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the ALASKA nordic skier

NOVEMBER 2026, VOL.28, NO. 2

PHOTO BY SCOTT PARMALEE

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Anchorage Nordic Skier

Newsletter Of The Nordic Skiing Association Of Anchorage, Inc.

9170 Jewel Lake Rd., Anchorage, AK 99502
Phone: 276-7609 **Fax:** 258-7609
Hotline: 248-6667
nsaa@alaska.net
anchoragenordicski.com

AROUND THE BOWL

Annual meeting a good time for Business & Brats

A hearty thanks to everyone who came out to NSAA's Business & Brats: Annual Meeting! The brat bar was a sizzling success, and a big shoutout to all who brought their culinary masterpieces for the potluck!

Kikkan and Eric dazzled us with last season's data and spilled the beans on goals for the coming season. We also rolled out the red carpet for new board candidates, honored Lifetime Members, and crowned the champs of the Annual Photo Contest.

For all the more details, head over to **anchoragenordicski.com/events/annual-celebration/**.

Ski Swap a success

What an incredible turnout for the annual NSAA Ski Swap at the Kincaid Wax Bunker! Huge gratitude to our amazing vendors who braved the cold: AMH, The Hoarding Marmot, Skiku, Anchorage Biathlon, Muni Parks And Rec, Ermine Nordic Skate, Start Wax and more!

We were thrilled to see 80-plus vendors and hundreds of people come together, sharing a collective passion for the outdoors and leaving with awesome gear! The energy was electric, and we're hopeful that the snow will keep falling soon!

Limited ticket alert! Nordic Nights Benefit and Fashion Show on Nov. 7

Snag your tickets now to join us at the Wildbirch Hotel on Nov. 7 for a spectacular evening supporting NSAA's Community Scoreboard at Kincaid Park. Dress to impress in your finest Après Ski ensemble as you indulge in complimentary appetizers, a cash bar, and a fabulous fashion show. It's sure to be an unforgettable night!

Attie: Embrace the enchantment of a Nordic night with après ski flair. Picture this: Dale of Norway sweaters, metallic ski vests, Skhoop minis, moon boots, and the coolest Skida headwear – just the ticket for post-skating bliss on perfect corduroy. Layer up with classic Nordic knits, sleek puffers, and playful winter accessories. Channel the coziness of mulled wine by the fire, under starry skies, in the brisk winter air, where practicality meets effortless chic!

Check out our website for additional info and tickets: **anchoragenordicski.com/nordic-nights-gala-fashion-show/**.

5-8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 7, Wildbirch Hotel (239 W 4th Ave.)

Free wax clinic!

NSAA and Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking (AMH) are partnering up to offer a wax clinic from 5-8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 13, at the Kincaid Park Wax Bunker. And it's free!

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.

Solstice Tree Tour: Dec. 12 at Kincaid Park 4 - 8 PM

NSAA's Solstice Tree Tour is a celebration of Winter Solstice, festive holiday trees, and healthy outdoor fun for all ages, and it's an Anchorage winter tradition! Entry is free and open to the public. This year's event runs from 4-8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12, at Kincaid Park. This is your opportunity to walk or snowshoe the Mize Loop. There is free hot chocolate and traditional s'mores. Don't miss the beer garden where there will be live music!

Decorated trees are sponsored by local businesses. Want to sponsor a tree? Go to: **docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe0ZjJl0JTvs76rDa0wnNXUJlsOORwjrSHPVP1ssYQNUPGt2g/viewform**.

Ski Train tickets on sale now!

All aboard for a one-of-a-kind adventure! On March 20, 2027, join the NSAA Ski Train and journey into Alaska's breathtaking backcountry for a day of skiing, snowshoeing, and fun!

From Anchorage to Curry – an area rich in history and surrounded by stunning wilderness – this annual event is your chance to explore Alaska's hidden treasures.

Don't miss out! Spots will fill up fast as we bring on new brewery, Broken Tooth, and a few Ski Train regular breweries with Midnight Sun, Turnagain Brewery, Double Shovel. And we still have the Wild Scoops family-friendly car! This is more than an adventure ... it's a fundraiser supporting NSAA. Check out our website for additional details: **anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-train/**

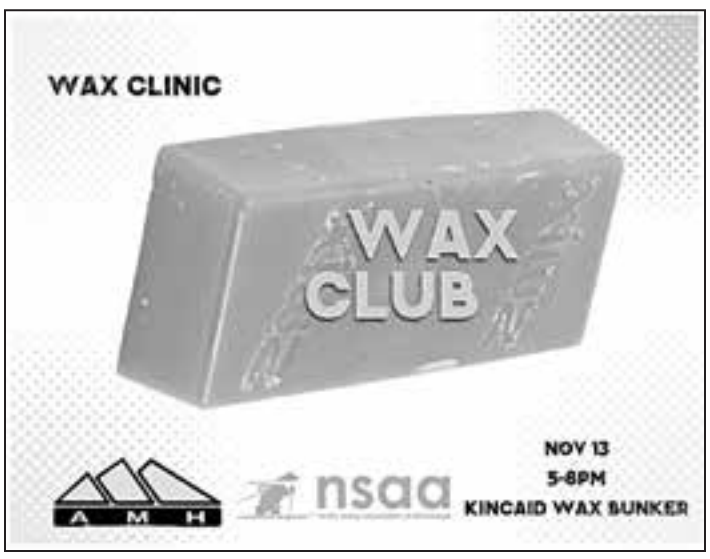
NSAA Adult Lessons return this winter

Looking to learn or improve your Nordic skiing this winter? NSAA's Adult Lessons program is returning for the 2026–27 season with instruction designed for a range of abilities and interests.

We're planning to offer both small-group and private lessons, with instruction in both classic and skate techniques. Group lessons will bring skiers together by ability and skill level, while private lessons offer a more personalized approach based on your individual goals.

We're currently finalizing the schedule and working with our coaches to determine the best mix of locations, dates, times, and skill levels. The 2026-27 schedule and registration information will be released on the NSAA website (**anchoragenordicski.com/programs/ski-lessons-2/**) in November, with lessons beginning as soon

See **AROUND THE BOWL**, Page 3



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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

as snow conditions allow.

Whether you're new to Nordic skiing, looking to build confidence, or hoping to refine your technique, we'd love to have you join us this winter. We'll see you on the trails!

NSAA Ski Mobile is growing: Getting more kids on skis

Last winter, NSAA launched an exciting new way to introduce Anchorage kids to the sport we love: the Ski Mobile. The mobile ski unit brings everything needed to get students on skis right to their elementary school, making it easier than ever for kids to discover the fun of Nordic skiing.

The inaugural season was a tremendous success. The Ski Mobile visited five Anchorage School District elementary schools and introduced approximately 1,300 students in grades 3-5 to Nordic skiing through two- to three-week PE curriculum blocks. For many students, it was their first time on Nordic skis and an opportunity to learn the basics, build confidence, get outside, and simply have fun.

And now, the Ski Mobile is growing! Thanks to a generous contribution from the Anchorage Rotary Club, NSAA has built and equipped a second Ski Mobile unit, which will be ready to hit the road as soon as the snow arrives this winter. Adding a second unit means we can reach more schools, more students, and more Anchorage families while continuing to build a strong foundation for the program.

If you're an Anchorage School District educator interested in bringing the Ski Mobile to your school, talk with your PE teacher, who can reserve the program through ASD's online reservation system.

Want to help put more kids on skis? Donor support and community partnerships make programs like the Ski Mobile possible. Whether you're interested in volunteering your time, sponsoring a future Ski Mobile unit, or simply helping spread the word, we'd love to hear from you at info@anchoragenordicski.com.

Save the dates: NSAA event calendar

NORDIC NIGHTS BENEFIT AND FASHION SHOW– Nov. 7
WAX CLINIC – Nov. 13
ANCHORAGE WINTER START – Nov. 21-22
JUNIOR NORDIC STARTS – Nov. 30
AMH ANCHORAGE CUP #1 – Dec. 6
SOLSTICE TREE TOUR – Dec. 12
BESH CUP IN ANCHORAGE – Dec. 19-20

2027

AMH ANCHORAGE CUP #2– January 10
AMH ANCHORAGE CUP #3– January 24
SKI 4 KIDS– January 30
ALASKA SKI FOR WOMEN – Feb. 7
AMH ANCHORAGE CUP #4– Feb. 14
AMH ANCHORAGE CUP SVEN– Feb. 21
TOUR OF ANCHORAGE: MARCH 7
JR. NATIONALS– March 11-15
LAST DAY OF JUNIOR NORDIC– March 13
SKI TRAIN– March 20
VOLUNTEER PARTY– March 26

Service High School Nordic Ski Team Wax Fundraiser

Saturday, November 21, 2026, from noon-3 p.m. at Service High School • Get your skis waxed and ready!

Who? Skiers of all ages and abilities | **What?** Bring your skis – downhill, cross-country, backcountry – and snowboards to get them waxed and ready for winter! Please scrape off old wax and clean skis with liquid wax remover, if possible.

Where? Service High School – use entrance at back of the school near football field

Bonus! A bake sale, too! | DONATIONS GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED

the Alaska nordic skier

EDITOR
Josh Niva
nordicskiereditor@gmail.com

LAYOUT
Kevin Powell
kevin@powelldesign.net

AD REPRESENTATIVE
Sara Lucey
nordicskieradvertising@gmail.com

LOCAL EDITORS

ANCHORAGE
Josh Niva
nordicskiereditor@gmail.com

EAGLE RIVER
Kortnie Horazdovsky
kortnie.horazdovsky@gmail.com

FAIRBANKS
Eric Troyer
newsletter@nscfairbanks.org

JUNEAU
Tristan Knutson-Lombardo
tkl1289@gmail.com

KACHEMAK
Rachel Allmendinger
kachemaknordicskiclub@gmail.com

MAT-SU
Marla Jakab
marla.jakab@matsuski.org

GIRDWOOD
Deb Essex
deb@skigirdwood.org

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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

Scott Parmalee's entry into the AK's backcountry is practically poetic, which is fitting Scott shot this skier cruising along Shakespeare Glacier. Scott's photo took second place in NSAA's Photo Contest's Touring/Backcountry category.

The prep before the fun: NSAA Junior Nordic season on the horizon

Let the snow dances commence: NSAA Junior Nordic is ready for another season of fun! We've been busy assembling our coaching staff and getting equipment ready. Our registration for this coming season started on the morning of October 3. Yet again, the Hillside afternoon sites filled up most quickly, and the Saturday groups at Kincaid and Hillside have also been very popular. There are spots available at our other times and locations. Registration will remain open into December, so encourage your family and friends to join us: https://anchoragenordicski.com/programs/junior-nordic/.

For families who have already registered for the program, the most important thing to do this month is to join our new communication platform, sportsYou. Remind has served us well for several years, but we believe sportsYou will give us even more functionality at a fraction of the cost. Once the program starts, all our communication about practices will occur via sportsYou, so you don't want to miss any important updates.

PHOTOS BY **ART HARMON**

NSAA's Ida Gullet brushes skis in preparation for NSAA Junior Nordic season.

NSAA Junior Nordic Sport Director Art Harmon's daughter Gwendolyn helped scrape JN skis. He said, "She was a big help and learned a lot."

There are detailed instructions on the website and in this year's Parent Handbook.

It is traditional to express gratitude in November, and Junior Nordic has a lot to be grateful for. Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking graciously stone ground over two dozen of our rental skis, giving new life to some well-worn ski bases. They also assisted us with several ski repairs. AMH will be at both our gear pick-up events, selling ski clothing and wax kits. Dondee's Laundry yet again washed all our program's jackets at no cost, which is an epic undertaking and a tremendous boon to JN. Be sure to thank both of those businesses for their support of Junior Nordic and NSAA.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR NOVEMBER:

JUNIOR NORDIC GEAR PICK-UP #2 – Nov. 14, 3-6 p.m. at the Kincaid Wax Bunker

COACH TRAINING – Week of Nov. 16

JUNIOR NORDIC STARTS – Week of Nov. 30

– Art Harmon
NSAA Junior Nordic Sport Director

A big 2026-27 ski season ahead for NSAA, Anchorage community

Kikkan Randall / NSAA Executive Director

Winter is on its way, and NSAA is looking forward to a thrilling season ahead. Whether you're a weekend wanderer, a devoted racer, a biathlete, or a parent wrangling a small skier into a snowsuit, there's something on the calendar for all of us!

Our tried-and-true annual programs, events, and races are all back, and this year they have some big company. We're excited to host the Western Regional Championships for the NCAA RMISA region together with the Alaska State High School Championships, as well as the 2027 U.S. Junior National Championships. Our world-class biathlon range will also take center stage, hosting both the National Guard Biathlon Championships and the U.S. Biathlon National Championships. It's a lineup that puts Alaska's trails and our community squarely in the national spotlight.

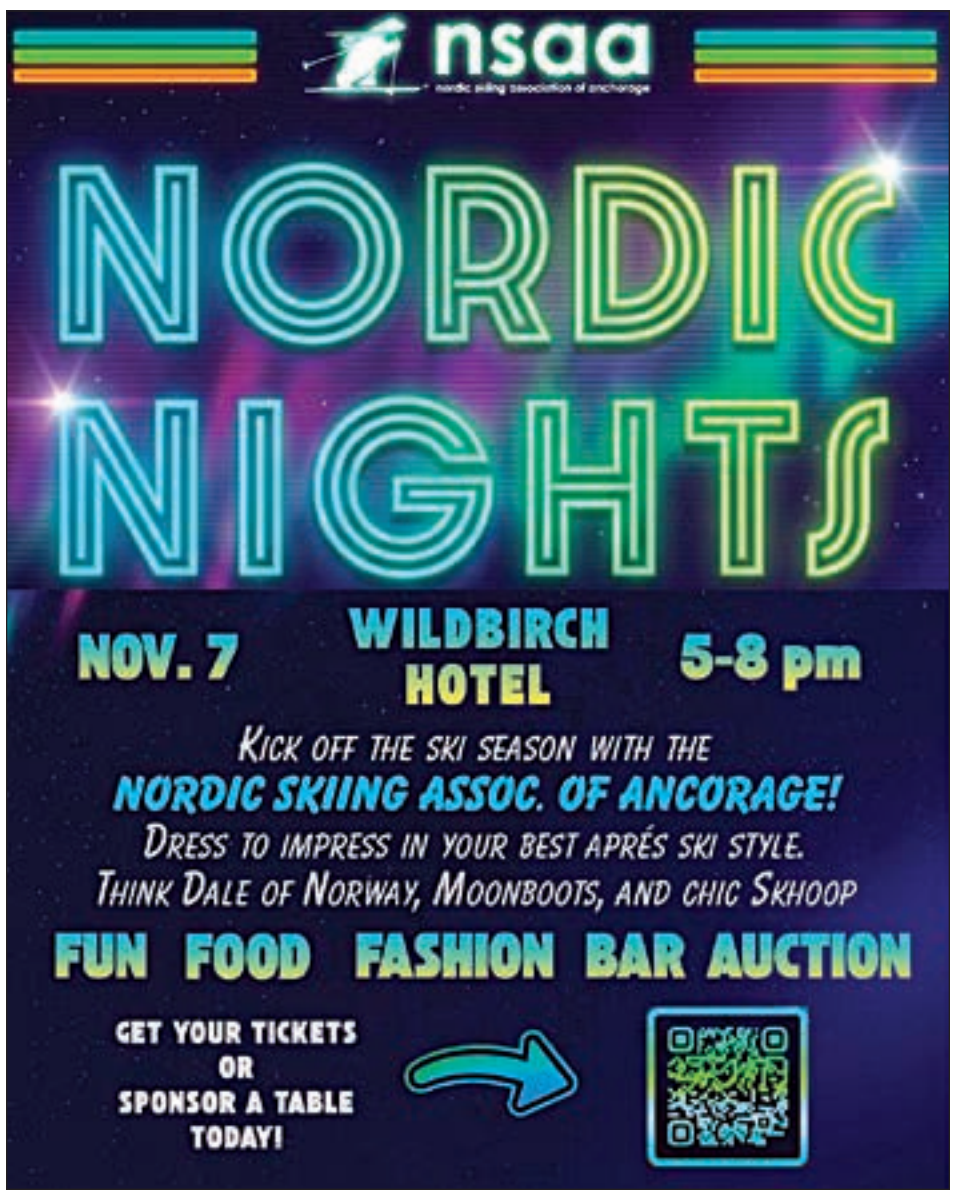
Of course, we'd be remiss not to mention the elephant in the grooming shed: a strong El Niño is expected, and no one can say for sure what that will mean for snow. Like any good thing in life, hosting a season like this takes a little risk to earn the reward of showcasing our beautiful trails and vibrant ski community. Mother Nature may challenge us, but we are ready to rise to the occasion.

Pulling off this many races and events takes people, and we're thrilled to welcome Lauri Bassett as NSAA's new Volunteer Coordinator. Lauri joins the staff just as we're more excited than ever to work with our many volunteers, who are the backbone of every event we put on. If you've been thinking about lending a hand, this is your year.

We're also delighted to share that we're doubling the impact of our Ski Mobile program, thanks to community partners like the Anchorage Rotary Club. That means more Anchorage kids on skis, and there's no better way to build the next generation of skiers.

So, we remain optimistic. Our sleeves are rolled up, the klister is within reach if we need it, and we're ready to make this NSAA's best season yet, its 63rd. See you on the trails!

Cheers, Kikkan :)



Welcome to our newest NSAA board members!

At the NSAA Annual Meeting, Lauren Berry and Scott Broadwell were voted in to fill two open NSAA Board of Directors positions.

Lauren Berry is a longtime Alaskan, parent of three, and enthusiastic member of Anchorage's outdoor community. When she's not skiing, biking, hiking, climbing, or fishing, Lauren brings her experience in environmental policy, organizational strategy, partnerships, and community engagement to her work. She's excited to help strengthen NSAA's year-round presence and connections throughout our community.

Lauren Berry

Scott Broadwell

Scott Broadwell has called Anchorage home since 2006 and has spent nearly two decades honing his skiing, fitness, and technique. An attorney specializing in environmental matters and civil litigation, Scott is also an avid skier, biker, and hiker. He's looking forward to giving back to the local ski community and helping NSAA continue to grow and thrive.

Please join NSAA in giving Lauren and Scott a warm welcome!

With gratitude to our departing board members

As we welcome new faces, we also want to recognize two longtime leaders who have made an incredible difference in our organization. A heartfelt thank you to Sara Miller and Josh Niva for their 12 years of service to NSAA, from 2014 to 2026!

Serving on a board takes time, commitment, and a genuine belief in the community. Sara and Josh have generously shared all three over the past dozen years, helping guide NSAA and support the local ski community. Their dedication and contributions have helped shape our organization, and we are deeply grateful for the time, energy, and care they've given along the way.

Sara and Josh, thank you for being such an important part of NSAA. While your time on the Board is coming to a close, the impact of your service will continue for years to come. You will always be part of the NSAA community!

Here's to new beginnings, lasting contributions, and the wonderful people who make NSAA what it is. Thank you for being part of our community!

Winter ski jumping, and snow making, is in the air

BY ZAK HAMMILL
Director, NSAA Ski Jumping & Nordic Combined Program

NSAA's Ski jumping & Nordic Combined Program is ready for the winter ahead! The fall season is always our time to prepare for the upcoming winter season. Tasks like waxing skis, putting on the snow retaining snow nets, and athlete recruiting set us up for success.

As the days get shorter, we keep an eye on the temperature so that we can start making snow as soon as the weather allows. Making snow gives us a great base while we wait for natural snow to cover the ground. Once the ski jumps are prepared with snow we will welcome Anchorage's ski jumpers back for an exciting high-flying season!

Our programs start in early December and run through March 13. We have programs for kids from 5-19 years old. If you have ever thought of trying ski jumping this is your chance! All of our skiers start in alpine ski gear which is a bit more supportive than ski jumping gear. This gives them a chance to develop confidence before making the switch to ski jumping specific skis and boots.

Modern day hill design and equipment keep ski jumpers safe. Each ski jumper progresses through the different size ski jumps at their own pace and there is never pressure to move onto a bigger jump. All of this paired with our highly knowledgeable coaching staff makes for a great skiing environment. If you have a skier that is interested in trying ski jumping and have more questions, please reach out to our program director Zak Hammill, jumping@anchoragenordicski.com. And learn more about NSAA's Ski jumping & Nordic Combined programs, visit **anchoragenordicski.com/programs/ski-jumping/**.

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Making snow and making trails for skiers all season

BY NSAA OPERATIONS

NSAA's Operations team has held two snowmaking training sessions for our new volunteer recruits. Our strategy this season is to have more helping hands trained and ready to go when the conditions for making snow are just right.

We have a few long-time volunteers who have devoted hundreds of hours to operating and monitoring the snow making system at Kincaid Park. They have reached "expert" status and will be on hand to guide and train up the next generation of snow makers.

So far, we have had eight promising volunteers attend the two orientations and hope to get all of them on a rotating schedule to help with the exciting process of making snow. We'll strive to work 4-hour shifts throughout the day and/or night depending on conditions.

If you think you might like to join the fun, please reach out to trailsadmin@anchoragenordicski.com.

Craig Norman explains the workings of the fan gun to Josh Varney, Robert Walgren, Jackie LaBelle, Phillip Tafs and Carter Alsworth.

Jack Porter discusses the monitoring system with David Stierwalt, Bryan Wilson and Travis Rector.

Many thanks to Jackie LaBelle, Josh Varney, Phillp Tafs, Robert Walgren, Carter Alsworth, David Stierwalt, Travis Rector and Bryan Wilson for taking the time to learn about making snow and a very special thanks to Jack Porter and Craig Norman for conducting the training sessions. We look forward to working with you all!

Compton, Murray recognized by NSAA for their commitment, passion

We are delighted to honor Karen Compton and Vivienne Murray as Lifetime NSAA Members. Karen and Vivienne revitalized NSAA's ski jumping and Nordic combined program in the early 2010s.

When they took leadership, the program faced a loss of direction, aging facilities, and just three active jumpers. Through their visionary leadership and dedicated efforts, they expanded participation to over 60 athletes, secured funding for a summer ski jumping surface, and spearheaded the acquisition of brand-new facility buildings. Under their management, the program has proudly produced both junior and senior National Champions.

Without their commitment and vision, the program would not be where it is today. Thank you, Karen and Vivienne, for your dedication and years of service!

STATEWIDE

Get ready to race! Besh Cup season coming soon

BY THOMAS O'HARRA
CCAK

The 2026/2027 ConocoPhillips Besh Cup racing season opens with races hosted by the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage at Kincaid Park trails on Dec. 19-20. The Besh Cup races will be held as usual – Team Alaska qualifiers for Junior Nationals, and races for younger juniors, seniors, and masters. In January, skiers will head to the Government Peak Rec Area trails in Palmer, hosted by the Mat-Su Nordic Ski Club on January 16-17. Besh Cup Finals will be held on January 30-31 at the Birch Hill trails, hosted by the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks.

What to do next?

Bookmark the Cross Country Alaska website (**crosscountryalaska.org**). You may also find our new calendar useful to keep track of different race dates around the state (**crosscountryalaska.org/calendar**)

Join your local ski club. It's time to join or renew your membership to keep your trails groomed and managed. Cross Country Alaska (CCAK) shares a portion of entry fees with host clubs to help offset weekend expenses. Additionally, the race rotation allows each region (Southcentral & Interior) to offer home trail advantage and no travel expenses to their members for at least one race weekend. CCAK also encourages families to consider becoming members on some level with clubs outside of their home club as well. The more options for places to ski, the better for our sport!

Obtain a U.S. Ski & Snowboard (USSS) License. All competitors in Besh Cup races are required to have a valid USSS license (either General or Competitive) or a valid FIS license for non-US skiers. USSS license holders older than 18 years of age must complete SafeSport, Avalanche Awareness, and register for a Background Check prior to competing in any USSS events. USSS license holders who turn 18 during the season must complete SafeSport and Avalanche Awareness at the time they register for the license and will be notified to register for a background check around their 18th birthday. USSS does not allow any exceptions for skiers without valid licenses at time of competition. Meeting the background check requirement may take two to four weeks, so do not put this off until the week of registering for Besh Cup races.

- **YOUTH SKIERS** – not competing for a position on Team Alaska only need a General license ($35).
- **ADULT SKIERS 18 AND OVER** – may purchase a USSS Non-Scored Athlete license ($85). This license does not include access to the USSS points list or the CCAK Team Alaska points list.

Registration for ConocoPhillips Besh Cup Races opens Nov. 1. Skiers may register on the CCAK website. All skiers who register for all six races and all skiers in the U12 and younger age groups receive a season T-shirt designed by long-time Alaska skier, Becca Rorabaugh. A discount is given to skiers U16 and older who register for all six races by Nov. 30. Check on the Besh Cup page for registration information: (**crosscountryalaska.org/besh-cup-general-info**).

FIND A SKI GROUP – It's not a requirement but it is helpful to work with a training group and coaches to help navigate race weekends. Racers who are unaffiliated with training groups may reach out to training groups for help with waxing and race weekend logistics. U12 and younger skiers can check with the host ski club to meet up with local Junior Nordic skiers of that area. If you are part of a ski group, check with your coach for specific race weekend information as it pertains to your team.

MAKE TRAVEL PLANS – This may include flights, carpooling, vehicle rental, housing accommodations, and food plans. Visit the CCAK website for hotel information. The Wedgewood Resort in Fairbanks and the Land's End resort in Homer offer special

See **CCAK**, Page 7

CCAK

Continued from Page 6

weekend rates. Details can be found on the appropriate Besh Cup weekend page on the CCAK website.

Other things to know about CCAK operations:

WEATHER & TRAIL ISSUES – The CCAK Competition Committee meets the Wednesday 10 days prior to each race weekend to make final weekend plans. If there are weather or trail issues to consider, the Committee meets the week prior to the regularly scheduled meeting to discuss relocation or postponement possibilities. The deadline to make changes to a race weekend is the Sunday prior to racing.

CHECK-IN FOR RACE DETAILS – Begin watching the CCAK Facebook page, Instagram page, and website two weeks prior to each race for information about the upcoming race. Start lists are posted the Friday and Saturday before each race. There will be a Team Captains' meeting on the Thursday prior to a race weekend to give details to coaches.

TEAM ALASKA INFORMATION – Participation in Besh Cup races gives skiers the opportunity to be named to the Team Alaska ski teams that will compete at the USSS Junior National Championships. The qualification lists for each team are posted on the CCAK website.

USSS Cross Country Junior National Championships will be held in Anchorage from March 11-15. Age groups and birth years are listed below, and all racers are required to have a valid Competitive USSS license prior to racing in Besh Cup races. You can find the Team Alaska qualification criteria for Junior Nationals here: www.crosscountryalaska.org/junior-nationals-information) Note that on odd years (non-AWG championship years), Team Alaska will name a team of 50 skiers.

- U16 (2011-2012)
- U18 (2009-2010)
- U20 (2007-2008)

Alaska biathletes shine at U.S. Biathlon Fall Festival in Utah

Alaska biathletes from the Anchorage and Fairbanks Biathlon Clubs made a strong showing at the U.S. Biathlon Fall Festival and International Team Trials in Midway, Utah. The festival drew a field of more than 90 athletes from the United States, Canada, and Switzerland.

In the first-day Men's U17 6K sprint, Beckett Hayden led an all-Alaska podium sweep, winning the race ahead of Jacob Foreman in second and Daniel Sears in third. Sears said, "I'm excited to have made my first podium."

Despite the course's steep hills and challenges of racing at high altitude, the Alaskans continued to excel throughout the two-day competition. Hayden won the men's 6K sprint again on the second day, with Foreman finishing third. Naomi Smith and Eva Driggs each won both their 6K sprint races, while Lance Smith captured the U17 Men's race. Smith raced up to the Elite division on the first day to compete in the Men's 10K against Olympians. Service High School student Reine Soule likewise challenged herself by racing in the Elite division.

Several other Alaska athletes also reached the podium. Ellie Burnett placed third in the Women's U19 6K sprint, Severin Parks finished third in the Men's Open race, and Jonna Keller took second in the Women's U17 race. Former Alaska resident, West High School graduate, and Olympian Maxime Germain added another Alaska connection with a second-place finish in the Elite Men's race.

Other Alaskan competitors included Grace Post, Valentina Sears, Zoe Noble, Hailey Finch, and Coltyn Kilchrist. After a sunny training day with temperatures in the 80s, remnants of Tropical Storm Rachel brought wind and rain for both race days. Those wet, demanding conditions were familiar to the Alaskans, who train in challenging weather at home, and their ability to adapt was evident in their strong results. With international competition, a hilly course, and high altitude, the Fall Festival provided a valuable test as Alaska's biathletes continue pursuing opportunities on the national and international stages.

Eagle River Nordic Ski Club
Eagle River, Alaska
cernsc.org

‘You’d better get after it!’

After decades of skiing and service, volunteer tries the snowbird life, but leaves legacy of daughter’s memory

BY KORTNIE HORAZDOVSKY

After decades of family skiing, Chugiak-Eagle River Nordic Ski Club involvement, leading ski tours, and building an enduring legacy on outdoor activities in Alaska, longtime CERNSC volunteer Barb Johnson is handing over the reins in exchange for warmer climes.

Barb Johnson and her daughter Erin pose at Junior Nationals in 2007 in Soldier Hollow, Utah.

Johnson, who led the transformation of the Ski the Beach Race into Ski the Beach for Erin, in memory of her late daughter, reflected on her time with the ski club last month from Arizona, where she and her husband are “trying out” the snowbird life.

Her legacy of involvement with the CERNSC is largely due to the influence of her daughter Erin, who died at age 27 in a bear attack in Interior Alaska, where she was doing geologic field work.

Johnson, her husband Steve, and Erin had spent their winters backcountry skiing in the Peters Creek, Eklutna and Eagle River valleys. Erin was on skis since age 2, and the family had some metal-edged Norwegian skis. While the family wasn’t as involved in the ski club in those days, once Erin hit middle school, they all started learning classic and skate methods of skiing, and found themselves on groomed trails more often. Erin skied through high school and lived a very outdoor life, summiting peaks and choosing a career that allowed her to work in the field.

After Erin’s death in 2017, Johnson joined the CERNSC board. She recalled moving through grief, and being inspired by something her daughter would often say: “Well, you’d better get after it!” So she found an outlet for her energy in the ski club.

Motivated by Erin’s love of skiing, and the outpouring of support from the ski community, Johnson started by turning the annual Ski The Beach race, held at Beach Lake in Chugiak each year, into Ski the Beach for Erin. The community showed up in force.

“That was a huge deal for us,” Johnson said, “We were just so overwhelmed by the community.”

“Ski the Beach for Erin” has continued on as an annual tradition, taking an in-person pause for COVID, and a year off due to lack of snow. The race will have a new director this season.

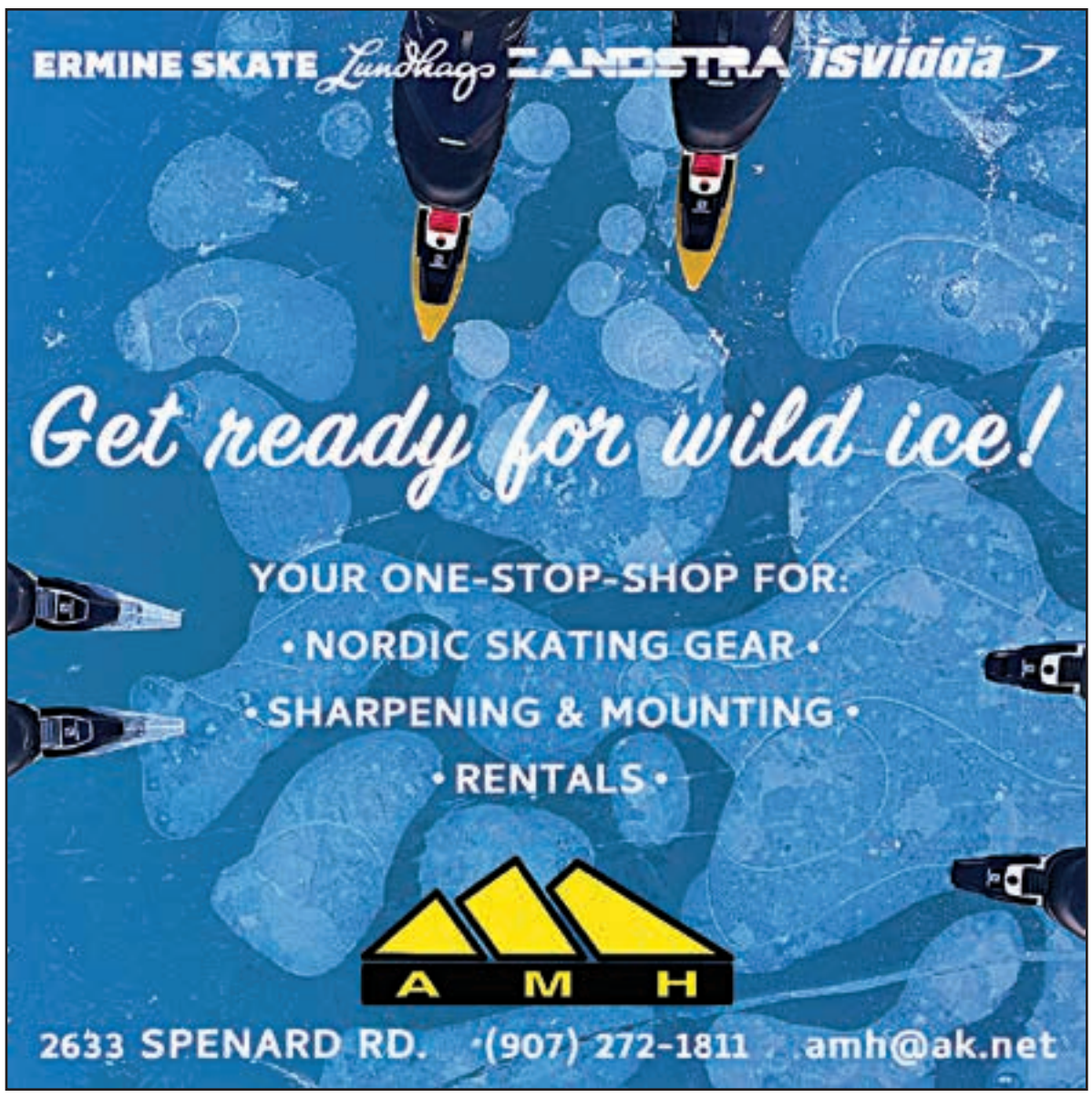
Johnson led ski tours, served as a Junior Nordic coach, and was the voice of the Chugiak-Eagle River Nordic Ski Club here in the pages of the Alaska Nordic Skier.

Johnson and her husband’s only child, Erin’s love for outdoors has left a legacy far beyond the annual ski race. Johnson and family began the Erin K Johnson Memorial Fund. Ski the Beach raises funds for the endowment each year, and it funds projects contributing to life in the outdoors. It funds scholarships to Junior Nordic for families in need, and other activities big and small, like Skiku sessions in rural Alaska, field trips, conservation funds and the Great Land Trust.

One of the fund’s larger projects is the recently-completed Korohusk public use cabin at the Eagle River Nature Center. Working with high school friends of Erin’s who designed the cabin, the group went through the many layers of approval to finally get the ski- or hike-in cabin completed.

“Erin loved nature and she loved being outdoors,” Bard said, “so this is getting families outside, people outside, enjoying nature, and it also supports the whole education program with the nature center.”

PHOTOS COURTESY BARB JOHNSON
Barb Johnson at Ski The Beach for Erin, which she took on as director in memory of her late daughter Erin.



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AROUND EAGLE RIVER

CERNSC Ski Tours planned for 2026-27 ski season!

Snow is right around the corner! Come tour with us in 2026-27 and enjoy the wonders of Eagle River Valley trails! Ros Singleton is leading tours this year since Barb Johnson will be enjoying warmer weather in the Lower 48.

REQUIREMENTS: You should be a CERNSC ski club member. Ski tours are not for beginners or children under 12. You may bring dogs if they are well-behaved, stay with you, and don't fight with other dogs.

Below is a proposed list of ski tour dates, times and locations. These are subject to change due to weather and snow conditions. If you are interested in joining us, please e-mail Ros Singleton at rosalynsingleton2@gmail.com.

• Sunday, Dec. 6 – 12:30 p.m.: Meet at Beach Lake (the lake, not the chalet) parking lot to ski the Lake and the Lakeside trails at Beach Lake and possibly Fire Creek estuary.

• Sunday, Jan 3 – 12:30 p.m.: Meet at the Eagle River Nature Center's lower parking lot for a tour of the trails and river

• Sunday, Feb 7 – 12:30 p.m.: Meet at Briggs bridge for a tour on Homestead trail along Eagle River

• Sunday, March 14 (or possibly Saturday, March 13) – 12:30 p.m.: Meet at South Fork for a tour to Symphony Lake

– Ros Singleton

Junior Nordic ready for a great season ahead with new leadership

Chugiak-Eagle River Nordic Ski Club's Junior Nordic Program is off to a great start for 2026-2027. With new leadership on our committee, we're still learning the ropes, but have so far had a successful signup process. Our program is full up for this year and we're hoping for a solid snow year!

This year, we've added Early Bird sessions on Tuesday/Thursday. They've been a hit! Stay tuned for information about adult lessons. We plan to hold them, but have been focusing on registering and rostering for Jr. Nordic first.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR JR. NORDIC:

NOV. 30 – First Day

Photo by **Kortnie Horazdovsky"**

Chugiak High skiers Bennett and Hunter Hamm perfect the 'wax-off' part of the process so others can 'wax-on at the Beach Lake Chalet for Chugiak-Eagle River junior nordic skiers.

DEC. 21-31 – No Jr. Nordic - winter break

FEB. 25 – Last Day

– Kortnie Horazdovsky
CERNSC Jr. Nordic Coordinator

STATEWIDE

AROUND ALASKA

TSALTESHI

Testing the trails before ski season begins

At Tsalteshi Trails, we'll welcome mid-October snow, but we'll also welcome the opportunity to get things done should the early powder not arrive.

The mild October allowed cyclocross to return to Tsalteshi Trails with the famed grass race Oct. 11. A rainy weekend kept the field down to 11 riders, but they were rewarded with a parting of the clouds and the fun of the roller-coaster course.

Tsalteshi's biggest October event was Spooktacular on Oct. 25. The occasion kicked off with the Zombie Run and festivities continued with the Trick-or-Treat Trail behind Skyview Middle School.

There's never enough time for construction and maintenance projects as Tsalteshi. If Mother Nature gives time in October, Tsalteshi will more than take advantage.

Work continues on the upgrade to the Slikok trailhead. The new pavement to the parking lot is in, and the massive potholes in the parking lot are out. The race also is on to get the outhouse completed before winter arrives in full force.

Tsalteshi also had a trail work days Oct. 10 and 17. The original trails were meticulously laid out, but alders, elderberry, devil's club, rusty menziesia, Lutz spruce, and birch and aspen shoots have altered routes over the years due to the relentless march of the boreal forest. By retaking the original trail bed with loppers and handsaws, volunteers have helped restore the subtle curves that make Tsalteshi the thrill ride it is.

Speaking of thrills, one of the goals at Tsalteshi is to get children to enjoy the Alaska winter while learning the sport of cross-country skiing.

Registration for the Tsalteshi Trails Youth Ski Program begins Nov. 7 at 9 a.m. for those 6 to 12 years old. Registration for 4- and 5-year-olds starts Nov. 14 at 9 a.m.

For more information on the program, see tsalteshi.org.

– Jeff Helminiak
Tsalteshi board member

TALKEETNA

Ski Together, Talkeetna: Building skills, community and winter wellness

The Denali Nordic Ski Club is excited to announce that it has received grant funding from the Jessica Stevens Community Foundation to support Ski Together, Talkeetna: Building Skills, Community and Winter Wellness Through Recreation! This project will expand community-based educational programming and recreational events, creating welcoming opportunities for people throughout the Susitna Valley to experience the joys of Nordic skiing, build skills, connect with others, and enjoy the outdoors together.

Whether you are stepping onto skis for the first time, returning to skiing after a break, looking to improve your technique, or simply hoping to spend more time outdoors with others, there is a place for you in our skiing community. Our goal is to make Nordic skiing accessible, enjoyable, and inclusive for people of all ages, abilities, and experience levels.

Beginner clinics will introduce participants to the fundamentals of classic and skate skiing, including equipment selection, basic techniques, trail etiquette, and building confidence on snow. Intermediate and advanced clinics will offer opportunities to develop skills through technique refinement, hill climbing and descending strategies, ski waxing and maintenance instruction, and off-season training education. By offering a range of learning opportunities, we hope to help everyone find a comfortable starting point and a path toward reaching their personal goals.

Ski Together, Talkeetna is about more than learning to ski. It is also about building connections across our communities and making winter recreation a shared experience. Full moon skis, guided trail tours, pop-up ski outings, and fun, low-pressure races will offer welcoming ways to participate, meet new people, and enjoy time on the trails without the pressure of competition or expectations about ability. Whether you come with friends and family or arrive on your own, we hope you will feel welcome.

By bringing people together from across the Susitna Valley, these activities will encourage greater use of our local trails, promote active lifestyles during the winter months, and celebrate the unique outdoor culture that makes our region such a special place to live. We recognize that everyone's experience with skiing is different, and we want our programs to offer opportunities for people to participate at their own pace, learn from one another, and discover what makes Nordic skiing rewarding for them.

THIS WINTER'S PLANNED ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

PRESEASON – Equipment selection and preseason training clinics

NOVEMBER – Ski cleaning, waxing and maintenance clinics

DECEMBER – Snip, Scoop, Sip event; solstice ski; guided trail tours

JANUARY – Trail tours, technique refinement clinic, full moon ski, and skate ski race

FEBRUARY – Hills clinic, poker ski, waxing for racing clinic, and a multi-user team race

MARCH – Full moon ski, the Oosik, and an end-of-season gear care clinic

We are grateful to the Jessica Stevens Community Foundation for helping make this project possible. Their support allows us to expand opportunities for learning, recreation, and connection throughout the Susitna Valley.

Everyone is invited to ski together! Whether you are a beginner or an experienced skier, a longtime resident or a newcomer to the valley, we hope you will join us this winter. Come to learn something new, enjoy the trails, meet fellow outdoor enthusiasts, or simply share the fun of being outside in winter. We look forward to building a stronger, more connected, and more inclusive Nordic skiing community – one ski outing at a time.

Watch for event announcements and details from the Denali Nordic Ski Club, **denalinordicskiclub.org**. We can't wait to see you on the trails!

– Christina O'Dell
DNSC Coordinator

Picture perfect

2026 NSAA Photography Contest captures highlights of skiing season

A lot of factors played into JR Patee's Best of Show image in the 2026 NSAA Photography

Contest. Snow, incredible light and a great view of the Karl Eid Ski Jumps, where JR is an avid volunteer! The winning shot was among dozens of photos entered in the 2026 edition of the annual competition.

The Overall Winning photographers as well as all first, second and third place category finishers, earned special prizes from Alaska Mountaineering & Hiking. NSAA, the Anchorage Nordic ski community and contest photographers thank Alaska Mountaineering & Hiking for the always generous giving to this contest!

NSAA thanks all of the photographers who shared their images, as well as the many voters who went online to choose their favorite photos. NSAA selected contest photographs for its 2026-27 calendar, which is on sale now. Calendars are $10 at the NSAA office. Calendars are also available online at **nordic-skiing-association-of-anchorage.square.site/s/shop**.

Special thanks to Justin Ritter at Ritter Art for graphic design work on the calendar, and David Large at Assets Inc. for the printing.

On the road to an epic ski adventure! Archangel Road, that is. Laura Bozeman's photo earned first place in the Recreational/Casual Skiing category.

Is it a dream? No. Just a special moment on the Hillside trails, captured by JR Patee in his Best of Show winning photo.

Now that's a sweet shot of a sweet sunset on the Lekisch by Wayne Pence, whose image nabbed first in the Groomed Trails category.

Coming in hot! It was just another day of skiing at Kincaid Park, shot by Jessika Hedges on the Sisson. The image placed second in the Recreational/Casual Skiing category.

Skiing is more fun with friends. It's also more fun when the powder is fresh and it's somebody's birthday! Calisa Kastning's photo of a backcountry birthday ski won the Kids On Skis category.

Good times with biathlon friends hits the mark every time. That's what it's all about with Sarah Wilson's third place photo in the Biathlon category.

2026 NSAA Photography Contest results

Biathlon: 1. Cold but focused- Sarah Wilson; 2. Focused on the range- Sarah Wilson; 3. Girls on the range- Sarah Wilson. Fun Ski Events: 1. Solstice Tree Tour- Laura Bozeman; 2. Wooden Ski Classic - Calisa Kastning. 3. Fun Kid Awards - Sarah Wilson. Groomed Trails: 1. 7.5 km Lekisch at sunset - Wayne Pence; 2. Laying Spring track at Hillside - Scott Parmelee; 3. 7.5 km Lekisch sunburst- Wayne Pencel. Kids On Skis: 1. Backcountry Birthday Ski Day - Calisa Kastning; 2. Tutus and friends kind of ski day - Calisa Kastning; 3. Putting brother to work- Jonathan Hedges Jumping: 1. Ski Jump morning - Laura Bozeman; 2. 10 and 20 Meter jump practice - JR Patee 3. 40 meter jump – JR Patee. Racing: 1. Gus gets silver - Anna Engle; 2. AMH Cup Start - Ida Gullett; 3. Super Tour Start - Anna Engle. Recreational/ Casual Skiing: 1. Archangel Rd Ski - Laura Bozeman; 2. Just another day on the Sisson - Jessika Hedges; 3. Gasline Trail November Light - JR Patee. Touring/Backcountry: 1. Approaching Justice Peak - Tobias Albrigsten; 2. Shakespeare Glacier - Scott Parmelee; 3. Skin Tracks - Tobias Albrigsten.

Eight Alaska-based skiers lead U.S. cross-country team into post-Olympics season

BY LEANN BENTLEY
Stifel U.S. Ski Team

U.S. Ski & Snowboard officially announced the 21 athletes who have accepted their nominations and have been named to the 2026-27 Stifel U.S. Cross Country Ski Team. All athletes qualified for the team based on the published selection criteria.

After the most successful Olympic Winter Games in U.S. cross country program history, with three athletes winning three medals (two silver, one bronze), the team aims to carry that momentum into the upcoming season. The A Team is led by Ben Ogden, a two-time Olympic silver medalist and the most decorated American man in cross country history, Olympic silver medalist Gus Schumacher, and two-time Olympian JC Schoonmaker. The B Team features a majority of Team USA's Milano Cortina Olympians, plus a new face, Ava Thurston, who qualified for the B Team for the upcoming season. Two-time World Championships medalist Julia Kern leads the B Team, which also includes World Cup top-10 finishers Jack Young, Kendall Kramer, Novie McCabe, Zanden McMullen, Zak Ketterson and Sophia Laukli, among others.

The Development (D) Team welcomes several new athletes to the national team, including University of Utah athlete Neve Gerard, University of Alaska Anchorage athlete Corbin Carpenter and Alaska Winter Stars athlete Jack Leveque, all of whom have represented the U.S. at the World Junior & U23 World Championships in 2026.

The 2026-27 World Cup season will feature 13 race weekends, including the Tour de Ski. The World Cup season begins in Ruka, Finland, Nov. 27-29, 2026, and ends in Ulricehamn, Sweden, March 19-21, 2027. The calendar also features three championships: FIS Junior World Ski Championships and the U23 World Ski Championships in Otepää, Estonia, Jan. 19-24, 2027, and the FIS World Championships in Falun, Sweden, Feb. 24-March 7, 2027.

PHOTO BY DUSTIN SATLOFF/U.S. SKI TEAM

Alaska's Zanden McMullen is a blur during the 10km Interval Start Classic on March 20, 2026, at Mt Van Hoevenberg in North Elba, New York. McMullen is returning as a member of the U.S. Cross Country Ski Team this fall.

2026-27 Stifel U.S. Cross Country Ski Team

(Hometown; Club; College; Birthdate)

A TEAM

MEN

BEN OGDEN – (Burlington, VT; Stratton Mountain School; University of Vermont; 2/13/2000)
JAMES "JC" SCHOONMAKER – (Lake Tahoe, CA; Alaska Pacific University; University of Alaska Anchorage; 8/12/2000)
GUS SCHUMACHER – (Anchorage, AK; Alaska Pacific University; University of Alaska Anchorage; 7/25/2000)

B TEAM

WOMEN

JULIA KERN – (Waltham, MA; Stratton Mountain School; Dartmouth College; 9/12/1997)
KENDALL KRAMER – (Fairbanks, AK; Alaska Pacific University; University of Alaska Fairbanks; 6/26/2002)
SOPHIA LAUKLI – (Yarmouth, ME; Aker-Dæhlie; University of Utah; 6/8/2000)
NOVIE MCCABE – (Winthrop, WA; Alaska Pacific University; University of Utah; 12/15/2001)
SAMANTHA "SAMMY" SMITH – (Boise, ID; Sun Valley Ski Education Foundation; Stanford University; 9/22/2005)
AVA THURSTON – (Waterbury, VT; Dartmouth College; 10/6/2004)

MEN

JOHN STEEL HAGENBUCH – (Ketchum, ID; Sun Valley Ski Education Foundation; Dartmouth College; 10/1/2001)
ZAK KETTERSON – (Bloomington, MN; Snø Racing; Northern Michigan University; 4/2/1997)
ZANDEN MCMULLEN – (Anchorage, AK; Alaska Pacific University; 5/31/2001)
JACK YOUNG – (Jay, VT; Craftsbury Green Racing Project; Colby College; 12/17/2002)

DEVELOPMENT TEAM

WOMEN

HALEY BREWSTER – (Avon, CO; Stratton Mountain School; University of Vermont; 6/6/2003)
NEVE GERARD – (Bend, OR; University of Utah; 3/20/2006)*
SYDNEY PALMER-LEGER – (Park City, UT; Mansfield Nordic Pro Team; University of Utah; 2/4/2002)

MEN

CORBIN CARPENTER – (Aspen, CO; University of Alaska Anchorage; 12/2/2004)*
TABOR GREENBERG – (Moretown, VT; University of Vermont; 5/4/2006)
ZACH JAYNE – (Bend, OR; Stratton Mountain School; University of Utah; 3/30/2004)
MURPHY KIMBALL – (Anchorage, AK; Alaska Winter Stars; University of Alaska Anchorage; 7/16/2006)
JACK LEVEQUE – (Anchorage, AK; Alaska Winter Stars; 5/3/2009)*

*Newly named to the Stifel U.S. Cross Country Ski Team

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Juneau, Alaska

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

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Mudslinging up Montana Month

October wears many hats. There's one for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Another for Disability Employment Awareness Month. It's National Book Month as well as a month to celebrate Filipino American History. So while the Muskegger office spends time honoring each of these campaigns, we make it all the busier with our annual pilgrimage up Montana Creek to get things ready for season. Which is why we're adding Mudslinging Up Montana Month to October's list of awareness campaigns.

Over many days last month, dozens of volunteers cleared ditches and culverts, brushed the entire length of the trail (both sides!), opened up the canopy (we'll take all the snow we can get), and spread gravel on some increasingly cobbly sections of trail (every inch counts). In an era of erratic snowfall, and a forecasted Super El Niño for winter, this is more than just annual trail maintenance. It is critical work as we adapt to climate change and maximize every little advantage we can to groom trail in times of minimal snow.

Huge thanks to our partners at Trail Mix, to Lindy and Colleen Jones for use of their Kubota, to our many volunteers, and to the Juneau Community Foundation for their financial support to make these trail repairs possible.

PHOTO COURTESY JNSC

Our volunteers provide only the best ditching by hand, as evidenced by this photo.

Why your membership matters!

Gravel doesn't deliver and spread itself. Snowmachines need annual pre-season tuneups. And those skis don't wax themselves. Your membership is a commitment to our collective vision: of getting more people on skis, more often, on more groomed kilometers. Thank you for helping us make Juneau a great place to ski in the winter! Join or renew at jnski.org/donate. Special thanks to the 150-plus members who are on monthly or yearly auto-renew. A recurring membership gives you peace of mind so you can focus on what matters most: skiing!

Speaking of money that matters…

October is PFD time! This annual distribution of individual dividends comes alongside our club's Pick.Click.Give. check and accompanying list of supporters This year, 65 of you donated $4,600 to skiing in Juneau! This money lands in our bank account at just the right time. As we gear up for another season and expenses fly out the door, Pick.Click.Give. donations give us that extra layer of assurance that we have the resources to get you skiing as soon as the snow flies.

Merch sale

It's November, which means we need your help! Our old inventory is on sale so grab what's left before it's gone. Nab yourself (or a friend) the perfect JNSC-branded swag, support Nordic skiing in Juneau, all while making room in our locker for new inventory. Visit **jnski.org/shop** to get your items.

And the winner is…

Thanks to everyone who submitted an entry for our first-ever snowmachine naming contest. The winner wasn't announced until after our monthly submission deadline, so visit our website to see who won. We also want to thank the Rasmuson Foundation and Dave Haas and Mary Ellen Arvold for their support, which allowed us to upgrade two of our oldest towing machines. It all adds up to fewer mechanical breakdowns, meaning more uninterrupted grooming of the trails you love to ski!

That's what friends are for

There's something special about running a cross-country ski club in Southeast Alaska. It takes a certain kind of skier that decides to head out when the forecast calls for rubber fishing gloves. And it takes a certain kind of volunteer to know how to churn frozen slush into silky smooth corduroy. Which is why us Southeast clubs gotta look out for each other.

To that end, we were happy to donate some of our surplus grooming equipment to Haines Huts and Trails and the Log Cabin Ski Society (Skagway). While the machines and grooming attachments have seen their fair share of use, some continued TLC means they have plenty of kilometers left in them. The donation of our excess equipment will help each club grow their respective operations. So if you're looking for a uniquely Alaska ski adventure, head over to Haines or Skagway (or both!) to ski some unforgettable trails.

See **AROUND THE CAPITAL CITY**, Page 13

You can't spell "volunteer" without "u"!

We may have added someone to the payroll, but this little-train-that-could of a ski club is still powered by over 100 volunteers! (Well, that and 1,000-plus members.) Here are a few key places we could use your help:

Coaches: You don't have to be a great skier to be a great coach. A great coach is someone who loves to ski and wants to share that passion with others. A great coach is supportive, respectful, patient, communicative, and brave. A great coach brings their authentic self and

PHOTO COURTESY LARS GREGOVICH

Our volunteers know: sometimes you just gotta step out of the way and let the heavy machinery do the work.

AROUND THE CAPITAL CITY

Continued from Page 12

PHOTO COURTESY JNSC

Only a few of these limited edition Mendenhall headbands left. Get 'em before they're gone!

the fun! The commitment is what you make it and we need coaches for all ski experiences and ages (from ages 6 to 60-plus!).

Groomers: Those trails don't maintain themselves! Whether it's once a week or as needed, join an enthusiastic team that keeps the corduroy fresh and skiers smiling. Training provided, compensation includes a bevy of smiling trail users heaping thanks for your service.

Events: Help with an existing event or bring your new idea to life!

Have a skillset we haven't asked for? Email us and we'll harness your energy for the greater skiing good: info@jnski.org.

Upcoming events

We're still working out our 2026/27 event schedule. And anything outside is at the whim of the weather gods (Ullr, we're talking to you …). But, here's what we have going so far:

Friday, Nov. 6 – Nordic Night @ Foggy Mountain Shop. Want to get into cross-country skiing? Need to upgrade your gear? Join Foggy Mountain Shop staff to get expert advice on finding the gear you need to get gliding this ski season. JNSC members get 20 percent off! Not a member? Join the night of or online at **jnski.org/donate**.

SATURDAY, NOV. 7: 72nd annual (at least!) Juneau Ski Sale @ Centennial Hall. Sell your old gear, look for something used, or just come by our table and say hi! We'll have info on becoming a member, how to volunteer, and our famous Go Fish game.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 2: Annual Ski Season Kick-Off! @ Amalga Distillery. Our membership meeting is really not a meeting at all! Potluck, ski swap, release of our 2026-27 merch, updates on the season and where you can pitch in. It's probably the most fun you'll have on a Wednesday night!

PHOTO COURTESY JNSC

All loaded up and ready for a ferry ride to Haines!

SUNDAY, DEC. 20: Light the Night @ the Mendenhall Campground. This is actually a fundraiser hosted by the JD Yadaa.at Kalé high school ski team. Last year's inaugural event was magical, so you can expect more of the same! Hot cocoa, cookies, a stroll through lit trails. Rain or snow, there's no better way to welcome back the light.

– Tristan Knutson-Lombardo
JNSC Executive Director

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Build a Better Skiing Body: Part 2

Essential pre-season exercises: Lower body

BY ZUZANA ROGERS, PT, ScD, SCS, COMT
IOC Diploma in Sports Physical Therapy
Physiotherapist for the U.S. National Cross Country Ski Team

As a physical therapist, I see cross-country skiers who have excellent endurance and strong motivation – but sometimes lack the mobility and strength needed to get the most out of their technique. Whether you ski classic, skate, race, or simply enjoy long days on the trail, your body needs to move well and stay stable under fatigue.

When I work with skiers, I focus on a few areas that help create smoother movement, better power transfer, and more durable shoulders, hips, knees, and ankles. This is Part 2 of our series, focused on the lower body. Check out the October Alaska Nordic Skier issue for tips on upper body workout.

Build Hip Extension Power

Hip extension means bringing your thigh behind your body. You need it to finish a classic stride, create a strong skate push, and drive through the hips when double poling.

I often find that a skier may have adequate hip flexibility but still lack the glute strength in this range to control and use that motion. When the glutes are not contributing well, the low back may take over, the stride can become shorter, and propulsion can feel less powerful – especially when fatigue sets in. Squats are a great exercise but they do not train your glutes in the correct range!

Try this: Glute kickback. Hold on to a solid surface. Place a band around your ankles, extend your leg backwards. Start slowly and gradually build up to a more powerful kick. Work up to being able to perform 3 sets of 10 repetitions or more. You should feel the work primarily in your glutes – not your low back.

Strengthen Your Lateral Hips

Your lateral hip muscles, especially the gluteus medius, help control your pelvis and leg from side to side. This is particularly important in skate skiing, where you must balance on one ski while shifting your full body weight onto the other.

When these muscles fatigue, I may see the pelvis drop, the knee drift inward, or the skier struggles to hold a clean glide. Strong lateral hips help you maintain balance, keep the knee aligned over the foot, and direct more of your energy into forward movement instead of side-to-side wobble.

Try this: lateral band walk. Place a light resistance band around your ankles or just above your knees. Bend slightly at the hips and knees, keep your toes pointing forward, and take 8–12 controlled steps sideways. Avoid leaning your trunk or letting the knees collapse inward. Complete 2–3 rounds in each direction.

Train Stable Ankles and Strong Calves

Your ankles provide the foundation for balance and force transfer through the ski boot and binding. They need to adapt to changing snow, turns, hills, and uneven terrain while helping you stay centered over the ski.

Calf strength matters because the calf muscles support the ankle, control the shin as it moves forward, and help you maintain a stable lower-leg position during the push-off. Weakness or poor control can make it harder to balance on one ski and may increase strain farther up the chain at the knee or hip.

Try this: Single-leg calf raise. Stand near a wall or countertop for balance. Shift onto one foot, rise onto the ball of that foot, pause briefly at the top, and lower slowly. Keep the heel moving straight up and avoid rolling the ankle outward. Start with 2 sets of 8=15 repetitions per side. If that is too challenging, begin with both feet and gradually build toward the single-leg version.

A little targeted training can go a long way. Keep it simple, you don't need fancy equipment to get started. I encourage skiers to add these movements two or three times per week, starting with manageable volume and good form. The goal is not to make every workout complicated – it is to help you move efficiently, ski longer, and enjoy more strong, confident days on snow. Enjoy!

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.

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.

Kachemak Nordic Ski Club

Homer, Alaska

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

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AROUND THE BAY

Kicking off the season with the annual meeting … and snow?

A little birdie foretold that the first snow would fall on Homer on Oct. 13, an auspicious occasion. With last season, and its less than desirable conditions, behind us, we look forward to another great winter on the trails. KNSC's Annual Meeting will be held from 6-9 p.m. Nov. 7 at the Best Western Bidarka. Bring a potluck dish to share, an item for the silent auction, and your wishes for snow. If you would like to make a donation prior to the event, please reach out to kachemaknordicskiclub@gmail.com. We look forward to seeing you there!

Trail, gear and event prep for a wonderful winter

In other news, volunteers have been hard at work mowing trails making them ready for winter's first base of snow. Alaska DOT recently closed the DOT trailhead in preparation for a large road project. This is an inconvenience for the ski community, but hopefully a long-term solution will be reached in the future. The SKiER program, which rents boots and skis to the youth of the Homer area, is now offering equipment rentals for more experienced young skiers. This will support the mission of KNSC as well as the newly revitalized Kachemak Nordic Racing. KNR had a great summer getting out on trails, by foot and by roller skis. We are excited for more youth programming!

Keep an eye out for our events flyer. Whether it is Wine, Cheese, and Wooden Skis, Sea to Ski triathlon, the Marathon, or something else, there are many reasons to visit the Homer area and our three trail networks. We look forward to seeing you when the snow flies!

Bio for 2026-2027 artist: Abigail Kokai

Abigail Kokai has been a resident of Homer long enough to join in on the "Homerite" humor. She spends most days sewing, making toys and art stuff. Perhaps you know her world famous "Homer Whales" or the Panda Mick's family of characters – or the infamous Possum on the Shelf (R.I.P. dear Grubby). You've most like already seen some of her graphic design around Homer, without even knowing it. The presence of art is sneaky like that.

– Rachel Allmendinger
KNSC Administrative Manager

Mat-Su Ski Club
PALMER, ALASKA

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

AROUND THE VALLEY

Mat Su Ski Club: Bring on winter!

There is a lot happening at the Mat Su Ski Club as we get ready for another winter! While we wait for the snow to start piling up, our volunteers have been busy at GPRA (Government Peak Recreation Area) getting trails ready for grooming, our programs are gearing up for another season, and our grooming crew is getting ready to roll. We are excited for another winter in the Mat Su and hope you'll come ski with us!

A little love for our trailwork volunteers

Our Adopt A Trail volunteers have been busy! Throughout late summer and early fall, individuals, families and groups have been spending time on their adopted sections at GPRA, helping us take care of the trails we all love to ski.

Giving volunteers the flexibility to head out and work when it fit their schedule was a big success, bringing out more than 40 volunteers and families throughout September and into early October. Along the way, they helped get the new sections of trail at GPRA ready for their first winter of grooming. There was root clipping, raking, rock chucking and plenty of good old fashioned trail work. These guys put in the work!

We wrapped up the effort with more than 50 volunteers coming together for our October Trail Work Day to put a little more love into GPRA before winter arrives.

A huge thank you to everyone who adopted a trail, joined a work party or simply grabbed some tools and pitched in this year. Great trails and a strong ski community don't just happen. They happen because of all of you.

We also want to give a shout out to our GPRA partners at VMBaH, Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers, for sharing tools and helping support the effort, and to Big Dipper Ice Cream for donating gift cards that helped us give a special thank you to some of our smallest trail volunteers!

RTTO Comes to GPRA Nov. 14 and 15

Get ready to kick off the race season in the Mat Su! RTTO returns to GPRA Nov. 14 and 15 for a weekend of early season racing on the trails at GPRA. RTTO is a FIS sanctioned Nordic ski race and is currently scheduled as the North American opener for the 2026–27 race season. Whether you're racing, cheering or just ready to get excited about another winter on snow, we'd love to have you join us! Race details, registration information, schedules and updates will be posted as they become available at **matsuski.org/rtto**.

A tip of the hat to our snow crew

We love fresh corduroy, but a whole lot happens before those first skis hit the trail! Our volunteer grooming crew puts in a tremendous amount of time throughout the winter helping keep our local trails ready for all of us to enjoy.

This season, MSSC will once again provide grooming and winter trail care at GPRA, up at Hatcher Pass – Independence Mine, Archangel Road, over at the Moose Range and Mud Lake KRUPA area. The Mat Su Borough Winter Trail Care Grooming Grant helps support this work, but covers only a portion of what it takes to keep these trails groomed all winter. The rest comes from our members, donors, sponsors and volunteers. So when you find yourself gliding along some beautiful fresh corduroy in the Valley this winter, give a little tip of the hat to the volunteer groomer who made it happen by becoming a member or donor. There are a lot of early mornings, late nights and hours behind the wheel that go into every great ski. We are lucky to have this crew!

October 10th Volunteer Trails Day pic by Stephanie LaRousse

Adopt-A-Trail group works on new Bashful loop pic by Marla Jakab

MSN kids pitching in for trailwork pic by Tegan Thorley

Know before you go: Grooming reports and trail conditions

Before you grab your skis and head out, check the MSSC grooming reports on our website. Our grooming crew shares updates throughout the winter so you can see where we've been, what's been groomed and what conditions are looking like before you go.

Whether you're traveling to the Valley or live at the base of Hatcher pass, head to matsuski.org and look for "Trail Conditions" on the homepage. Bookmark it and check it often. It's everything you need to know before you go!

We're also thrilled to use Nordic Pulse again this season and incredibly thankful to Eric Christensen of State Farm for sponsoring this awesome resource and keeping it free for our community. Use the Nordic Pulse app on your phone or visit our Trail Conditions page to find Nordic Pulse and other helpful trail resources.

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MSN DEVOS COACH
Tegan Thorley

MAT-SU SKI CLUB
matsuski.org

Lots more happening at MSSC this season!

The trails aren't the only thing getting ready for winter! Junior Nordics is gearing up for another great season with skiers ages 5-16 of all abilities getting outside for fun, fitness, new skills and plenty of time on snow with friends.

Our Mat Su Nordic athletes are also busy training. From Minis and Devos to Juniors and Masters, there are year-round opportunities for youth and adults to train, build skills and be part of our ski community. Reach out to MSN Head Coach eric.strabel@matsuski.org to learn more about this amazing program.

New to Nordic skiing? We've got you covered, too! This winter, MSSC will host Ski 101 at Backcountry Bike and Ski on Dec. 2 at 6:30 p.m. A casual, in-store introduction created especially for absolute beginners. Learn about equipment, what to wear, where to ski, trail etiquette, grooming reports and all the basics to help make getting started a little easier.

Want to take the next step and get on snow? MSSC Adult Lesson registration opens in December, with opportunities to learn the basics, build skills and gain confidence out on the trails.

There is a lot to look forward to this winter, and we are incredibly grateful for the volunteers, members, partners and supporters who make it all possible. Bring on the snow! We hope to see you out on the trails this winter.

Girdwood Nordic Ski Club
Girdwood, Alaska

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

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AROUND GIRDWOOD

Girdwood Trails Marathon XI delivers

Clouds and cool-morning weather accompanied a record number of runners for the 11th annual Girdwood Trails Marathon, before rain joined the exciting day. 78 marathoners toed the line, over 220 ran the half marathon and junior half marathon, and 61 runners crushed the fun 5K! All routes went clockwise, in tune with the routine switch of direction each year. Runners from around Alaska and beyond registered, and each one supported GNSC. The Trails Marathon is our favorite and largest non-ski fundraiser, which links up many trails in Girdwood Valley to make as close to a marathon length as possible, as well as a half.

This novel idea began with Brian Burnett over 10 years ago, when he started the event. The course has mainly stayed the same, however, there's something different every year to keep it interesting and rather unpredictable – whether it's the weather or a wild card. In addition, more hearty souls are bringing it – to either officially start their October or finish their summer with a dirty splash, (we're not sure?) which makes us all smile and cheer.

Top runners in each race performed in speedy form, with Yvonne Jeschke finishing the Women's Marathon in a strong-and-fast lead, literally leaping over the mat at 3:45:31, followed by Shauna Severson in 4:11:22 and Girdwood's Lauren Fritz at 4:12:24. Scott Patterson earned Men's first place in 3:19:02 with Galen Hecht just behind in 3:21:54. The two ran together for most of the race, with their splits right on until the final few miles. Ryan Beckett was third (3:39:28). All three were smiles and not that muddy! Lead runners from the half marathon were coming in also, prompting spectators at the finish area to look for familiar bodies or bib coloration, figuring which race the runners were completing.

Klaire Rhodes took first on the women half marathon in 1:44:47 with Tracen Knopp placing first in the men's event (1:46:42). Both winners even ran extra! That's impressive. In second place for the women was Hannah LaCroix (1:56:11) followed by Elizabeth Parry (2:00:02). Nolan Gerlach was second for the men (1:41:08) and Michael Moerlein was third (1:42:47). Our half marathon field included a juniors category (ages 10-17) and it was a busy one. Half of the girls field was from Girdwood! Leading for ladies was Adelaide Blair in 2:20:05 with Xan Carlson coming in second (2:20:28) and Allie Zellmer third (2:28:21). Sam Davis led the junior boys in 2:06:28, with Avi Dashow taking second (2:08:27) and Simon Rolfs in third (2:33:06). Way to go to our young runners! All ran into the finish area strong and proud, and oftentimes with a serious kick.

In case you were wondering, The Bake Shop delivered with hot coffee, cocoa, sweet rolls and soup for everyone. A huge thank you to The Bake Shop is in order for their continued support! Typical fall conditions in Girdwood with light rain made for perfect soup weather. Thirst-quenching Beach Tribe Sodaworks drinks were ready at the finish and prizes added to the fun. Thank you to our generous sponsors: Alyeska Resort, Alyeska Nordic Spa, The Bake Shop, Skinny Raven, Girdwood Brewing Company, Moose's Tooth Pizzeria, Bear Tooth, Chair 5, The Ice Cream Shop, Powder Hound Ski & Bike Shop, Birch & Alder, La Bodega, Great Harvest Bread Company, Beach Tribe Sodaworks, and Alpenglow Coffee House. Strabel Racing Services kept track of every single runner, which was pretty neat to follow! Thank you Mark! Live timing is where we are today.

Girdwood Nordic Ski Club's Deb Essex organized the event with the help of nearly 65 fantastic volunteers. Course flaggers, aid station crews, registration, daylodge setup, Gatorade mixers, sweet roll slicers, Glacier Creek crossing crew, highway crossing guards, prize and swag allocation, soup ladlers, finish line medal-givers, cowbell ringers, and all take down/clean up was thanks to super-duper help. We couldn't have done it without their energy!

And last but paramount: runners were ready to work hard on a very challenging course, so kudos to all those who came out for the event, sharing time, sweat, tears, wet socks, and joy along the ups and downs before almost flying down Chair 3 – that was a sight to see. Thank you for registering and making donations! We appreciate all of you for the support. See you in 2027 or on the ski trails in the coming months!

Find full results at **my.raceresult.com/426730/results**. A local Girdwoodian wrote about his annual suffer-Marathon woes, plus a wrap up of the Marathon with photos: **turnagainnews.org**.

– Briana Sullivan
GNSC Executive Administrator

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

101 Wilderness Drive, Fairbanks, AK 99712
info@nscfairbanks.org
(907) 978-6343
nscfairbanks.org

NSCF offers full schedule of races for 2026-27

The NSCF once again has a full slate of ski races for this coming season including hosting the SuperTour Finals in April!

Over many years the NSCF has continued to offer high-quality, fun ski racing. So, whether you prefer short sprints or longer endurance marathons, high level competition or something more laid back, we've got something for you. Watch for updated information on the club's website (**nscfairbanks.org**) and Facebook page (**facebook.com/NSCFairbanks/**). For more information on any of these races, see Races on our website.

PHOTO COURTESY **ERIC TROYER**

Several racers from last year's first Distance Series gather after finishing.

HERE'S WHAT'S COMING UP:

SUPERTOUR FINALS: We are hosting the U.S. Ski & Snowboard SuperTour Finals! These races determine the U.S. National Championships and are a part of the World Cup selection process. The NSCF will host the races on April 2 (skate sprint), April 3 (classic team sprint), and April 4 (classic mass start 40K). Watch some of the nation's top skiers race for big stakes! Learn more at **usskiandsnowboard.org/supertour**.

KINROSS/FORT KNOX TOWN RACE SERIES: Celebrating its 31st year in 2026-27, the Town Race Series includes four short-to-medium-distance races held November-March and open to all ages of skiers. Each event features races at increasing distances for age/gender groups from kindergarteners to adults. These races also serve as competitions among local high schools. Races include mass start and interval start formats, a sprint and a ski-cross.

TURKEY DAY RELAYS: Burn calories the day after Thanksgiving in the race open to skiers from kindergarten to adult. Teams of three skiers each ski one lap. Laps are usually 1-4K with distance varying depending on age. Costumes and unique team names add to the fun. The relay is the oldest continuously held ski race in Fairbanks, and one of the oldest in Alaska, having started in the mid-1960s.

DISTANCE SERIES: If you like going the distance, this series features three events: the Gundeloppet 7.5Km/15Km, the January Jaunt 10Km/20Km, and the Unpleasantry 10Km/30Km. Events alternate between classic and freestyle in alternate years. All events are mass start.

FRIDAY NIGHT SKI RACES: Three fun-filled events at Birch Hill encourage young skiers to try out racing in a relaxed and fun atmosphere. Races are untimed, on short courses, and skiers will start in small waves. Cookies and hot chocolate will be served at each race! Event dates are not but will be advertised on NSCF social media.

BESH CUP JUNIOR NATIONAL QUALIFYING RACES: Fairbanks hosts two of the six statewide Besh Cup races annually. Races bring the best cross-country ski racers in the state to Birch Hill. Junior skiers (U20, U18, U16) earn points toward selection to Team Alaska, the U.S. Junior National Championships, and more, as well as earning points toward national rankings. Fairbanks Besh Cups are usually held in late-January or early-February.

SONOT KKAAZOOT: Fairbanks' premiere springtime skiing event attracts everyone from hard-core competitors to relaxed cruisers. Held in late March, the Sonot offers the standard 50-kilometer, freestyle ski marathon, but also has 30- and 10-kilometer freestyle divisions. Classic skiers are welcome, too! The race is held on the Birch Hill Recreation Area trails and adjoining military lands.

SKIATHON: The 20-kilometer, classic-only race and tour is held at the UAF ski trails. Participants are timed but can go as fast or as slow as they want. All finishers receive a Skiathon patch. This is a fundraiser hosted by the UAF Trails Club, which funds projects on the UAF trail system. The Skiathon's history reaches back into the last century. The event is planned for March 7, 2027. For information, visit **uaf.edu/recreation/outdoor-adventures/skiathon.php**.

INTERIOR YOUTH FESTIVAL: This fun event, usually held in March, is open only to skiers from elementary through junior high school. Shorter distances are geared for youth and allow the skiers to try multiple formats. The emphasis is on fun, relaxed competition. Food, prizes and maybe even race glitter keep the mood light.

BIATHLON RACES: Our biathlon program hosts races Nov. 14-15 at Birch Hill as part of an Alaska biathlon race series. We will use the shooting range, generously offered by Fort Wainwright, on the White Bear Trail. Volunteers are needed to help run the event. Biathlon also offers indoor and outdoor training sessions. Learn more at biathlon@nscfairbanks.org.

OTHER LOCAL SKI RACES: In addition to our own race series, several other cross-country ski races are held in Fairbanks.

UAF: The Alaska Nordic Cup is the annual UAF vs. UAA collegiate competition, alternating between Fairbanks and Anchorage. This season, UAF is the host school. The Nordic Cup is a two-day competition with team scores kept based on the competitors' finish places. This season's races will be held in November. Follow the Alaska Nanooks and find their social media at **alaskananooks.com** (Sports > Women's Sports > Skiing and Sports > Men's Sports > Skiing).

HIGH SCHOOL: Fairbanks high school teams use the Town Race Series as competition. Regional high school races are held in February at Birch Hill.

WILDERNESS ENDURANCE RACES: Several long-distance multi-sport endurance races are held in the Fairbanks area. They all include skiing options. For more information see **endurancenorth.org** and **tdogalaska.org**.

WHO'S WHO IN THE NORDIC SKI CLUB OF FAIRBANKS

PRESIDENT
Chris Puchner
president@nscfairbanks.org

VICE PRESIDENT
Jon Denton
vicepresident@nscfairbanks.org

SECRETARY AND TREASURER
Ann Jamieson
treasurer@nscfairbanks.org

AT-LARGE BOARD MEMBERS
Peter Delamere
Gina Chythlook
Joanna Fox
Ann Marie White
Ellen Lyons

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Thad Keener
executivedirector@nscfairbanks.org

ADULT LESSONS
Rosie Frankowski
adultlessons@nscfairbanks.org

JUNIOR NORDICS
Susan Schwartz
juniornordics@nscfairbanks.org

FXC (FAIRBANKS CROSS COUNTRY)
Warren Rosholt
fxc@nscfairbanks.org

FXC MASTERS
Rosie Frankowski
adultlessons@nscfairbanks.org

RACE PROGRAM DIRECTOR
Susan Faulkner
competitionevents@nscfairbanks.org

MEMBERSHIP
Kathy Fitzgerald
membership@nscfairbanks.net

BIATHALON
Jim Pasek
biathlon@nscfairbanks.org

SPONSORSHIP
Rachel Johnson
sponsorship@nscfairbanks.org

TOURING
Eric Troyer
touring@nscfairbanks.org

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
Eric Troyer
newsletter@nscfairbanks.org
For more contact information
nscfairbanks.org/about/

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR
Pam Laker
volunteercoordinator@nscfairbanks.org

INFO@NSCFAIRBANKS.ORG

(907) 978-6343

Junior Nordics director transition should be smooth

BY THAD KEENER

When Susan Schwartz told me she was stepping down from Junior Nordics, my stomach dropped. How could we ever replace her? Then she explained she'd spend a year training her successor – relief.

This season, Susan begins the handoff to Jileen Knopp, who will work with Susan to learn the Junior Nordic routines, how to find coaches, create ski groupings, and make sure everyone is having a good time. Jileen brings her own style which is rooted in her long-time Fairbanks experience – she attended Pearl Creek Elementary. She skied a bit in middle school but was a swimmer through high school. Jileen made a statement that caught my attention, "With other sports, as the parent you sit on the sidelines and watch. In cross-country skiing, the whole family can be involved, at all their different levels." Quite a profound insight. Jileen is ready to spread that cross-country skiing excitement throughout our Jr Nordic families.

PHOTO BY **THAD KEENER**

Jileen Knopp, left, is taking over Junior Nordics from long-term director Susan Schwartz.

Jileen is passionate, eager to share, and sees the work as the type you want as a parent. "I want to see others enjoying the outdoors, Fairbanks' winters, and the joy of cross-country skiing." She sees the Junior Nordics program from a fresh angle. As a parent she wants clearer and more information about the bridge from Junior Nordics to FXC. She wants a race schedule that includes the local races as well as fun, Friday Night Under the Lights Races. We talked about skis for Jr Nordics and boot covers for cold feet. All good goals for the coming season.

Susan has appreciated this "perfect job" as the director of JN. She works full time, which makes directing Jr Nordics a bit of a stretch. She is excited to tour with her daughter Kendall for the World Cup races this winter. Susan looks forward to seeing new ski venues and revisiting others.

We have been fortunate to have Susan Schwartz direct our Jr Nordics for the past six years. Her commitment continues as she guides Jileen Knopp through the complexities of running such a large program; including one evening at UAF. We wish Susan the best in her next adventures and we welcome Jileen and thank her for taking on these responsibilities.

Junior Nordics needs coaches. The number of youngsters we can take are limited by the number of coaches. If you are interested, send an email to: juniornordics@nscfairbanks.org.

NSCF Board meeting report: October

BY THAD KEENER

The work the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks Board of Directors does is critical to keeping NSCF programs running. Here are a few of the issues that the board dealt with at its October meeting. If you would like to be considered as a board member, please contact executivedirector@nscfairbanks.org.

• The SuperTour Finals budget was approved. This was a process (much appreciated). The document becomes a useful tool for guiding the SuperTour Finals Committee and ensuring our larger organization is not taking on risk. Thank you to the committee members for their work and to those who showed up at the meeting: Steve Taylor, Julie Queen, Ben Buck, Sue Faulkner.

• The Memorandum of Agreement with UAF for grooming and supporting races at UAF during 2026-27 was approved. The Nov. 21-22 UAF Nordic Cup races will not need NSCF support. We have some time to iron out any topics before the RMISA races in February.

• Kudos to our trail groomers, Tom and Brian. They went above and beyond to build and install the new kiosks on Birch Hill. This grant work became quite tricky, and they rose to the occasion. Thank you.

PHOTO BY **ERIC TROYER**

Thanks to our trail groomers for building and installing our new kiosks at Birch Hill Rec Area.

• The meeting was mostly spent on program budgets. The good news is NSCF looks to be closing 2025-26 in the positive. That is a big thanks to our program directors for staying on budget and watching incomes and expenses.

• Next year will see more club-wide expenses. The projected budget for next year is tight. The board discussed what this means for the upcoming season. They did not approve program budgets, not because of specific budget lines, but because they want to discuss "what can be done to improve this budget." The budget will be discussed at the November meeting.

• The board is looking for a new member. Spread the word and have them contact Chris or myself.

• The next board meeting is Nov. 3, 6 p.m., in the Timing Building.

Anna Sorenson: Keeping NSCF races on time

BY THAD KEENER

Caring, smart, responsible – I scribbled those words down 15 minutes into an 8 a.m. meeting with Anna at Lulu's. I'd quickly add positive and resourceful. She moved effortlessly through every shift in conversation, which reminded me of the skills for one who has skied at Junior Nationals. That adaptability has clearly been with her a long time.

Anna spent her early childhood in the Matanuska Valley before moving to the Interior for high school and then University of Alaska Fairbanks. She arrived as an ice skater and alpine skier, but Fairbanks turned her into a swimmer and a Nordic skier for Lathrop High School. While at Lathrop, she made Junior Nationals. The competition, held in New Hampshire that season, were a bit of a surprise for her, complete with standing water that soaked skiers. She spent her senior year abroad in Switzerland – skiing in the mountains and staying in rural huts that sound like something out of a Nordic dream.

At UAF, Anna skied and started in engineering but ultimately graduated with a history major and a political science minor. That's also where she met Joe, now her husband. They share an interest in politics – his field professionally – but interestingly, we didn't touch politics during our conversation.

Anna Sorenson has been the NSCF head timer for more than a dozen years.

For more than a dozen years, Anna has been the backbone for timing NSCF races. She began in 2006, training under Terry Schmidt. When Joe took a job with Senator Joe Thomas, the two moved to Juneau for six years. By the time they returned, Carol Haas, who had stepped in, was ready to hand over the reins. Anna learned the new wireless timing system and officially took over in 2014.

Why does she keep coming back?

"I love it," she said without hesitation. She lit up talking about the people – the volunteers, the parents she once knew as a young skier and now knows as colleagues. She loves the problem-solving, the constant learning, the shared purpose that gathers around every race. If there's a challenge, it's the demands of FIS-level events: staying current with international standards, reports, and equipment. She does have a wish list for upgrades to keep us compliant.

When asked for a Fairbanks secret, she didn't hesitate: Winter is the best. The beauty, the light, the Dr. Seuss trees – Fairbanks in winter, she said, is a place where life slows down even as your social calendar fills up. We also touched on the lack of pretension here, especially compared to the cross-country ski uniforms you see down south.

Caring, smart, responsible – add positivity and resourcefulness, and you have a picture of the person who has been our timing official for the past fourteen seasons. She shows no signs of slowing down, and we hope she keeps riding this wave for another 14 years.

Thank you, Anna.

AROUND THE INTERIOR

Kramer on U.S. Cross Country Ski Team

The 2026-27 U.S. Cross Country Ski Team has been announced, and Fairbanks' Kendall Kramer is on the Women's B Team! See the story in the Statewide section of this Nordic Skier issue.

PHOTO COURTESY U.S. SKI TEAM

Kendall Kramer

NSCF and UAF offer ski club team

Through a joint venture with the NSCF, the University of Alaska Fairbanks is launching a new ski team this winter: The UAF Club Ski Team!

Any UAF student looking to stay motivated, train with a team, meet other skiers, and maybe even travel and race this winter can now join the team. You need to be an NSCF member. If you are not already a member, individual memberships are just $50 (student memberships for people up to 18 years old are just $25). Sign up here:

nordicskicluboffairbanks.wildapricot.org

TEAM REGISTRATION OPTIONS ARE: full academic year for $750 and pay by semester for $375. Need-based scholarships are available for team registration and NSCF memberships.

AS A TEAM MEMBER, YOU'LL RECEIVE: Three coached training sessions each week; student-led practices on additional days for those who want more training opportunities; the opportunity to compete in local races and travel to the Tour of Anchorage; race wax support from the FXC Junior Racing Team at Besh Cups and other supported events; access to a dedicated team room on the UAF campus for meetings, gear, and building team camaraderie; and van rides to get off campus and explore new trails.

If you are a UAF student who loves to ski, we'd love to have you join the team. If you know a UAF student who loves to ski, please pass this along to them or share it with your networks. Register at **nordicskicluboffairbanks.wildapricot.org/event-6776259/Registration**. Questions: caturman@alaska.edu.

Celebrate skiing on the Alaska Long Trail with photos

If you are a fan of the Alaska Long Trail and want to see it celebrated with skiing, consider entering the Alaska Long Trail photo contest with some skiing photos. You can win cash prizes and have your photos featured in Alaska Long Trail accounts. Contest Categories include: Adventure: The experience of being on the trail with others; Landscape: Scenic vistas and terrain along the trail; Culture: People, communities, and trail/camping activities.

The submission period lasts until Nov. 30. Up to 16 entries per person. Category winners receive $200, runners-up $100, grand prize $400. Winners will be announced January/February 2027. Learn more at **alaska-trails.org/photocontest**. The Alaska Long Trail in the Fairbanks area includes portions of the UAF ski trails, the Equinox Marathon Trail, the Isberg Recreation Area, and trails in the Tanana Valley State Forest, including the Rosie Creek area. Find interactive maps at **alaska-trails.org/alaska-long-trail**.

PHOTO BY JANE LANFORD

Participants in last year's NSCF tour in the Rosie Creek area enjoyed warm temperatures and plentiful snow.

Start training early for wilderness ski races

BY ERIC TROYER

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

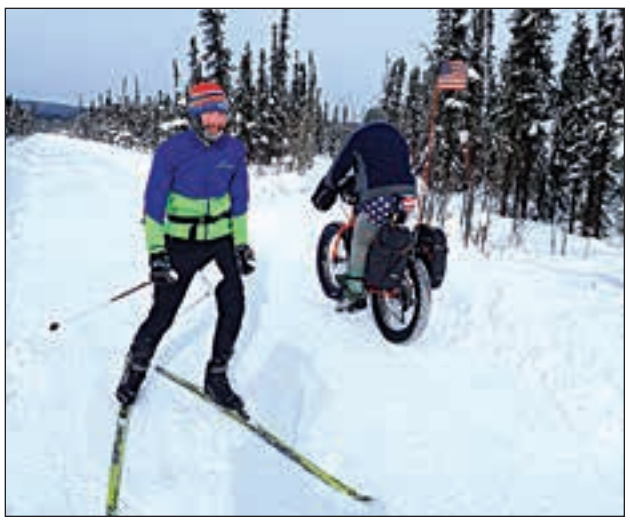
Endurance North has three races: The Chena River to Ridge, the Tanana River Challenge, and the White Mountains 100. The T-Dog also has options for long-distance skiers. Many skiers have started out with NSCF races and gone on to compete in these races. These races are best attempted with classic ski gear, though some people use short skate skis.

CHENA RIVER TO RIDGE: MARCH 6, 2027

The race features skiing, running, and biking categories with 26- and 55-mile distance options in the Chena State Recreation area. It's a challenging racecourse on maintained snowmachine trails with big ascents, fast downhills and outstanding views of the local hills and the Alaska Range. The course links the Compeau, Colorado Creek, Stiles Creek, and Yukon Quest trail systems. The start/finish is at Twin Bears Camp on Mile 30 CHSR. Learn more: **endurancenorth.org/cr2r**, **facebook.com/Chena-River-to-Ridge-187619548028898/**

TANANA RIVER CHALLENGE: MARCH 20, 2027

The event is open to fat-bikers, skiers, skijorers, and runners. The 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



PHOTOS BY **ERIC TROYER**

Skiers and biker share the river portion of the trail during the 2020 Tanana River Challenge.

25- and 45-mile distances. The start/finish area is at the Tanana River boat launch off Chena Pump Road. Learn more: **endurancenorth.org/trc**; **facebook.com/TananaRiverChallenge**

WHITE MOUNTAINS 100: APRIL 4, 2027

The WM100 offers just one distance – 100 miles – and includes skiing, fatbiking, and running. The racecourse is a loop in the White Mountains National Recreation Area, run by BLM north of Fairbanks. Aid stations at cabins are spaced about every 20 miles and have drinks and snacks. As with the other Endurance North races, it features big ascents, fast downhills, and outstanding views. The start/finish area is at the Wickersham Dome Trailhead at Mile 28 of the Elliott Highway.

Hannah Myers approaches the Tolovana Roadhouse in the 2026 T-Dog 135.

Registration is typically in November and done on a lottery system. It usually sells out, but there is a waitlist; people on that list often get into the race, so have patience. Learn more: **endurancenorth.org/wm-100**, **facebook.com/profile.php?id=100058708762267**

T-DOG: MARCH 19-21, 2027

The T-Dog has two distances open to skiers: 50- and 135-miles. This race was founded to foster a welcoming environment for participants to grow, connect, and thrive. The racecourses are less hilly than the other endurance races. The T-Dog 50 starts in Nenana and goes to Fairbanks on the Tanana River. The T-Dog 135 goes from Manley to Fairbanks. The races are also open to mushers, bikers. Sign up started in October. Learn more: **tdogalaska.org**, **facebook.com/profile.php?id=100090657020741**