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the ALASKA nordic skier

October 2025, Vol.27, No.1

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ANCHORAGE:
Start the season in style at Nordic Nights
3

MAT-SU:
Behind the scenes of our winter prep
10

STATEWIDE:
Summer skiing, training is fun in the sun
15

Anchorage 2
Eagle River 13
Fairbanks 16
Girdwood 11
Juneau 9
Kachemak 12
Mat-Su 10

Anchorage Nordic Skier
Newsletter Of The Nordic Skiing Association Of Anchorage, Inc.

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Doing the hard work to prepare for whatever winter arrives

A Message from NSAA Executive Director Kikkan Randall

What can we do to ensure good snow this season? It's a question that invites both preparation and imagination as we look toward winter. The honest answer isn't a trick or luck – it's a shared commitment to be ready for whatever the season brings and to trust in the power of this community.

After two banner winters in 2023 and 2024, last season presented its own challenges. Yet we adapted, found creative solutions, and kept the momentum going. When this community comes together, we turn obstacles into opportunities and make great things happen.

Looking at the broader picture, Anchorage tends to cycle through tougher winters about once a decade. That gives us confidence that a strong season is on the horizon. More than data, it comes down to belief—and we believe this winter will be exciting, and we're doing the hard work to be ready for anything that comes our way.

This is an Olympic year, and February's celebration of human potential inspires us to lift our sights and lift each other. Our season will blend the warmth of our time-tested events with fresh experiences that light up the trails and the impact of what we love to do together.

We're kicking off with Nordic Nights, our new fall fundraiser, on Oct. 18 at the Wildbirch Hotel. It's a vibrant night to come together, start the season in style, and raise funds for our brand-new SkiMobile initiative to bring skiing to more Anchorage elementary school students.

In partnership with the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks and the Mat-Su Ski Club, we're proud to host races in December as part of the Alaska SuperTour, the first period of the national SuperTour series. These races will be part of the Olympic selection process, and NSAA is honored to host many of North America's top athletes as they vie for spots on the Olympic Team.

All of the work we do at NSAA is powered by you, our members. Grooming trails, supporting youth ski programs, and hosting community events are possible because of our shared belief in the positive power of the outdoors and Nordic skiing to build health and community through trails.

Thank you for your ongoing support. We can't wait to be out on the trails with you this winter!

Get those skis waxed – it's going to be a great season!

— Cheers, Kikkan

AROUND THE BOWL

To put a pin in, and on, it: NSAA appreciates its members!

We thank you all for your generous membership and support. Member pins and decals are now available to pick up at AMH, Hoarding Marmot, and at the NSAA office on Jewel Lake! This year's design is all about the Winter Olympics, celebrating our amazing athletes, and the Olympic dream!

We also have new signature gifts for our Meister and Blazer members that can be picked up from our office (9170 Jewel Lake Road, Suite 200). Our office is open noon-4 p.m. Tuesday-Friday.

NSAA maintains, repairs, and grooms 160km of trails that are used by thousands every year and are only made possible because of individual giving from trail users like you! Haven't renewed your membership? Know someone who uses the trails but isn't a member? Now is the time to support NSAA before the grooming begins! Learn more and sign up today at **anchoragenordicski.com/membership/**.

See **AROUND THE BOWL**, Page 3

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Zak Hammill

SKI TRAIN
Travis Taylor

SOLSTICE TREE TOUR
Sara Miller

TOUR OF ANCHORAGE
Ida Gullett

NSAA OFFICE HOURS
Noon-4 p.m. Tuesday-Friday during ski season

BOARD MEETINGS
Fourth Thursday of the month 6:30 p.m. at NSAA Office Open to all

AROUND THE BOWL

Continued from Page 2

Nordic Nights Benefit & Fashion Show

Join NSAA for an evening showcasing new and exciting NSAA's projects and the latest in Nordic and ski attire and gear from local businesses at the new Nordic Nights Benefit & Fashion Show from 5-8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 18, at the Wildbirch Hotel (239 W 4th Ave.).

Our fashion show will spotlight new designs that you can find at AMH, Hoarding Marmot, and the Alaska Clothing Company, so you can look great while out on the trails and for apres ski! Attendees can also bid on live auction and silent auction items.

Join us for a sublime and memorable evening supporting NSAA's community outreach and Ski Mobile goals. Wear your best attire while enjoying complimentary appetizers and a cash bar. Learn more and RSVP at **anchoragenordicski.com/nordic-nights-gala-fashion-show/**.

NSAA Run De Jump

NSAA's Run De Jump makes its debut at noon Saturday, Oct. 11, as the iconic Karl Eid Ski Jumping hill plays host to the new competition.

The principle is simple: participants start at the bottom of the ski jump and race up the cargo net, then on to the top of the Hilltop Ski Area chair lift. The race will challenge speed and endurance, and is guaranteed to put the participants' calves, quads and fitness to the test.

Please no training or running on the cargo net before the race. Other race rules include: No contact between participants; no poles, spikes, or traction devices; slow runners, stay to the right; portable music or headphones are not allowed; have fun; and costumes encouraged.

Learn more and register to race at **anchoragenordicski.com/2025-run-de-jump/**.

NSAA Ski Swap

Have you noticed the chill in the air? It's time to dig out your gear and get ready for winter. Looking to upgrade your setup? We can help. Sell your old equipment and find new-to-you gear at NSAA's annual Ski Swap, arriving from 1-4 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 25, at the Kincaid Park wax bunker. Gear drop-off is 4-6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 24.

NSAA's annual swap arrives at the perfect time to get fired up and prepared for the season of skiing and winter adventures. Sign up as a seller or as a volunteer, and learn more about the event, at **anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-swap/**. Want to get first pick on gear? Sign up to volunteer and you will be allowed to shop and purchase up to two items prior to the event opening to the public.

Business & Brats/NSAA Annual Meeting

Save the date for NSAA's Business & Brats/Annual Meeting: 4-7 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 9, at the Kincaid Park chalet. Join us for our Annual

See **AROUND THE BOWL**, Page 7

the Alaska nordic skier

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The Alaska Nordic Skier is a publication representing the nordic ski clubs of Anchorage, Eagle River, Fairbanks, Homer, Juneau, Mat-Su, Salcha, Seward, Soldotna, Kenai, Talkeetna and Valdez. The Alaska Nordic Skier is published October through April by the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage, Inc.

All rights reserved. © 2025 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

Alaska summer skiing went to new heights at the new Thomas Training Center on Eagle Glacier. Read more on PAGE 15. Photo courtesy of APU Nordic Ski Center.

2025 NSAA Scholarship Awards honor outstanding student-athletes, community members

NSAA is pleased to announce it awarded six Anchorage-area student/athletes college scholarships this summer. These outstanding youth demonstrate a love of skiing and commitment to community service while maintaining exceptional academic success.

This year's scholarship recipients are: West High School's Benjamin Strauss, who received $1,000 to assist at the University of Utah; Service High's Brianna Gill Anderson, who received $1000 to assist at Colorado State University; Bettye Davis East High's Brynn Rathert, who received $1,000 to assist at Colorado State University; Bettye Davis East High's Fiora Graziano, who received $1,000 to assist at Western Colorado University; Service High/UAA's Lohn Lohuis, who received $1,500 to assist at Alaska Pacific University; and Dimond High's Teagan Halsey, who received $1,500 to assist at the University of Wyoming.

NSAA has awarded college-student scholarships for more than 30 years. Congratulations and best wishes to this year's scholarship winners and many thanks to all who applied.

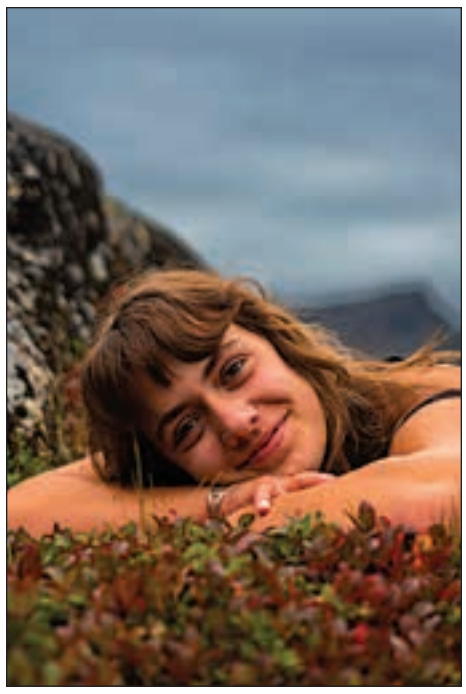
The deadline for NSAA's 2026 scholarship applications is March 31, 2026. Learn application requirements, eligibility criteria and more at **anchoragenordicski.com/about/scholarship/**.

Benjamin Strauss

Brianna Anderson

John Lohuis

Teagan Halsey


Fiora Graziano

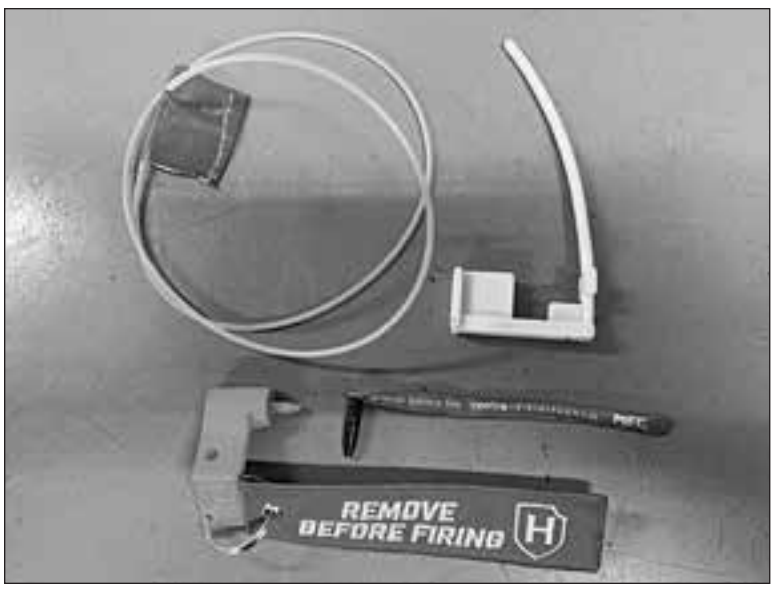
Brynn Rathert

Celia Rozen represented NSAA to recognize Dimond High's Teagan Halsey for being awarded the NSAA High School scholarship. The $1,500 scholarship will assist Halsey, who is attending the University of Wyoming.

NSAA Biathlon Program under construction for big-time upgrades

The Kincaid Biathlon Range saw several improvements over the summer. NSAA staff, club members and leaders, and volunteers raised target control boxes to keep them out of the freeze/thaw cycle; biathlon berm signage was raised to be visible above the winter snow and summer foliage; there was an Eagle Scout project to repaint firing lines and lane markings; we resealed gun racks; and a lot more!

Other local biathlon notes include: Effective Oct. 1, 2025, is a new safety rule (ECR: 8.5.1.1 Safety marker): The IBU now requires a Safety Marker, also known as a clear barrel indicator (CBI), empty chamber indicator (ECI), or chamber safety flag, installed on all biathlon rifles. RSO Steve Wilson has nicely summarized the rule, including links from IBU and USBA, and given examples of safety markers. Read about it and more at NSAA's Biathlon program's site **anchoragenordicski.com/programs/biathlon/**.



BLACK DOG GUNSMITHING

Meet our new NSAA Armorer, Miles Michel

Please give a warm welcome to Miles Michel, the new NSAA Armorer! Miles is a school-trained gunsmith who has personally dabbled in biathlon and is happy to support our community. He is the proud owner of Black Dog Gunsmithing, a certified firearms shop in Anchorage and offers a 10 percent discount to NSAA members for all their firearm needs. He is ready to keep our gear in top shape and service our community with reliability and skill. Fun fact: Miles hails from Scotland and once competed on the U.S. Marine Corps rifle team!

We're excited to have him onboard. Welcome to the team, Miles!

– Bridget McBride
NSAA Program Director

Looking for a new winter activity? There are many ways to learn, enjoy biathlon

Enjoying biathlon doesn't have to mean years of training and skiing loops with an eight-pound rifle on your back.

For many, the best introduction to the sport is simply searching for World Cup biathlon race coverage on a streaming platform like YouTube. As a major television draw around the world, WC biathlon has excellent camera coverage with commentary in English and other languages. Watch the U.S. team for Alaskan Maxime Germain, and hunt up races from recent Youth/Junior Biathlon World Championships for Alaskans who make that squad each year. Like in skiing, this season is a great one to watch the WC circuits as they lead up to the Winter Olympic Games. The influence the Olympics have on the early cup season is unique in sport, as athletes strive to balance World Cup performance while at the same time preparing for the Olympics. The battle on the range and in the standings each week is fantastic sports television.

Anchorage is a great place to try biathlon hands-on. The biathlon range at Kincaid is on the snow making loop which makes biathlon practice possible even when other local trails suffer from lack of snow. NSAA, who operates the range, has biathlon rifles available for members to use and ammunition available for purchase. With completion of an education/ certification class and racer membership with the United States Biathlon Association and NSAA biathlon, skiers ten years and older can use club rifles and take part in general range openings, events, and club practices. Biathlon Alaska offers training sessions for all skill levels, and Challenge Alaska offers biathlon opportunities for athletes experiencing disabilities. The Anchorage Biathlon Club offers training sessions as well.

If a front row seat for live biathlon sounds better than taking on a race, the biathlon community always welcomes volunteers to help with local races. Many volunteer positions provide great views of the start/ finish and shooting range. Watching local racers battle on the range and skis is always exciting.

So whether it be on a streaming service, a training session, or helping out at a race, consider adding some biathlon to your winter. Anchorage is among the best places to give it a try and there's plenty of room at the biathlon range at Kincaid Park. See you at the range!

Tom Grenier is a long-time Anchorage ski and biathlon coach and head coach at Biathlon Alaska (**biathlonak.com**).

Meet NSAA's new Program Manager Bridget McBride

We have an amazing team at NSAA, and we're excited to introduce and congratulate our new Program Manager, Bridget McBride.

HOMETOWN/GREW UP – Anchorage, AK

WHEN DID YOU FIRST CONNECT WITH NSAA – At 8 years old, as a Polar Cub! I've been professionally working for NSAA since May 5.

FAVORITE PART OF THE JOB – The people! NSAA's staff, board, volunteers, and working with the greater community are really what makes this job great. It doesn't hurt that we all share a passion for skiing too. :)

FAVORITE HOBBY – Trail running, puzzling, eating chocolate.

FAVORITE FEEL-GOOD SONG – One Republic's "I lived."

Proud to Support NSAA and Anchorage skiers!

Offering a large menu of salads, appetizers, baskets, 35+ great sandwiches, Beyond Burgers, dairy & non-dairy ice cream treats and more!
*Call **248-3068** for orders to go or visit **www.tfalaska.com***
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Summer highlights, winter preparation for NSAA's Ski Jumping program

BY ZAK HAMMILL
NSAA Ski Jumping Director, Coach

There's no such thing as a summer break for NSAA's Ski Jumping and Nordic Combined program and local athletes at the Karl Eid Ski Jumps. This summer's program was highlighted by the Summer Solstice jump camp, which capped off with our 12-hour Midnight Sun Jump-A-Thon. Our volunteer crew completed a very impressive new staircase build. This project was led by Mike Jokela, who was inducted into the National Ski Jumping Hall of Fame this summer!

After the eventful 2024-25 winter season, it was nice to maximize jumping this summer with our consistent summer ski jumping surface. Ski jumpers had the opportunity to jump up to four days a week, and they certainly took advantage of the many sunny days.

As fall is setting in, the anticipation of winter is upon us. It won't be long until temperatures drop below freezing and the snow starts to fly! We can't wait to see our jumping facility blanketed in beautiful white snow again.

NSAA's Ski Jumping program is always looking for more ski jumpers. If your child has looked at the ski jumps and said that they would like to try it, bring them out for some fun and safe lessons.

Learn more about NSAA's Ski Jumping and Nordic Combined programs at **anchoragenordicski.com/programs/ski-jumping/**.

Check out the sweet – and safe – new stairs at the jump facility!

Anchorage's super-volunteer, former jumper Mike Jokela joins the National Ski Jumping Hall of Fame

Long-time club member Mike Jokela was inducted into the National Ski Jumping Hall of Fame this past summer. He is a past ski jumper at the Karl Eid ski jumps and since then has coached, done countless volunteer facility improvements, and has helped facilitate large national events here in Anchorage.

From the 1970s to the 1990s the sport of ski jumping was thriving across American ... but little was known about what was happening in the far northwest of America, and many would be surprised to hear that ski jumping was also thriving in Anchorage, Alaska.

Many jumps, from 10 meters to 40 meters, were constructed all over Anchorage by Scandinavian immigrants to this young state. Even the small ski town of Girdwood built a 40-meter so that the town could host joint ski jumping and cross country Junior Nationals in the 1980s. It wasn't until 1984 when the current ski jumps known today as the Karl Eid Ski Jumping Complex were built. Today, all of the other small jumps spread across Anchorage have been deconstructed, but the Karl Eid ski jumps still remain.

It was during the heyday of the 1980s that Anchorage's jumps attracted Mike Jokela to the sport. He began jumping in high school coached by none other than Karl Eid, the grandfather of Alaska ski jumping. While many individuals have come and gone from the Alaska ski jumping scene over the years, Mike more than anyone else has stayed involved and given back to the sport.

By trade, Mike spent his career as a surveyor. His knowledge and skill in this field has allowed him to lead many construction improvement projects at the Karl Eid Ski Jumps. Most notable would be: redecking of the 40-meter tower, regrading and installing summer ski jumping surface on all four ski jumps, designing and constructing facility staircases, and surveying and site placement of the new buildings currently under construction.

Throughout Mike's dedicated time to Alaska Ski Jumping he has worn just about every hat possible. He has taken on the role of head coach, leading Alaska ski jumping teams to multiple Junior Nationals. When key volunteers were phasing out of the program Mike once again stepped up to keep the program afloat taking on the program director role. Long before our current snowmaking system was installed and our winchcat was purchased, Mike spent countless hours snowing inruns and prepping landing hills so practice could be held. In 2014and 2018, Mike put on his officiating hat and was the Chief of Competition for Junior Nationals. This past season, Mike passed the JN COC torch, but not without helping train his successor throughout the winter leading up to the 2024 Junior Nationals, and still showing up to help every day of the competition anyway.

Mike's involvement is driven from a pure love of the sport. Without his dedication, Alaska

Ski Jumping and the Karl Eid Ski Jumps would not be around today. In his quiet and humble

way, Mike has been the glue that has held the sport and program together in Alaska, and made him a Hall of Fame figure in our sport.

Mike Jokela is Alaska's newest Ski Jumping hall of famer.

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AROUND THE BOWL

Continued from Page 3

Meeting, where you can learn about the successes and challenges of the previous season and what's in store for the upcoming season. Dive into the business of NSAA and learn the stats from the previous season and what's in store for the upcoming year. NSAA will provide the Brat Bar and while members add to the potluck feast. Sign up to bring a side, dessert, or what correlates to your last name, and learn more, sign up to volunteer, and RSVP at **anchoragenordicski.com/events/annual-celebration**.

Ready to race? There are some big, and fun, ones on the schedule this season

NSAA has an exciting race calendar for the 25-26 season. We have an early season FIS weekend with the Winter Start races November 22-23, a great way for Alaskan skiers to get points early on. We will also be hosting Super Tour Period 1 races 3 & 4 Dec. 12 and 14. We also have lots of high school races and community races. Come out and have fun on the snow with us. Learn more about NSAA races and register at **anchoragenordicski.com/races/**.

As always we can't put on these awesome races without volunteers. If you want to get involved please email Ida Gullett, race director at racing@anchoragenordicski.com.

Wax Clinic

NSAA and AMH are partnering to offer a wax clinic from 5-8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 15, at the Kincaid Park wax bunker. There will be stations set up for all to learn glide wax, kick wax, and structure. Whether you are new to waxing or a pro, there will be information for all to expand their knowledge wax base. Experts from AMH and NSAA will discuss the finer points of ski waxing, such as: purpose; application; function; selection; examples; key differences; and snow conditions. The wax clinic is free for anyone who is interested in attending; donations are encouraged.

Need a break? A Wetzel Cabin getaway is an NSAA member perk

If you're searching for a fabulous fall retreat, look no further than the NSAA Wetzel Cabin! Nestled in the breathtaking Nancy Lake State Recreation Area, this cozy 438-square-foot retreat is your perfect off-the-grid getaway. Thanks to the incredible generosity of Gordon and Linda Wetzel, our dedicated lifetime members, you can experience this hidden gem! So, grab your gear, rally your crew, and book your stay today at nsaabackcountrycabins.com/.

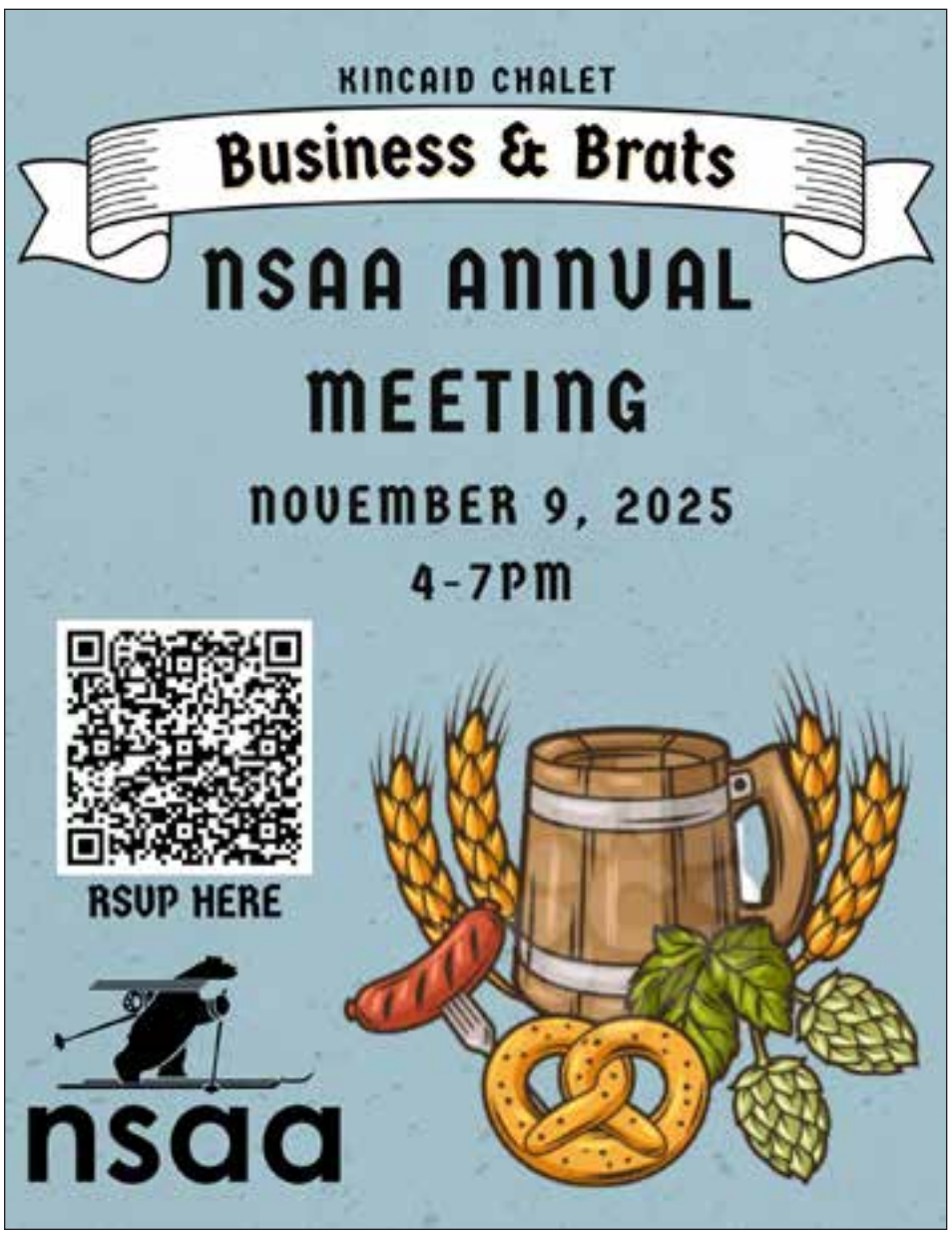
Spots are only available to NSAA members, so don't miss out on this exclusive opportunity!

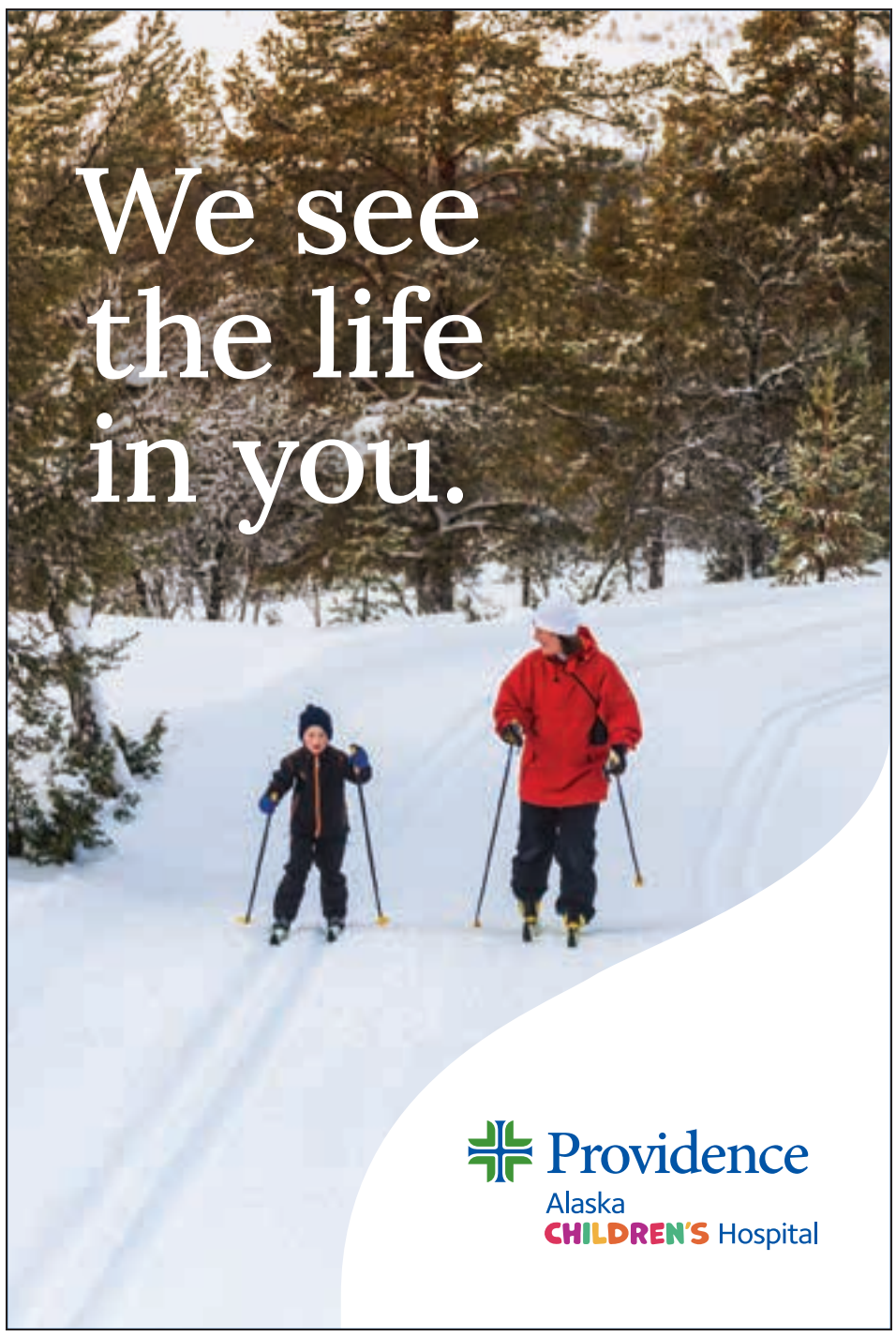
Thanks to our community photographers!

Thank you for all those that submitted photos for NSAA's annual Photo Contest. We also want to thank AMH as the sponsor and for the prizes; Justin Ritter for putting the calendar together; and David Large at Assets for printing. Winners will be announced in the November issue of the Nordic Skier!

NSAA Save the Date Calendar

JR. NORDIC REGISTRATION – Oct. 4
RUN DE JUMP – Oct. 11
NORDIC NIGHTS BENEFIT AND FASHION SHOW – Oct. 18
NSAA SKI SWAP – Oct. 25
NSAA BUSINESS & BRATS/ANNUAL MEETING – Nov. 9
JUNIOR NORDIC STARTS – Dec. 1
AMH ANCHORAGE CUP #1 – Dec. 7
SUPER TOUR – Dec. 12 and 14
SOLSTICE TREE TOUR – Dec. 13
BESH CUP, ANCHORAGE – Dec. 20-21
AMH ANCHORAGE CUP #2 – January 11
AMH ANCHORAGE CUP #3 – January 25
ALASKA SKI FOR WOMEN – Feb. 1
SKI 4 KIDS – Feb. 7
AMH ANCHORAGE CUP #4 – Feb. 8
AMH ANCHORAGE CUP SVEN – Feb. 22
TOUR OF ANCHORAGE – March 1
JUNIOR NORDIC LAST DAY – March 7
SKI TRAIN – March 21
NSAA VOLUNTEER PARTY – March 27





Summer work preps our trails, and equipment, for peak winter performance

NSAA OPERATIONS TEAM

Another season is almost gone as the rainy days of September linger.

NSAA's Operations team started the summer with plenty of machine maintenance and fabrication while we waited for approval from the Municipality of Anchorage to proceed with trail renovations. Lots of mowing, removal of deadfall and smaller projects kept us plenty busy.

Each trail at Kincaid Park and Hillside Park is scheduled for renovation every 10-15 years, or as needed, according to the NSAA Trail Maintenance Plan for Soft Surface Trails.

Late in July, we started our first big project on Arlene's Way. We restored 2.15 km of trail surface (to and from the Sisson) back to standard specifications according to our maintenance plan. The Operations crew worked for approximately six weeks removing and/or chipping beetle-killed spruce and encroaching brush, re-grading the trail surface to a safer longitudinal profile, and re-vegetating the back slope and trail surface.

We also spent some time repairing a few spots on the Sisson to improve drainage by elevating a short section. This will make for a much dryer experience in both summer and winter.

Arlene's Way – a work in progress.

Arlene's Way – ready for grass seed.

Adding fill to a wet spot on the Sisson.

A much dryer spot on the Sisson.

The summer work season isn't quite over as we continue to maintain and improve the trails at both Kincaid and Hillside. The wet weather is making it challenging, but we're hoping for that to subside soon so we can cross a few more projects off our list. Enjoy the trails!

New skis, new season, same big enthusiasm for NSAA Junior Nordic

Get ready for online registration on Oct 4!

We are getting more excited by the day as the next season of Junior Nordic gets nearer and nearer. We're working hard finding coaches and getting equipment ready for another season filled with fun on the snow.

Our season calendar is different this year. We're still starting right after the Thanksgiving break on Dec. 1, but our program will end on March 7, 2026, which is at the start of ASD's spring break. We will also meet during winter break in order to give families who stay in town a reason to stay active, or for parents to slip in a bit of kid-free gift shopping. We found that taking two weeks off after just starting the program at the start of December made it feel like we basically needed to start over again in January. In March, it was sometimes a struggle to get back into the swing of things for the last two weeks of the program after taking a week off for spring break.

Registration for Junior Nordic is online and will open at 9 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 4. You need to be a member of NSAA for the 2025-26 season to be a part of the program. Costs for this season are $350 for the weekday groups and $200 for Saturdays. There are detailed instructions on our website: https://anchoragenordicski.com/programs/junior-nordic.

We are still looking for coaches. It's a plus if you happen to be an elite skier, but the most important qualities are patience, compassion and a love of being outdoors. Please go to our website for more information and a link to our application.

Other things we are excited about:

• One hundred new pairs of rental skis from Fischer! We really needed some new pairs in longer sizes.

• Thanks to Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking for repairing our skis this summer!

• A special thanks to Ida Gullett for glide waxing our 500-plus pairs of rental skis!

Important dates:

• NSAA Ski Swap: Oct. 25 at the Kincaid Wax Bunker

Now that's a lot of new skis for our NSAA Junior Nordic program!

• Junior Nordic Gear Pick Up #1: 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Oct. 26 at the Kincaid Wax Bunker

• Junior Nordic Gear Pick Up #2: 3-6 p.m. Nov. 8 at the Kincaid Wax Bunker

– Art Harmon, Junior Nordic Sport Director

Juneau Nordic Ski Club

Juneau, Alaska

Mission: To enhance, develop, and promote Nordic skiing in Juneau. **Goal:** Great Nordic trails for all skiers!

P.O. Box 21262 Juneau, AK 99802
jnski.org
info@jnski.org

AROUND THE CAPITAL CITY

A busy "Off" season

If you've been in the industry long enough, you know that there really is no "off" season. Snow-free ground just means time spent digging the foundation for future successful ski seasons. For us here at the Juneau Nordic Ski Club, our foundation is looking pretty sturdy about now:

Elevating Eaglecrest trails

It didn't take long after the snow melted for the JNSC to team up with Eaglecrest to tackle improvements on the Lower Nordic Trails. JNSC volunteers spent two weeks in May alongside Eaglecrest staff to smooth and harden the remaining meadow loop. This improved 750 meters of trail means more skiing in low-snow conditions for Juneauites! In an era of declining and erratic snow pack, smooth and hardened trails hold snow longer and allow ski club volunteers to groom when only a few inches of snow has accumulated (something our smaller equipment can do whereas Eaglecrest's heavier Piston Bullies require substantially more snow). The JNSC is considering this the first phase of our "climate proofing" trail efforts at Eaglecrest.

The impacts of ski trail improvements extend beyond the ski season. This newly finished meadow loop expands summer-time recreation for hikers, dog walkers, and mountain bikers alike. With the previously exposed shot-rock portion of trail now covered, the trails are safer for users of all abilities and ages as tripping hazards are smoothed over. This included the Juneau-Douglas High School Yadaa.at Kalé cross country running team using this new trail for a home meet earlier in September!

Special thanks to the Juneau Community Foundation for a $15,000 grant that kickstarted this project. Funds were matched by Eaglecrest to purchase D1 gravel, rent heavy equipment, plus the labor of 5-plus ski area staff over the course of the project. In-kind support was also received from Bobcat of Juneau as we test drove their new all-electric skid-steer during the course of the project, CBJ divisions of Streets and Parks for gravel trucking and dump truck use, and a number of JNSC volunteers.

This project would not have been possible without the collaboration of many. We look forward to future collaborations as we climate-proof our ski trails.

JNSC reps on July 4th

Young skiers, coaches, and a few intrepid parents braved the chaos of Juneau's Independence Day festivities to represent JNSC's youth Nordic ski programs in Juneau's July 4th parade. Roller skiers and in-line skaters dodged each other and young candy snatchers while displaying their deft skills of quick turns and fast stops on wheels. But the real highlight of the day? Snowballs! Coolers packed with shaved ice caught onlookers by surprise when they thought they were reaching for candy, only to find themselves showered in snow.

PHOTO BY **MEGAN GAHL**

Young skiers, coaches, and parents rep'ing Nordic skiing in Juneau's 4th of July parade.

Rolling into Eaglecrest's 50th season

This year's annual Discover Eaglecrest Day in early September doubled as the kick-off celebration for our community-owned ski area's 50th anniversary. Amidst the burgers, live music, and numerous community booths, the JNSC just about stole the show with roller ski demos and drawings for free club swag. There's a lot of uncertainty facing our favorite little ski hill these days, but one thing is for sure: it was born out of community love and that is the only thing that will keep it going for another 50 years.

PHOTO BY **FRED HILTNER**

JNSC Executive Director Tristan Knutson-Lombardo poses with the JNSC's latest youth recruit thanks to a fun-filled day of roller ski demos at Discover Eaglecrest Day on September 13th.

Youth program registration

As of October 1st, registration for our youth ski programs is open! You can expect more of the same, great programming we've operated for years. There are also a few new things:

Junior Nordic: Elementary youth, grades K-5, meets Sundays mid-January through early March. Due to demand, we have opened more spots so we can get more Juneau kids out on skis!

Middle School* Ski Team: Meets mid-January through mid-March and is open to skiers of all experiences grades 6th-8th. *Given the district's shuffling of grades and buildings last year, we are opting to keep this team 6th-8th grades. Which means, as of this typing, we are still searching for the perfect new team name. Suggestions welcome!

JD Yadaa.at Kalé High School Team: Running November through February, this district-sponsored team operates in close collaboration with the JNSC. Open to high school skiers of all abilities and ski experiences (from none to "I was born on skis"). Interested skiers should contact coaches Abby (abbylee.mcallister@gmail.com) and Ricky (ricardo.worl@gmail.com) for more information.

Skiing in the schools

Speaking of skiing with kids – are you an elementary school teacher who wants to get your students out in the snow? You're in luck! The JNSC is kickstarting our newest campaign where we aim to give every Juneau student a chance to glide on snow. While we might not get every student out this winter, your partnership will help us get one stride closer to that dream. Email info@jnski.org to find out how you can get involved.

We run on volunteers!

With a paid staff of just one, we simply couldn't do what we do without our volunteers. Here are a few key areas we can always use more hands (and

See **AROUND THE CAPITAL CITY**, Page 11

PHOTO BY **FRED HILTNER**

Hauling gravel to smooth the Lower Loop Meadow trail at Eaglecrest Ski Area in May.
Elevating Eaglecrest 2

PHOTO BY **FRED HILTNER**

Just a few of the hardworking Eaglecrest staff and JNSC volunteers who furthered the JNSC's efforts to "climate proof" Eaglecrest's Nordic trails.
July 4th

Mat-Su Ski Club
PALMER, ALASKA

P.O. Box 364
Palmer, Alaska 99645
(907) 745-SKIS
matsuski.org

AROUND THE VALLEY

Behind the scenes of summer: Preparing for winter

Even though summer seems to pass in the blink of an eye, our Volunteer Snow Crew has been hard at work behind the scenes getting everything ready for winter.

These dedicated volunteers aren't just the ones who lay down the smooth corduroy we all enjoy – they're also the ones turning wrenches, troubleshooting machines, and donating countless hours to keep our grooming equipment in top condition.

This summer, the PistenBully that creates the corduroy magic at Independence Mine got a major upgrade: a brand-new tiller bar. This key addition will make trails smoother than ever and help power through icy patches with ease. With maintenance complete, the snowcat will be staged at Independence Mine ahead of the first flurries. Grooming usually kicks off by mid-October, and we can't wait to see those first crisp corduroy tracks laid down on the snow!

Meanwhile, closer to home, summer work at Government Peak Recreation Area (GPRA) was just as important. Mowing the ski trails to prepare the surface for snow is no small task – it takes countless loops and many hours of effort to ensure the trails are smooth and ready to welcome skiers as soon as the snow arrives.

None of this happens without the dedication of our volunteers. Their behind-the-scenes work makes it possible for all of us to glide into winter on the best trails around.

PHOTO BY **MARLA JAKAB**
Steve Jakab works on tiller bar and Steve and Robert Lynch wrench on the PB.

PHOTO BY **MARLA JAKAB**
Ed Strabel mowing at GPRA.

Mat-Su Nordic: Building trails, building momentum

A huge shoutout to the Mat-Su Nordic crew for their hard work widening the end of Archangel Road! By brush cutting and clearing, they've created a wide-open corridor that supports year-round access. For skiers, this means earlier-season grooming and a wider trail—making it possible for more than one skier to ski side by side all the way to the gate. In summer, the improved space makes access easier for cars and hikers, while in winter it benefits skiers, snowmachiners, and all trail users. Many days of dedication went into this project, and the whole community will enjoy the results. Way to go, team!

This project is just one sign of the strong momentum behind Mat-Su Nordic. After wrapping up its first year, the program is going strong, offering development pathways for skiers of all ages and abilities – from Minis just starting out, to Devos and Juniors training for high-level competition, to Adults in the Masters division having fun and learning new tricks. With top-notch coaching and a supportive community, Mat-Su Nordic is providing access for more people than ever to get on skis, build confidence through teamwork, and thrive in the sport. Want to learn more? Reach out to MSN Program Manager and head coach Eric Strabel at eric.strabel@matsuski.org.

Together, trail work and program growth show how Mat-Su Nordic is investing in both the places we ski and the people who ski them.

PHOTO BY **ERIC STRABEL**
The Archangel Road brushing crew.

Junior Nordics registration opens in October!

We're snow excited for the 2026 Junior Nordics season! This wildly popular program (January-March) teaches kids ages 5-16 the joy of cross-country skiing in a fun, supportive environment. Registration dates for returning participants open on Oct. 10, and for new participants on Oct. 13. Junior Nordics fills up quickly each season, so don't wait – spots go fast!

We offer ski and pole rentals to support growing kids, and thanks to our partnership with Backcountry Bike & Ski, families can also rent boots to keep growing feet comfortable. With generous support from the Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF), we're able to keep program fees affordable for all families. And with help from both the Rasmuson Foundation and MSHF, we've replaced much of our worn and aging skis so kids have access to top-quality gear for both classic and skate skiing.

Remember: You must have a current Mat-Su Ski Club membership to gain access to program registration.

Junior Nordics is led by Program Manager Stephanie LaRousse, who brings years of experience, passion, and energy to the trails. Questions? Reach out to Stephanie at juniornordics@matsuski.org. Let's go ski!

Second annual RTTO 2025: Kicking off the FIS season!

We're thrilled to announce that the second annual Race to the Outhouse (RTTO) will kick off the North American FIS ski race season! Serious competitors can earn valuable early-season FIS points, while everyone else can shake off the offseason and jumpstart their winter skiing.

The races will tentatively take place at Government Peak Recreation Area (GPRA) on Saturday, Nov. 15, with a 5k Classic interval start, and Sunday, November 16, with a 7.5k Freestyle mass start. Full course maps and details will be shared closer to the event, and if snow conditions at GPRA are challenging, we may move the race to Independence Mine at Hatcher Pass, a higher-elevation alternative.

Volunteers, families, and ski enthusiasts help make this event possible, blending community energy with world-class competition. Visit our website for the latest updates, registration, and spectator information – it's the perfect way to celebrate the start of the ski season!

See **AROUND THE VALLEY**, Page 11

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AROUND GIRDWOOD

Girdwood trails continue growing

BY DEB ESSEX
GNSC President

We all have seen the winter-warning forecasts, and some of us even smiled ... or at least dusted off our ski quiver. Time to schedule a visit to your local ski shop to check out the latest inventory. In Girdwood, Powder Hound is doing their annual pivot from bikes to skis, as Girdwoodians are switching from rain gear to well … rain gear with a puffy.

Kicking off our 2025-26 season, we would like to remind everyone that we no longer mail out the metal moose ski pins. We have created a general Girdwood Nordic pin, and will have them available for pick up at Bake Shop and Powder Hound Ski & Bike Shop. We will still mail membership receipts and stickers from online membership signups (skigirdwood.org) or you can sign up in-person for this season's membership, pick up moose pins, socks, patches and hats at the FVCS annual Sports Swap on Nov. 1, Girdwood's Holiday Bazaar on Dec. 6, and our Solstice Celebration on Dec. 21.

The Girdwood Grizzlies hosted the Middle School Cross Country Meet recently on the 5K Loop. This was such a fun event to watch and host in Girdwood. Go Grizzlies!

The 5K Loop also hosted the annual Klunker Kontest. This event is a fundraiser for Bikewood and a major milestone as we witnessed Bikewood's Dan Starr post the official HLB Land Permit to begin construction of Phase 2 of the bike trails in Girdwood. Woohoo! The trails will continue along the 5K Loop. If you would like to contribute to this worthy cause, go to Bikewood.org and click the "Take Action."

Mark your calendars with these events

Speaking of fun events, here is a list of the events happening this fall in Girdwood. We hope to see you on the trails!

OCTOBER 4, 9 A.M.-4 P.M. — 10th Annual Girdwood Trails Marathon, Half Marathon, and 5K Race will host 300-plus runners throughout the Girdwood trail system. This event is a fundraiser for the Girdwood Nordic Ski Club and Girdwood trails. Over 60 volunteers help create this successful race that has grown from just 20 racers its first year. As usual, we give pumpkins to the winners, and pickles to the red lantern finishers. We serve The Bake Shop sweet rolls, Coast pizza, Zip kombucha, and pickle juice to all the runners, so put this on your calendar for future years.

NOVEMBER 1, NOON-3 P.M. — FVCS Annual Sports Swap at the Alyeska Daylodge! The event is a fundraiser for Four Valleys Community School, and a great annual community gathering. Always a well-attended event and definitely one to sign up as a volunteer. We will be there selling memberships!

DECEMBER 6, NOON-4 P.M. — Girdwood's Holiday Bazaar. Do not miss this packed holiday event at the Girdwood School gym. This is where most of you sign up for your annual memberships and check out our latest moose swag. Yes – we have a few new items this year!

DECEMBER 21, 6-8 P.M., 5K LOOP — Annual Solstice Celebration with the lighted 1.5K Loop, goodies from the Bake Shop, music, disco lights on the downhills, and more GNSC moose swag to purchase as last-minute gifts. Enjoy the holiday season with this family fun event!

Thank you for your continued support and we hope to see you on the trails.

MAT-SU

AROUND THE VALLEY

Continued from Page 10

In memory of Tom Smayda

It is with heartfelt sadness that we honor the passing of Tom Smayda, a beloved friend and champion of the Mat-Su Ski Club. Tom was there from the very beginning – one of the original coaches of our Junior Nordics program, a dedicated volunteer, and a past board member. His energy, passion, and commitment helped shape the spirit and strength of our club.

More than a skier, Tom was an adventurer, biker, and outdoorsman who loved sharing the joy of the outdoors with others, especially the next generation. His impact is woven into our trails, programs, and community, and his joyful presence will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

Tom Smayda

JUNEAU

AROUND THE CAPITAL CITY

Continued from Page 9

brains!):

Trail grooming: Whether it's once a week or as needed, join an enthusiastic team that keeps the corduroy fresh and skiers smiling. D-1 shovel Club: Clearing a landslide, a snow berm, or digging out after a storm, you'll be added to this as-needed email list. Events: Help with an existing event or bring your new idea to reality! Coaches: You don't have to be a great skier to be a great coach. A good coach is someone who loves to ski and wants to share that passion with others. A good coach is supportive, respectful, patient, communicative, and brave. A good coach brings their authentic self–and the fun! The commitment is what you make it and we need coaches for all ages (from ages 6 to 60+!) and ski experiences. Ski fixers: This has nothing to do with the illegal sports betting practice, and everything to do with supporting our youth programs. We loan out hundreds of pairs of skis and lean on a savvy crew of tinkerers to extend the life of our well-loved equipment as long as is practical. Social Media, Website, Fundraising or any other particular skill set or talent we have yet thought of. If you have a desire to help, we want you on our team!

Fall trail work days

If you're looking for an immediate fix, we have community trailwork days in the works for Montana Creek trail and Eaglecrest Upper and Lower loops, Eagle Beach. Stay tuned to jnski.org for details.

That's all for now. Hopefully, the next time you'll be reading our contribution will be after a hardy ski!

Kachemak Nordic Ski Club
Homer, Alaska

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kachemaknordicskiclub@gmail.com

AROUND THE BAY

Productive summer sets us up for a busy winter of ski adventures and events

BY BOB GLEN
KNSC President

Kachemak Nordic Ski Club volunteers had a busy summer. We've done trail and facilities maintenance at the Eveline, McNeil, Sunset, Lookout and Baycrest trail systems.

Eveline State Recreation Area is managed by the KNSC for Alaska State Parks. It is groomed for skiing in winter but has heavy summer use by walkers enjoying the glacier views and wildflowers. This summer, we did major trail repairs and drainage improvements.

At McNeil, we replaced the driveway to the equipment maintenance building. At Sunset, volunteers built a new kiosk for maps and information. At Lookout, the trails are mowed for the fall cross-country running races and ready for snow. Volunteers there are doing outhouse building and equipment maintenance. This year the Besh Cup races 3 and 4 will be at Lookout.

The biggest project is the new equipment building at Baycrest. The equipment has been stored and maintained outdoors for over 30 years in the backyard of Dave and Molly Brann, two of the original KNSC founders. This long-overdue project started in summer 2024 with design, permitting, and the foundation installation. This summer, volunteers, led by master carpenter and volunteer Dave Stutzer, completed the construction to enclose and weatherproof the structure. We're well under budget thanks to their hard work. We've gotten incredible support from the community and local businesses. We hope to have the project fully completed next summer. We still have a lot of interior work and fundraising to do before it will be in service.

Our Jr. Nordic and SKIER (Skis For Kids) programs are getting ready for the season. We have events for skiers of all ages, too. Please come visit us in Homer. We welcome skiers from around the state.

Volunteers building the new Baycrest equipment shed.

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Eagle River, Alaska

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Club hotline: 689-7660
Junior nordic hotline: 689-7661
cernsc.wildapricot.org

AROUND EAGLE RIVER

Hope springs eternal for good snow season!

Fall is a beautiful time of year and it also is the time when our ski club starts planning! We are starting to get excited about the winter ski season with much hope for a better snow year and many more days to glide on groomed trails!

Junior Nordic prep underway, coaches needed

The Junior Nordic Committee has already been meeting and trying to recruit this year's coaches. If you know anyone who might be interested in coaching, we would love to have them on our team. Coaches get first chance to register their kids in the program and they get a discount. They also get a cool coach coat! Contact Kristi Brown at (845) 820-1198 or Barb Johnson at (907) 229-6891 if you are interested and please spread the word! We need more coaches.

Although we don't have all of the dates for this year set in stone, we do have the following dates scheduled to put on your calendar:

We hope to open up registration for returning Junior Nordic kids on Oct. 5. General registration will begin on Oct. 12. The first coaches meeting will be on Thursday, Nov. 13, at the Beach Lake Chalet with coaches technique clinics (one classic and one for skate skiing) planned for mid-November.

Parent meetings are scheduled for Nov. 17 and 18 at the chalet and Junior Nordic will begin on Dec. 1. If we get enough coaches, there will be evening M/W sessions and T/Th sessions from 7-8 p.m. M/W Early Bird sessions will be from 4-5 p.m.

We are planning a time trial for kids in December. There is no Junior Nordic over the school holidays, but we plan to begin classes again on January 5. The second time trial is scheduled for the end of January/early February and we also hope to have a week with biathlon practice for kids sometime in February.

Save the date: Ski the Beach for Erin, Feb. 22

The 2026 Ski the Beach for Erin event will be held on Sunday, Feb. 22, with the Junior Nordic season ending on Feb. 26 this season. Ski rentals are usually returned that week.

Join us on the trails for fun, adult lessons, touring and more!

We hope to see you out on the trails this winter skiing! Remember, if you are interested in being a JN coach, we would love to have you! The club will also lead monthly ski tours and will likely teach adult skiing classes for beginners. Watch for dates in the November Nordic Skier!

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PHOTO BY **BARB JOHNSON**

Beach Lake Trails last winter. It was icy!

The Summer of Bob

PHOTO BY BOB STEHN

Check out the upgrade of the Junkyard play park area, which was improved this summer thanks for Bob Stehn.

Super-volunteer improved trails, got some Junior Nordic gear, and is handling the finances

Bob Stehn is our club's super-volunteer year-round. When most of us are off camping, biking and hiking, Bob is still thinking about how he can make the ski trails better for the next season. He mows many of the trails in the summer to keep them in good shape and works with Bill Brion to ensure that trails are cleared of any obstructions.

Bob recently reported that the Junkyard play area (terrain park) work is done for the season. He expanded and regraded the existing "scary" hillside into three much wider downhills; now all are skiable with slightly different steepness. The runouts are now smooth, not skewed, and without any abrupt drop-offs. Below-ground water seepage is keeping some of the lowest areas mucky (bad for bike riders and cross-country runners), but drainage is improving. Bob also reshaped the old "half-pipe" area to be more bowl-like so that it should be skiable in all directions. It also is muddy from recent rains but should be good in the winter. Two access trails extend through the woods to the top of the bowl. Hopefully, everything will be snow-machine groomable this winter, which will be a big improvement.

In addition to all of his trail work on the Beach Lake Ski Trails, Bob manages, repairs and organizes all of skis and poles that we rent for the Junior Nordic program. He also acquired some additional skis this summer and will most certainly be at all of the sessions. We will be organizing this fall to wax all of the skis in preparation for passing them out to rent for the season. Bob is also the ski club member who keeps track of our finances and he organizes our annual budget report.

We should all be grateful for Bob and all of the volunteer work that he happily contributes to our club and to the community. Thanks so much, Bob!

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Running after total knee replacement: A conditional "Yes" for cross-country skiers

BY ZUZANA ROGERS, PT, ScD, SCS, COMT

The answer to returning to running after total knee replacement has evolved dramatically – from a resounding "no" to a cautiously optimistic "potentially, yes." For recreational and elite master cross-country skiers who rely on running for conditioning, this shift opens new possibilities while requiring careful consideration of individual factors and surgical advances.

The Changing Landscape of Post-Replacement Running

The medical community's stance on running after total knee replacement has undergone a significant transformation. While high-impact activities were traditionally prohibited due to concerns about implant loosening and wear, recent research challenges these blanket restrictions. Studies now show that running after total knee replacement carries relatively low complication rates when properly managed.

Special Considerations for Cross-Country Skiers

For cross-country skiers, running serves a crucial conditioning role, but the sport itself may offer protective factors. Cross-country skiing is inherently lower-impact than running, with the gliding motion reducing joint loading compared to the repeated impact of running. Many skiers report that they can continue skiing comfortably even when other activities cause knee pain.

The master athlete population presents unique considerations. Research indicates that higher pre-operative activity levels predict better post-surgical outcomes, with more active patients showing superior functional results. Master cross-country skiers typically possess:

- Excellent cardiovascular fitness
- Strong proprioception and balance
- Experience with low-impact training modalities
- Commitment to structured rehabilitation

We at Runners' Edge Alaska emphasize performance-based criteria over time-based restrictions for return to activity. Our approach focuses on functional milestones rather than arbitrary timelines, including:

- Pain-free walking for 30 minutes daily
- Three single-leg squats to 90-degree knee flexion
- Single-leg hopping for 10 seconds
- Running in place for 30 seconds pain-free

This functional approach aligns with emerging evidence that individual readiness matters more than surgical timeframes.

Evidence-Based Guidelines for Returning to Running

Recent systematic reviews establish several key principles for safe return to running post-knee replacement:

Timeline Expectations: Most patients can begin graduated return to running protocols at 6-8 months post-surgery. However, individual factors including pre-operative fitness, surgical technique, and rehabilitation compliance significantly influence this timeline.

Risk Factors: Research identifies several considerations for post-replacement runners:

- Slightly higher revision rates (6.2% vs 4.8%) among runners compared to non-runners
- Impact loading concerns with potential for accelerated polyethylene wear
- Individual biomechanics affecting joint loading patterns

Practical Recommendations for Cross-Country Skiers

Pre-Surgery Planning: Discuss running goals explicitly with your orthopedic surgeon AND your physical therapist. The individualized approach is crucial – some surgeons actively support return to running while others remain conservative. Choose a surgical and a physical therapy team experienced with active patients and familiar with current evidence.

Rehabilitation Strategy: Focus on performance-based milestones rather than timeline-driven progression. Key benchmarks include:

- Full range of motion restoration
- Quadriceps strength return (>85% limb symmetry index)
- Dynamic balance and proprioception
- Pain-free completion of functional tasks

Alternative Training Methods: During recovery and as ongoing conditioning, consider:

- Cycling and elliptical training for cardiovascular fitness
- Pool running for impact-free conditioning
- Nordic walking as a bridge to running, with gradually increasing intensity
- Strength training focused on quads, hamstring, hip and core stability

Long-term Monitoring: If you return to running, implement careful load management:

- Start with run-walk protocols
- Monitor for pain, swelling, or range of motion changes
- Consider gait analysis to optimize biomechanics
- Regular follow-up with your surgical and physical therapy team

The Reality for Master Athletes

The evidence increasingly supports that well-selected patients can successfully return to running after knee replacement. For cross-country skiers, the combination of pre-existing fitness, sport-specific conditioning knowledge, and access to low-impact training alternatives creates favorable conditions for success.

However, success requires honest communication with your medical team, commitment to structured rehabilitation, and willingness to modify training approaches. The goal isn't necessarily to return to pre-surgery training loads, but to maintain the cardiovascular and musculoskeletal conditioning that supports your skiing performance.

The answer to "Can I run after knee replacement?" has evolved from "no" to "potentially, yes" - but it requires the right patient, the right surgical approach, and the right rehabilitation strategy. For dedicated master cross-country skiers, this evolution opens possibilities that weren't available even a decade ago.

We at Runner's Edge Alaska have vast experience in returning our clients to activities they love – come by and talk to our physical therapist to see if this is a viable option for you!

Disclaimer: Since we don't know you and we can't perform a detailed examination; responses are general tips only and not medical or physical therapy advice. If you need detailed answers to your questions, please contact us directly.

Alaskans podium at U.S. Biathlon Summer Rollerski National Championships

Seven Alaskan biathletes from across the state competed in the US Biathlon Summer Roller Ski Nationals in Jericho, Vermont, this summer.

Anchorage biathletes Reine Soule (16), Elin Lunoe (14), and Naomi Smith (13) landed on the podium despite the rigorous competition and hot temperatures. Soule raced up a division to win the mass start in the Junior Women's division and placed second in the sprint. Lunoe won both the sprint and mass start races in the U-17 division. She was joined by Naomi Smith, who earned silver medals in both events. All three athletes train with the Anchorage Biathlon Club at the Kincaid Range with Coach Jean Paquet.

"The experience of racing with Olympians and World Cup biathletes was awe-inspiring and motivating," added Smith, "I've been working hard all summer on my ski speed and marksmanship, so I am pleased with my podium finishes. And now I'm even more excited about biathlon! I can't wait for the snow."

Luneo attributed her better shooting scores to a well-fitted rifle: "My rifle fit me like a glove, and when I aligned the sights, the bullets hit their targets spot on – just like my coach instructed me."

PHOTO BY MICHAEL SMITH

Anchorage biathletes Elin (bib 90) and Namoi Smith (91) had 1-2 finishes in two U-17 races – the sprint and mass start – at the U.S. Biathlon Summer Rollerski National Championships.

Other Alaskans competing at the National event included Talia Day, 18, and Eli Zellmer, 17, of Anchorage and training with Biathlon AK; Justin Hansen of Kenai Biathlon Club; and Zoe Noble, who trains with the National Guard Biathlon Team.

PHOTO BY MEGAN SOULEE

Anchorage's Reine Soulee raced up a division but still won the mass start in the Junior Women's division and placed second in the sprint at the U.S. Biathlon Summer Rollerski National Championships.

Despite Vermont's 80-degree temperatures and high humidity, Alaskans persevered on the Ethan Allen Firing Range.

"Coming from Alaska, it was hard to get used to these warm temperatures," said Soule. "I removed all my race gear and jumped in the kiddie pool because it was so hot outside."

New Thomas Training Center develops winter champions on summer snow

BY APU NORDIC SKI CENTER

This summer marked a new era for APU Nordic Ski Center as the doors to the new Thomas Training Center on Eagle Glacier officially opened.

It has been a long road since 2018, when the earthquake that hit Southcentral Alaska shifted the old training center off of its foundation. With fortitude and some hard work from APU's design and construction crews and Alpine Air Alaska, Eagle Glacier was operational once again this past summer for on-snow training with the APU Nordic Elite Team. APU Nordic Ski Center looks forward to fully opening up the new facility in the summer of 2026 to a wider audience of Junior and Master camps, in addition to elite Training camps.

The Thomas Training Center on Eagle Glacier has held a long history with many different user groups from the past decades and has had a profound effect on the international success for American skiing. APU has been very thankful to have had the new training center open this summer, helping to prep our skiers moving into an Olympic year!

For more information on the Thomas Training Center on Eagle Glacier, head here: **apunordic.com/programs/glacier-camps/**. Read more about the training center and the summer skiing on the glacier in this Anchorage Daily News story: **adn.com/sports/skiing/2025/09/05/apus-rebuilt-glacier-training-center-is-again-propelling-cross-country-skiers-toward-an-olympic-season/**.

PHOTOs COURTESY APU NORDIC SKI CENTER

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AROUND THE INTERIOR

Skiathon gets new race director; Sonot still looking

Good news about the Skiathon. Laura Grage is taking over as the new race director! Stan Justice, who had directed the race for years, had been looking for someone to take over the popular classic-only event, which covers most of the ski trails on the UAF campus. Thank you, Laura! And thank you to Stan for reviving the race/tour and directing it for so many years!

The Sonot Kkaazoot is still looking for a new race director. Race founder Bad Bob Baker, who has directed the race for most of years it has been in existence, is wanting to step back. And he deserves the break! The Sonot is the premier spring skiing event for the club and a wonderful cap to a season of NSCF races. But these races need to directors or else they can't happen. If you are interested in helping direct the Sonot, Bob will help you ease into it. Send an email to sonotkkaazoot@nscfairbanks.org

Fairbanks trails intern report, call for support

Here's a report of what the Fairbanks Trails, Inc., interns accomplished this past summer. They got several ski-related items done, including improving the Skarland and Pearl Creek Nordic Park trails, and repairing and painting the ski racks at Birch Hill. Read more here: https://tinyurl.com/mpfwbyt

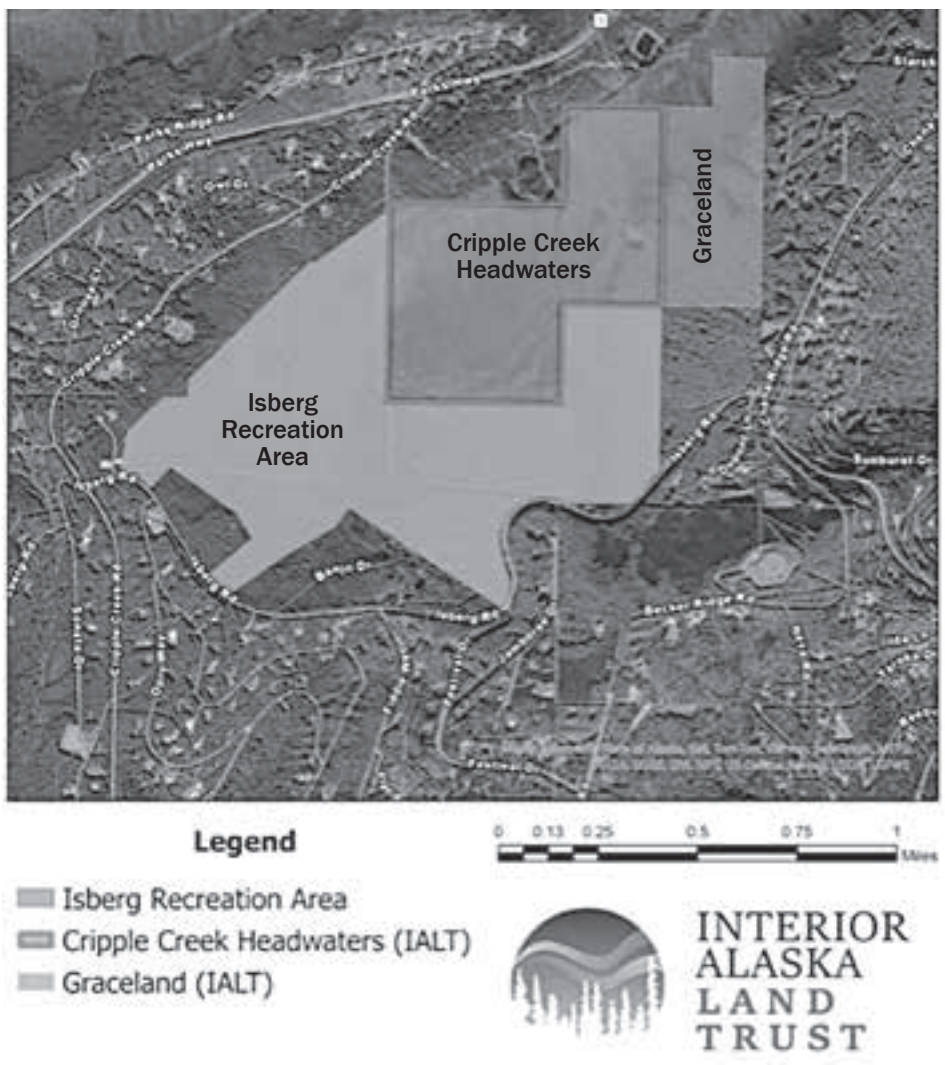
Stan Justice is asking for donations to Fairbanks Trails, Inc., so that it can remain a 501c3 and continue doing trails work in and around Fairbanks. If you would like to donate you can do so through the Donate button on the Fairbanks Trails Facebook page or you can send a check to: Fairbanks Trails, Inc., 1750 Reed Circle, Fairbanks AK 99709.

NSCF wins grant for Birch Hill map kiosks

The Fairbanks Daily News-Miner had a recent story about Explore Fairbanks' new Golden Heart Giving Sponsorship Program. The program recently awarded nearly $100,000 to several local organizations, including the NSCF! The club was awarded $8,100 for five new map kiosk stations at Birch Hill Recreation Area.

Other awarded ski-related grants included $10,000 to the Eastern Alaska Range Avalanche Center for a Fairbanks-based Pro-Observer to provide backcountry snow and avalanche reports; and $10,000 to Chena Hot Springs Resort for signage and trail enhancements on the Monument Creek Trail.

Read the News-Miner story here: **tinyurl.com/mvr8dppm**. Find out more about the program here: **tinyurl.com/4urr5f4z**.



MAP COURTESY INTERIOR ALASKA LAND TRUST

The Fairbanks Borough has accepted nearly 300 acres of land from the Interior Alaska Land Trust to be added to the Isberg Recreation Area.

West Valley High School Ski Swap

We've heard that the West Valley High School Ski Swap will happen on October 25. No other details yet. For more, watch the NSCF Facebook page (and, for those not on Facebook, the weekly "News from Facebook" newsletter sent to NSCF members.) We will also keep you of any other ski swaps we hear about.

Fairbanks Assembly passes trailhead ordinance, Isberg Rec Area land donation

The Fairbanks Borough Assembly unanimously passed an ordinance in June that will make it easier to build trailheads in the borough. Find out more about the ordinance here: **tinyurl.com/nhbnxc54**.

Also, in September, the assembly unanimously passed an ordinance allow the mayor to accept more than 300 acres of land from the Interior Alaska Land Trust adjacent to the Isberg Recreation Area. The parcel contains wetlands, upland habitat, and several trails, including some fun skiing trails. See the ordinance here: **tinyurl.com/mux4b6vb**

UAF skiers named Academic All-American

In July, UAF skiers Kendall Kramer and Philipp Moosmayer were named to the 2024-25 CSC Academic All-America At-Large Teams. Congrats! **tinyurl.com/3b8ppfus**.

Nanook Hall Of Fame

This summer, the Alaska Nanooks Department of Athletics and the Nanook Hall of Fame Committee announced 10 inductees for the Nanook Hall of Fame Class of 2025. Among the inductees is Fairbanks native and Lathrop High School graduate Peter Alden who skied with the 'Nooks from 1987 to 1991. Congrats to Peter and to all the other inductees!Read more at **tinyurl.com/yckyfjw2**.

Norris wins Mountain Running National Championship, Kramer places high

David Norris – the Fairbanks born, raised, and trained ski and mountain running phenom – once again won Seward's Mount Marathon! **tinyurl.com/2hdnf7rd**.

Kendall Kramer – another Fairbanks born, raised, and trained ski and running phenom – took ninth place in the race. Her former UAF teammate, Rosie Fordham, took 10th. **tinyurl.com/53t3vr73**

Then, in September, Norris broke the top 10 in an elite European mountain running race. Read about that here: **tinyurl.com/y6am2uf6**

Military RAP is now SAP, costs $10 per year

The United States Army Garrison Alaska now has a fee for getting a Sikes Act Permit (formerly known as the Recreational Access Permit. People already holding a permit won't have to pay until their current permit expires and a new one is purchased. The permit is needed for some Birch Hill area trails. The permit is rarely enforced (most people never see Army enforcement personnel), but it is the law. To find out more about the permit and how to get one see this article: **nscfairbanks.org/2021/12/03/permits-required-for-using-some-birch-hill-trails/**.

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Summer changes help strengthen NSCF for another great season of skiing

BY CHRIS PUCHNER AND THAD KEENER

Welcome to another wonderful season of skiing in Fairbanks!

We are working hard to keep offering our many Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks programs. We will again have Junior Nordics, our slate of races, Adult Lessons, FXC and FXC Masters classes, biathlon training and competitions, tours, and more!

To kick off our season, we will be holding our Annual Membership Meeting on Oct. 26, 2-5 p.m., at the Birch Hill Cross Country Ski Center. As a fundraiser for the club, we will have some silent auction items and artist and skier Sara Tabbert will be donating her hand-printed linoleum block prints as a fundraiser for the club. We will also have a Lazer rifle demonstration from our biathlon program, a limited number of neck gaiters as membership thank you gifts, information tables, food, and music. We hope to see you there!

Over the summer, we've had some changes on the board of directors and with our staff. Dan Darrow stepped down – thank you for your service, Dan! – and Joanna Fox has joined the board as an at-large member – welcome Joanna!

Rosie Frankowski is taking over FXC Masters and Adult Lessons from Christina Turman. Christina has done a wonderful job growing the programs and will still be involved in coaching. Rosie is a former Olympian and has already been involved in FXC Masters as a coach. We are so lucky to have them!

Rachel Johnson has taken over as Sponsorship director from Stephanie Rozell. And Sue Faulkner, who had been sharing Competition Director duties with Kent Slaughter, is now the sole director. Thank you all for your service!

And we've had changes in the Trail Crew. Tom Helmers is stepping down as the Lead Groomer and Brian Carroll is taking his place. Long-time groomers Bill Husby and Ken Coe will also be spending less time on the trails, but taking on more duties are Randy Foland, Colin Field, Logan Hanneman, and Travis Kulp. The old guard says they will still be involved, just less so. Maybe we'll even see them skiing!

The board and executive director Thad Keener have been busy all summer, guiding the direction of the club. Projects they have been working on include: working on the proposed new Birch Hill multi-purpose building (a huge job!), exploring grant opportunities, changing our internet provider so that we now share a provider with the borough, working with staff to buy and install a new webcam and weather computer, incorporating a new sick leave policy and system in accordance with changes in state law; working on our club Permanent Fund, working with Fort Wainwright and the borough to gain access to land adjacent to the current Birch Hill trails for the purpose of building some less-hilly trails; keeping track of the proposed Steese Highway underpass and U.S. Fish and Wildlife complex that would allow trail connection between Birch Hill and the ADMA trails, and more. Phew! Lots going on!

Thad Keener

Chris Puchner

Also over the summer, Thad and a group of volunteers spent a couple of days cleaning up NSCF's Adopt-a-Highway section of Birch Hill Road. If you want to help with that next summer, just let Thad know. And two interns from Fairbanks Trails, Inc., Gavin Ferguson and Tyler Christensen, cleared the footpath to the biathlon range and mended and stained our numerous ski racks.

The NSCF membership year has already started but you still have time to join! If you aren't yet a member you can sign up here: https://www.nscfairbanks.org/membership/

Chris Puchner is president and Thad Keener is executive director of the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks.

Rosholt brings Midwestern energy, positivity to NSCF Biathlon, FXC

BY THAD KEENER

Having just chatted with Warren, I had to look up Grand Rapids, twice. That's Grand Rapids, Minnesota, not in Michigan. I've never been there, but it had a major impact on Warren's coaching development. That's biathlon coaching. Grand Rapids, Minnesota, is the biathlon mecca of the Midwest.

PHOTO COURTESY **WARREN ROSHOLT**

Warren sporting his NSCF-FXC headband.

Raised in Duluth, Minnesota, Outside magazines' No. 1 city, Warren was not raised with rifles on his back nor Nordic skis strapped to his feet. Eventually he found his biathlon path: Army National Guard and Itasca College. Several powerful coincidences moved Warren closer to biathlon. Like his use of Facebook Messenger to introduce himself to the Army National Guard Biathlon team and his engineering professor being the local biathlon head coach.

Warren Rosholt is our NSCF Biathlon head coach. Our biathlon team is a dedicated bunch enthused by Warren's boundless energy. Have you been to the shooting range? Did you email ahead and take your permit for Ft. Wainwright? We need to thank our biathlon folks every time they practice for the multiple hoops they have to jump through.

When you can catch Warren, you'll be drawn by his energy and positivity. Besides biathlon, Warren is our FXC assistant coach. With over 60 skiers, FXC keeps him quite busy, even more so in the summer. Our young skiers are drawn to Warren and rarely do you see him not chatting and skiing with a bunch of energized youth.

Did I mention Minnesota Nice?

Thad Keener is the executive director of the Alaska Nordic Skier.

Tips for new Fairbanks Junior Nordic parents

BY SALLY ENDESTAD

Junior Nordics are a wonderful way to get your kids outside, getting exercise, socializing, and learning to love a Fairbanks winter. But being a new parent of a Junior Nordic can a little confusing and sometimes challenging. Here are a few tips and tricks from a former Junior Nordics coordinator to help make your experience run more smoothly.

Preparing for the season:

• If you have multiple kids, take a notebook when you go to the ski store and jot notes on boot, ski and pole sizes needed for all children.

• Visit ski swaps to look for your specific needs before shopping at stores for retail prices. The kids grow so fast, and you might find that they grow out of their equipment during the season. To avoid this problem, purchase boots with a bit more room and double the socks. It may be used in Fairbanks when our cold temps hit.

• If your child has never skied before, try on all the equipment inside on your living room carpet. Allow them the space to move around and find their balance a few times. Carve out some time at the ski area for them to safely put on their skis and begin to slide around even if they've never tried it before. That will help give them the necessary confidence it will take to successfully navigate the first lessons.

• Your car should be stocked with an extra bag containing extra socks, hats, mittens etc. You will probably need them at some point for your children or others who may be skiing with you.

• Label everything! Lesson days get crowded with excited kids who may not be paying attention when they pick up their belongings. Take a moment to be sure they have theirs.

PHOTO COURTESY NSCF

Skiing with your child is an excellent way to spend family time.

Dealing with lesson days:

• A sense of humor on the days when it is really cold goes a long way in creating the steadfast attitude that all things are possible with the right attitude. Whatever the conditions, we'll make the best of it.

• Always carry extra mittens, a neck warmer, and chemical handwarmers on days when it is cold. Chemical handwarmers can be found at all our local sporting goods stores and even at general stores like Fred Meyer and Walmart. You can reuse them multiple times if you seal them in a jar before they lose their heat.

• A warm snack before Jr. Nordics lessons along with water in the car afterwards (they really do work up a sweat!!) goes a long way in making your experience a good one. It also is setting the stage for the care of their bodies for any future endeavors.

• Sometimes the bundling and getting out the door process takes longer than the actual skiing time. Try to be OK with this! Eventually the time spent skiing exceeds the preparation time. (This also true when you go out to ski whenever!)

• Building relationships is an extremely important element in the life of the child. Know your child. If you have an introvert and your personality is an extrovert, be sensitive to that. Give them the adequate space to form their own bonds. Stay after the session and speak with some of the other parents so that it creates a space for the child to develop relationships with the other kids.

Make it a family matter

• Show up and ski yourself during lessons– even if it is just once. Nothing reinforces the fun more than seeing mom or dad out there with them. Plus, it is good for mom or dad to get some fresh air.

• Take a day and ski with your kids when they are not at Jr. Nordics. Pick a lovely Saturday and ask your kids to take you for a ski at the UAF or Birch Hill trails. Believe it or not, that little bit of interest you show goes a long way and makes for a great family outing.

• Enter the Town Series races! They are family oriented and give your child a chance to strut their stuff no matter what level they are at.

• Listen to your child. There's a difference between needing a bit of encouragement and gently prodding your child when they're not excited about skiing. Don't ever force your child to participate.

Creating the desire for healthy exercise is so valuable to your children. Being intentional with the activities to promote a healthy lifestyle is one way to do it. If parents make it a habit to exercise daily, kids learn by imitation, and it becomes a part of their daily lives. Whether kids decide to ski as part of a competitive club or not, shouldn't matter. The goal is to have children moving and enjoying the sport of cross-country skiing.

Sally Endestad is a former coordinator for NSCF Junior Nordics.

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FXC Summer Program full of training and fun outings

BY JESSE WILKINS

FXC Juniors wrapped up a fun and successful 2025 summer training season.

We had 54 athletes in our summer programs, up a little bit from last season. All practices were coached primarily by Jesse Wilkins (Head FXC Juniors Coach) and Warren Rosholt (Assistant FXC Coach/Head Biathlon Coach). We would not have had the successful summer we did without the help Inga Peterson in her second season coaching mostly Devos and Justin Oestreich in his first season coaching after skiing with us for many years. We were also very lucky to have Olympian Rosie Frankowski and NCAA skier Jenna DiFalco assist with several practices.

We welcomed nine new freshmen into our Comp team this summer, most of whom had top 10 finishes in Besh Cups last season in our Prep program. These athletes successfully took the next steps in their careers this summer on our comp team.

We had three training camps this summer: one at Denali National Park in June, one at Mt Prindle Campground in July, and one at Fielding Lake in August. Aside from being outstanding training opportunities, the camps were really fun and helped integrate all our new athletes and families into our ski community. The future of FXC is strong.

In addition to ski training this summer, many FXC athletes excelled in running races across the state. Six FXC athletes traveled to Seward for Mount Marathon, with Nathan Vanderlugt and Ellie Abrahamson placing in the top 10 for boys and girls, respectively. Closer to home, Nathan also won the Masochism of Moose Mountain Trail race. Emmett Schnieder posted podium finishes in Drew's Angel Creek 50 and the 24-hour Alaska Endurance Run. Ellie Burnett won the women's Golden Heart Trail Run while Reid Merrill placed on the podium for men. Coaches Jesse and Justin completed the San Juan Softie 100-mile race in Colorado, while FXC alumni Wells Wappett competed, as well. FXC athletes continue to prove that ski training doubles as great run training and all local youth runners are encouraged to take part in our summer programs.

Besides registration metrics and race data, the best measure of our successful summer is the feedback we have gotten from kids and parents. Our athletes grow socially as much as they grow physically. Our team culture is as strong as our athleticism, and I am excited to see how our positive momentum translates into competitive success this ski season.

PHOTO COURTESY **JESSE WILKINS**

FXC freshman hike over snow patch on a hike toward Mount Healy.

Jesse Wilkins is the NSCF - FXC Head Coach and Director of Skier Development.

PHOTO COURTESY **JESSE WILKINS**

FXC summer members (and Coach Wilkins, left) during this summer's Prindle Training Camp.

FXC Summer Program allows kids the space to grow and learn

BY THAD KEENER

Summer programs are the best!

Parents were gathered around the van, talking to one another. Our skiers were busy with final items and being responsible for getting their stuffed bags loaded in between the van seats. The puffy white clouds were not turning into thunderheads nor indicating the nearby forest fire smoke would blow in. It was July 11, a near perfect 70-degree day to start a two-night camping trip to the White Mountains National Recreation Area. It struck me that our competitive and developmental summer skiing program is the best summer camp ever.

Summer Camp, where everyone gets to reinvent themselves. Camp, where group activities and trainings bond young adults into brother and sisterhoods. Our summer programs leave a lasting impression not just because they improve the skiers' abilities and take them on amazing outdoor adventures. I think back to Pete Leonard, my son's coach, and I realize how important a role model he was for my son. Rare is the parent who doesn't see a shift in their child following a summer in our FXC program.

In today's educational debates, a common concern for young adults is their lack of unstructured time. The hours I spent in my youth riding with my bicycle gang taught me much about my family's wealth (type of bike), my character (would I do all the jumps?), and my social standing (did the gang listen to my ideas?). Unstructured time allows young people to figure out who they are and then make changes if they feel the need.

Even though it is structured, our summer training programs provide time for young folks to get to know themselves and learn social lessons our parental overprotection can keep them from learning. I see the difference it makes in our young adults, and I imagine you do too.

Our club's mandate is to build a better life for people of the Interior. I can't think of a better way to make this happen than through an intensive summer, being outdoors, exploring Alaska, with a great group of peers. Our club is hooking young Alaskans on a sport well suited for life in the Interior. We are giving them space and time to find their character and how they fit in with society. We are supporting their growth and engaging them to become healthy citizens.

What our ski club does is important, in a simple humanistic way. Here's to supporting our summer programs and improving the lives of young Alaskans.

PHOTO COURTESY **THAD KEENER**

A group of FXC members from 2015, including Ben Keener (far left). Can you name the other members?

Thad Keener is the executive director of the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks.

Planning begins now for Besh Cup series and Team Alaska roster spots

BY THOMAS O'HARRA
CCAK

The cross-country ski racing season is fast approaching, and CCAK wants to give everyone in Alaska a heads up about some important changes and updates to the Besh Cup race series.

First up, the race schedule is as follows —

BESH CUP 1 & 2 – Dec. 20-21 at Kincaid Park in Anchorage, hosted by NSAA

BESH CUP 3 & 4 – January 17-18 at Lookout Mountain in Homer, hosted by KNSC

BESH CUP 5 & 6 – January 31-Feb. 1 at Birch Hill in Fairbanks, hosted by NSCF

Besh Cup registration will open on Nov. 1. For those competing in all six series races, registering during November will give you a one-race discount. That means racers U16 and older will pay $225, U14s will pay $150, and U08, U10, & U12s will pay $50. Starting on Dec. 1, racers will pay full price for all races. Individual races cost $45 per U16 and up, $30 per U14, and $10 per U08/U10/U12.

There is also a new registration deadline for Besh Cup races — the Monday prior to races instead of Wednesday. This means that the new Besh Cup registration deadlines are as follows:

BESH CUP 1 & 2 – 11:59 p.m. Monday, Dec. 15

BESH CUP 3 & 4 – 11:59 p.m. Monday, January 12

B**ESH CUP 5 & 6** – 11:59 p.m. Monday, January 26

There is one important change happening to Besh Cup sprint race days — Sprint heats will now be 10 skiers each, with 50 skiers advancing to heats instead of 30. As a result, sprint days will be significantly shorter. No more standing in the cold until after the sun sets.

Participation in these races gives skiers the opportunity to be named to the Team Alaska ski teams that will compete at Arctic Winter Games and US Ski & Snowboard (USSS) Junior National Championships. There are separate qualification lists for each team.

Register for races and learn more at Cross Country Alaska's website; **crosscountryalaska.org**.

Get your U.S. Ski & Snowboard license

All competitors in Besh Cup races are required to have a valid USSS license (either General or Competitive); you will not be able to register for the races if you do not have a current license. Skiers whose birth years are 2007 and earlier must complete SafeSport, Avalanche Awareness, and register for a Background Check prior to competing in any USSS events. USSS does not allow for any exceptions for skiers without valid licenses at time of competition. Meeting these requirements may take two to four weeks, so do not put this off until race week.

Season information for Team Alaska

Arctic Winter Games will be held in Whitehorse, YT, March 8-15, 2026

U14 (2012-2013) – General USSS license

2024-25 Besh Cup overall champions Mia Stiassny (U18) and Davis Isom (U20).

U16 (2010-2011) – Competitive USSS license

U18 2008-2009) – Competitive USSS license

USSS Cross Country Junior National Championships will be held in Cable, Wisc., March 9-14, 2026. Age groups and birth years are listed below, and all racers require a Competitive USSS license prior to racing in Besh Cup races. Please visit the Junior National Information page on the CCAK website for updates made to the Team Selection Criteria. The base team size has changed from 50 to 42.

U16 – (2010-2011)

U18 – (2008-2009)

U20 – (2006-2007)

CCAK Fall Summit, coaches needed

CCAK will host a Fall Summit to disseminate a lot of this information and answer any questions from the community. Keep an eye out on the Cross Country Alaska Facebook page for details soon.

Finally, with the Arctic Winter Games, Junior Nationals, and Junior/U23 World Championships all happening during in same time period in 2026, we expect to have difficulty finding coaches. If you are interested in coaching at the Arctic Winter Games (three coaches) or Junior Nationals (10 coaches) next March, please submit an application on the CCAK website! The CCAK coaching application can be found on the Junior National Information page. The deadline to apply for one of the race trips is Oct. 15.

AROUND ALASKA

Fall fun coming soon to Soldotna's Tsalteshi Trails

Fall can be a scary time for ski trails organizations – managing muddy conditions, migrating wildlife and the nail-biting angst of an uncertain winter forecast. Soldotna's Tsalteshi Trails long ago decided to embrace fearsome fall and kick off the season's youth programming early — come rain, shine, snow, mud, monsters, ghosts or goblins. Tsalteshi's Spooktacular is, Oct. 26, with a 5K costumed Zombie Run for all ages at 12:30 p.m. and trick-or-treating on the trails for the kiddos from 1 to 3 p.m.

This is the 14th year of the event, designed to invite the entire community out to the trails, not just those excited to dress up in Lycra and NNN bindings. Local businesses and organizations get in on the fun, sponsoring trick-or-treat stations. Each station of course has treats for the hiking Hulks and Hermiones. But a trick in the form of a game or activity must be accomplished first. That can run the gamut from cornhole to fishing, shooting hoops or hockey goals. Treats aren't just candy, either. Books, fidgets, reflective safety badges or even light sabers have been on offer (Star Wars costumes not required).

Preregistration is open at www.tsalteshi.org. Or our worker zombies will be ready to sign up participants at the event.

Can't make it this year? Never fear! Spooktacular is just the beginning of Tsalteshi's youth programming for the year. Registration for youth ski lessons opens Nov. 1, also at www.tsalteshi.org. For more information about Tsalteshi events and programs, email info@tsalteshi.org.

– Jenny Neyman, Admin Coordinator
Tsalteshi Trails Association