome, Green Grunts

Tour of Anchorage arrives on March 3, 2019

The Tour is almost here, and here's what you need to know before the race:

Tour of Anchorage ski racing starting info — 50K freestyle, 9:30 a.m. (Service HS); 40K freestyle, 10:30 a.m. (Service HS); 25K classic, 11 a.m. (APU); 25K freestyle, noon (APU)

Inaugural Fat Bike Tour of Anchorage race info — 50K, 2 p.m. (Service HS); 40K, 3 p.m. (Service HS)

Bib pickups— Friday, March 1 from 3-7 p.m. (APU Moseley Center); Saturday, March 2 from 10 a.m.-noon (APU Moseley Center).

2018 50K Champions — Men – Jack Novak, 2:16:49; Women – Hannah Rudd, 2:38:54

Record 50K times — Men – Brent Knight, 2:04:41 (2013); Women – Rosie Frankowski, 2:23:42 (2017)

Awards Ceremony and Post-Race Party— Tuesday, March 5, at 49th State Brewing, 6-8 p.m.

More information and late registration: **tourofanchorage.com**

Take a tour, savor the backcountry with NSAA

If you have questions about NSAA's Backcountry Tours or program, visit **anchoragenordicski.com/programs/backcountry-tours/** or contact Mary Vavrik at (907) 306-7686 or mvavrik@gci.net.

March 1-3 — Denali View Chalet, two overnights, Peters Hills

Level: Easy II; Distance: 8 miles one way to chalet; Elevation Gain: Generally flat, rolling terrain; Tour Leader: Karlene Leeper at 907-440-0049; kbleeper@gci.net

Enjoy the weekend at a rustic Alaskan lodge on Kroto Lake south of Mt. McKinley. Ski 8 miles into the lodge with just a day pack. Your gear and food will be brought in by the chalet owner on snowmachine. Enjoy awesome views of Denali, fantastic company, wonderful group cuisine, sauna and more skiing on various trails in the area. Because the weather is often variable, bring clothing for wind, cold and snow. Space is limited. A deposit to hold a spot is required by February 15. For more information, contact the tour leader.

March 10 — Beach Lake to tidal grasslands

Level: Easy II; Distance: 6+ miles round trip, 3-4 hours; Elevation gain: Generally flat; Tour Leader: Ray Cammisa; 907-726-7977, raybird68@hotmail.com

See **AROUND THE BOWL**, Page 3

BOARD MEMBERS

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Travis Taylor

SOLSTICE TREE TOUR
Sara Miller

SPECIAL EVENTS AND RACING
Lauri Bassett

TOUR OF ANCHORAGE
Matias Saari

NSAA OFFICE HOURS
10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday

BOARD MEETINGS
Fourth Thursday of the month, 6:15 P.M. at BP Energy Center or NSAA office. Open to all.

The trials – and trails – of snowmaking

BY NSAA OPERATIONS

The snowmaking process at Kincaid Park was unexpectedly interrupted this winter due to the malfunction of the primary pump. The pump was pulled from the well and taken to Alaska Pump for inspection and diagnosis. A new pump was ordered and installed and the system, after a few fits and starts, was up and running by mid-February.

Our snowmaking volunteer Tim Brabets explained the details as follows: "The electrician wired in the new breaker, reconnected the power line to the new pump and wired in the new VFD (Variable Frequency Driver) … which is like the throttle for the pump." Once the electrician finished, Tim gave things a test and noted that all signs were positive. He was only able to leave the system on for a few minutes since it was so warm, but all lights indicated "green" … and that's good! He said, "Both pumps turned on in addition to one of the high-pressure pumps before I had to stop the system. The well line pressure looked good (100+psi) and the line pressure was good as well (400+psi)."

This new pump is smaller and better matched to the well's capacity than the old one and the crew is cautiously optimistic: "We needed to continue running the system in cold weather to see if it is working properly, but for now all signs are positive."

The crew had their chance and started the system on Tuesday, February 12, at midnight when the temperature dropped to an optimal range. According to Tim, "There were a few starts and stops that I would have difficulty describing but I think it comes down to understanding and running the system a different way or 'The New Normal.' Anyway, I think all who have operated the system these past two days are adjusting fairly quickly."

They made snow for 48 hours straight – starting at midnight Tuesday and stopping at midnight Thursday, February 14, to let the groomer catch up and start leveling the large piles of snow and to get ready for the big weekend of races on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. Tim mentioned that the "Average water use for the two days was about 240,000 gallons, very typical of what we've used in the past. One notable (or expected) difference thus far is that the smaller 25 HP pump uses less energy. On a typical 24-hour cycle, we would use about 900 kwh with the 60 HP pump. With the new 25 HP pump we use only half – 450 kwh and pump the same amount of water."

We're keeping our fingers crossed for continued success! Thank you to all NSAA employees, volunteers and members for their hard work and thank you to our ski community for the support and patience.

AROUND THE BOWL

Continued from Page 2

From the lake parking lot, if conditions allow, we will ski the lake side to the north end and pass over the mushing trails and onto Cook Inlet Upper tidal grasslands. Beautiful views of the coastal flats, meandering channels and maybe a muskrat lodge. Meet at 11 a.m. Directions: From MP 20.9 Glenn Highway – Take South Birchwood exit and turn west past Chugiak High School. Drive roughly .9 mile to Beach Lake Road. Take a left on Beach Lake Road and drive 2 miles to Beach Lake.

March 17 — Skookum Glacier, Kenai Mountains

Level: Moderate I (for distance); Distance: 12 miles; Elevation Gain: 400 feet; Tour Leader: Mary Vavrik; 907-306-7686; mvavrik@gci.net

This will be a kick and glide tour up to the Skookum Glacier. On a sunny day, you'll enjoy incredible views of the glacier, Byron and Carpathian Peaks. Because it's spring, we have to worry about the warmth instead of the cold. Depending on snow conditions, we may need to negotiate some snow bridge crossings. The ski is flat until the last two miles as we approach the glacier. There are beautiful views of the glacier from ~mile 4. To get to the toe of the glacier, we will need to continue on, ski down and up Skookum Creek valley and up the glacier moraine. We'll meet at 9 a.m. at the Chugach State Park Headquarters parking lot (the train south of Potter Marsh).

March 30-31 — Reed Creek overnight ski-in

Level: Moderate I; Distance: 8 miles; Elevation Gain: 500 feet; Tour Leader: Mary Vavrik; 907-306-7686; mvavrik@gci.net

Travel under the rugged and beautiful peaks of Archangel Valley and up Reed Creek for a spectacular weekend of skiing and winter camping. Plan on meeting at the Carrs Muldoon parking lot near the bakery at 9 a.m. on Saturday. From there we'll carpool to the trailhead at the intersection of the Archangel Road and the Hatcher Pass Road. This is about ¾ mile past the former Motherlode Lodge. If you'd rather meet us at the trailhead, we'll meet about 10:30 a.m. Expect to ski about 3 ¾ miles before we set up camp, gaining about 500 feet of altitude in that distance. Camp will be set up between Goodhope Creek and the former mine buildings near Snowbird Creek. We'll dig a pit for a common area for cooking and set up tents near the pit. Bring your camping gear and food. A parts list is available. Be prepared for the elements, wind, cold and precipitation, including rain. For those skiing with their dogs, porcupines are in the area.

April 7 — Gold Mint Trail, Hatcher Pass

Level: Moderate I; Distance: 10 miles; Elevation gain: 800 feet; Tour Leader: Ray Cammisa, 907-726-7977; raybird68@hotmail.com

Travel under the rugged and beautiful peaks of the Little Susitna Valley in Hatcher Pass for a spectacular day of spring skiing on the Gold Mint trail. Plan on meeting at the north end of the Eagle River Fred Meyer parking lot at 10 a.m. From there we'll carpool to the Gold Mint trailhead. If you'd rather meet us at the trailhead, expect to see us about 11:30 a.m. We intend on skiing about 5 miles up the valley with an overall elevation gain of 800 feet. The trail is relatively steady with just a few fast downhills. There are several short steep hills to ascend and descend which will be a bit of fun. Be prepared for the elements: wind, cold and precipitation. Although this time of year it could be warm and sunny! Bring adequate water and food including something for a lunch break. For those skiing with their dogs, porcupines are in the area.

NSAA CALENDAR

MARCH

Friday, March 1 — NSAA Backcountry Tour: Denali View Chalet two overnights, Peters Hills

Friday-Saturday, March 1-2 — Biathlon State Championships (Races #7 and #8)

Friday, March 1 — Tour of Anchorage Bib Pickup – APU

Saturday, March 2 — Tour of Anchorage Bib Pickup – APU

Sunday, March 3 — Tour of Anchorage

Saturday, March 9 — Junior Nordic Equipment Return – Bunker

Sunday, March 10 — NSAA Backcountry Tours: Beach Lake to Tidal Grasslands

Monday-Sunday, March 11-17 — Junior Nationals hosted by NSAA

Saturday, March 16 — Oosik Ski Race/Tour – Talkeetna

Sunday, March 17 — NSAA Backcountry Tours: Skookum Glacier, Kenai Mountains

Tuesday, March 19 — Junior Nordic Equipment Return – Bunker

Saturday, March 23 — Ski Train

Saturday-Sunday, March 23-24 — SKAN 24 Race

Saturday, March 30 — NSAA Backcountry Tours: Reed Creek Overnight Ski-In

APRIL

Sunday, April 7 — NSAA Backcountry Tours: Gold Mint Trail, Hatcher Pass

For more events and details, visit the NSAA calendar at **anchoragenordicski.com/calendar**

NSAA SKI TRAIN

ALL ABOARD!

MARCH 23| CURRY, AK

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www.anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-train/

Fatbike and snowshoe demo, Railgate Garden (tailgate party), Polka Music, and Themed Cars!
Best of all, untouched powder for your pleasure!

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MARCH 23, 2019
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EDITOR
Josh Niva
nordicskiereditor@gmail.com

LAYOUT
Kevin Powell
kevin@powelldesign.net

AD REPRESENTATIVE
Andre Lovett
Andrelovett93@gmail.com
nordicskieradvertising@gmail.com

LOCAL EDITORS

ANCHORAGE
Josh Niva
nordicskiereditor@gmail.com

EAGLE RIVER
Ros Singleton
jrcjsingleton@aol.com

FAIRBANKS
Eric Troyer
newsletter@nscfairbanks.org

KACHEMAK
Jeannie Woodring
jwoodring50@gmail.com

JUNEAU
Frankie Pillifant
frankie@gci.net

MAT-SU
Ed Strabel
matsuski@gci.net

SALCHA
Jim Ostlind
jostlind@ptialaska.net

SEWARD
Julie Robinson
julieprigge@gmail.com

SOLDOTNA
Penny McClain
262-6257

TALKEETNA
Chris Mannix
733-2427

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On the cover – *The 2019 Alaska Ski for Women put the fun in fundraising! Photos by Jan Hazen.*

Happy spirits break through murky skies at the 23rd annual Alaska Ski for Women

BY JENNY DI GRAPPA
Director, Ski for Women

Although preceded by a rainy week, we received some snow and cold weather to make for perfect trail conditions at the 2109 Alaska Ski for Women at Kincaid Park. Gray skies blocked the sun but provided warmth for our 653 attendees and hundreds of volunteers and community members as we celebrated the 23rd year of this successful community event. We had 42 women participate in the duathlon, 117 in the freestyle/skate race, and 120 women in the classic event. Over 250 women participated in the "party wave," many of whom were skiing for the very first time! The Mardi Gras of the North costume contest provided some tough competition this year – coming in second place in the group costume were the Fur Rondy Pin-Ups with each team member dressed as a different pin from Rondy's past! Additionally, they were the team with the most team members and donated the most funds! The final events of the day included a successful silent auction and our second time hosting a refreshing mimosa reception.

Equally important to the skiing, this event raised awareness and funds for a very serious issue facing women in Alaska: domestic violence. 100 percent of race entries, donations, merchandise sales, and funds raised during the silent auction will be donated later this year to programs and organizations that actively work to stop the cycle of domestic violence against women and children. Funds are also distributed to organizations that provide resources to domestic violence victims and their families. Grants will open in late spring – if you know of an organization that might qualify, please email alaskaskiforwomengrants@gmail.com.

Events like the Alaska Ski for Women couldn't happen without the support of major sponsors. Please help us by thanking ConocoPhillips, our 2019 Platinum Sponsor and race bib sponsor. We would also like to thank our Gold Sponsor, KTUU, for their continued support and promotion of the event. Other sponsors include: Anchorage Women's Clinic, The Alaska Club, Banker Law Group, Denali OB-GYN, Great Harvest Bread Co., Premier Alaska Tours, Bristol Bay Native Corporation, Moose's Tooth & Bear Tooth, Kaladi Brothers Coffee, REI, Magic 98.9, K&L Distributors, TOKO, Skinny Raven, SAUCE, Alaska EyeCare Center, Hartman Orthodontics, Fur Rondy, Hydrate Alaska, Turnagain Training and Alaska Medical Solutions (swag bags). Additionally, we received over 50 in-kind donations for our silent auction from Anchorage businesses and community members.

Finally, I would like to give praise to our 2019 ASFW all-volunteer event committee: Meg Stehn, Diane Moxness, Greg DuBois, Paulette Compton, Julie Truskowski, Celia Rozen, Tamra Kornfield, Kelly Fehrman, Deborah Hansen and Amber and Sara with NSAA.

PHOTOS BY **JAN HAZEN**

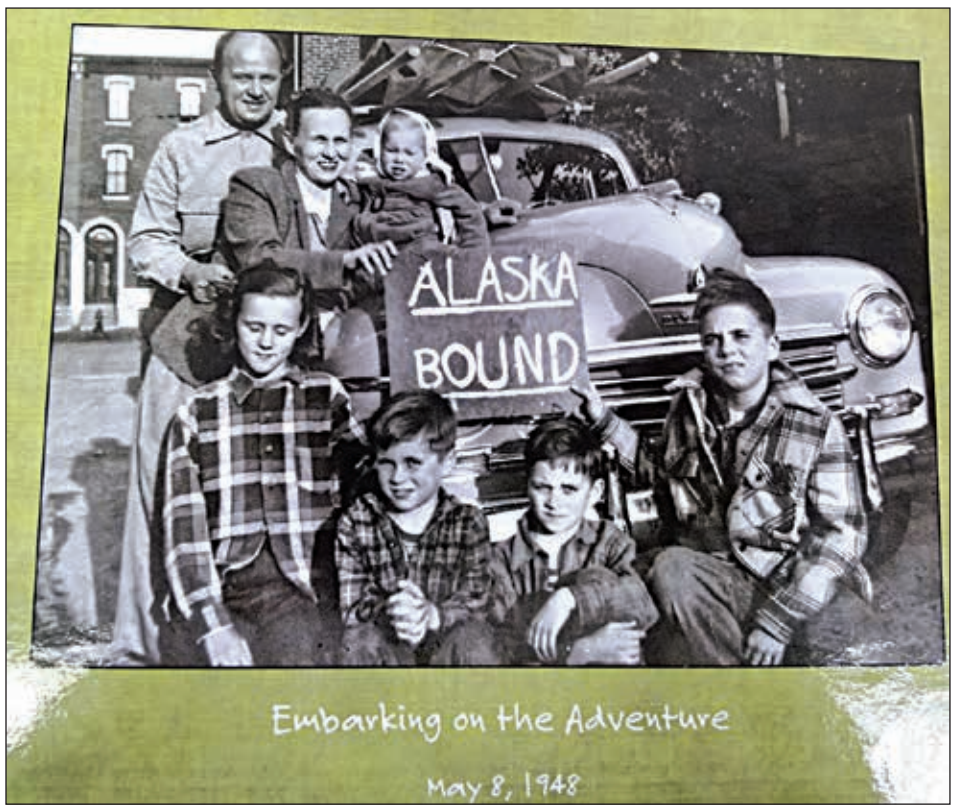
RACE RESULTS — Duathlon: 1. Sarah Freistone; 2. Madeleine Reckmeyer; 3. Sara Miller. Freestyle: 1. Briana Lowen; 2. Zoe Rodgers; 3. Claire Wilkerson. Classic: 1. Sultana Noffsinger; 2. Abigail Elbow; 3. Theresa Phillips

COSTUMES — Best Group: Polar Bees. Best Kiddo: Hot Dog, Mustard & Ketchup.

SAVE THE DATE — Alaska Ski for Women arrives on February 2, 2020. It takes numerous volunteers to put on this great event for the community. Whether you can commit a few hours, or a few hours each month to help with the 24th annual event, there are a variety of ways you can help! Email alaskaskiforwomen@gmail.com to learn more!

NSAA Member Spotlight: Tim Middleton

NSAA is always thrilled to celebrate and thank its special members. This season, NSAA is spotlighting a handful of those supporters with short stories in the Nordic Skier. March's NSAA Members of the Month are Tim and Joyce Middleton, who have deep roots in Alaska skiing, were at the foundation of many popular NSAA programs, and have been as active on the trails and behind the skiing scenes as they are supporting their team of skiing family members. Tim, a former NSAA board president, recently visited the NSAA office to chat about his family, his love of trails, and to share some sentimental and historical images of his family.



How many years have you been Nordic skiing?

Since I was 7 years old, playing around on wooden skis with my brother on our homestead in Homer in late 1940s.

How many seasons have you been involved with NSAA as a member and donor?

About 45 years. I first got involved in a backcountry skiing group that met at Central Middle School. Since 1971 as a member, and I donated my time as Board President from 1976-1978.

What do you love about Nordic skiing?

I've always loved being outside! We started skiing with our daughter and now, we're out cheering on our grandkids.

What does NSAA's mission mean to you?

Connecting people to trails and getting kids outside. After I was no longer board president, I wanted to get kids together to ski, so we gathered 20-30 kids from the neighborhood including my wife and other parents and called ourselves Munchkins. This volunteer-run youth skiing group was so popular, we formed a committee and over the summer, we hired coaches and organized more groups to ski around Anchorage. I also helped establish ski touring programs through the club to connect members to trails.

Do you have some standout moments from skiing, connecting with NSAA and/or participating in programs or events that you would like to share?

As board president, myself and other well-known skiers advocated for the lighted trails at Russian Jack, Service High School, and Kincaid. We knew more people would ski if the trails had light, helping to draw folks outside during long winters.

I had been attending ski races outside Anchorage, and we needed longer ski race distances like 50k, but Anchorage didn't have the trail system in place to support a 50k ski race. I worked on the committees that created the Tour of Anchorage race, and the committees that advocated for more trail systems that could support a 50k ski race, including writing to Mayor Tony Knowles. I also was the co-chief of the 1992 World Masters race held in Anchorage!

SPONSORED

Make tracks to TRAX on your way to Kincaid!

TRAX Outdoor Center 2.0, Anchorage's newest Nordic ski shop, is situated perfectly on your way to Kincaid Park in the Tastee Freez mall. We rent skate skis and classic skis from race to touring styles. We wax with same-day service, and yep, we do kick wax. TRAX Outdoor Center is the No. 1 dealer for the most exciting ski brand in the world: Salomon! You can demo any gear, any time, because sometimes you have to see it and ski it to believe it. :)

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A 100-year-old skiing surprise

BY TIM KELLEY

For 20 years I had been driving by what could be Anchorage's oldest known cross-country skis. I'd drive, run or bike past these skis sometimes four or more times a day. I made many thousands of trips past these ancient skis. But I didn't have a clue they were there, out in the open, watching me go by.

I live in the Goldenview Drive area of Anchorage. Back in 1936 Harold and Ruth Moen established a homestead in the South Goldenview area. There's still a remnant of their old homestead where their daughter Janey Moen and her husband live and have a horse boarding stable. Also in this area is Moen Park and an old homestead trail called the Moen Trail.

I had been to Janey's horse stables a number of times. But this summer I stopped by to attend a barbeque with a bunch of New Zealand horsemen (some bloody fine Kiwi blokes I might add). I asked Janey some questions about the history of her place. Come to find out, she has the bulldozer that made the original Goldenview Drive. And she has a shed that was actually an outhouse from the 1917 railroad construction camp at Potter, that was dragged up to the Moen homestead with the bulldozer.

And then I noticed some long, weathered, old cross skis leaning up against the 1917 shed.

"And what is the story with those old skis leaning against the shed?" I asked.

"My father found them in the Potter work camp," Janey replied, "and used them to travel between this homestead and the Potter railroad stop."

When I heard that my head started spinning. From the last 12 years of working on the Alaska Lost Ski Areas Project (www.alsap.org), I've got a lot of ski history facts floating around in my head. Numbers started lining up. March 4, 1917, was the first known cross-country ski race in Anchorage. This shed was from 1917. The skis were found near this shed. Could these skis have been used in that first cross-country ski race?

PHOTO COURTESY **TIM KELLEY**

Tim Kelley and Martin Hansen with the Moen Homestead Skis.

I knew they were old and needed to be rescued, so I broached obtaining and restoring them with Janey. She thought it over, and a couple of months later she gave the skis to me.

I consulted with friends who are antique ski experts: Greg Fangel of Tofte, MN (**woodenskis.com**), and my ALSAP cohort Dave Brann of Homer. Cable bindings had been put on these skis at a later date, so Greg said to remove them and make the skis period-authentic. Dave advised me to be very careful sanding the skis so no markings would be lost.

We concluded that the skis were likely from the late teens or twenties of last century. So, these skis could be up to 100 years old. Stamped markings on the bottom side of the tips indicate these skis were manufactured, and not homemade. But unfortunately, there is no way to know if they were used in Anchorage's first ski race in 1917.

I told Janey that if she gave me the skis, I would find a good home for them. These historic skis were once a Norwegian's skis and nobody embraces Norwegian heritage more than Norwegians. So I contacted Tom Falskow, president of the Anchorage Sons of Norway club.

Tom was excited about the skis and put me in contact with board member Martin Hansen, who I knew from 1980's Iditaski races. Soon the Moen Homestead Skis had a place of display in the entryway of the Sons of Norway Bernt Balchen Lodge in Anchorage. The perfect home for a Norwegian's skis, that are perhaps the oldest skis with Anchorage history in Alaska.

Stumbling upon these old skis, obtaining and refurbishing them and seeing the enthusiasm as they were passed on to a good home was a fun experience. And from this experience, there were a couple takeaway points.

A sense of heritage helps bond a community. Just ask any Norwegian. Talk to old-timers, read about the past, and keep your eye out for relics of our Alaskan heritage. Your bonds to Alaska will only grow stronger.

And if you find something really cool from Alaska's past, share it with other Alaskans. You'll find that others will be happy that you shared. And that will make you happy that you shared.

For further information about Anchorage's first known cross-country ski race, visit **alsap.org/4thAvenue/4thAvenue.htm**. See pictures of 1917 Alaska railroad work camp at Potter Creek (South Anchorage) at **vilda.alaska.edu/digital/search/searchterm/potter%20creek**

March Ski Madness in Talkeetna

BY LAURA WRIGHT

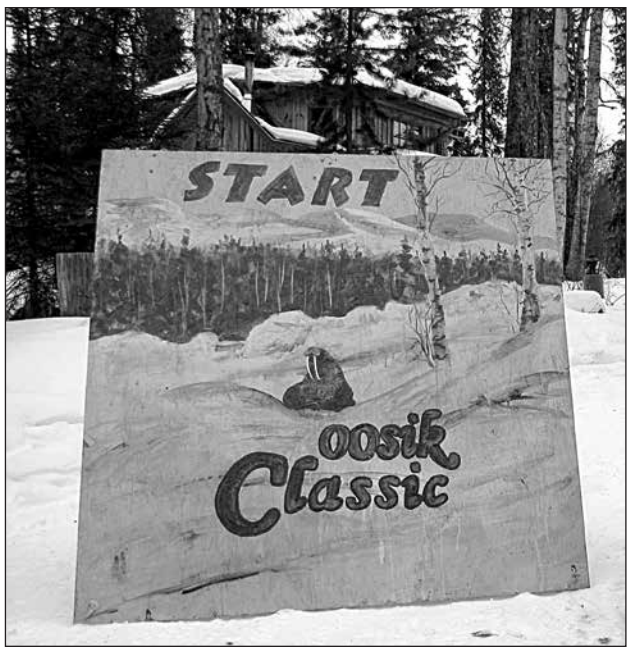
There are so many trails to ski in Talkeetna it is just phenomenal. What a great season it has been so far and now that it is March there is so much more time to enjoy winter. DNSC trailmeister and friends have focused their energies on putting in the Oosik Ski Race trail, which arrives on Saturday, March 16. Registration is underway (www.denalinordicskiclub.org/oosik-ski-race) and the trail is basically in! Not all of it has set tracks yet but the route is figured out and sections that go through the Talkeetna Lakes park are groomed with tracks.

Here are the details so far:

Friday evening, March 15 — Move night in Talkeetna! A Nordic ski movie will be shown at 7 p.m. at the Sheldon Community Arts Hangar. It's Rated R, so no kiddos allowed! Donations are appreciated. "The Last King" stars "Game of Thrones" regular Kristofer Hivju. The year is 1206. Norway is ravaged by civil war. The King's illegitimate son is guarded in deep secret. A boy that half of the kingdom wants to kill and two men will protect to the death. A boy named Earl Håkonsson Birkebeiners is the story of the escape that changed Norway's history forever.

Saturday, March 16 — Ski waxing: We encourage you to wax your own skis. If you are going to have your skis waxed by the volunteers, they must be dropped off at the race start by 8 a.m.; no skis will be waxed after 11! There is no Friday afternoon wax station downtown.

Saturday, March 16 — Let the racing begin! Junior Oosik 1-4K starts at 10:30 a.m.; 50K starts at noon; 25K starts at 12:30 p.m. The start will be at the gravel pit at Mile 11 of the Spur Road, just south of the Flying Squirrel Bakery.



A familiar sight for Oosik racers – this old sign is in use every year.

The course covers 25 and 50 kilometers of excellent rolling wooded terrain, several lakes and a few bogs as it makes its way toward the Talkeetna River. There won't be any river miles this year so we can avoid the unpredictable freeze and thaws that seem to have become normal.

The finish is at the Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge. Some of you may remember two years ago the huge hill to get up to the finish. Well, you'll have to do that again but we've found an easier route up that won't be as intimidating; still uphill though! I recommend stopping and taking in an amazing view of town, the railroad tracks, State airport and the Alaska range that is a view not seen from other vantage points.

The Oosik is always jamming. Here's what the start of 2014 race looked like.

Saturday, March 16 — Let the afterparty begin! We will only have one official party and it will be at the Talkeetna Alaska Lodge. This allows racers and their non-racing friends and family to celebrate in a larger space. In past years we always had a party downtown at the Sheldon Arts Hangar but we've decided against that this year. Of course, you can party downtown with great restaurants and live music at the Fairview Inn.

Swag — We've got a new Ski Talkeetna hat. They will be available for purchase at registration for $35. Volunteers: Yes – we need you. There are lots of things you can help us with such as signage, registration, parking, aid stations, road crossings, clean-up and more. The Oosik race director is Lauri Steck. Please register to volunteer using the online form at denalinordicskiclub.org/oosik-ski-race/volunteer-for-the-oosik/. All volunteers receive a Ski Talkeetna hat.

Ski you in Talkeetna!

Eagle River Nordic Ski Club
Eagle River, Alaska

P.O. Box 770117, Eagle River, Alaska 99577
Club hotline — 689-7660
Junior nordic hotline — 689-7661
cernsc.wildapricot.org

Chugiak, Eagle River high school skiers represent at regionals, on the trails, in the classroom

Chugiak Mustangs ride high with first regions title (and GPA title, too!)

BY MAX BEIERGROHSLEIN

The Chugiak High ski team turned a new leaf in this 2018-19 ski season. The season started off with a bang or more appropriately a big earthquake. Several races were cancelled due to the quake which really was unfortunate as early season races are necessary to get those racing jitters out of the way. The team right from the get-go was strong and confident. We all came to practice with smiles on our faces and were rearing to get on the skis.

Going into Regionals, we were all confident in our abilities and knew we could maybe, just maybe, come out on top. Sure enough a day later we stood in the Kincaid Park Chalet with Chugiak's first ever region title. It was a joyous moment that we, the varsity members, shared with the entire team. Then to our surprise we won the GPA award with an average of 4.13.

Our team success has been in part from this season's amazing coaching staff. Branden Fontana, the new head coach, brought a new energy to the team which has worked well as results have shown. Assistant coaches Sarissa Lammers and Autumn Person were also a huge help. A special thanks also has to be given to Stan Carrick who has been coaching most of the varsity kids since they started skiing. He has been a huge support to the team and is one of the best coaches out there. The regionals weekend was awesome and will definitely be remembered. We hope to create even more awesome memories at the State Championships in the week to come.

The Chugiak Mustangs (front row) celebrate regionals racing.

First-year skier learns from new Eagle River High family

BY BENJAMIN STAPES

Junior, first year on team

When you think of an intense sport, the first things to come to mind are sports like football and hockey – you would never think of Nordic skiing. Or may not have even heard of cross-country or Nordic skiing. Nordic skiing is one of the toughest, most demanding sports of all time. It requires impenetrable mindsets, complete concentration, long endurance, and immense power.

Why would anyone want to compete in a sport that requires so much? Personally, I do it for the fitness, skiing allows me to tone my body and maintain great physical standing. I also enjoy the camaraderie, and the spirit of other skiers. The people on the ski team have become a sort of second family, a very diverse one with every color imaginable. In just one year, I've made countless unforgettable moments with my family and friends. One of my favorite memories being the whole team singing songs together on a bus ride back from the Regionals meet. For the whole ride we sang "Don't Stop Believin'," "Africa," and other iconic songs like "Sweet Caroline." Moments unique, that could never be duplicated. I highly suggest that if you don't participate in a winter sport, you try Nordic Skiing with ERHS. You'll have some of the best times of your life with us. Just make sure you don't use up all the ski wax.

Welcome to cross-country skiing!

BY ETHAN JENNINGS

The flag is up and they're off! The sound of poles stabbing the ground and skis gliding fill my ears and I know I am now racing. So many thoughts fill my head: what if this happens or that, but I have to focus on my race. As I take it kilometer by kilometer, every corner is taken with precision, speed and finesse. The final kilometer is coming up and I get just as nervous as when I started my race. Adrenaline is pumping through my veins and tunnel vision sets in. The only thing in my mind is finishing my race. I see the final stretch, just me and 100 meters until I'm done. I hear the crowd's roar and the cowbells ring, I hear my coach yelling, "hyah hyah hyah," and telling me I'm doing great even though I don't think I am. I cross the line and am exhausted thinking of what I just accomplished knowing other people still have their race to finish.

I think to myself, "Why do I put myself through all the pain" and I think "Is it the people on my team, the sense of pride and accomplishment, or just improving physically?" I realize it's all of them. I ski because of the sense of pride I get at the end of a race, my teammates that cheer me on, having fun, and just staying in shape. Others do it because their cross-country running coach told them to, some because it keeps them happy and fit, a few because they love pushing their body past its limits and love seeing how far they can go, or some because they're not good at basketball. In the end I realize I wouldn't want to be on any other team, because when it comes down to it we're a family. I wouldn't want to be on any other team because I know this is where I belong: skiing at Eagle River.

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AROUND EAGLE RIVER

Busy season for Eagle River Junior Nordic ends with pizza party on March 21

ERJN Coach Harty recently wrote, "Our Junior Nordic season is in full throttle and the trails at Beach Lake are in amazing shape! Our kiddos are learning at lightning speed and even the littlest skiers are venturing far into the woods in search of adventure! Our last day is March 7 but the season will culminate in our end-of-year pizza party from 6-8 p.m. Thursday, March 21, at the United Methodist Church on the Old Glenn Highway. We hope to see all our families there to celebrate a great year!"

Eagle River Junior Nordic members are ready to ski!

Mirror Lake Middle School has a huge team, including this crew of five smiling skiers at the Service High race on February 13. From left to right is Livia Valenote, Akela Byrne, Coral Mercer, Kiley Dennis and Sora Hanna.

As Besh Cup closes, Junior Nationals presents next challenge for Alaska's top young skiers

BY CCAK

Despite Mother Nature posing challenges for most of the ConocoPhillips Besh Cup racing season, all the Alaska Junior Nationals qualifying races were held. The first weekend of races, usually held in Anchorage, was relocated to the Government Peak Recreational Area (GPRA). The second weekend of races was held inx Soldotna at the Tsalteshi Trails as planned. The final weekend of racing in Fairbanks was jeopardized by a bitter cold temperature forecast … but the famous Birch Hill inversion factor came through, allowing for a Saturday sprint race and a beautiful Sunday mass start race in balmy 12 above temperatures.

United States Ski & Snowboard, the governing organization of U.S. Cross Country Junior Nationals, divides the U.S. into five regions; usually allowing 42 athletes per region to compete at the March championship event. This year, each region was allowed to take up to eight additional athletes; so Alaska formed a base team of 50 athletes. In addition, 11 of 14 athletes who prequalified based on results in January either at U.S. National Championships in Craftsbury, Vermont, or at Youth & Junior World Championships in Slovakia comprised the final slots of Team Alaska; making this one of the larger fields of athletes representing Alaska.

CCAK congratulates the members of Team Alaska for the U.S. Cross Country Junior Nationals:

U16 — Victoria Bassette; Neena Brubaker; Hannah Delamere; Quincy Donley; Marit Flora; Abigail Haas; Katey Houser; Maria Nedom; Meredith Schwartz; Josh Baurick; Porter Blei; Carter Brubaker; Kai Caldwell; Aaron Maves; Eli Merrill; Aaron Power; Noah Rehberg; and Konrad Renner.

U18/U20 — Tjarn Bross; Morgan Coniglio; Hannah Cryder; Jenna Difolco; Maggie Druckenmiller; Ivy Eski; Annie Gonzales; Annika Hanestad; Emma Jerome; Kendall Kramer; Maja Lapkass; Aubrey LeClair; Anja Maijala; Ellie Mitchell; Claire Nelson; Adrianna Proffitt; Garviey Tobin; Emily Walsh; Maggie Whitaker; Helen Wilson; Tatum Witter; Adeline Wright; Josiah Alverts; Micah Barber; Dale Baurick; Max Beiergrohslein; Jonathan Burrell; Everett Cason; George Cvancara; Karl Danielson; Samuel Delamere; Miles Dennis; Eric Difolco; Michael Earnhart; Ari Endestad; Maxime Germain; Eli Hermanson; Alexander Maurer; Zanden McMullen; Kai Meyers; Joel Power; and Gus Schumacher.

U18/U20 Guest Member (non-US) — Patrick Marbacher.

Alaskans make mark – and history – at international events

The vision of Cross Country Alaska is to have Alaska's cross-country skiers succeeding at the highest levels of competition. Once again, this vision was realized with many skiers on the international teams being from Alaska.

In January, Alaska skiers had great success racing internationally. Adrianna Proffitt and Michael Earnhart raced in Estonia for the Nordic Nations' Cup. Proffitt and her team members landed on the podium for relay race, placing third in the 3x3K mixed discipline race. Each of them had strong showings in their individual events with Proffitt placing 10th in the 5-kilometer freestyle race and Earnhart placing 13th in the 10-kilometer freestyle race. Additionally, Earnhart was the top U.S. sprinter qualifying 15th and finishing 15th in the sprint heats.

Also in January, Alaska was also well-represented at the World Junior Championships in Lahti, Finland. Fairbanks skier Kendall Kramer and Anchorage skier Gus Schumacher posted results which earned them opportunities for start positions at the World Cup races being held in Quebec at the end of March. Kramer and Schumacher each placed fourth in the classic mass start event. Schumacher missed the podium by 0.2 seconds and

See **INTERNATIONAL**, Page 9

SPONSORED

Food for the Entire Team!

For over 9 years, South Anchorage residents have been coming to locally owned and operated Firetap Alehouse and Restaurant for its signature pretzel sandwiches, gourmet pizzas, hearty salads and a great selection of appetizers. Firetap Alehouse has 36 different beers to choose from, the majority made in Alaska, and you can even get them to go at the growler bar in the liquor store. There is something on the menu for everyone on the team and plenty of space to accommodate large groups.

Firetap Alehouse is a strong supporter of our community athletics including Nordic Skiing, Soccer, Wrestling, Basketball, and Baseball. Firetap also supports numerous charities and participates in school-business partnerships with many South Anchorage schools.

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Firetap is conveniently located at 10950 O'Malley Centre Drive, near the corner of Old Seward Highway and O'Malley Road. Call ahead to order your food or pizza to-go at **(907) 561-2337**, then grab a growler and/or some wine. The menu is online at **firetapalehouse.com**.

Girdwood Nordic Ski Club
Girdwood, Alaska

P.O. Box 337
Girdwood, AK 99587
skigirdwood.org

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PHOTO BY **AMY SCHUMACHER**

Alaska's Hailey Swirbul and U.S. teammates Lina Sutro and Julia Kern are all smiles after racing in the U23 Women's division of the World Junior Championships in Lahti, Finland.

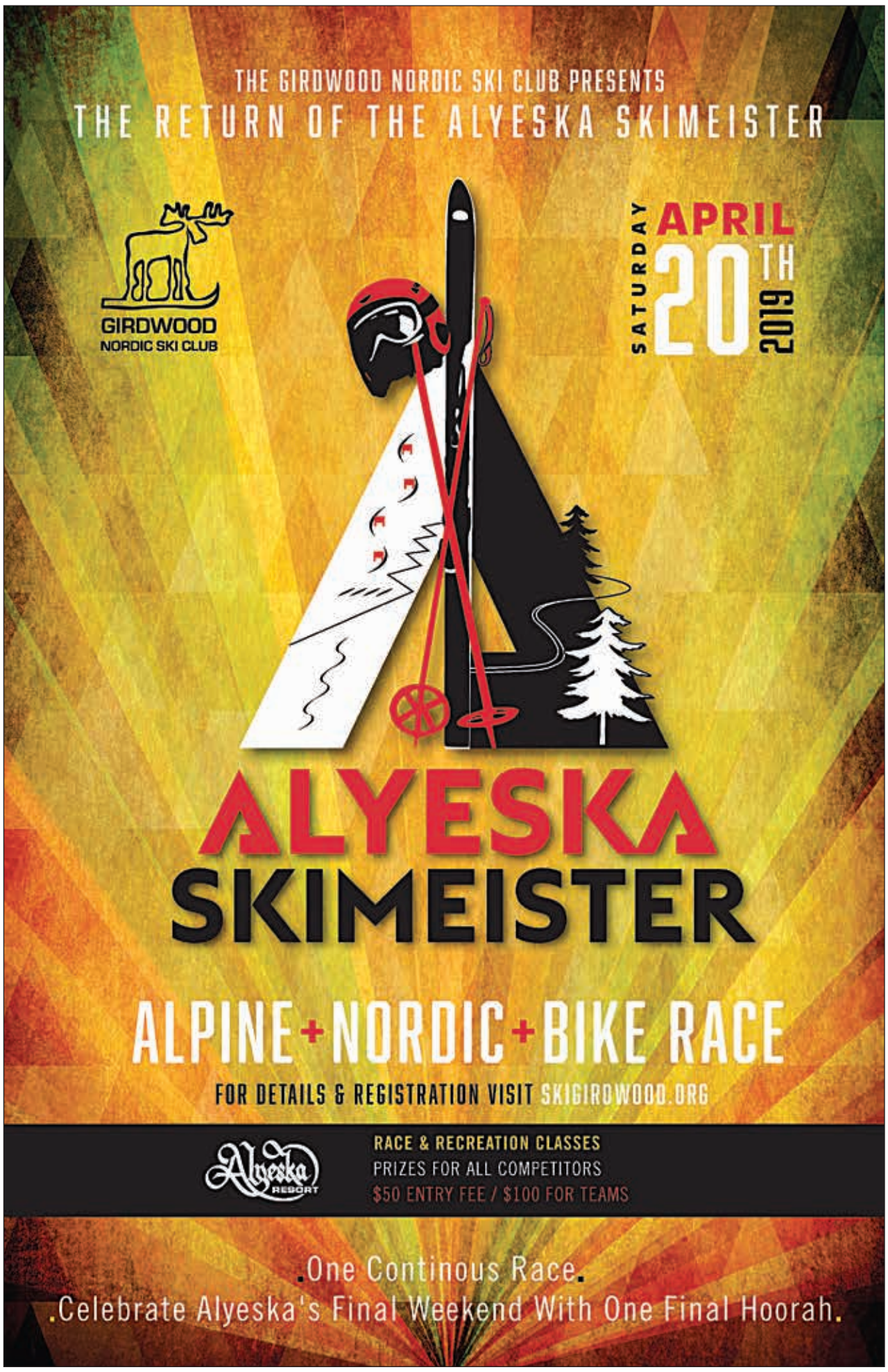
INTERNATIONAL

Continued from Page 8

the next U.S. skier was Alaskan Zanden McMullen in 32nd place. Team USA found its way to the top of the podium on relay day with two Alaskans bookending the lineup. Schumacher, a member of the 2018 silver medal history-making relay team with two Alaskan teammates (Hunter Wonders and Luke Jager), once again anchored the relay team with Jager as the scramble leg. (Wonders participated at World Junior Championships as a member of the U23 team.) Going into the relay as a favorite for a medal, the U.S. skiers pushed the pace on every leg making for a very exciting race for all who were watching the online video stream in the early hours of January 26. At the end of the race, Team USA topped Russia by 3.8 seconds and Germany by 6.3 seconds thanks to each member of their team going out and doing their job. (Read more about the team's historic race on Page 9 as part of the Junior Nationals preview.) Alaska skiers in the U23 competition had their own various successes with Hunter Wonders being the top U.S. skier in the 15K freestyle race and Hanna Halvorsen and Hailey Swirbul as top U.S. sprinters. Swirbul landed in the top

PHOTO BY **ROBERTA WONDERS**

Alaska's Hunter Wonders had a strong showing in the U23 Men's division of the World Junior Championships in Lahti, Finland.



10 for the 15K classic mass start race and is eligible to compete in the Quebec World Cup races with Kramer and Schumacher. By all standards Alaskans had great showings; and we'll likely be cheering for these young skiers in the coming years.

With 2019 being a non-Arctic Winter Games season, Alaska fielded a U14 team to attend the Intermountain Division Youth Championships in Jackson, Wyoming. Based on their results in the ConocoPhillips Besh Cup races, these middle schoolers represented Alaska at the end of February for a fun weekend of racing and festivities. Congratulations to Meredith Duhrsen, Nora Hulse, Zarah Laker-Morris, Fern LeClair (not attending), Sammy Legate, Berit Meyers, Heidi Schumacher, Peter-John Bragonier, Aven Elsberg, Elias Engman, Paul Hlasny, Murphy Kimball and Elias Soule for their successful racing seasons to represent Alaska at this Outside race weekend.

Finally, for the older junior skiers in the U18/U20 age group, the Besh Cup trophy was awarded to Garviey Tobin and Kai Meyers, both skiers with APUNSC. This traveling trophy is awarded to the top skier in this age group who races all six races of the ConocoPhillips Besh Cup race series.

Congratulations to all skiers of the ConocoPhillips Besh Cup races and thanks to the support from families, host clubs, coaches, and race officials.

Mat-Su Ski Club

Palmer, Alaska

1150 S. Colony Way, Suite 3
Palmer, Alaska 99645
(907) 745-SKIS
www.matsuski.org

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AROUND THE VALLEY

The family that skis together …

I am going to take some editorial freedom and talk about that other form of skiing: downhill. I am also going to take that same "right" and talk about my child. So bear with me. My kiddo turned the life-changing 4 this last month and while birthdays are noteworthy, well, to those below the age of 21, this particular month meant quite a bit to his folks …

Exhibit A) My wife spent the morning playing with him on the "magic carpet" in Girdwood trying his 80 cm Blizzard Blizzi skis. I would love to report to all Nordic types that he completely rejected this riff-raff, and promptly requested his Nordic skis. However, to our dismay he actually enjoyed the experience and after a few hours he was requesting to take his first chair lift. Even better yet, my wife who has snowboarded most her life, was asking for skis so she could help the boy learn to ski. In case any of you non-Charlie Sheen folks do not understand the word "winning," this is it.

In previous articles, I've spent some time talking about this sport and its amazing value to families. And while the previous example doesn't include the "skinny" skis, it nevertheless gives an n+1 case study of getting ones kids out on skis. They naturally love sliding on snow with sticks. I might even make an argument that it is innate, but I haven't yet got my masters in anthropology. My point being is that kids take energy and what better way to burn that energy then throwing them down a hill on skis, or have them chase you on skis, or have them just stare at you on skis. It all pays dividends in the end …

– By Hans Hill

Ski for Women Mat-Su

On Sunday, February 10, 143 skiers, fat bikers, and snow-shoers gathered at Government Peak Recreation Area (GPRA) for the Mat-Su Ski for Women. Patterned after the Anchorage event, this community event was a fundraiser for Alaska Family Services. Participants went a variety of distances on the beautifully groomed trails. The event started at 2 p.m. and was followed by a raffle and potluck at 3. Costumes were encouraged and ran the gamut from super heroines to four "Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg" cyclists. The costume contest was won by a two-person team of snow fairies, who were awarded the "Golden Ski Pole." While the event was free to participants, donations were encouraged and $4,316.41 was raised to help Mat-Su families in need.

We must mention those wonderful sponsors who made this event a substantial success: Mat-Su Health Foundation; Mat-Su Womens Health Specialist; Backcountry Bike & Ski; REI; Skin Like A. Rose Aesthetics; Midnight Sun Yoga; Alaska Massage Clinic; Brew Haha; Northern Edge Physical Therapy; Valley Performing Arts; Alaska Artisan Coffee; No More Mat-Su; and Gagnon Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery.

Pick.Click.Give

As you are receiving this you are entering the last month for apply for your PFD, but I am sure all of you have already applied. Nevertheless, whether you have or not applied, you can still donate to the Mat-Su Ski Club through Pick.Click.Give. For those unfamiliar, when filing for your PFD it is an option for you to donate to those non-profits that you support … and as it would happen MSSC is one of those non-profits you can donate to. FYI, you can elect the amount to donate, not necessarily the whole PFD amount … And not to mention, this deducts from your taxable income!

Help needed – Groomers

So maybe you've seen that shiny red MSSC groomer making it rounds around GPRA and said to yourself, "Gee, that looks fun," or some derivative of that. If so, the MSSC is looking for a couple folks to fortify our groomer ranks. Normal volunteer hours are 8 p.m.-midnight, but the schedule is flexible. Obviously qualified applicants would be cold weather "compliant." No experience necessary. Please give Ed Strabel a call if interested at 354-7524.

Race to the Outhouse #2

Obviously, you all are now ramping in to your serious distance races, but it is not to lose your sight on the premier short distance race, the Race to the Outhouse #2. I am sure you all partook in the #1, so April 6 is your season peak event. Conditions allowing, we will be at Archangel Valley Road. So make sure it is on your calendar.

Calendar of Events

March 5 — MSSC Board Meeting, GPRA, 6:30 p.m.
April 2 — MSSC Board Meeting, GPRA 6:30 p.m.
April 6 — Race to the Outhouse #2, TBA
April 6 — MSSC Spring Social, GPRA 6:30 p.m.

Kachemak Nordic Ski Club
Homer, Alaska

P.O. Box 44, Homer, Alaska 99603
kachemaknordicskiclub.org
kachemaknordicskiclub@gmail.com

AROUND THE BAY

March – The last chance for great skiing

While some expert KNSC Nordic skiers claim they can ski until June, most great skiing happens on the groomed trails around Homer during March. The sun is up for 12 hours. The snowfall is recent. The groomers are out almost every day making the trails shine.

So if you haven't tried Nordic skiing on the Homer trails this year, March is the best time. A few events, like KNSC Nordic Ski Marathon on March 9 and the Sea to Ski event on March 31, will give you more thrills.

Before an event, always check the KNSC club website (Kachemaknordicskiclub.org) and our Facebook page for updates, as well as occasional emails and future newsletters. Enjoy!

Saturday, March 9 — KNSC Nordic Ski Marathon: Lookout Mountain Ski Trails (starting line)

Sunday, March 31 — Sea to Ski: Location TBA, based on snow

More information and updates for these events can be found online at **kachemaknordicskiclub.org** or on Facebook @ Kachemak Nordic Ski Club.

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Homer Cycling Club

Sea to Ski Triathlon
Derek Bynagle

Dare to ski the legendary Kachemak Nordic Ski Marathon

Do you want to add completing Alaska's toughest Nordic ski marathon to your resume? If so, come to Homer on March 9 for the Kachemak Nordic Ski Marathon. Starting again this year from the Lookout Mountain Ski Area trails, the race offers 25K or 42K runs or lap races of 13K, 21K and 39K.

The shorter races are scenic and challenging. The longer races, however, truly take your breath away.

Hardy skiers attest to the race's difficulties. Marylou Burton has done the 25K and 40K Tours of Anchorage several times, and says, "They are way easier than our local marathon, when held on the traditional route."

"I did the 42K race here one year, came in second from last, and it about killed me," she admits.

Groomers are tested every year when they carve the marathon trail out of rugged terrain.

"Putting in the trail is a lot of work," says groomer Dave Stutzer. "It is a wildland trail located in terrain that anyone would have difficulty traversing in the summer."

The groomers first pack the wilderness trail with several snowmachine passes (over alders, willow patches, elderberries, etc.). Next, they trim the remaining vegetation. Then they make multiple passes with a steel drag to level the trail.

Groomers Billy Day and David Stutzer rough out the rugged Marathon trail prior to packing it down with snowmachines.

Heavy snow before the race means more dragging with a big roller. "One year, the week before the Kachemak Bay Marathon, we got five feet of snow," Stutzer adds. "We managed to get the trail ready for a successful race."

The connector trail, which is included in the 42K and the 25K, runs 12 miles between the Lookout and Baycrest ski areas. Both races ascend and descend the 1,345-foot Crossman Ridge and the 1,060-foot Diamond Ridge, ending up in the Baycrest parking areas.

"We sometimes get people doing our 42K who also do the Tour of Anchorage 40K, only to find themselves a little over their head," adds Burton. "I used to try to emphasize – in a joking way – that the 25K is pretty hard and is a good place to start if you haven't done the KNSC race before."

Despite the effort to groom and or to ski these difficult races, Dave Stutzer says, "Personally, I feel it's worth it. The payoff, for me, is gliding through the meadows and forests, hearing only the sound of my breath, the hiss of my skis and enjoying the stunning views of Kachemak Bay and Cook Inlet."

On race day, March 9, the Kachemak Nordic Ski Marathon opens for registration at 9 a.m. Races will begin at 10 or 10:30 a.m. Online registration is also available at the KNSC website under "Events." The event includes an awards ceremony and afterparty at Alice's Champagne Palace.

KNSC offers new class for beginning adult skiing

Kids have it good when it comes to skiing. Ski clubs like the KNSC offer lots of inexpensive ski classes for kids of all ages.

What about adults that want to learn how to ski? Try Stephanie Dickerson's new program for beginning adult skiers.

Coaching skiing is in Dickerson's blood. She started coaching alpine skiing while in college through the Professional Ski Instructors in America (PSIA) program. Moving to Homer after college, Dickerson became involved with the KNSC, ranging from teaching in the Junior Nordic (JN) program to serving on the KNSC board.

She took time off from ski club activities when starting her family six years ago. With her oldest child now in his second year of JN, Dickerson began coaching the program again in the spring of 2018.

KNSC adult beginning skiers, left to right: Jodi Andrews, Jessica Reed, Stephanie Dickerson, Peg Gavillot, David Prince, Patti Prince and Jessie Mattson.

"I'm expecting my third little skier this April," Dickerson said, "and I wanted to do something more low-key than coaching littles! I knew I wouldn't be able to help myself if I was going to be around it – I love coaching skiing at all levels."

She added, "My friends often find out how deep this (my coaching streak) runs when our impromptu ski runs at Alyeska turn into lessons!"

When Dickerson started her adult beginning ski program in January 2019, more than a half dozen adults signed up.

One adult student, Pam Gavilla, says, "I am taking the classes to learn the basics and to acquire some confidence in skiing alone. I like her teaching because she makes it fun. She personalizes her teaching according to each of our needs. She includes tips on gear and trail etiquette. I definitely recommend the classes and hope to pick up more next season."

Dickerson adds, with a smile, "It's been so fun and gratifying, and I've gotten so much wonderful feedback."

Homer youngsters thrive with KNSC Junior Nordic program

In spring, the ski hills in Homer are alive with the squeals and thrills of youngsters learning – and mastering – skiing with the KNSC Junior Nordic program.

More than 110 kids turned out in late January for this season's program. Lessons run 90 minutes every Saturday, for five Saturdays running through the end of March. At the start of the lessons, the children are divided into six groups, according to abilities, and KNSC parents and adults do the coaching.

Kim Sweeney helps Miranda Wiess, Anna Raup and other volunteers coach the youngest skiers, Sea Stars. They don't use poles and may spend more time lying on the ground than standing up.

"These sprouts do not use poles and learn to get up from a fall, shuffle, duck walk up a hill, and snowplow down," Sweeney says. "They progress from moving tentatively to zipping around independently. There have been a varying number of Sea Stars from week to week, but generally between 15 and 30 kids."

The Puffins group learns beginner classic skiing with head coach Charlie Trowbridge. These youngsters gain more confidence, mostly by watching and copying the adults. As the season progresses, the Puffins move on to the fun stuff – like skiing backwards down hills without poles and playing games on skis.

Catie Bursch and Cindy Sisson co-coach the Coho group – the kids who are advancing their classical skiing skills. About a dozen students show up each week, ranging in ages from 4 to 11 years old, with different ranges of abilities.

"We can all go along without leaving anyone too far behind," says Bursch, "and they can all come to a stop using snowplow on a steep hill. Last week we taught them how to sidestep up and side-slip down steep hills. We also took them off trail to show them how to break trail, how to get up after falling in deep snow, and how to identify animal tracks."

The Sockeye group, working on beginning skate skiing, number 12 strong. Ranging in age from 7 to 11 years old, "They have some experience on skis and lots of enthusiasm," says coach Chris Jacobson. "I love seeing the enthusiasm and energy these kids bring every week to our sessions."

Puffins gather with coach Charlie Trowbridge.

The Sockeyes progress from herringbone to single-pole skating, and learn to use single or double poles if hills are too steep.

Youngsters with intermediate skate skiing abilities join the Harbor Seals group. Coach Annie Ridgely says seven skiers participate every week. "They are learning how to transition through different skate techniques based on terrain. They are fast, tucking down hills, and fearless with trying new things on skis."

The Salmon Sharks are the advanced skate skiers, under coach Emily Lint. These young daredevils ski some challenging terrain and learn from their coaches how to change their techniques. As with the other JN groups, these youngsters learn most by watching and copying the advanced moves made by their adult coaches.

And the coaches make sure the lessons are fun.

"I coach Junior Nordic because I enjoy playing games with young children outdoors, witnessing their ability to learn new skills quickly, and sharing my love of the sport of skiing," says Kim Sweeney. "I also enjoy the whole family involvement the activity supports. In addition to ski coaches, there are many parents and grandparents who help out."

"I coach because I love to ski, and I love kids," says Catie Bursch.

"I coach Junior Nordic because I have four kids and want to see Nordic skiing continue to have a large community in Homer," says Annie Ridgely. "I want my kids to be a part of a something bigger than just skiing with me on nice days, and to I want give back to the Nordic ski program that has had a tremendous impact in my own life."

"Coaching Junior Nordic provides an opportunity for me to share my love of skiing and the outdoors with kids," adds Chris Jacobson.

Credit for the program's success also goes to the JN director Kathy Sarns. During the five-week spring program, she sends out weekly emails to the coaches giving instructions for each level. Each Saturday, she shows up to help each group get organized. Sarns also has a huge catalog of age-appropriate games and techniques to motive the youngsters to improve their Nordic skills.

Kim Sweeney says, "Kathy Sarns is an amazing organizer who makes keeping over 100 young skiers challenged and happy look easy. She is attentive to detail, a timely communicator, a talented ski instructor, and has an unflagging happy attitude that warms all she touches. The program is fortunate to have Kathy's guidance."

What do the Junior Nordic kids say?

Rye Ridgely, age 5, says the program is "easy and fun, and it's in the snow too!" Joy Ridgely, age 8, says, "Even if you're 12, you'll be having fun." Obi Ridgely, age 6 says, "It was so awesome and Coach Kathy squirted water in my mouth!"

Riley Dickerson, age 5, says, "It was really fun. We went through some hoops and did a really fun big downhill. And we bend our knees is how we go down fun twisty hills! I like Junior Nordic a lot." His sister, Taylor, age 2, hasn't started Junior Nordic yet, but has watched her brother from the sidelines. "I really like Junior Nordic too," she adds.

Sockeye skiers pick up skate skiing pointers from their coaches.

Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks
Fairbanks, Alaska
SKIING UNDER THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

P.O. Box 80111, Fairbanks, AK 99708-0111
Competition Office — 907-474-4242
Competition Fax — 907-474-2073
Racing Hotline — 907-457-4434
nscfairbanks.org

UAF Biathlete Grace Miller: Overcoming the challenges of skiing and shooting with one arm

Normally, we feature an NSCF volunteer in our Q&A profiles, but this month we thought we'd feature Grace Miller, a UAF freshman student and member of the ski team who competed last year in the Paralympics.

Grace was born without a left forearm. She has been skiing a long time, but she has recently taken up biathlon.

PHOTOS COURTESY **GRACE MILLER**

Grace Miller competes in the Besh Cup races at Government Peak Recreation Area in December 2018.

How long have you been a cross-country skier? What do you remember about first learning to ski? When did you start biathlon?

I started skiing when I was 4 years old. My mom loved the outdoors and skiing so she shared her passion with me. When I first started skiing I remember wanting to lie in the snow to make snow angels and being really tired. So, actually not very much skiing going on. Thankfully, now I can go at least three hours before I want to lie down and make snow angels.

My mom used to be the U.S. biathlon coach so I've always had some interest in biathlon. Also biathletes look so cool skiing and shooting in the snow. It wasn't until I join the U.S. Paralympic team though that I got the opportunity to try biathlon. I started training to shoot this past July and I just had my first race six months later. I've had an amazing transition into biathlon with the help of the Eagle Eyes Biathlon club in Anchorage and the UAF rifle team.

What do you like about cross-country skiing? Biathlon?

I love Nordic skiing because it is the perfect sport to do in cold, dark Fairbanks, Alaska. It keeps you warm and allows you do something with the three hours of daylight we have. Honestly, though, when I ski it is the most peaceful and stress-free I feel in a day. Especially, now that I am in college, training with the team has been a huge stress reliever for me and gives me a break from school.

I just had my first biathlon race so I'm still in the learning process but I love it. It is a completely different mental mindset than normal ski racing. It feels more like interval racing but you have to keep your heart rate low, which is really contradicting.

What sort of challenges have you had to overcome competing in skiing and biathlon without a left forearm?

I've been skiing since I was 4 years old, but I was never very fast at it. It wasn't until junior year of high school that I considered trying to be competitive in skiing. I can train exactly like everyone else on the team, except I'll just ski with one pole. Skate skiing is usually easier because it requires less arm strength than classic skiing. It's hard to make up skiing with one pole, but being extremely fit and having perfect technique will definitely help. I'm still working on becoming fit and learning every day on how I can improve my technique. To ski with one arm you honestly just need to really love the sport and be driven. You can do anything if you have a passion for it and know how to work hard.

Surprisingly competing in biathlon has been pretty smooth. Since I only shoot with one hand I always shoot in prone position (laying down) and shoot with a stand that helps hold up the gun.

What was it like competing in the 2018 Paralympics? Were you nervous? Were you happy with your performances?

Going to Pyeongchang (South Korea) was an amazing experience that I was entirely unprepared for. I got voted in as a wild card athlete and learned a month before that I was going. It was honestly a life-changing event to go to because it allowed me to see other people race exactly like me. Currently, I am still getting beat by my competition, but that is really exciting for me because it gives me no excuses for being slow. It shows me how much I can improve and how fast I can go. When I go to Beijing 2022 :) I am really excited to represent my country again and hope to bring back a medal.

Where do you like to cross-country ski and why?

Honestly, I have never been to a bad location to ski. You can ski on lakes, forests or mountains, which is partly why I love it. Skiing is also a year-round sport and involves a lot of cross-training, like running, hiking, roller skiing, or rock climbing, which makes it really exciting. The main reason I love skiing, though, is the community of people. The Nordic ski community is full of awesome, cool, supportive people who just love to ski. If it wasn't for how supportive my hometown and college ski community has been I would have probably quit skiing.

What other activities do you enjoy besides skiing?

Currently 98 percent of my time goes to school, training, and sleeping. In my extra free time though I really enjoy reading. I find it really relaxing to take my eyes off of a screen and take my mind away from training and school.

When and why did you move to Fairbanks? What do you like about living in Fairbanks?

University of Alaska Fairbanks was a really good fit for me when I was applying to colleges. It had a ski team and is a ski community town, I have in-state tuition, and it was math-and-science focused. Also, ski coach Eliska is one of the best ski coaches I have ever had and has helped me grow so much. (Eliska Albrigtsen is assistant coach with the Nanooks.)

Read more about Grace at **disabledsportsusa.org/athelete-profile/grace-miller/**.

Who's Who in the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks

JUNIOR NORDIC HOTLINE
457-4437

PRESIDENT
Steven Hansen
president@nscfairbanks.org

VICE PRESIDENT
Bruce Jamieson
vicepresident@nscfairbanks.org

SECRETARY
Helena Rueter
secretary@nscfairbanks.org

TREASURER
Anna Sorenson
treasurer@nscfairbanks.org

AT-LARGE MEMBERS
Eric Buetow
Peter Delamere
Chris Puchner
Mark Winford

ADULT LESSONS COORDINATOR
Andie Levesque
adultlessons@nscfairbanks.org

FAIRBANKS JUNIOR NORDICS
Sally Endestad and Jennifer Williamson
juniornordics@nscfairbanks.org
371-9564

FAIRBANKS CROSS COUNTRY
Alasdair Tutt
Head Coach, Program Director
FXC@nscfairbanks.org

RACE PROGRAM DIRECTOR
John Estle
competitionevents@nscfairbanks.org

BIATHLON
Jim Pasek
biathlon@nscfairbanks.org

TOURING
touring@nscfairbanks.org
Mike Schmoker | msfbcski@gmail.com
Eric Troyer | fbxskierparent@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
Eric Troyer
newsletter@nscfairbanks.org

Borough Try-Athlons make for interesting mashups

BY ERIC TROYER

Want to try mixing up your skiing with other winter sports? Like disc golf? The Fairbanks Borough's Winter Try-Athlon series might be what you're looking for!

The Fairbanks North Star Borough is holding its unique winter triathlon series over three days in March. The races will be held in different parks on different days of the week. These events are family-friendly.

The first race will be at 6 p.m. Thursday, March 14, at Tanana Lakes Recreation Area. It will be a run/ski/

See **TRY-ATHLONS**, Page 15

Fairbanks skiers head to Junior Nationals, IYC

BY ERIC TROYER

The NSCF-FXC Program recently qualified its largest ever team to compete in the 2019 Junior National Cross Country Ski Championships in March in Anchorage. A handful of other Fairbanks-area skiers not associated with FXC will also be racing in the championships. And a few FXC skiers also qualified for the Intermountain Youth Championships, which were held in late February.

"These teenagers have shown an incredible amount of dedication, attention to detail and hard work over many years to reach this point, all whilst performing strongly in academics, music and volunteering in the community for an average one hour each month (several complete more than two hours per week)," wrote Alasdair Tutt, FXC head coach.

Junior Nationals will be held March 11-16 at Kincaid Park in Anchorage. Junior Nationals are the pinnacle event at the national level for junior cross-country skiers in the U16-U20 age brackets (ages 14-19). (The U stands for Under, as in Under Age 16.) The Intermountain Youth Championships, held February 23-24 in Jackson, Wyoming, is a two-day event for U14 and U16 skiers that alternates every 1-2 years between Jackson, WY, and Sun Valley, ID. For Alaskans, it takes the role of the Arctic Winter Games every second year to provide a travel and competition opportunity for Alaska's U14 athletes.

Skiers for the teams were chosen based on points earned at certain races, such at the U.S. National Cross Country Championships and the Alaska Besh Cup race series. The last two Besh Cup races were held in Fairbanks in early February. Results from those races finalized the teams.

Here is a lineup of Fairbanks-area skiers competing in the two events and the teams they compete for:

JUNIOR NATIONALS — U16 Girls – Victoria Bassette (West Valley, FXC); Hannah Delamere (West Valley, FXC); Abigail Haas (Lathrop, FXC). U18/U20 Girls – Kendall Kramer (West Valley, FXC); Jenna Difolco (UAA, FXC); Maggie Druckenmiller (West Valley, FXC); Tjarn Bross (Lathrop, FXC); Emma Jerome (West Valley, FXC); Maggie Whitaker (West Valley, FXC); Anja Maijala (UAF). U16 Boys – Josh Baurick (West Valley, FXC); Eli Merrill (West Valley, FXC). U18/U20 Boys – Ti Donaldson (Montana State University); Ari Endestad (West Valley, FXC); Samuel Delamere (West Valley, FXC); Dale Baurick (West Valley, FXC); Jonathan Burrell (Lathrop, FXC); Eric Difolco (West Valley); Karl Danielson (UAF); Josiah Alverts (UAF).

INTERMOUNTAIN YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS — U14 Girls – Zarah Laker-Morris (FXC Prep). U14 Boys – Elias Engman (FXC Prep); Peter John Bragonier (FXC Prep).

Denali State Bank Sonot Kkaazoot offers fun at many distances

BY ERIC TROYER

Recreational skiers from across the state who don't already know about the fun of the Denali State Bank Sonot Kkaazoot should come Saturday, March 23, and give it a try.

Known as Fairbanks' premiere ski marathon, the Sonot is more than just a 50-kilometer race for the Spandex-clad crowd. This Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks event has a variety of offerings for a variety of participants. If you want to wear skin-tight clothing and ski hard, you are certainly welcome at this event, but if you want to wear comfy clothes and ski at a more relaxed pace you are also welcome.

To register and find out more about the Sonot, please see the Sonot webpage (https://sonotkkaazoot.org/). The regular registration deadline is 5 p.m. March 15.

In addition to the 50-kilometer freestyle race, the Denali State Bank Sonot Kkaazoot offers choices of 20 kilometers and 40 kilometers. Classic skiers are welcome at all distances, as always. There will be classic tracks on the entire course, however, this year there will not be a separate race for classic skiers in the 50-kilometer race. (But classic skiers are more than welcome to beat out those skaters for a spot at the podium!)

The 20-kilometer choice is the most popular. Participants ski just the first part of the 50k route, which heads up the Chena River for 10 kilometers before making a long climb to the trails of Birch Hill Recreation Area. By skiing 10 kilometers up and back on the river, 20k participants avoid all the hills. It's basically flat. Quite a few casual skiers usually take part in the 20-kilometer Sonot in order to get in a nice ski while enjoying the camaraderie of other casual skiers and the smiles of helpful feed station volunteers. But there's always room for more casual skiers to help bring an element of carefree fun to the event.

PHOTO BY **ERIC TROYER**

Skiers cross the first road on Fort Wainwright in the 2018 Denali State Bank Sonot Kkaazoot.

Those skiers wanting more of a challenge but who don't want to do the entire 50 kilometers can choose the 40-kilometer option. You still go up to Birch Hill, but while there you completely avoid the toughest trails: Competition, Black Hole, North 40, Blue and Outhouse. Yes, it's still a challenge, but it might be one you can do.

Of course, recreational skiers are invited to challenge themselves to the entire 50-kilometer option. A few slow diehards always sign up and are looking for more company at the back of the pack. It is a tough challenge, but with a little training many skiers can complete the course as long as they take their time and can enjoy the good-natured complaining from the other back-of-the-packers.

For all distances there are feed stations every 5 to 6 kilometers. And if the Chena River is deemed unsafe, all distances will be held completely at Birch Hill Recreation Area. The Sonot has never been canceled, so make a commitment now!

Important note for foreign skiers: Because the 40K or 50k Sonot Kkaazoot course traverses Fort Wainwright land, race organizers need your passport numbers and issuing country to submit to Fort Wainwright before you can be issued a race bib. (You can enter the information online when you sign up.) Due to these requirements, no foreign nationals will be allowed to enter the 40 or 50 Sonot Kkaazoot on race day.

The fun continues even after the race. An awards ceremony is held that night at 6 p.m. and includes soups, breads and drinks. Participants are asked to bring a salad or dessert to feed 10 hungry people.

So, no matter if you are a Spandex-clad speedster or a recreational plodder, the Denali State Bank Sonot Kkaazoot has something for you. Give it a try and you're sure to be back for more the next year. And whenever you get a chance, please thank the race's sponsors: Denali State Bank, Doyon Limited, the Fairbanks North Star Borough, Fort Wainwright, U.S. Army Alaska, and Subway.

Denali State Bank Sonot Kkaazoot looking for volunteers

PHOTO BY **ERIC TROYER**

Shoveling snow is just one of the important tasks done by Sonot volunteers.

Skiing in the Denali State Bank Sonot Kkaazzoot is only one fun way to participate. Another great way is to volunteer to help put on this great event.

Volunteering is delightful fun! You can cheer on skiers, work with other friendly volunteers, and feel good knowing you've helped another wonderful community event succeed. Just be prepared. There is usually a lot of laughing and smiling involved!

Organizing the Denali State Bank Sonot Kkaazzoot takes many volunteers. If you do not plan to ski, please consider volunteering to help out on race day. Many Sonot participants are the volunteers who staff other Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks events, so this is their one big event to race. We especially need people who can help with timing or staffing the various road and alpine hill crossings on Fort Wainwright.

We also have other volunteer tasks that racers can do before the race. See the "Volunteers" page on the Denali State Bank Sonot Kkaazoot webpage for specifics or to sign up: **sonotkkaazoot.org/volunteers/**.

AROUND THE INTERIOR

NSCF seeking adult lessons instructors

Want to share your love of skiing with people new to the sport? Help them gain confidence and skills? Share in-depth techniques and training strategies? The NSCF Adult Lessons program is looking for instructors and substitute instructors.

Instructors need to be NSCF members and need to undergo a background check. Instructors get paid $45 per hour for group lessons and are covered by club insurance for those lessons. Instructors need to be First Aid and CPR certified. (The club will provide an opportunity to gain these certifications.) The club also provides instructor training alongside the Jr. Nordics program instructors.

For more information and to sign up as an instructor, please contact Andie Levesque at adultlessons@nscfairbanks.org.

NSCF seeking Junior Nordics coaches

Our youth skiers are in need of your help! We have lots of excited, budding Nordic skiers ready to enjoy this amazing snow and not enough volunteer coaches to go around. You do not need experience, just a positive attitude and love of skiing. If you are interested, please contact Sally Endestad or Jennifer Williamson (juniornordics@nscairbanks.org; 907-371-9564). Junior Nordics lessons take place Mondays at 6:30-7:30 p.m. at UAF West Ridge, Tuesday/Thursday at 6:30-7:30 p.m. at Birch Hill and Sunday at 2-3 p.m. at Birch Hill. There is also a new daytime program at 1-2 p.m. at Birch Hill Ski Center intended for homeschool children.

Help NSCF by going shopping

Help the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks simply by shopping at Fred Meyer or Amazon. If you have a Fred Meyer Rewards Card you can link it to NSCF through the store's Community Rewards program. Fred Meyer makes donations to participating non-profits based on the spending of the customers linked to each nonprofit. Amazon donates a portion of its profits through its AmazonSmile program. Find out more about each program at: **nscfairbanks.org/support-nscf/** > Affiliate Programs.

NSCF Calendar keeps you updated

Remember to check the NSCF Calendar for upcoming club events. You can check competition events, social activities and more. Visit **nscfairbanks.org** > calendar for more! You can also "like" the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks on Facebook to keep up with local events. Some of the upcoming events include:

March 3 — Tour of the Skarland 12-Mile Loop
March 10 — Skiathon
March 19 — Junior Nordics Spring sessions start
March 20 — Interior Youth Festival (day one)
March 23 — Sonot Kkaazoot
March 27 — Interior Youth Festival (day two)

NSCF volunteer opportunities

Interior Alaska is one of the greatest cross-country ski communities in the country! We have an amazing group of dedicated volunteers who help make Fairbanks skiing great. The NSCF has several volunteer opportunities. If you want to volunteer or have questions see **nscfairbanks.org/support-nscf/** > Volunteer or contact NSCF president Steven Hansen at president@nscfairbanks.org.

TRY-ATHLONS

Continued from Page 13

ice skate format.

The second race will be at 6 p.m. Monday, March 18, at Birch Hill Recreation Area. It will be a ski/run/disc golf format.

The final race will be at 1 p.m. Saturday, March 30, at Chena Lake Recreation Area. It will be a ski/run/basketball format.

Each portion of the race is about 1.5 kilometers (though that probably doesn't include the basketball!). People can enter as individuals doing all the sports, teams doing all the sports, or relay teams. Check-in begins one hour before the race start times and racers must provide their own equipment. Youths are free and adults pay $5. All participants must pre-register.

Visit http://parks.fnsb.us/ (under Register > Programs) or call 907-459-1070 to register and for more information. Or check out the FNSB Parks and Recreation Facebook page. The series is sponsored by Design Alaska.

To ski, or not to ski. Duh.

If you're in Fairbanks for some spring skiing, keep to your routine and stay in comfort. At Wedgewood Resort, enjoy condo-style one- and two-bedroom suites with fully-equipped kitchens. All suites are surrounded by a 75-acre wildlife reserve with nature trails for cross-country skiing, next to the groomed trails at Creamer's Field and only 3 miles from Birch Hill Cross Country Ski Center.

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Skiathon at UAF has an old and continuing history

BY LIZ PAWELKO

Ski races can be fun. They can be exciting. How often is it that they are truly historic?

Skiathon is the historic ski racing and touring event of the Interior. You can be a part of its continuing history by entering this year's Skiathon on Sunday, March 10. It starts near the University of Alaska Fairbanks ski hut on the West Ridge. This joint event of the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks and the UAF Trails Club benefits trail funds and follows quite a historic course. For info, check the UAF Trails Club website (https://uaftrailsclub.weebly.com/) or contact Stan Justice at 479-5017.

The history of the Skiathon started in the 1920s when six students University of Alaska Fairbanks crossed the threshold of the campus on the hillside west of Fairbanks. Skiing was how those students commuted to downtown, or to their jobs at mines along Ester Dome. The trails that would become the bedrock of the Skiathon, the Skarland trails, started right where the Wood Center stands today.

Young Fairbanks was surprisingly in sync with the rest of the world. The first ski race of Fairbanks occurred sometime in the 1923-24 winter. In 1924, the first Winter Olympics were held in France featuring among other sports like curling and mountaineering, something called Nordic skiing.

As far back as the 1933, UAF skiers hosted a spring ski event on a two-mile trail down to the farm on campus and back. In 1936, the first ski club officers were elected. The 1940s saw UAF skiers competing against Army skiers, envying that it was their "job" to ski.

Ginny Wood and Celia Hunter, local pioneers and activists, had their hand in Skiathon. In the 1950s, they lived in the Dogpatch subdivision east of Ballaine Road and worked with the UAF ski team to connect the campus trails with the hillside trails. They helped create the network of trails that were the bedrock of the original 20K race that was officially started as "Skiathon" in the 1960s.

Another Fairbanks phenomenon touched Skiathon – Joe Vogler. Yep, this vigilantly independent soul protested that the Skiathon crossed his property, despite the trail existing before his ownership. He was known to sabotage the trails, sending one racer to the hospital with a broken collarbone, which happened when the skier crossed a bulldozed section of trail.

Skiers serious and silly take part on the Skiathon.
PHOTO BY ERIC TROYER

The Skiathon and Equinox Marathon are linked because in 1963 Nat Goodhue, athlete and trails advocate, went along with the idea of creating this innovative running race trail in order to expand 42 more kilometers of skiing trail.

After an inactive period caused in part by the exodus of ski racing to Birch Hill, the UAF Trails Club resurrected the Skiathon in 2001, using a course that avoided any road crossing by staying completely on campus. The "classic" character of the event was maintained by disallowing skating, having a wooden ski division, and keeping it the 20K distance. In 2014, a new course was implemented using the 6-mile trail that returned the event to its roots following more of the historic route. Pesky figure 8s from recent events have been removed.

Thanks to Jane Parrish for her scholarly work investigating the history of trails in Fairbanks.

SPONSORED

OFF THE TRAIL

Starting running again ...

BY ZUZANA ROGERS, PT, SCD, SCS, COMT
Advanced Physical Therapy

It has been a breakthrough cross-country skiing season for APU, Alaska and America, and I would like to extend my congratulations to athletes and supporters at all levels. You're riding high on the possibility of new heights for American skiing and you want to do your part. And while this ski season is nearly over, you're already making training plans for the season to come.

Let me help you with a safe transition from skiing to running.

1 Taking your run outside

A Decrease your distances. Let your body slowly build up bone, muscle and tendon strength. Allow appropriate rest time between runs so your body can repair. Run every other day, or even every two days if you haven't been running much over the winter. Don't worry about your pace for the first few weeks. Let your body adapt to the increased demands you are placing on it.

B Vary terrain and intensity. Variety will not allow your body to repeat a movement mistake over long period of time.

C Write down your goals and make a training plan. Start with your end goal in mind and then work backwards. Gradually build up your distance, intensity and terrain tolerance.

2 How about your feet?

A Chose the right footwear. Have professionals help you; they can assess your feet, gait and find the right shoes. Your running shoes should feel comfortable right away, there is no 'getting used to it.'

B Do not forget to address the strength of your feet and lower legs! Our feet weaken and atrophy during the winter. Lift and spread your toes, walk on toes, walk on heels (Check the January issue of Nordic Skier for more on this!).

3 Cross training

A Hip and core strength are tremendously important. Cross training prevents injuries, makes you fit and you won't get bored. Body weight and free weights exercises, balance, plyometrics, and mobility give you more benefit than machines. Did I mention the Nature Gym? The Alaska outdoors has it all!

4 Address your weaknesses

A You cannot be stronger than your weakest link! By nature, we practice and develop skills or exercises that come relatively easy to us. We usually don't go out of our way to learn a skill that is awkward, unfamiliar or challenging. It is difficult and we may feel uncoordinated and weak just like a baby giraffe! Ask for help from your fellow runners and coaches, or seek professional help from a physiotherapist.

advanced physical therapy

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