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the ALASKA nordic skier

JANUARY 2020, VOL.21, NO.4

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Anchorage Nordic Skier

Newsletter Of The Nordic Skiing Association Of Anchorage, Inc.

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AROUND THE BOWL

PHOTOS BY **ERIC STRABEL**

AMH Anchorage Cup: The path through the ice

The first race of the season was met with smiles, even though the location was moved from Hillside to Kinciad Park at the last moment and the race style was changed to a sprint relay. Everyone just couldn't wait to ski! Thank you to the race co-host, Alaska Winter Stars – you guys know how to pull your team together to make a great apres-ski spread and help with race logistics! The NSAA Operations team was able to push a snowmaking path through the icy Kincaid Stadium, which made for the perfect runway of skiers zooming towards the tunnel and the Biathlon Range stadium.

The 2x2x1.5km course around the Kincaid Snowmaking Loop was a quick trip for the top three men's teams: 1) Gus Schumacher, Alexander Maurer, 13:03.5; 2) Espen Persen, Magnus Norvey, 13:24.6; 3) Peter Hinde, Nils Kolb, 13:25.9. The Women's & Youth teams cruised through the course and the top 3 teams were: 1) Alison Arians, Meredith Schwartz, 15:43.2; 2) Anna Darnell, Helen Wilson, 15:50.9; 3) Arianna O'Harra, Ivy Eski, 17:07.9. The co-ed division had the timers on the edge of their seats: 1) Austin Huneck, Tuva Granoien, 14:43.6; 2) Espen Persen, Anna Darnell, 14:45.2; 3) Gus Schumacher, Heidi Schumacher, 15:09.8.

Get ready and registered for upcoming races: the Hickok Duathlon on January 12, co-hosted by APU Nordic Ski Center, and the AMH Classic on January 26, co-hosted by the Sons of Norway. Learn more at anchoragenordicski.com/amh-anchorage-cup-series/.

Solstice Tree Tour

A Winter Solstice event with no snow? That's crazy … crazy fun! The NSAA Operations team scuffed up the Mize Loop to make the little snow out there walkable for the thousands of people who attended the fourth annual Solstice Tree Tour. The Kincaid Stadium had enough man-made snow to cushion vendors like Skiku and Alaska Kicksled so participants could try out cross-country skis or kicksleds. Thank you to Cynosure Brewing for providing beer in the Beer Garden and to Atman & Rogers Co. for the Gluhwein, the beverages were delicious! Thank you CRW Engineers for providing a s'more station and to Alchemy Orthotics & Prosthetics for staffing a cocoa & coffee station.

PHOTO BY **JOSH NIVA**

The Solstice Tree Tour champ: The Kobuk

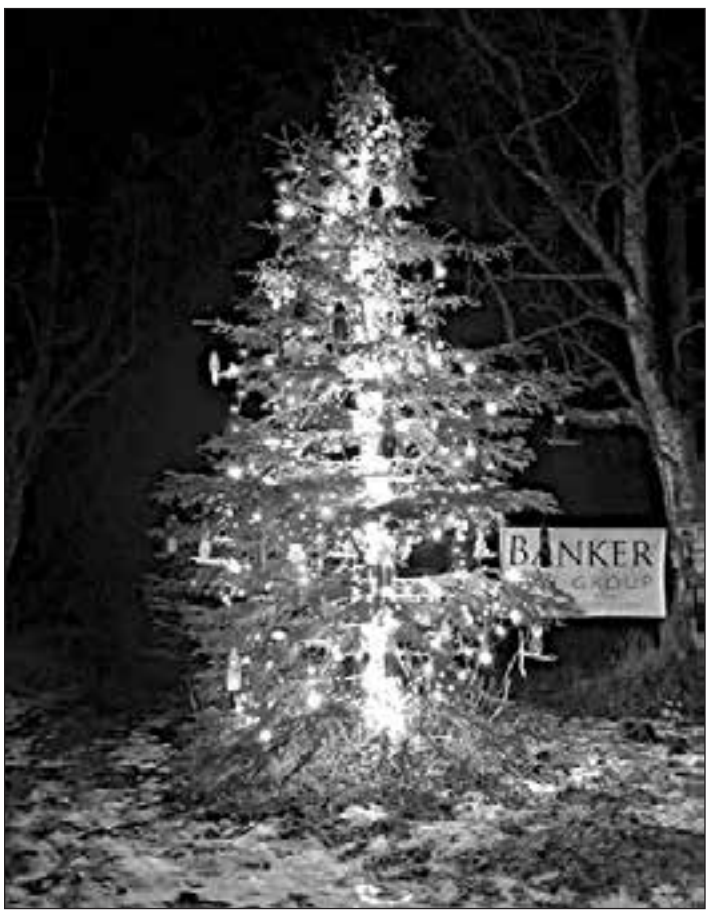

PHOTO BY **KATIE BLEDSOE**

A bright night of lights at the Solstice Tree Tour.

Congratulations to the Tree Winner for 2019: The Kobuk! Closely followed in votes by Tall Trees Alaska and The Bake Shop. The trees were decorated by sponsors and adored by all! Thank you to the Premier Event Sponsor, ConocoPhillips Alaska, for supporting NSAA's mission and programs through this event.

Thank you to all the 2019 Event Sponsors: Anchorage Fracture & Orthopedic Clinic, The Children's Hospital at Providence, CorsoGraphics, Cynosure Brewing, Geneva Woods Birth Center "The Nest," Granite Construction, Kaladi Brothers coffee, KTUU Channel 2, and Northrim Bank. A huge thank you to the event co-host, Anchorage Parks & Recreation!

This event would not be possible without the leadership

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SOLSTICE TREE TOUR
Sara Miller

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.

AROUND THE BOWL

Continued from Page 2

of Sara Miller, Event Director, and her committee of volunteers Lauree Bertrand, Lisa Delaney, Sam Grosenick, Elizabeth Knapp, Iain Miller, Mike Miller and Jacob Mathiesen. It takes a lot of hours and coordination to put on an event of this size – thank you to all the volunteers who made it happen! A shoutout to the Anchorage Fire Explorer Post 264 for help with parking and to the Trek Store of Anchorage for hosting the Bike Corral.

NSAA Events Calendar

JANUARY

4, Saturday — Biathlon Race #3
5, Sunday — Biathlon Race #4
9, Thursday — Junior Nordic Gear Pick Up for 2nd Session
11, Saturday — Junior Nordic Equipment Return for 1st Session and Pickup for 2nd Session
11, Saturday — ASD High School Skiathlon – Kincaid
12, Sunday — Ski Jumping — Fun Club Competition
12, Sunday — AMH Anchorage Cup – Hickok Duathlon
13, Monday — Junior Nordic Session #2 Starts
15, Wednesday — ASD High School Bartlett Relay – Bartlett
18-19, Saturday-Sunday — NSAA Backcountry Tours — Sheep Mountain, two overnights, Talkeetna Mountains
18, Saturday — Besh Cup #3 – TBA Kenai Peninsula
19, Sunday — Besh Cup #4 – TBA Kenai Peninsula
20, Monday — NSAA Backcountry Tours — Matanuska Glacier from Caribou Creek
22, Wednesday — Biathlon Race #5
24, Friday — ASD Middle School Race – Kincaid
25, Saturday — Ski Jumping — Fun Club Competition
25, Saturday — ASD High School Chugiak Stampede – Chugiak
26, Sunday — AMH Anchorage Cup – Classic
28, Tuesday — Tuesday Night Ski Race – Kincaid
29, Wednesday — ASD Middle School Race – Mirror Lake
31, Friday — Alaska Ski for Women – Bib Pickup at REI

NSAA Backcountry Tours

Saturday-Sunday, January 18-20 — Sheep Mountain Lodge, two overnights

Talkeetna Mountains; Easy III; Pick your distance, up to 15 miles (24 km) or more; Elevation gain: 50-300 feet; Tour Leader: Elizabeth Bluemink, 907-952-3956, ebluemink@yahoo.com

Enjoy two overnights over MLK Holiday weekend at Sheep Mountain Lodge in group cabins. Ski on 24 km groomed non-motorized trails or beyond on 60 miles of multi-use trails at Sheep Mountain Saturday and Sunday. Monday, ski out to Matanuska Glacier along Caribou Creek. Space is limited; contact the tour leader to make your reservation early and to get logistical details. A deposit to hold a spot is required by January 1.

Monday, January 20 — Matanuska Glacier from Caribou Creek (MLK Holiday)

Moderate I, due to distance; 10 miles; Elevation gain: Downhill at beginning and end, generally flat; Tour Leader: Elizabeth Bluemink, Sheep Mtn., 907-952-3956; ebluemink@yahoo.com; Mary Vavrik, (Anchorage Carrs Muldoon carpooling) 907-306-7686; mvavrik@gci.net

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Carrs Muldoon where we'll drive up to Caribou Creek pullout (Mile 106 of the Glenn Hwy) to ski to the toe of the mighty Matanuska Glacier. We will meet skiers coming from the Sheep Mountain Lodge weekend. The ski will be on and off the creek and through some brush, but mostly open terrain. Be prepared for cold and wind. Make sure you have lunch and water. If you choose to meet at the trailhead, be there at 11 a.m. For those skiing with dogs, traps are in the area. Please bring a leash for your dog on this tour!

Friday, February 7 — Friday Night Full Moon Fun Ski

Powerline Pass; Easy II; 3-6 miles; Tour Leader: Lisa Maas, 812-599-7566, lisaimaas@gmail.com

Meet at the Glen Alps parking lot at 7 p.m. We will ski Powerline Pass to the German Bridge and back. There is potential to make this a short or long trip, depending on the group. The trail is fairly flat with a wee bit of ups and downs. Bring water, warm clothes, and a headlamp (in case the moon is shy that night). Check the local Anchorage weather forecast before heading out. Optional après ski food and grog at a nearby restaurant if there is interest from the group.

the ALASKA nordic skier

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All rights reserved. © 2019 Articles, letters and advertisements are welcome. Please ensure all names are correct and information is accurate. Submissions may be edited for clarity, content and space limitations. Deadline is the 15th day of the prior month. E-mail nordicskiereditor@gmail.com.

On the cover *– AMH Cup participants kick off the Anchorage racing season with fast skis and snow. Photo by Eric Strabel.*

When should I start ski jumping?

BY ADAM LOOMIS

Ski Jumping is a sport often shrouded in mystery. We are used to getting peppered with questions: "Isn't it scary?" "How high are you?" "How does one get started?" And amongst all of these questions, "When did you start?"

The most eager ski jumpers first ride off our bump jump at just 5 or 6 years of age. Those that start young develop their skills before any sense of fear. However, there really is no one time that is best to start. In the early 2000s, the U.S. had an Olympic Nordic Combined skier who picked up ski jumping at the age of 15. Here at Team Alaska, we occasionally have adult jumpers who jump right along the kids. One of our volunteers (featured in last month's issue), first strapped on jump skis in his 60s!

As a coach, and before as an athlete, I've seen jumpers in there 40s and 50s who love the thrill of flying just as much as anyone. They might not progress as fast as their teenage counterparts, but they relish in the opportunity to develop new skills, push their limits, and get a taste of weightlessness. After a day of office work or an afternoon of chasing around their own kids, these older jumpers just might appreciate the opportunities we provide more than anyone.

On the other end of the spectrum, our Cubs program focuses on getting 6 to 9 year-olds in the program. Every Wednesday starting January 22, we'll have an influx of novice skiers learning the ropes. These little boys and girls might be inexperienced at first, but they quickly progress and learn to hang with our veteran athletes. Cubs practices are all-hands-on-deck, but the program is extremely rewarding and memorable to be a part of.

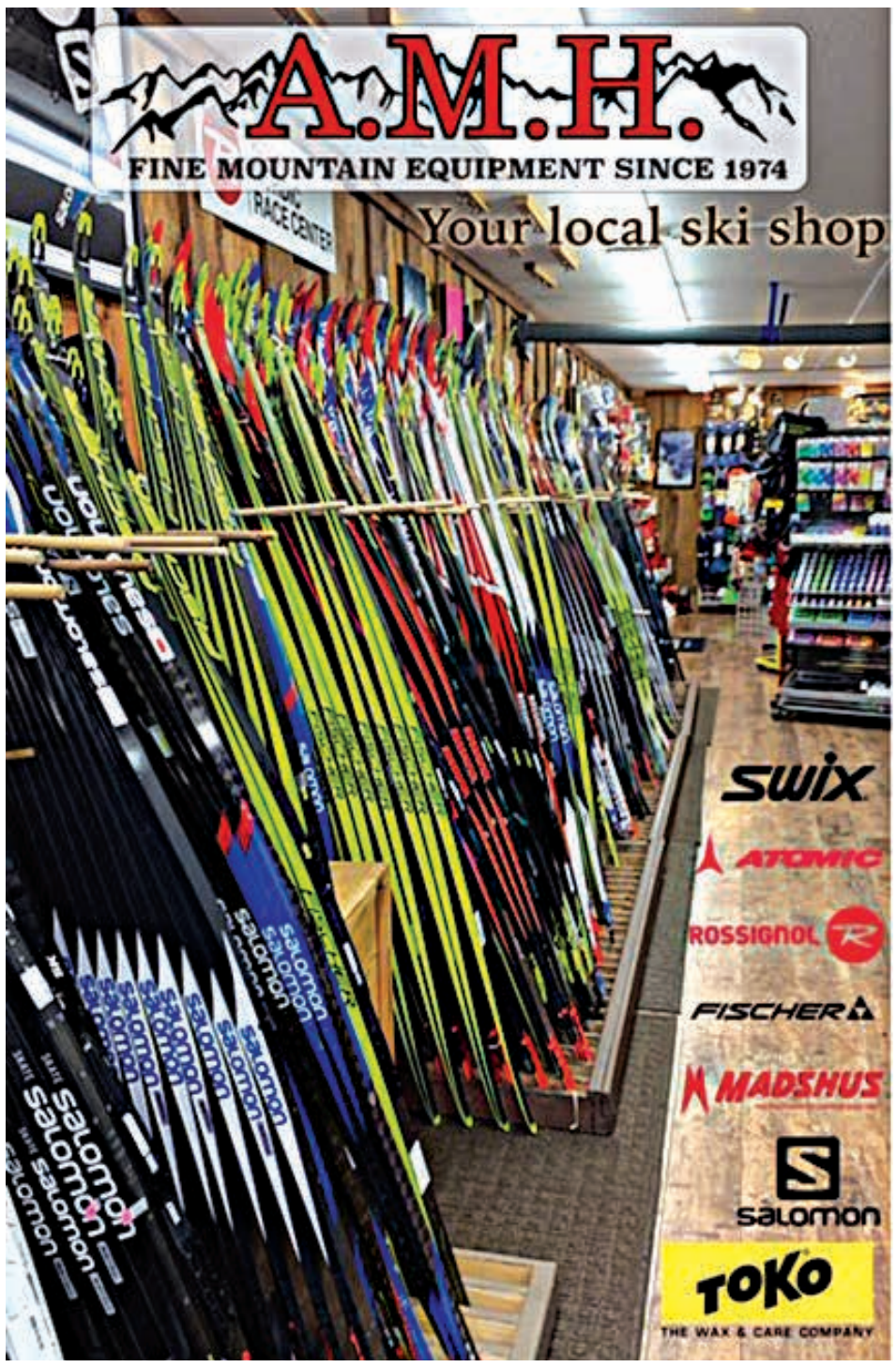
Come check out the Karl Eid Ski Jumps if you're interested in getting someone into our program, whether it is your child, your neighbor, your aunt or yourself. Our Cubs and other programs are still open to registration. We also offer a free try-it experience for anyone looking to dabble in ski jumping – just come to any of our practices!

Get more information on the NSAA Ski Jumping program at **anchoragenordicski.com/ski-jumping/**.

PHOTOS BY **ADAM LOOMIS**

Jumpers of all ages watch one of their teammates leave the 10-meter jump.

Two new jumpers form a bond of friendship as they learn on the small hills in early 2019.



NSAA volunteer spotlight: Remembering E. Jean Kaufman

E. Jean Kaufman, who passed away in November at age 100, leaves a long legacy of volunteering in Anchorage. The Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage is one of those lucky recipients of countless hours of service from this "amazing ball of energy." In 1985, NSAA honored Kaufman as a Lifetime Member – one of many awards bestowed throughout her years of dedication to more than 50 organizations.

Diane Moxness, former NSAA executive director and longtime volunteer herself, recalls: "Back when I came to work for NSAA, (Kaufman) had already been volunteering for years. She was our 'Newsletter Ladies' chief organizer. First week of the month, she would make sure we had eight to 10 volunteers to slap on labels and bundle up the NSAA newsletters, getting them ready to take to the bulk mail office. NSAA staff would keep the labels, bulk mail bins, coffee and cookies flowing, and they took care of the rest.

"Many folks know her from the visitor center at the airport," Moxness added. "She continued to volunteer there well into her 90s. She was an amazing ball of energy with wonderful stories and a collection of equally vivacious friends she'd rope into helping out.

"She stopped volunteering for us when we went to an automated bulk mailing service. It was a whole lot less trouble than doing it by hand, but we did miss the 'Newsletter Ladies and Fred' every month. I think they always came the first Tuesday ... We could never change the day of the week because all the other days Jean had a volunteer gig somewhere else in town."

Billie DeVore is a certified public accountant who has been NSAA's office neighbor for years. She gets a huge smile on her face while remembering Kaufman, whom she visited monthly at the Pioneer Home until her last days.

"She's a fantastic person! … She'd come in with her troops and get those newsletters done," DeVore says. "She'd take the bull by the horns and just run with it."

DeVore is impressed by how Kaufman turned her humble beginnings into a lifetime of achievement.

"She didn't go to a snooty, high-falutin college" yet managed to accomplish great things, DeVore notes.

NSAA member and volunteer Alice Knapp remembers Kaufman's work not only with the newsletter but dressing as "Buttons the Clown" on the Ski Train.

"She was such an amazing person," Knapp recalls. "I miss her happy spirit!"

NSAA Partner Spotlight: Rasmuson Foundation

Few, if any, organizations have done more to promote a better life for Alaskans than the Rasmuson Foundation. By sustaining trails year-round and providing Nordic skiing programs that encourage healthy activities and lifestyles for all Alaskans, NSAA also seeks to improve the lives of Alaskans.

These symbiotic goals have been acknowledged by the Rasmuson Foundation with a series of generous grants to NSAA over several decades. Recently, NSAA received a Tier 1 Grant to upgrade technology in the main office. The Rasmuson Foundation also provided significant support for the Cross Country Junior Nationals, held in Anchorage in March 2019. This fall, at the discretion of Rasmuson Foundation Board of Directors member Natasha von Imhof, $5,000 was donated to NSAA's snowmaking efforts. With ever-increasing variability in early-season snow conditions, contributions like these help to keep us skiing, even when Mother Nature does not cooperate.

The Rasmuson Foundation's support of individuals and Alaska nonprofits helps to ensure that Alaskans can continue to live vibrant, healthy, active lives. NSAA extends a big ski-bear hug to the Rasmuson Foundation for decades of support!

TRAX
OUTDOOR CENTER
Salomon Super Center
Besh Bash
5:30-8:30 p.m. Friday, January 31
At the Fairbanks TRAX Store, 310 Birch Hill Road
SkiKu Movie Premiere: Pizza, Prizes & Giveaways!
Solomon Demo Saturday at the Besh Cup with Ben Arians
Good luck to all the racers! See you in Fairbanks!

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Celebrating 24 years of North America's largest women-only skiing event

BY JENNY DI GRAPPA
ASFW Director

Just weeks remain until this year's Alaska Ski for Women event! Find a costume and a friend (or five) and join us for another day of fun and skiing at Kincaid Park. For the racers we have the 8k duathlon, 4k skate and 4k classic races with the first race starting at 10:30 a.m. We'll then have our favorite costume contest from 11:30 a.m.-noon, followed by the most popular event, the party wave, starting at noon. Inside the chalet you'll find even more fun with a mimosa reception sponsored by K&L Distributors, coffee from Kaladi Brothers, bread from Great Harvest, massages and more!

There are three options to register for the 2020 Alaska Ski for Women event:

1 — Sign up online now through midnight, January 29, at www.alaskaskiforwomen.com

2 — Late registration takes place at bib-pick up from noon-7:30 p.m. on Friday, January 31, at REI

3 — Race day late registration from 9-11:30 a.m. on Sunday, February 2 – Racers who sign up on race day can only participate in the untimed party wave

Community members can sign up individually or in teams. Prizes will be awarded this year to the team with the most number of participants, as well as to the team that raises the most money.

Registration is $35 for adults and $15 for youth. The first 100 registrants who donate $50 or more will receive the 2020 Signature hat (race entry included). 100% of your registration fee is donated to community nonprofits through our grant program, thanks to our many sponsors.

Anyone who can't register by the January 29 online registration deadline can register and pick up their bibs at the bib pick-up on Friday, January 31. Merchandise can also be purchased at bib pick-up, and skis/boots/polls can be rented from REI for a discounted rate.

Race schedule for 2020: The Duathlon, an 8k course, timed. The skate race is 4k in length, timed. The classic race will also be 4k, timed. Prizes will be awarded to the Top 3 skiers in each of the timed events. Finally, the party wave will start at noon and is 4k in length. The party wave is an untimed fun ski – take your time and enjoy the trail.

The costume contest is the greatest part of the Alaska Ski for Women, where hundreds of women each year dress up in elaborate costumes, many of them taking several months to put together. We encourage all of our participants to dress up and participate in the Mardi Gras of the North costume contest! Contest takes place from 11:30 a.m.-noon. Prizes will be awarded in the team, duo, and youth categories.

Our silent auction will have about 50 items this year including excursions, hotel stays, art, and more! For those that do not own kick wax or would prefer some help, bring your skis to the wax tent from 9-11:30 a.m. to get waxed to win courtesy of Toko.

The Ski for Women event is the first of a series of four events for women to earn their patch in Alaska's Triple Patch program. The Triple Patch program provides a classy, distinctive patch awarded to women and girls who complete three of the four designated sporting events in one calendar year: Ski for Women, Bike for Women, Run for Women, and the Gold Nugget Triathlon. *The Ski for Women event is the only event in the series where you can participate in an untimed event (the party wave) and still count towards your triple patch.

Parking: There is limited parking at the chalet and the outer lots, and they fill up early. It is best to park at Kincaid Elementary. Premier Tours will be providing coach buses that will whisk you and your skis from the school to the chalet. Buses will start running at 9 a.m. and continue until 1:30 p.m.

For those that might not be able to participate in the races this year, we would love your help! Email us if you are interested in any of our volunteer positions: alaskaskiforwomen@gmail.com.

Ski 4 Kids: New date for fun, February 29

Ski 4 Kids is coming up! So is your opportunity to volunteer!

Imagine the Kincaid Park stadium filled with laughter, music, and children of all ages zooming around on skis. The annual ski festival known as Ski 4 Kids will take place on Saturday, February 29. For some, the annual Ski 4 Kids festival will be the first time they test their mettle during timed and untimed race courses. For others, it's the first opportunity to try snowshoeing, biathlon and other outdoor sports and recreation. The event provides something for everyone, and often the volunteers have as much fun as the kids.

"When you're in the stadium, you're in the middle of this beautiful eight-ring circus because there are kids running from station to station to try out sit skiing, shooting lemon drops at the mock biathlon, or making another run with a friend on the obstacle course," said volunteer coordinator Lia Slemons. "As a stadium volunteer, you get a front row seat at that circus. It's pretty entertaining, and at the same time you're serving as a valuable guide for the kids."

If you have a hand to lend, there are plenty of different types of jobs – some outside working with kids on skis, other in the chalet helping with lunch or set-up/clean-up. It takes about 30 volunteers to make the event run and online volunteer sign-up is available now; time commitments range from 1-4 hours. Find the "volunteers" tab on the Ski 4 Kids website, www.anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-4-kids/, to add your name to the list.

Volunteer spotlight: Ira Edwards

Longtime volunteer Ira Edwards has been running the sit-ski station at Ski 4 Kids since 2012, providing the chance for kids to try out a sit-ski and feel what it's like to move around on snow without using their legs. For Edwards, it's a way to support youth getting outside, and it's also personal. Ira uses a wheelchair himself and sought out funding eight years ago to purchase sit-skis for the Anchorage School District after discovering most schools have ski programs for PE but no ability to allow kids with disabilities to participate. Thanks to Ira's initiative, there are now 12 sit-skis in the school district, and all will be on hand at the Ski 4 Kids event.

"The kids have a great time on them, and it's also an opportunity to let people know these resources exist," he said. "I often hear kids say they have a friend with no legs or a friend in a wheelchair and this helps spread the word."

Sometimes he brings his own sit-ski to the event, and he remembers a child saying, "He's the only adult I can see eye to eye with!" What's the hardest part about using a sit-ski? "It's hard to turn," Edwards said. But the challenge is part of the draw, and there's always a line of kids waiting to try.

Supporting with a financial gift

If you aren't able to volunteer, you can still support the Ski 4 Kids fundraising effort. The goal this year is to collect $10,000 for grants to support youth skiing through funding of equipment, transportation and other needs of Anchorage schools and programs, as well as the Municipality of Anchorage's Ski Outreach Program. Registration fees help towards the fundraising goal, but a significant amount comes from corporations, foundations, small businesses, individuals and families. Contributions help cover the costs and overhead involved in putting on Ski 4 Kids and boost the amount available for grants.

Erin Whitney Witmer, Ski 4 Kids lead organizer, encourages NSAA members to consider a donation. "This is a great way to support kids in an active and healthy lifestyle, and also build an even stronger community of skiers to support trails and programs in the future," she said. If you would like to make a donation to Ski 4 Kids, call or email the NSAA office at program@anchoragenordicski.com.

This year's Ski 4 Kids is noon-3:30 p.m. Saturday, February 29, at Kincaid Park. To register, go to **anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-4-kids/**.

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Young Alaskans take strides to Winter Olympic dreams

BY CROSS COUNTRY ALASKA

Since 2012, during the even years between the Winter Olympics, the International Olympic Committee holds the Youth Olympic Games, an international event for young people aged 15-18 from all over the world. There will be over 1,000 athletes in attendance representing 73 countries. In addition to offering elite sports competitions, the Youth Olympic Games also include a series of educational activities with three areas of focus: protecting the athletes, working on performance, and assisting the athletes outside the competition area of sports. Alaska is well-represented with three athletes in the 2020 Youth Olympic Games in Laussane, Switzerland. All have roots in the ConocoPhillips Besh Cup race series.

At the 2019 U.S. Cross Country National Championships, Fairbanks skier Kendall Kramer qualified for the cross country ski competition of the Youth Olympic Games. Kramer, a high school junior recently named to the U.S. Ski Team, will travel to Laussane shortly after the 2020 US National Cross Country Championships in Haughton, Michigan. Kramer's competition this year will range from high school races with her peers to U.S. National Championships with sights on making the World Juniors Championship team competing in Oberwiesenthal, Germany, in March. Luckily, her hometown of Fairbanks has given her ample days on snow to prepare. As for competing at other international events as a member of the U.S. Ski Team, athletes get invited to certain World Cup races or other international races based on season results, so Kramer will still need to have good results this year to earn a spot at World Cup races. Kramer

Kendall Kramer

said she is looking forward to seeing where she stacks up against the older skiers, will take things one race at a time, and hopes her results are good enough for her to qualify for the World Junior team.

Anchorage biathlete Maja Lapkass qualified for the Youth Olympic Games through a series of races last season. Lapkass' performances at the 2018 Youth and Junior World Trials in Soldier Hollow, Utah, and at the 2019 US Biathlon National Championships and the 2019 USBA Summer Festival & Rollerski Biathlon National Championships in Jericho, Vermont, determined her qualification for the Youth Olympic Games. Lapkass is a two-time member of Team Alaska competing at the U.S. Cross Country Junior Nationals Championships and is attending Wargentin Skolan in Östersund, Sweden. The school has a sports component which includes biathlon as well as an amazing home-cooked school lunch! Lapkass became interested in biathlon after attending a range safety course at the biathlon range. Since Lapkass was already cross-country skiing, the added element of shooting interested her. At the

Maja Lapkass

Youth Olympic Games, Lapkass will compete in a 10Km individual race and a 6Km sprint race; and depending on results will have an opportunity to compete on a relay team.

The Karl Eid ski jumps at Hillside Park in Anchorage have produced Alaska's first junior athlete named to USA Nordic junior national Nordic combined team. Carter Brubaker has been involved in ski jumping since his first jump as a 10 year old. Aside from needing courage to launch yourself from a 50-plus meter ski jump, a Nordic combined competitor requires cardiovascular fitness as a cross-country skier. In addition to jumping several days a week, Brubaker trains with Jan Buron of the Alaska Winter Stars. Thanks to the efforts of a very dedicated group of Alaska Jumping Club parents, Anchorage ski jumpers now train year-round, preparing them for winter competitions and summer tournaments and camps often held in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. To qualify this year, Brubaker competed in December 2019 at Winterstart in Steamboat Springs and earned the spot on the Youth Olympics Games team. The Nordic combined event consists of a jump and a 5Km free-style ski race. There is also a relay race based on games' performance. In addition to participating in the Youth Olympic Games, Brubaker will compete at the Jumping Junior Nationals in Steamboat Springs and hopes to compete at the 2020 Junior Nationals Cross Country Ski Championships in Truckee, California. Brubaker is thankful for Coach Buron and his jumping coaches Adam Loomis and Zach Hammill.

As you can see, there are many opportunities to see the world as a Nordic skier! Best of luck to these Alaska athletes competing at the Youth Olympic Games!

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Girdwood, Alaska

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A

Solstice celebration in Girdwood kicked off the season of Nordic skiing with some bright winter light.

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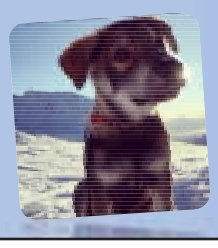

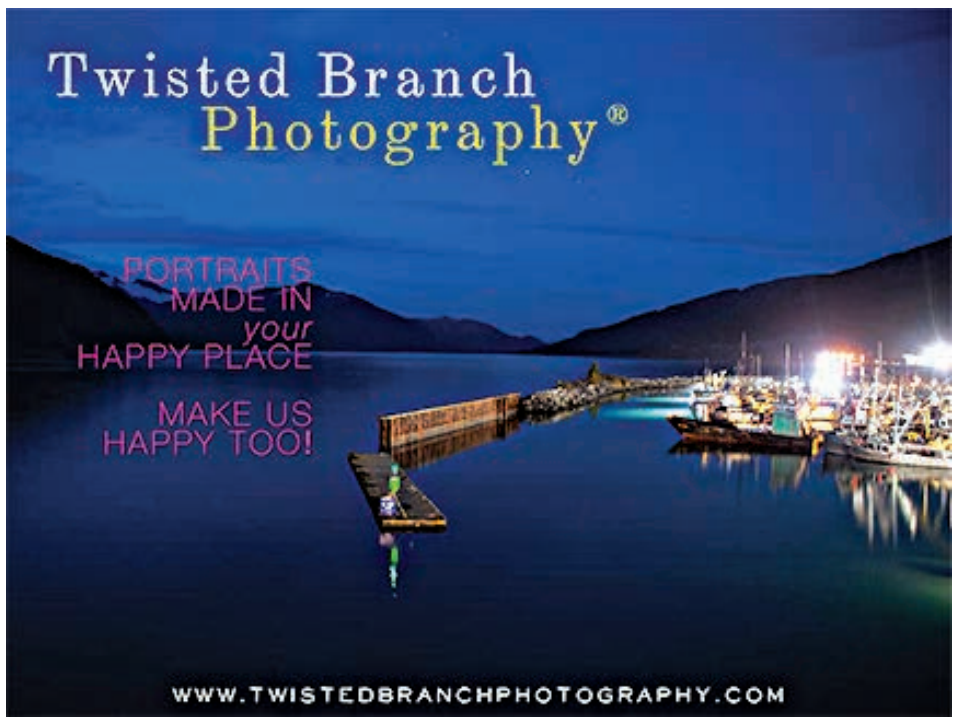

Mat-Su Ski Club

Palmer, Alaska

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

AROUND THE VALLEY

Gratitude, gravity and that new ski feeling

I've spent many of articles talking of yesteryears, and this episode will be no different. Colony High was where I pounded more flakes than I will ever for another couple of years. The "long" loop allowed a little over 3 km of skiable trail back then. Which meant a few of us would put in 8-10 laps a couple time a week to get our training in. The Colony High School trails are super unique in trail trails are always going up or down and not in a gradual sense. In fact, the difference in ascending and descending can change in seconds … repetitively. Nevertheless, these were our home trails.

When I joined the team my freshman year, I skied freestyle on a pair of two-year-old Rossignol one-size-fits-all super-shorty skis. Some marketing wizard amongst this manufacture had figured out that sizing skis to each individual was cost ineffective, plus skiing on 140cm is way more fun than traditional length skate skis. … Did I mention that these skis had more camber (arch) than a leaf spring on an old Ford pickup, because they accommodated persons from 120-200 pounds! Lucky for me, my folks bought into this bleeding edge technology (in their defense, the price was right). Thankfully I had coaches that realized that these were not doing me much favors. It was then that I had my first ski fitting. I had no idea prior to then that ski length, flex related to race performance. I was stoked as a sophomore to be standing on snow with a pair of skis that were sized for me and made me feel fast. And then reality came crashing in …

I definitely skied faster on my new skis, and I even tried to do what all the cool kids were doing. So for those of you not familiar with high school Nordic skiers, they are easily the best behaved kids… but they are still kids. So when our coaches were on other portions of the course, most of the varsity and a few of the JV kids would hit up the "jump hill," which you may guess, was a steep downhill with a nice bump near the bottom. In some cases this bump may be fortified with additional snow to make a true jump.

So for most of my high school career up to that point, I avoided the jump. Having come to skiing somewhat late in life, as a 11-year-old, and not having any appreciable downhill experience, I was far from comfortable in descending at high rate of speed. So then, peer pressure appeared, and I made the decision to show off my nonexistent jumping skills. The year was '97 and the season was shaping up to be an exceptionally great snow year. As such, the boy's team had made a record-setting ski jump. In my reflective mind's eye, this jump was nearly four feet in height. It may have taken me seconds to decide to point my skis downhill towards this apparatus, but it felt like 20 minutes. All felt good until my skis changed direction from downward trajectory to skyward.

It is at this point in my life that I learned an important lesson; that everyone should recognize those traits in oneself that you must compensate for to ensure you productively exist in this world. My lesson that day was my body when placed in the air naturally wishes to be inverted. I have no idea if I am disproportionately weighted from top to bottom, but given the choice this humanoid will find himself upside down if air exists below his feet. Needless to say, my crash was epic and I was shockingly unhurt by

See **AROUND THE VALLEY**, Page 11

PHOTOS BY **JERRY HUPP**

A Mat-Su Ski Club member enjoys fresh snow in the Matanuska Moose Range.

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Kachemak Nordic Ski Club
Homer, Alaska

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kachemaknordicskiclub.org
kachemaknordicskiclub@gmail.com

AROUND THE BAY

With the promise of snow in another week or so, here at the Kachemak Nordic Ski Club (KNSC) we're still holding our breath and wishing and hoping for real snow – which will make all the Nordic events described below actually happen.

Much-needed shed constructed at Sunset Loop

In November 2019, the KNSC completed a new equipment building for the Sunset Ski trail system. The building is located on Kenai Peninsula Borough property near the Diamond Ridge Fire Station, and will be used primarily for storing grooming equipment, snow machines and tracked ATVs. It will provide space for repairs, and will prolong the life of equipment by keeping it out of the weather. The building is 16x24 feet with a garage door at each end that creates drive-through capability.

The building location went through several iterations before a final location could be settled on with the Borough, taking into account proximity to the CISPRI (Cook Inlet Spill Prevention and Response) Tower and the availability of electrical service. The final location is a little further away from the parking lot than ideal, and the delay pushed back the start of construction about six months.

The Ski Shed was financed through KNSC and a matching grant from the Rasmussen Foundation, and was constructed by numerous KNSC members who worked on the building in their spare time.

Plan ahead for the epic KNSC Ski Marathon – note the date change

If you want a challenge and haven't tried the Kachemak Nordic Ski Marathon, put this date change on your calendar: Saturday, March 21.

This marathon, reputed to be one of the hardest in the state, is a backcountry, point-to-point free-style race based in Homer. Hosted by the KNSC, the marathon has a 25K and 42K race with awards for men and women categories in both events.

This year, the race has been moved a week later than normal to accommodate the Oosik Classic ski race date change to a week earlier. See the KNSC website for further details under the events tab.

KNSC 2019-2020 Events Calendar

ONGOING

Nov 1-March 15 — Kachemak Women's Nordic (Co-ed Masters' Ski Program) – Tuesday, 2-4 p.m.; Wednesday and Friday, noon-2 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m.-noon. Details at http://kachemakwomensnordic.com/.

Jan 25-Feb 22 — Junior Nordic Program: Saturdays, first session on Jan. 25 @ Lookout Mountain Recreation Area. 1-2:30 p.m. Other locations TBA.

JANUARY

11 — Beginner skate & classic ski clinic: 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Saturday, Lookout Mountain Ski Area. Register on KNSC website.

11 — Intermediate skate & classic ski clinic: Saturday. 1:30-4 p.m. Saturday, Lookout Mountain Ski Area. Register on KNSC website.

24-25 — Friday Night Lights torch light ski and candle making: Friday and Saturday @ Lookout Mountain Recreation Area.

25 — Junior Nordic Program: Saturdays, Jan. 25- Feb. 22. First session on Jan. 25 @ Lookout Mountain Recreation Area. 1-2:30 p.m. Other locations TBA.

FEBRUARY

1, 8, 15, 22 — Junior Nordic Program: 1-2:30 p.m. Saturdays @ Lookout Mountain State Recreation Area

2 — Ski/Walk/Run for Women: Sunday @ Lookout Mountain State Recreation Area

Backcountry Film Festival — 7 p.m. @ Homer Theatre. Date and details TBA

16 — Wine and Cheese and Wooden Ski Tour: Noon-4 p.m. Sunday @ location TBA

MARCH

14 — KNSC Nordic Ski Marathon: Saturday @ Lookout Mountain Ski Trails (starting line)

29 — Sea to Ski: Sunday. 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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Friday Night Lights
Stacey Buckalew

Kachemak Bay Ski for Women & Haven House
Kris Holdereid/Shelly Laukitis

Wine, Cheese & Wooden Ski Tour
Mike Gracz

Kachemak Bay Marathon Ski
Deland Anderson

Homer Epic 100
Homer Cycling Club

Sea to Ski Triathlon
Derek Bynagle

Stacey Buckalew: Energy and enthusiasm power KNSC volunteer

Jeff and Stacey Buckelw in Norway

An army of volunteers is the foundation for success of Alaska's Nordic ski clubs. In Homer, Stacey Buckalew is part of the Kachemak Nordic Ski Club army of volunteers. And to many of us, her energy and enthusiasm for all things Nordic make her a powerful army of one.

As a member of the KNSC Board of Directors (BOD) for the past four years, Stacey has:

- Served as coach for the Kachemak Women's Nordic and Junior Nordic Programs
- Led the volunteers in putting on the popular Friday Night Lights Nordic event in January
- Served as Vice President of the BOD for the past three years
- Puts in 15-plus hours a week during the winter for all her volunteer activities for the KNSC
- Volunteers with the rural Skiku program for the past four years, including spending a week each year in some rural community teaching youngsters to ski
- Volunteers for the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program for the past four years
- Holds a full-time job
- Skis and runs competitively. Running, she has: first place in the Kenai River Marathon, Homer Half Marathon, and Resurrection Ultra 50; top 3 finish in Anchorage Run Fun Fest Marathon and Homer Mariner Triathalon. Skiing, she won the KNSC Marathon for women; placed 3rd in the Tour of Anchorage 40K; and qualified for the National Masters Nordic Program.
- Has a supportive husband who skis, volunteers, and helps keep meals on the table after long days of skiing.

"As vice president Stacey has been an extremely valuable, hard-working board member," says KNSC President Mike Gracz. "Despite having a full-time job, she has always been willing to coach, run a board meeting, and organize events, especially Friday Night Lights and the last annual meeting."

Stacey first visited Homer in 2000, two days after graduating from college. Initially, she worked with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey as a seabird biologist on St. George Island in the Pribolofs. For the next five summers, she returned to conduct seabird research in the Aleutians Islands. Before moving to Homer year-round in 2007, Stacey managed the eradication of invasive Norway rats on Hawdax Island (formerly Rat Island) to restore native seabird habitat.

Though she grew up on the East

See **STACEY**, Page 11

STACEY

Continued from Page 10

Coast using alpine skis, Stacey got on her first Nordic skis in Homer – and never looked back. Two years later, she joined the Kachemak Women's Nordic Program and began all her efforts to volunteer for coaching programs, join the KNSC board, and work on Nordic events all winter.

Her favorite part of the KNSC volunteering?

"Skiing, of course," she says. "I am inspired by the dedication of all the volunteer groomers, coaches, board members, mechanics, and more that truly make our Nordic trail system a labor of love. It's the community that has developed around a passion for winter skiing that has grown to be one of my favorite things about living in Homer."

Even the rural Skiku Nordic program has the same magic for Stacey. "What's not to enjoy?" she adds. "I get to spend eight hours a day on skis in some of Alaska's most surreal and remote places. … Skiku is run by tremendous staff and group of dedicated volunteers from across the U.S. It's an experience of a lifetime that I would encourage anyone with a love for skiing and interest in remote Alaska to consider."

One of Stacey's greatest joys is having the support of her husband.

"The old saying is true, behind every good woman is an incredible man," she says. "That saying really resonates in my house. I am fueled by the support of my husband, Jeff. His works take him outside of Homer during the winter, so he's pretty aloof on the ski trails."

Being out of town doesn't stop Jeff from volunteering for the KNSC when he is in town.

"Since it takes the whole village to run a ski club, and even more for Besh Cups(!)," Stacey says, "he volunteered a few years ago as a timer. Another volunteer in the stadium didn't know him and asked who he was. He said, 'I am Jeff, Stacey's husband.'"

The other volunteer laughed and said, "Wow, I didn't think you were real. But, here you are!" and then introduced him to the other volunteer as "Mr. Stacey."

Stacey adds, "Mr. Stacey works to keep meals on the table after long ski days, and helps to mop up the spillage when the cup gets too full. Recent sighting of Mr. Stacey include: filling kids ski boots with flowers for the annual meeting, welding groomer awards, clearing downed trees from the Homestead Trail, maintaining trail mowers, and constructing the new Sunset Maintenance Shed."

Thank you, Stacey – and you, too, Mr. Stacey.

AROUND THE VALLEY

Continued from Page 9

the experience … until I saw my skis.

My left ski had done its best impression of a yoga instructor, allowing the tip to now connect with the tail. Lest to say I was emotionally crushed. Fast forward, I was able to borrow a pair of skis from a buddy, but the skis were far from the right fit for me, especially compared to my dearly departed Fisher RCSs. Fast forward a little further and I finally had saved up enough to head back to the ski shop and get fitted for a brand new set of skis. Now I won't say that those skis got me to skiing fast enough to finally be on the varsity team … but they didn't hurt.

All this to say it pays huge dividends to visit your local ski shop. For us in the Valley that place is Backcountry Bike and Ski. This excellent shop can outfit you with that perfect ski to make you feel like the amazing skier you are. Now they may not be able to correct my defective aerial form, but they do make skiing in the Valley better. Since their inceptions, Backcountry Bike and Ski has supported the Mat-Su Ski Club in their financial support of our races, events and fundraising, and by volunteering their staff to support our events too many times to count. I will definitively say that without Backcountry Bike and Ski, Nordic skiing in the Valley would be a shadow of its current state. So show your support of a great local business and make your next outdoor equipment purchase from these fantastic guys and gals.

– By Hans Hill, Mat-Su Ski Club

Our awesome new PistenBully needs a trailer

If you haven't noticed, the trails in Hatcher Pass have been exceptional this year. Our groomers do a fantastic job and as a reward the Club decided to give them a gift … a PistenBully. The PB100 is a 2006 machine from down south that is fully outfitted with all the necessities to produce world-class groomed trails. Its extra width and hydraulically actuated track setters allow for exceptional time savings over our existing grooming equipment, and it allows for the creation of trails that surpass our current capabilities. The PistenBully is an 8,000-pound trail beating beast with over 9 feet in width. At $600 a trip to transport the PB100, the Club is needing a trailer capable of bouncing this magnificent machine back from Independence mine to GPRA and back. For the past several months the Club has been running a fundraising campaign to purchase the PistenBully trailer. As of writing this $5,500 of the $18,000 goal has been donated. To all of you who have donated, Thank you! And to those who enjoy the great tracks we can now create, please consider donating. Please visit the website for more details.

Northern Lights Race Series

The new year is bringing some new racing opportunities. Three races will be held on Sunday afternoons starting at 1 p.m. Dates are January 12, January 26, and February 23. Race distances are 2-10 KM. The first race is classic, the second is freestyle and the third race will be a skiathlon (classic followed by freestyle), and can be done individually or as a 2-person relay. These community races and offer a "low-key" race opportunity with all abilities welcome.

The club has Chariots

When my wife and I had our child, we purchased a Chariot to haul the kiddo around the trails. It offered us some exercise and some family bonding time. Unfortunately, Chariots are not free, except if you are a MSSC member. The club has four Chariots (pulks) to carry one or two infants or small children. They are free to use for periods up to two weeks and can be used for additional time periods if there is no one on the waiting list. Please email the club for more information.

Junior Nordics

Junior Nordics are starting up this month. We now have maxed out the program with 403 kids enrolled this year. To help with trail congestion, The "top carnivores," Grizzlys and Wolves, will ski on the Denali loop freeing up trail space on the Mat-Su and Pioneer loops for the younger and beginner skiers. We look forward to seeing all the mini-me's out on the trail.

Grooming update

As of January 1, the MSSC has been grooming for a whopping 86 days and we hope to groom until the end of May, 248 days! A side note: There are two Mat-Su Ski Club members who are on track for skiing all 248 days. While the Independence Mine area has been the primary venue, on December 15 we opened a 3.5 KM loop on the east side of the valley using our new PistenBully 100. No fall away downhill turns! That is one benefit of the grooming motto of "For Skiers, By Skiers 24-7." Archangel Road is seeing lots of skiers and the parking lot is packed from early morning to late afternoon, seven days a week. Skiing conditions are excellent. GPRA and the Moose Range have seen limited skiing because of warm temperatures and minimal snowpack. (Hopefully skiing will be better by this article's publication date.)

Mat-Su Ski Club members participate in biathlon training

Some members of the Mat-Su Ski Club got a taste of biathlon in late November thanks to an introductory biathlon class at Kincaid Park in Anchorage. Steve Wilson with Alaska Biathlon Association led the class, which was organized in cooperation with the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage. The MSSC encouraged its members to attend so they could become familiar with the sport and receive the safety training needed to participate in biathlon events at Kincaid Park. Of the 13 people that took the class, most were from the Mat-Su Valley, including several young skiers. Participants received hands-on instruction in firearm safety and biathlon procedures and had a chance to try their hand at closing biathlon targets during an extended shooting session at the end of the class. Because there is not a biathlon range in the Mat-Su Valley, MSSC encourages its members that are interested in the sport to take part in biathlon at Kincaid Park range and will try to facilitate opportunities to do so. MSSC members interested in biathlon can contact Jerry Hupp (jerry.hupp@matsuski.org) to be placed on the Club's biathlon email list.

Two junior skiers from the Mat-Su Ski Club test their skill at closing biathlon targets during an introductory class at Kincaid Park.

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

AROUND THE INTERIOR

Birch Hill App slowly fading away

The Birch Hill App is no longer available from the App store. This app, which is for iOS users only, is slowly fading away. It still shows Birch Hill temperatures stats as well as the temperature at the airport. It also shows the National Weather Service weather update, the webcam, and the NSCF newsfeed.

If you would like to see the Birch Hill app continue and have an Apple developer account (or are willing to create one and pay the $99 yearly fee) send an email to fbxskierparent@gmail.com.

Temperature and grooming updates are available for anyone with a smartphone (iOS or not). Use your smart phone's browser and go to the NSCF website. For weather: in the menu (top right corner) choose Weather. Scroll down to Mobile Weather. Click on that link. For grooming: in the menu (top right corner) choose Trails. Then scroll down a bit and you'll get the latest grooming updates. Scroll down farther to get to the grooming chart. Turn your phone sideways for easier reading.

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:

Jan. 10 — Candlelight Ski
Jan. 11 — Town Series race #3
Jan. 18 — Distance Series #2
Jan. 25 — Town Series race #4
Jan. 25 — Backcountry Film Festival
Feb. 1-2 — Besh Cup Fairbanks races

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 Shelly Soderstrom (juniornordics@nscairbanks.org; 907-371-9564).

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 Shelly Soderstrom at adultlessons@nscfairbanks.org.

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 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 send an email to president@nscfairbanks.org.

Who's Who in the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks

JUNIOR NORDIC HOTLINE
457-4437

PRESIDENT
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TOURING
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Eric Troyer | fbxskierparent@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
Eric Troyer
newsletter@nscfairbanks.org

Goldstream Sports presents: Birch Hill Candlelight Ski on January 10

Check out the beauty of Nordic skiing and a Fairbanks winter night at Birch Hill. The Fairbanks community is invited to a midwinter Candlelight Ski. Please join us from 4-7 p.m. Friday, January 10, at Birch Hill Recreation Area as we turn off the trail lights and instead brighten and warm the snow with hundreds of candles.

This free event is being organized by the Lathrop High School Cross-Country Ski Team. All ages and abilities are welcome, so bring your

See **CANDLELIGHT**, Page 13

PHOTOS BY **AMY KULP**

Ice candles make for a magical ski on the Birch Hill Recreation Area trails during the Goldstream Sports Candlelight Ski.

Backcountry Film Festival celebrates winter, helps ski club

BY ERIC TROYER

The Backcountry Film Festival brings the world's winter wonderland to Fairbanks this January.

The Fairbanks showing, organized by the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks (NSCF), will be held on Saturday, January 25. Watch the NSCF website (www.nscfairbanks.org) and Facebook page for more information. Besides being great fun, this event serves as a fundraiser for the NSCF and the Winter Wildlands Alliance.

We've got all sorts of films for you this year including:

Climate Change in the Kennels — A documentary exploring how climate change is affecting the lives of the mushers and dogs who travel in Denali National Park.

Can't Ski Vegas — Which follows a crew of skiers as they withdraw into the wild and ski lines in northern Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska.

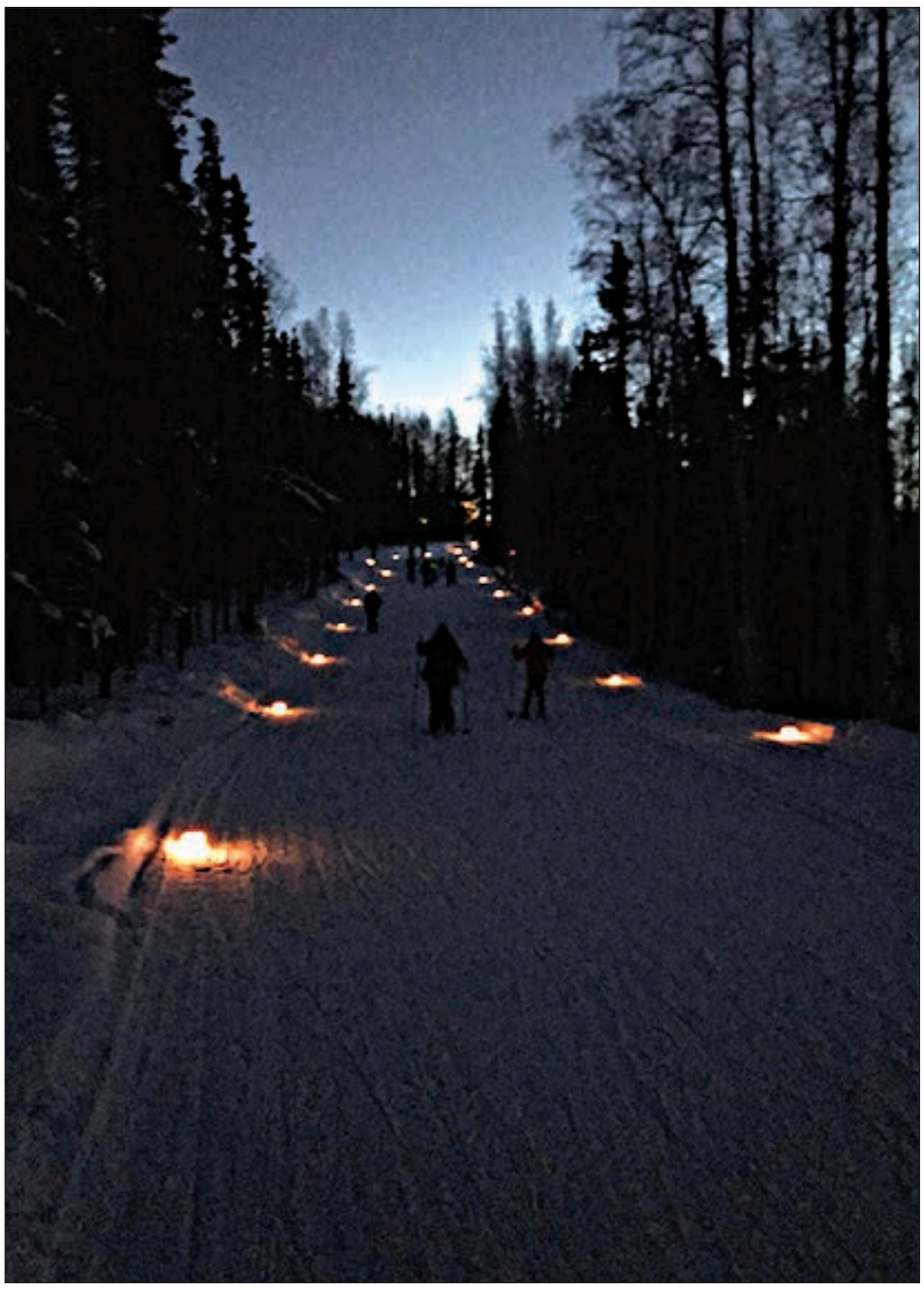
A Climb for Equality — In which ski mountaineer Caroline Gleich climbs Mount Everest, and by documenting her journey, invites women to join her in overcoming the challenges of mountaineering.

And many more! **winterwildlands.org/backcountry-film-festival-2019-20-film-line-up/** See this year's films teasers at **winterwildlands.org/backcountry-film-festival/**

Produced each year as a celebratory, backcountry community event by the Winter Wildlands Alliance, the 15th annual Backcountry Film Festival film lineup is full of snowy, cinematic adventure sure to inspire both the local backcountry and general communities. Winter Wildlands Alliance is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving winter wildlands and a quality human-powered snow sports experience on public lands.

The BackCountry Film Festival aims to entertain while helping to raise funds and awareness for Winter Wildlands and its like-minded partners. The festival, which was created in 2004, premieres in Boise, and then travels to more than 100 locations worldwide. Funds raised by the festival showings stay in local communities to support human-powered recreation and conservation efforts and to raise awareness of winter management issues, avalanche training/safety and winter education programs.

Eric Troyer is Fairbanks editor of the Alaska Nordic Skier.



CANDLELIGHT

Continued from Page 12

family and friends. A beginner loop around the stadium will be available, and a special trail will be uniquely flickering.

Ski amidst the peaceful glow of frosted candles. Bring your own light up "bling": glow sticks, headlamps, or light up jewelry. Take as few or as many loops as you'd like and stop inside for a warmup and some hot chocolate and cookies. This event is generously sponsored by Goldstream Sports and NSCF in hopes of seeing many new faces enjoying these beautiful Fairbanks trails and to have those familiar with Birch Hill see it in a different "light." See you there!

Questions? Contact Amy Kulp (atkulp1@hotmail.com). Note: if it is colder than 10 below at 3 p.m. on event day, it will be postponed until January 17.

Find the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage on Facebook at —
facebook.com/anchoragenordicski

the ALASKA nordic skier

Advertise here and your business can reach skiers across the state.

Rosie Creek Forestry roads offer miles and miles of skiing

BY ERIC TROYER

A project announced this past fall by the Alaska State Division of Forestry has drawn attention to the recreation potential in the Rosie Creek area of the Tanana Valley State Forest. But it's already a great place to go skiing in winter!

The state Division of Forestry is applying for a grant to improve and sign some of the forestry roads in the area and add a formal trailhead so that people are more willing to use it for recreation purposes. The many road intersections and lack of a formal trailhead often discourage people from using the area. The forest project got a favorable response during a public meeting this past fall.

The motivation behind the project is two-fold. One is that the division has no plans to log in that area for at least several decades. The other is that there is a desire on the Board of Forestry to explore more of the division's recreation mandate.

While the proposal has drawn attention to the recreation potential of the Rosie Creek area, many people already use the roads and trails informally winter and summer. However, some have been discouraged from venturing there because there are few directional signs. For people interested in exploring the area on their own, this map can be useful: **tinyurl.com/uuwf75v**.

Another way to get to know the area is to use it during an event, such as the Tanana River Challenge winter endurance race (**tananariverchallenge.org**), which is open to skiers, skijorers, fat bikers, and runners. The race, which is usually held in February or March, starts on and uses a portion of the Tanana River (unless the river is not sufficiently frozen), but it also uses many of the trails in the Rosie Creek area of the Tanana Valley State Forest.

PHOTO BY **DREW HARRINGTON**

The Tanana River Challenge helps keep trails in the Rosie Creek area groomed and cleared of brush.

Organizers of the race keep about 30 miles of trails in the area groomed and brushed during winter. There is no set track for skiing, but the trails are groomed 6 to 8 feet wide. Others also regularly snowmachine and brush the trails.

Skiers have had a long history in the area. For the past several years the NSCF has held a tour that explores some of the trails. One was already held earlier this winter. (See the tour report on the NSCF Touring News at: **nscfairbanks.org/programs/touring/news/**.)

In the past few years, the Tanana River Challenge has brought many skiers and other winter users to the area. According to the race website, the race is "a reincarnation of the much-loved Equinox Ultra-Ski 100k Challenge which went from Nenana to Fairbanks and run for many years by Audun and Sally Endestad of Fairbanks. We've updated it to include more modes of travel, multiple aid stations run by our great volunteers, and have embraced new course routes."

According to Sally Endestad, Audun packed the Rosie Creek trails with a snowmachine for many years. While Audun didn't have a tracksetter, track was set "on occasion by Paul Beberg and his group of groomers when he was coaching at UAF early to mid 90's," Sally Endestad wrote in an email.

The Rosie Creek area seems to almost have it all: groomed trails and a long history of skiing. While the area doesn't yet have a formal trailhead, you can use the Isberg Recreation Area trailhead off Isberg and Cripple Creek roads.

If you want to help the Tanana River Challenge continue grooming and brushing the trails, either volunteer to help with the race or donate to the Alaska Skijoring and Pulk Association at **alaskaskijoring.org**.

Eric Troyer is Fairbanks editor of the Alaska Nordic Skier.

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Thirty years of giving: Recognizing super-glue, super-volunteer Bob Stehn

Bob Stehn was awarded the Volunteer of the Year for the Chugiak Eagle River Nordic Ski Club (CERNSC) this year, but as ski club president, Jason Dennis says, "He should probably win the award by landslide every year. He is the glue that truly keeps the operation running year after year. NSAA may have the Green Grunts, but we got a Super Bob!"

Bob, and his wife, Meg, started volunteering for CERNSC when their kids were in Junior Nordic, which was called the Bill Koch League 30 years ago around 1990. They both helped with Arctic Winter Games when Chugiak/Eagle River hosted them in 1996. Before timing ski races, Bob preferred to volunteer at races on his skis. Since 2003, however, Bob has been volunteering for both CERNSC and NSAA. When asked about his timing, Meg said, "He is a science and math nerd and working with timing programs is in his wheelhouse."

Bob has also been the treasurer since 2010. As treasurer, he is basically the club's recordkeeper, which means he does the taxes, keeps track of Junior Nordic skis, poles, and rental income, keeps an inventory of club equipment and where it is located. In addition, he works to keep the club's 501(c)3 legal with the state. From 2014-2018, Bob also computerized online registration with Wild Apricot and PayPal.

If you thought that wasn't enough, Bob began working on the Beach Lake trails with Glen Macsurak and Gary Dale around 1997. They graded the trails and lit many of the original lighted loop trails during the summer. After Mirror Lake Middle School was opened, Sharon Macsurak attained permission to build a ski trail on adjacent property. Bob worked with Van Mitchell, Glen Macsurak and Dennis Corral to decide where to set the trails there. During the summer, Craig Norman, Ben Powell, Bob, Dennis Corral, and many other club members cut down trees and graded these trails.

Bob truly loves seeing people out Nordic skiing and he supports the club in any way he can. Jason Dennis added, "I have no idea of the true hours that Bob puts into trail maintenance, but if I had to guess I bet he put in 200 hours this summer. He coordinated with NSAA and Parks to get Meander Trail fixed. Then Bob spent a number of hours working solo to fix drainage issues. Bob is always the first one to step up to help and the last one typically to leave."

Bob Stehn with his wife Meg. They have both been volunteering for the last 30 years.

Ros Singleton, another longtime member of the club said, "Bob Stehn has been one of the biggest advocates for ski trails in Eagle River/Chugiak for decades. He has been involved with every aspect of trail development and maintenance. He has worked tirelessly with other CERNSC volunteers, NSAA, and Parks and Recreation to seek grant funding, design, build, and complete summer maintenance on trails and he continually works to improve them. Bob seems to enjoy every aspect of trail development and maintenance, including driving heavy machinery and walking the trails and cutting back brush. Bob's also selfless. Several years ago when the club wanted to name a trail "Stehn Trail," Bob changed it to "No Way" trail. We're all indebted to the loving care and great collaborative work Bob has accomplished over the years to make the Beach Lake Trail system a premier ski trail system for our community."

Everyone certainly agrees that we should recognize his hard work as a way of showing our deepest gratitude and appreciation. It is our hope that the Nordic ski community will thank him and tip a hat to Bob when they see him around the community in recognition of his hard work.

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AROUND EAGLE RIVER

Junior Nordic families and coaches anxious for snow!

Almost 200 kids have signed up for Junior Nordic classes in Eagle River this year. Everyone is waiting for snow. Snow dances, everyone! We need snow as soon as possible, but it is likely, based on the weather report and the fact that school holidays are a week away, that JN won't start this year until the beginning of the new year.

Eagle River's Helen Wilson making strides with UAA and national teams

A recent picture of Helen at the Alaska Nordic Cup Races.

Helen Wilson, well known biathlete from Eagle River, recently placed 10th in the 5km skate ski at Alaska's Nordic Cup ski race held on Saturday, December 7, at Government Peak Recreation Area. As a recent recruit to the UAA college Nordic ski team, and her very first college race, Helen is holding her own and showing great potential.

Helen grew up in Eagle River and graduated from Eagle River High School in May. She is the daughter of Steve and Sarah Wilson and got her start participating in CERNSC's Junior Nordic program at 7 years old.

Helen said, "Junior Nordic gave me a good base in skiing because it was fun, they played a lot of games, and it kept me motivated to keep going. I was always super stoked to go to JN."

Her dad, Steve, added, "It was always about having fun until she hit the 11-12 year old group. That was when something clicked and she was suddenly all about beating the boys in her group from then on."

Helen certainly has worked hard to be competitive since then. In fact, her father said her training has bumped up considerably now that she is on the UAA team and also competing in biathlon.

Helen joined Alaska Nordic Racing and Anchorage Biathlon Club when she was 13. By the age of 15, she qualified for her first traveling team as a snowshoe biathlete for Arctic Winter Games in Nuuk, Greenland. Since then, she has been successfully competing worldwide as a member of three U.S. teams at the Youth Junior World Championships held in Slovakia and Estonia. She also won the youth mass start race at U.S. Biathlon Championships to claim her first national title last year. Helen signed to ski at UAA and began racing with them last month. In December, she competed in Vermont in hopes of qualifying for this year's U.S. Biathlon Championships, held in Lenzerheide, Switzerland.

Congratulations Helen, we all look forward to cheering you on and watching you races this season and best of luck!

Start training for March's wilderness ski races

BY ERIC TROYER

Skiers interested in taking on a bigger and wilder ski race than what the club offers will have at least two choices later this winter, but you better start training now!

The Chena River to Ridge happens February 29 in the Chena River State Recreation Area. The Tanana River Challenge happens on March 7 just to the west of Fairbanks. Many skiers have started out with NSCF races and gone on to compete in these races. And neither race conflicts with the Sonot Kkaazoot or any other NSCF race, so you can get them all in! (The Tanana River Challenge happens the day before the Skiathon, so that would fill up your weekend!)

The White Mountains 100, a 100-mile adventure race in the White Mountains National Recreation Area, takes place in late March and has a ski division. The race roster is already filled, but you can put yourself on the waiting list. If that one intrigues you, make sure to keep an eye on Facebook or the website in early November when the registration opens.

Here are some details on the races:

CHENA RIVER TO RIDGE: FEBRUARY 29

The Chena River to Ridge multi-sport endurance race held in the Chena State Recreation area. The event features skiing, running, and biking categories with 26- and 55-mile distance options. It's a challenging racecourse on maintained snowmachine trails with big ascents, fast downhills, blind turns, and outstanding views of the local hills and the Alaska Range. The course links the Compeau, Colorado Creek, Stiles Creek, and Yukon Quest trails system, and is best attempted with classic ski gear. Although recently, the top finishes have gone to skate skiers. Aid stations with drinks and snacks are staffed by event personnel at the mid-points of each loop. Eats, drinks, and a warm place to hang out after the race are provided at the start/finish at Twin Bears Camp on Mile 30 CHSR. **rivertoridge.org**; Facebook: **facebook.com/Chena-River-to-Ridge-187619548028898/**

PHOTOS BY **ERIC TROYER**

Corrine Leistikow double-poles down the Colorado Creek Trail during the 2013 Chena River to Ridge.

TANANA RIVER CHALLENGE: MARCH 7

The Tanana River Challenge (TRC) is a non-motorized, winter, endurance race in beautiful Interior Alaska. It is open to fat-bikers, skiers, skijorers, and runners. The TRC experience is one of shared, multi-use trails, in a semi-remote setting. The race route sometimes changes, but it usually takes in the wide-open Tanana River and loops through the hilly, scenic Rosie Creek forest. Trails are groomed 6- to 8-feet-wide, but without set tracks. Typically, racers can choose between 25- and 45-mile distances. The race includes many aid stations and an after-party with food and bonfire. The start/finish area is at the Tanana River boat launch off Chena Pump Road.

For more information: **tananariverchallenge.org**; Facebook: **facebook.com/TananaRiverChallenge**

The White Mountains 100 information: **wm100.endurancenorth.org**; Facebook: **facebook.com/White-Mountains-100-193491062481/**

Eric Troyer is Fairbanks editor of the Alaska Nordic Skier.

Mike Schmoker, Corrine Leistikow and Jim Brader take a break on the Compeau Trail during the 2013 Chena River to Ridge.

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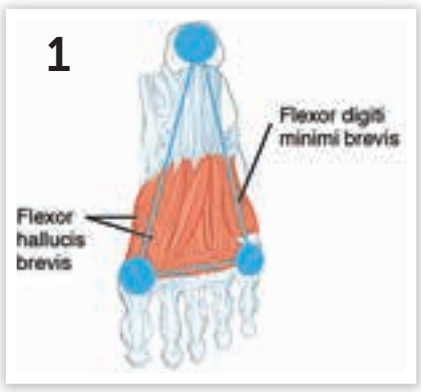
Putting your best – and strongest – foot forward this ski season

BY COLLIN ATKINSON, PT, DPT, COMT
Advanced Physical Therapy

Unlocking the strength and coordination of your foot and ankle musculature can make all the difference when you are out skiing. Even though your foot sits snugly and well-supported within your ski boot, it is important to maintain the strength and endurance of your foot intrinsic musculature to prevent overuse injuries. As an added bonus, working on your foot intrinsic strength will decrease your need for orthotics and improve the resilience of your plantar fascia.

Your foot intrinsic muscles live in four layers on the underside of your foot. These muscles function to stabilize your arch, move your toes, and absorb loading forces as you place your foot on the ground. Being able to successfully utilize your foot intrinsic muscles improves your ability to handle load at your foot and ankle before it progresses into your shin, thigh, hip, and low back. In addition, using these muscles efficiently facilitates your ability to make quick adjustments within your foot to handle difficult terrain and keep your body centered over your ski. Efficiency within your foot and ankle equates to efficiency throughout the entire movement system.

When it comes to foot intrinsic muscle strength, the flexor hallucis brevis (big toe flexor) is arguably the most important muscle to develop in order to improve your arch support and foot stability. Before covering strength and coordination activities for your foot intrinsics we must quickly cover a foot posture known as the foot tripod. To achieve this position, evenly distribute your weight between your heel, the ball of your foot, and the pad at the base of your pinky toe — you should feel all three points of contact equally (photo 1). From here you can begin with our first foot intrinsic exercise called doming.



To perform doming, stand on one foot and actively push all five of your toes into the ground without allowing your toes to curl. While putting pressure through your toes, actively try to raise your arch off the ground as through you are trying to avoid standing on a small tack (when done correctly your foot will move about ¼-½ an inch). While you lift your arch, take care not to roll your weight to the outside of your foot and lose your foot tripod. Hold each repetition for five seconds and repeat until you feel fatigue in the bottom of your foot and back of your leg.

To progress this activity, establish your foot tripod and push your big toe flat into the ground while raising your arch. While pushing your big toe into the ground raise your 2nd through 5th toes off the ground without losing your arch or foot tripod (images 2 and 3). Maintain pressure through your big toe and repeat 30 times while keeping your balance on one foot. While skiing you can begin to integrate the strength and coordination gains you make with these exercises by pushing your big toe down into your boot as you glide.

The last activity is for your remaining foot intrinsic musculature. Stand on both feet on a smooth surface and establish your foot tripod. From here, lift and hold all your toes off the ground and shuffle – walking without allowing your foot to lose contact with the floor – forward and backward 20 steps without letting your toes fall to the ground. Take care to not lose your foot tripod and repeat three times.

If you feel that you are limited in your ability to return to skiing this season because of pain or weakness, make sure to proactively seek help and consult with a physical therapist to reduce your risk of skiing related injury. Developing resilience throughout the season is the key to long-term fitness and performance success.

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Do you want to learn more? Come see us at **Advanced Physical Therapy**! Call for an appointment at any of our five locations statewide , or visit us online at: **aptak.com**

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