ANCHORAGE
Snow is back and so is the Tour of Anchorage

KACHEMAK
Real-time grooming updates keep skiers dialed

STATEWIDE
Alaskans rocking the national, world stages
Lots of snow, lots of enthusiasm for skiers of all ages in Anchorage

Message from the NSAA Board of Directors and staff

With snow on the ground and grooming all over the Anchorage bowl, NSAA staff is finally experiencing a real Nordic season along with thousands of excited locals. Our groomers are working hard to move all this snow. Remember, wave to the groomer. And a special thank you for all of your snow dances!

The second session of our Junior Nordic program started mid-January and is close to capacity; there is a buzz in the air as the love of skiing is shared daily! Close to 200 new skiers are in our Junior Nordic program this year and this is exciting. It helps predict the future of Anchorage skiing.

An investment in our youth is an investment in our community. NSAA recognizes that our Junior Nordic program is a primary feeder to all the other Nordic programs and events in our community, including school ski teams and youth training groups. Ensuring its success is a top priority for our staff and board. Getting feedback from coaches and parents helps us do that; please continue to provide it. With recent input, our Junior Nordic program introduced a new timeslot for our younger skiers: Early Junior Nordic from 4:30-5:30 p.m. M/W and 10:15-11:45 a.m. Saturday. Availability of coaches has limited the number of skiers for this pilot program but we hope to continue to grow this session to accommodate more families and our smallest sized Junior Nordikers.

Sharing the love of skiing goes beyond Junior Nordic. NSAA was recently asked by a local TV weather lady, a transplant from Mississippi, to share the hype about cross-country skiing. Easy to answer, right? Watch for Tamra Kornfield, NSAA Program Manager, on the local news in the next few weeks helping Rachael understand this rising Nordic epidemic. The series features discussions about gear, technique, trials and getting hooked on skiing.

All of this enthusiasm has reminded us that living and breathing Nordic skiing really is contagious. Anyone can do it. Trails are everywhere. Gear is easy to get ahold of with rentals or ski swaps, online buy/sell sites, or local consignment shops. Opportunities like Alaska Ski For Women, Ski 4 Kids, Tour of Anchorage and even Ski Train are completely doable by even the beginner skier and should not intimidate anyone. Thanks to partners like AARP, NSAA is providing lessons at half the normal price for those 50 and older.

Skiing is for all ages and all fitness and experience levels. Encourage a friend or neighbor to try it today! Looking for other lessons, there are many groups that provide them. Please visit www.anchoragenordicski.com to locate a group that will work for you.

AROUND THE BOWL

Happy in Hope: Rent the NSAA cabin

Recent NSAA Hope cabin renter, Alix Crone, wrote: “My boyfriend, dog and I actually took our Christmas photo at the Hope cabin last weekend :)... The cabin was a nice little cozy retreat from Anchorage. It had the rustic charm but with accessibility and the accompanying accessories. It was nice to not have to stress about hauling in gear, wood, etc. Driving up was convenient, though it did not make us feel cheated of any ‘wilderness experience.’ It was quiet, peaceful, and we were the only other humans that we saw all weekend. We skied around and explored and it was just what we needed for a short getaway.”

Want to create your own Hope cabin memories? It’s only $50 a night for NSAA members!

21st annual Alaska Ski For Women arrives Sunday, February 5!

We are fortunate this year to have lots of snow this season and we know it will provide for a great Alaska Ski For Women, which kicks off on Sunday, February 5, at Kincaid Park. Skiers have the opportunity to participate in one of the following events: The Duathalon will start at 10:30 a.m. on an 8K (4.8 mile) course, timed. The skate race also starts at 10:30 a.m. and is 4K in length (2.4 miles), timed. The classic race begins at 11 a.m. and will also be 4K, timed.

All participants are encouraged to put together a costume and participate in the costume contest at 11:45 a.m. Following the costume contest is the “party wave,” a 4K non-timed fun ski for all.

Prizes will be awarded to the top three skiers in each of the timed events, as well as to the best dressed team and individual. Registration is open through February 1 online at www.anchoragenordicski.com/events/alaska-ski-for-women/. In-person registration and bib pick-up will take place from noon-7:30 p.m. Friday, February 3, at REI. For anyone who misses these deadlines, race-day registration takes place from 9-11 a.m. Please note: those who register on race day can only register for the party wave.

As this race is also a fundraiser, participants are encouraged to donate a minimum of $35 when registering. The Alaska Ski For Women would like to thank the following sponsors for their generous support of the 2017 event: Platinum Sponsor ConocoPhillips; Gold Sponsors Continental Auto Group and KTUU; see AROUND THE BOWL, Page 2.
AMH Cup racing runneth over

The AMH Anchorage Cup is back with a real winter and full courses! (No more spins around the gerbil loop.) These events are designed to encourage the whole family to enjoy a day at the races. Each race offers various distances for skiers to choose what best suits their ski level and fitness. The kid’s races have been popular at each race.

Two races remain on the schedule: the Sven Johansson on Sunday, February 19, at Kincaid Park; and the Phat and Freestyle Duathlon on Sunday, March 12, at Kincaid Park.

Learn more and register for upcoming races at www.anchoragenordicski.com/races/amh- anchorage-cup-series/.

Save the date for an all-nighter: SKAN 24, March 25-26

SKAN (Ski Kincaid All Night) 24 is on! The race is scheduled for March 25-26; register online and learn more now at www.anchoragenordicski.com/races/skan-24/.

Get off the beaten trail with NSAA Backcountry Tours

Below is a partial schedule of upcoming NSAA Backcountry Tours. Stay up to date by visiting www.anchoragenordicski.com/programs/backcountry-tours/ or calling the Tours Hotline at (907) 248-6667, ext. 4.

**February 4 —** Manitoba Mountain 1/2 Telemark and Touring options, Kenai Mountains
Join us for a fun day telemarking AT skiing or touring. This tour is for beginners to intermediate skiers. If climbing Manitoba Mountain, you’ll need skis for your skin. You should also have avalanche gear (beavertail, shovel, and probe) and be prepared for the telemark/A portion of skiing. If you’d like to kick and glide instead, there are touring options to beautiful Summit Lake (no skis required). Depart from the Chugach Park State Headquarters parking lot (by the train south of Potter Marsh). Bring clothing for wind, cold and snow. Tour leader: Ken DePralma, 440-1562.

**February 18-20 —** Sheep Mountain Lodge
Enjoy two overnights at Sheep Mountain Lodge in group cabins. Ski on 24 kilometers of groomed and or unmaintained miles of multi-use trails at Sheep Mountain on Saturday and Sunday. On Monday, ski out to Matanuska Glacier. A $100 deposit to hold a spot is required by January 15. Tour leaders: Patti Phillips, 240-3742, and Ken DePralma, 440-1562.

**February 18-25 —** Denali National Park, Savage River to Kantishna.
This unforgettable ski tour through Denali Park is supported by dog teams. Ski 7 to 17 miles per day and stay in historic Denali Patrol cabins while dog teams haul your gear. Start at Mountain Vista near the Park Headquarters and end at Kantishna, where you will fly out to Healy. Great wholesome food, warm cabins, awesome guides! Cost about $1,800 plus air charter out of Kantishna for about $150. Deposit of $900 required by January 1. Contact Bob Sutterfield at funhog.fundogs@gmail.com or Patti Phillips at philips@chugach.net.

**February 23-25 March 4 —** Denali National Park, McGregor and Oaster Passes. Fly into Kantishna, overnight at a park cabin above Wonder Lake, then ski over McKinley Bar and Turtle Hill to our basecamp with wood stove heated Arctic Oven tents on Cache Creek. Ski north toward Denali the entire tour to basecamp. From basecamp, we’ll ski to McGregor Pass for grand views of Denali and the Muldrow and Tanisk glacier, following the footsteps of the historic routes of the first climbs of Denali. The following day we’ll ski up to Oaster Pass for even more scenery and stunning views of Mount Brooks and surrounding mountains. Dog sleds will haul all the gear. Cost about $1,800 plus air charter in and out of Kantishna for about $350. Contact Bob Sutterfield at funhog.fundogs@gmail.com or Patti Phillips at philips@chugach.net.

**March 3-5 —** Denali View Chalet
Enjoy the weekend at a rustic Alaskan lodge on Kroto Lake south of Mt. McKinley. Ski eight miles into the lodge with just a daypack. Your gear and food will be brought in by the chalet owner on snow machine. Enjoy great views of Denali, fantastic company, wonderful group cuisine, sauna and more skiing on various trails in the area. Because the weather is often variable, bring clothing for wind, cold and snow. Space is limited. A $100 deposit to hold a spot is required by February 15. Tour leader: Karlene Leeper, 440-0049.

**March 8 —** MysteryAT/Teleski
Location and details TBD.

**March 5 —** Skookum Glacier
This will be a kick and glide tour to Skookum Glacier. On a sunny day, you’ll enjoy incredible views of the glacier and because it’s spring, we have to worry about the warmth instead of the cold. Depending on how far out we go, the ski is flat, but we will need to negotiate some snow bridge crossings. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Chugach Park State Headquarters parking lot (the train south of Potter Marsh). Tour leader: Patti Phillips, 240-3742.

**NSAA calendar of events**

**FEBRUARY**

*Thursday, February 2 —* ASD Middle School Race, Kincaid Park

*February 4 —* Manitoba Mountain 1/2 Telemark and Touring options, Kenai Mountains
*February 9 —* Kincaid Park Classic Relays
*February 10 —* Fast Ski #1, Kincaid Park
*February 11-12 —* Kincaid Park Interclub Races
*February 12 —* Classic Relay, Kincaid Park
*February 17-18 —* ASD Middle School Race, Kincaid Park
*February 19 —* Kincaid Park Middle School bib pick up, REI

**MARCH**

*Wednesday, March 1 —* ASD Middle School Race, Kincaid Park
*Thursday, March 2 —* Ski 4 Kids bib pick up, REI
*Friday-Sunday, March 3-5 —* Ski 4 Kids lift ticket
*Friday-Saturday, March 3-4 —* Kincaid Park 4 Kids bibs pick up, REI
*Saturday, March 4 —* Tour of Anchorage bib pickup, REI
*Saturday, March 4-5 —* Tour of Anchorage bib pickup, REI
*Saturday, March 4 —* Ski 4 Kids lift ticket
*Monday, March 6 —* Kincaid Park 4 Kids bibs pick up, REI
*Wednesday, March 8 —* ASD Middle School Race, Kincaid Park
*Wednesday, March 9 —* Tour of Anchorage bib pickup, REI
*Friday, March 10 —* Tea for Two at the Highland Pub
*Monday, March 13 —* Kincaid Park 4 Kids bibs pick up, REI
*Tuesday, March 14 —* Kincaid Park 4 Kids lift ticket

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

**APRIL**

*Friday, April 7 —* Last day to return Junior Nordic skis

*Saturday, April 8 —* Nordic Adventure Race, Kincaid Park

*Sunday, April 9 —* Mystery AT/Tele-ski

*Saturday, April 15 —* SKAN 24, March 25-26

*Friday-Saturday, April 21-22 —* ASD Middle School Race, Kincaid Park

*Saturday, April 22 —* Ski 4 Kids bib pick up, REI

*Friday-Saturday, April 28-29 —* ASD Middle School Race, Kincaid Park

*Saturday, April 29 —* Ski 4 Kids bibs pick up, REI

*Sunday, April 30 —* Nordic Adventure Race, Kincaid Park

**FEBRUARY 2017**

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On the cover — Anchorage photographer and skier Jim Jager has spent the ski season capturing some of the last and fun high school skiing action.
JUNIOR NORDIC COACH/ PROGRAM SITE DIRECTOR

Some might say Branden Fontana was a late bloomer when it came to skiing. His family moved to Anchorage during his 7th grade year. While enrolling him at Goldenview Middle School, his parents were told about Junior Nordic and he was promptly signed up for the program. He remembers “not being pleased with this; I was two feet taller than the other Polar Cubs.” He also thought cross-country skiing sounded a bit nerdy – alpine or snowboarding seemed to be cooler.

His confidence and enjoyment grew alongside his skill, and it wasn’t long before he started looking forward to his first high school ski season. Although late to join the sport, he caught up quickly. This season is Branden’s ninth as a Junior Nordic coach and his second as a Site Director for our Kincaid T/Th group.

In two years, Branden went from zero to full throttle, skiing on his high school team and starting to coach. He went back to Junior Nordic, volunteering during his freshman and sophomore years at South High. He recalls working with the same coaches who had taught him the fundamentals. He eventually joined the coaching staff for Hillside M/W, earning one of our easily-recognizable, purple coach jackets (“I really wanted one of those”). He’s been with the program ever since.

His love for skiing drew him to become a coach. And while it’s a great way to get outside and enjoy the winter, for Branden the best part of coaching is working with the kids. Making skiing fun is the first priority, then comes teaching skills-balancing both is essential according to Branden. Certainly many that start in Junior Nordic will grow to have big goals and aspirations, from high school racing to the Olympics, and it’s important to provide a foundation of skills for those dreams, but Branden believes a more important outcome is having fun and instilling a lifelong desire to continue skiing. He says the biggest challenge with Junior Nordic, aside from the weather, is finding coaches. He believes our community has the volume of capable skiers, willing to give back, but that they seem hard to find or aren’t always available.

Outside of Junior Nordic practice, Branden is most likely found on the trails with high school skiers as a second year West High School coach. Previously he coached for three years at South High and has coached for Team Alaska at Arctic Winter Games and Junior Nationals. Most of Branden’s winter is spent coaching or skiing on his own. He wouldn’t have it any other way. And neither would our Junior Nordic skiers and parents.

JUNIOR NORDIC COACH/ PROGRAM SITE DIRECTOR

A self-proclaimed “early climate-change refugee,” Dave Ward sought out colder climates, ultimately landing in Anchorage and thankfully, in NSAA’s Junior Nordic program. Unpacking the details of our program site directors is eye-opening to say the least. History, heart and humility all packed into one. Dave has coached Junior Nordic for over 10 years, five of which he’s been the Hillside site director.

Dave humbly recalls starting out as “just a dad” when his youngest daughter joined Junior Nordics as an intermediate skier (Wolverine) in the 7th grade in 2005. Dave had been dabbling in skiing for the previous 27 years and was motivated to pass on this pursuit to Suzanne. He bought his first skis in 1978 for road trips in the Rocky Mountains, seeking snow in Southern California and New Mexico in his off time. An effort “to escape the increasingly hot summers and snow-poor winters of New Mexico” in the increasingly hot summers and the Rocky Mountains, seeking snow in New Mexico and finally, New Mexico “the place for us,” he said.

His confidence and enjoyment grew alongside his skill, and it wasn’t long before he started looking forward to his first high school ski season. Although late to join the sport, he caught up quickly. This season is Branden’s ninth as a Junior Nordic coach and his second as a Site Director for our Kincaid T/Th group. Dave works with the same coaches who had taught him the fundamentals. He eventually joined the coaching staff for Hillside M/W, earning one of our easily-recognizable, purple coach jackets (“I really wanted one of those”). He’s been with the program ever since.

This pursuit to Suzanne. He bought his first skis in 1978 for road trips in the Rocky Mountains, seeking snow in Southern California and New Mexico in his off time. An effort “to escape the increasingly hot summers and snow-poor winters of New Mexico” in 2003 led Dave to Alaska.

Dave Ward gets ready to hit the Hillside trails with his pack of Junior Nordic skiers.

“Although I had never been, I was sure it was the place for us,” he said. “On my first trip, I bought a house, and we haven’t looked back.”

After convincing his company to transfer him to Anchorage, he was welcomed with, “Woohoo! A live one!”

The energy of the kids can be a great pick-me-up after a day at my desk at the office,” he said. Dave also gives a lot of credit for this to his coaches and parents of the skiers.

“I count them as some of my best friends,” he said. “The parents are also great to get to know, especially the ones who ski with us or have kids in the program year after year.”

Being a coach, Dave says, has made him a much better skier and instructor.

The Flanum family

The Nordic community is only as strong as the people invested in it. Anchorage Nordic skiers are incredibly supportive of NSAA with membership, volunteer time and trail support. NSAA is extremely grateful to a handful donors earning special recognition for giving above and beyond with holiday giving levels in addition to their annual membership and trail support. Thank you to Christine and Mark Flanum, Michael and Julie Truskowski, Nancy Munro and Gregory Wahman for higher level support to NSAA in December, ensuring premier Nordic trails and cross-country skiing opportunities for Anchorage and beyond. Donations power the NSAA engine and we could not do it without our supporters. Thank you!
Putting the “tour” in Tour of Anchorage
Recreational skier makes the most of her Tour trail time

Caren Carlson isn’t your typical Tour of Anchorage participant: busy mother of four, husband gone for work every other week and doesn’t necessarily ski regularly. She owns two sets of Nordic skis, most of her technique is self-taught and she rarely has the time to get into a routine to train or race. But she loves trails and has a hint of adventure in her. When asked several years ago by a friend if she would do the Tour of Anchorage, Caren did one thing before saying yes: checked her kid’s schedules.

Not only did Caren successfully complete the 25K Freestyle event that day, she visited each feed station, took selfies nationwide and added another cool Alaska experience to her belt. She thanks that she put the “tour” in Tour of Anchorage. Her only regret? Not bringing her kids! Caren’s experience could be any skier’s; let 2017’s Tour of Anchorage put a notch on your belt!

Register now and learn more at www.anchoragenordicski.com/races/tour-of-anchorage/.

NSAA Volunteer Spotlight – Geoff Wright

Geoff Wright and his wife Cathy celebrate after finishing the Ooks Classic.

Junior Nordic provides.

Geoff firmly believes that Junior Nordic is for every kid. He admits he’s a sucker for the underdog and as diverse as this community is, he would love for every kid in town have a chance to ski. Geoff became a coach because he wanted to help instill the love for skiing and keep kids active.

Driven by a passion to raise kids to love the outdoors, Geoff is not only committed to his Polar Cubs, one of the younger groups of skiers in the program, he is a head coach and site director at Kincaid Park. These roles are challenging with many responsibilities that Geoff doesn’t take lightly, including: considering weather and trail conditions; juggling coaching availability, overseeing each week’s skiing activities; and being the lead for all head coaches.

Geoff has incredible insight with his vast experience, seeing the bigger picture of the program and the incredible impact it has on the community. NSAA is so grateful for the tremendous heart Geoff puts into the Junior Nordic program.

Tour of Anchorage arrives Sunday, March 5 – Register now!

The 2017 Tour of Anchorage is on Sunday, March 5, bringing together cross-country skiers from all over the state of all ages and abilities to enjoy Anchorage’s beautiful trails and participate in one of North America’s largest ski races. Annually, the Tour attracts more than 1,600 skiers (ages 8 to 81) to participate in the 25K Classic, 25K Freestyle, 40K Freestyle or the premier 50K Freestyle event. Skiers of all abilities, from new skiers to elite racers, enjoy this unique community experience.

Registration is open, cost is $75 for NSAA members, $85 for nonmembers until Feb 19, then goes up to $90 for NSAA members and $100 for nonmembers. New this year, NSAA is offering discount pricing for families so parents like Caren can bring their kids. Families can register kids for $20 each with a parent participant, minimum of two kids. Caren’s experience could be any skier’s, let 2017’s Tour of Anchorage put a notch on your belt!

Register now and learn more at www.anchoragenordicski.com/races/tour-of-anchorage/.
The Homer High School Ski team will host a meet at Lookout Mountain Ski Area.

**Ski for Women:**

**Sunday, February 5**

Super Bowl Sunday (February 5) is Homer’s Ski for Women. This event brings skiers of all ages (and in costume) to Lookout Mountain Ski area for an annual benefit for South Peninsula Haven House. It always takes place on Super Bowl Sunday and is a great alternative to watching football. Most importantly, it helps to aid victims of domestic violence. This is an all-inclusive event, not just for women. Costumes are encouraged with prizes for a variety of categories.

**Winter Backcountry Film Festival:**

**Thursday, February 9**

The Backcountry Film Festival is back. The Winter Backcountry Film Festival is co-sponsored by the Alaska Quiet Rights Coalition and the Winter Wildlands Alliance. Films, which are part of a juried competition, celebrate the “human powered experience” and serve as a meeting place for outdoor enthusiasts. Money raised will remain local to support human-powered recreation and conservation efforts, winter education and the gullies still shows up on the map. The devices were relatively easy to install, mainly because our generous volunteer electrician, Bruce Hess of Puffin Electric, performed the work. The devices were relatively easy to install, mainly because our generous volunteer electrician, Bruce Hess of Puffin Electric, performed the work. The devices were relatively easy to install, mainly because our generous volunteer electrician, Bruce Hess of Puffin Electric, performed the work.
Folds makes history, aims even higher

BY KAREN COMPTON

The Junior National team for ski jumping and Nordic combined has been named and at least one member is making history even before the competition starts. 15-year-old Rowan Folds is the first girl from Alaska to compete in Junior Nationals. She will join Alaska five boys – Nathan Shuttleworth, Hugo Compton, Alex Murray, Gus Compton and Carter Brubaker – as they travel to suburban Chicago’s Norge Jumping Club for the competition March 1-4.

Rowan is a sophomore at Anchorage’s East High School where she also plays soccer. She started ski jumping in 2014 and has made rapid progress in three years. She was selected to take part in the Fly Girls ski jumping program in the summer of 2015 where she spent five weeks in Park City, Utah, living and training with other young female ski jumpers from around the country.

“It’s really exciting to be the first girl from Alaska to go to JNs,” Folds said. “I hope there will be many other girls who follow me and show that girls can compete at this level.”

Folds helped recruit girls to give ski jumping a try at the annual Past and Female event and with the Girl Scouts. She was recognized in 2015 with a Spirit of Youth Award for encouraging girls to build courage and confidence by getting involved in sports. She’s also a role model for the younger girls.

At a recent competition, one young girl climbed the 65 meter jump tower after her competition to cheer for Rowan.

Alaska biathlon rising and the nation takes notice

Reflecting a growing interest statewide in biathlon, nine Alaskans traveled to Jericho, Vermont, last month to compete in the U.S. Biathlon Youth/Junior World Championships Team Trials. At competition’s end, four Alaskans qualified to represent the United States in the Biathlon World Youth/Junior Championship Trials in February in Osrblie, Slovakia.

Kenai’s Travis Cooper, racing for Alaska National Guard Biathlon, secured a junior Men’s spot on the team by demonstrating blazing ski speed throughout the three-race series. Anchorage’s Alex Kilby secured his second trip to the world championships in the Youth Men’s division with a strong final race. Grace Gilliland, from Chugiak, won one of four slots in the Youth Women’s division. Eagle River’s Helen Wilson became the fourth Alaskan named to the world championships team after the Youth/Junior World Championships Team Trials. At competition’s end, four Alaskans qualified to represent the United States in the Biathlon World Youth/Junior Championships.

The Kachemak Ski Marathon is coming right up! Saturday, March 11, at Lookout Mountain Ski Trails with 9 a.m. start times. This ski event depends on Old Man Winter. It will either be held as the traditional point to point race from Lookout to Baycrest (25K, 42K) or like last year’s event (13K tour, 25K, 42K races). As of now, the Lookout trail system is in great shape and our groomers are working really hard to keep it that way. Registration is available online or on race day. There will be aid stations provided and an after party with food, refreshments, door prizes and awards.

Homer Women’s Nordic

Session two runs January 8 through the Tour of Anchorage. Women are coached specific technique and workouts are designed around an eight-week peak training plan through the remainder of the season. HWN meets every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from noon-2 p.m. http://homerwomensnordic.com/

Junior Nordic

Junior Nordic is a non-competitive, learn-to-ski program for youth, kindergartener through 6th grade. Fun on skis happens once a week: from 1:20 p.m. January 28, February 4, 11, 18 and 25. http://kachemaknordicskiclub.org/programs/junior-nordic/
Discover Land’s End…
It’s just the beginning

Yes. This is the famed end of the road, and just the beginning of your Alaska adventures.

Quite simply, the Homer area has some of the most spectacular ski trails in Alaska. Not only are they designed for novice and expert alike, but they feature some of the most jaw-dropping views and scenic beauty found anywhere.

www.lands-end-resort.com
Or call for reservations: 1-907-235-0400

2017 Ski Train to Curry
March 11th

Family FUN for EVERYONE!
All ages, all levels, all kinds of snow fun!

Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage
Over 100 tickets left Get yours today at
www.anchoragenord[cski].com/events/ski-train or call 276-7609
Girdwood Nordic Ski Club

Save the date: GNSC proposed trail system presentation, February 13

The Girdwood Nordic Ski Club will host a presentation of a proposed trail system (four-season, multi-use recreation) in the Girdwood Valley. The presentation will be at the Land Use Committee meeting at 7 p.m. February 13 at the Girdwood Community Center.

In January, the Senior Nationals Cross Country Ski Championships were held in Soldier Hollow, Utah. While much of Alaska was easing into one of the nicer winters of recent memory, skiers in Utah skied in conditions similar to what we’ve been accustomed to as of recently: cold, snowy, windy, rainy, icy. Based on the results at this challenging competition, Alaskan skiers represented the United States at the World Juniors Championships as well as the U18 Nordic Nations Trip.

Three Anchorage skiers qualified for the World Junior Team and four Anchorage skiers qualified for the U18 team. The World Junior skiers competed in Soldier Hollow, Utah, at the end of January and the U18 team competed in Norway at the same time. UAA Coach Andrew Kastning coached for the U18 team, which was comprised of Luke Jager and Canyon Tobin of APUNSC; and Gus Schumacher and Molly Gellert of Alaska Winter Stars.

APUNSC skier Hunter Wonders (U20), UAA skier Hailey Swirbul (U20), and UAF skier Nicole Bathe attended the World Juniors. Jager also had the opportunity to attend the World Junior Competition, but opted to head to battle the Norwegians. Additionally, two UAA skiers, Natalie Hynes of Canada and Casey Wright of Australia, represented their countries’ team at the World Junior Championships. These skiers and other Alaskan skiers will be competing on familiar Alaskan trails for major ski events this March at the Distance Nationals in Fairbanks, as well as the 2018 Senior Nationals Cross Country Ski Championships in Anchorage.

As you read this, Team Alaska has been selected for two upcoming events. Alaska was invited to enter a group of U14 skiers in the Western Regional Championship races in Sun Valley, Idaho, at the end of February. This marks the first time Alaska has assembled a group of skiers in this age group for something other than the Arctic Winter Games. Junior Nationals, an event for U16, U18, and U20 skiers will be held in Lake Placid, New York, in early March. Three Alaska biathletes (Alex Kilby, Helen Wilson and Grace Gilliland) who qualified for World Juniors Biathlon will also represent Alaska in Lake Placid for Junior Nationals.

CCAK and ski fans of Alaska wish all of our skiers the best of luck at their national events! Track Alaskans in action around the nation and world at www.crosscountryalaska.org.

From left, Molly Gellert, Gus Schumacher, Canyon Tobin, coach Andrew Kastning and Luke Jager

From left, Natalie Hynes, Casey Wright and Hailey Swirbul.

Save the date: GNSC proposed trail system presentation, February 13

The Girdwood Nordic Ski Club will host a presentation of a proposed trail system (four-season, multi-use recreation) in the Girdwood Valley. The presentation will be at the Land Use Committee meeting at 7 p.m. February 13 at the Girdwood Community Center.

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From left, Molly Gellert, Gus Schumacher, Canyon Tobin, coach Andrew Kastning and Luke Jager

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Save the date: GNSC proposed trail system presentation, February 13

The Girdwood Nordic Ski Club will host a presentation of a proposed trail system (four-season, multi-use recreation) in the Girdwood Valley. The presentation will be at the Land Use Committee meeting at 7 p.m. February 13 at the Girdwood Community Center.

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From left, Natalie Hynes, Casey Wright and Hailey Swirbul.
**Winter is meant to be white.**

**Hans is meant to ski.**

I tend to find myself writing about snow because of obvious reasons and with the last few seasons, my addiction with its existence has begun to turn into an affliction. I like to recall stories from one of my friends from Girdwood who complained about having to shovel every day for three straight weeks and, well, that brings a smile to my face. So as 2016 came to a close, I was beginning to write off this winter as a repeat of the previous two and began to wonder if global temperatures were going to make this a more permanent winter feature. How different a weekend makes.

I always say, winters are meant to be white. Who wants to be in Alaska in the winter if all they have to stare at is frozen ground? But like the great band the Scorpions sang about the “wind of change,” now there is 12 inches of fresh snow. That dump of snow was like I took a hand full of Zoloft; I was ecstatic. I shoveled the walkway with glee, and snow-blowed the driveway with zest. I even joined my wife who was dragging our son around the yard on his snowboard and took my turn (although I am not thrilled about him being a snowboarder ...).

I know that this means the trails are to be great in this week and the next, but the potential is high for a fantastic season, as well. Here’s to a rejuvenated hope in this winter.

-- By Hans Hill, MSSC President

**Serenity Falls Hut trip**

The Mat-Su Ski Club will do their “sort of annual” Serenity Falls hut overnight ski trip Saturday and Sunday, March 11-12. The trip occurs every year there is skiable snow on either the lake and/or the lake side trail. The ski club grooms a skate lane and sets classic tracks all the way back to the hut (12.4 miles/20 KM) on Friday, March 10.

Participants will have their overnight gear and food hauled in to the hut Saturday morning and hauled out Sunday morning so skiers need only carry water and snacks or food for one day if they plan to ski the entire weekend. Most skiers cover the distance in 3-5 hours if we grom the lakeside trail and an hour less if the trail is set across the lake. The spacious cabin can accommodate 13 skiers and has several double bunks in the three sleeping bays. The cabin also has an excellent woodstove (we haul in fire wood) and spectacular south facing windows.

We do a community dinner and breakfast and absolutely no one loses any weight. A talent show normally follows dinner. While the trip is primarily for Mat-Su Ski Club members, we can usually accommodate a few outsiders. The trip occurs on the weekend prior to spring break and between the Tour of Anchorage and the Oskil Classic.

For more information and to make reservations contact Ed Strabel 745-4190 or edstrabel@gmail.com.

**GPRA ribbon cutting**

It is important to take time to celebrate successes. Far too often as a non-profit, we are always looking to the next goal. Thankfully, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough helped us out in planning a ribbon cutting to celebrate the new lit trails at Government Peak Recreation Area and the new commercial kitchen area at the chalet. Many notables showed, including the Borough Mayor, a number of assembly persons, MSSC board members, volunteers and of course the Junior Nordics kids who kicked the event off with their “let’s go ski” cheer.

The club took advantage of the event to recognize those exemplary donors who helped with the Light the Susitna loop campaign. Plaques were given to those donors who contributed over $2,500 and there were a number of them. Thank you to all of you who helped make our program a success.
Where are they now: Liz Turner

I graduated from Chugiak High School in 2004 and attended the University of Wyoming. I was on their ski team, which is a USCSA club team, and associate member of the NCAA (http://uwnordic.weebly.com/). I skied at Junior Nationals in 2005 for the High Plains Team and then competed at the USCSA Nationals in 2006, 2007 and 2008. I graduated from UW in 2009 with a degree in Microbiology, and returned to Alaska.

After college, I got a job with the State of Alaska at their Environmental Health Laboratory, where I worked from 2010–2013. In February 2015, I switched departments and got a job working at the Alaska State Public Health Laboratory. My job title is Public Health Microbiologist 1, and I work majorly in the Tuberculosis Department which is very interesting. I’m very thankful because they let me adjust my schedule to allow me to coach skiing.

I started coaching with Eagle River High School in the 2009-2010 season as an assistant coach. I became head coach in the 2011-2012 season and have been in this role since! (Although this season I am co-head coaching with Chris Morhain. I love skiing and coaching the team, and hope that I can encourage athletes to ski, lead an active lifestyle, make friends, learn discipline and responsibility, and of course have fun!

Mat-Su women and children in crisis. Last year, over $1,500 was raised for Alaska Family Services.

Junior Nordics starts off with a bang

Mat-Su Junior Nordics had its first sessions of 2017 in early January. With a midday session for home-schoolers and two evening sessions (M/W and T/TH), we have about 340 kids this year, ranging from our Polar Cubs (4-6 years old) to our top level group, the Blue Grizzlies. Due to the low snow this year, we were worried that conditions would be icy for the first sessions. However, it turned out that the skiing was the best we have had for our first sessions in the past three seasons! Evidently, our request for snow dances did the trick.

We had something unprecedented this year: trail lights! They sure make a difference. Kids love being able to see the faces of their coaches, instead of the cyclops of a headlamp. The ribbon cutting ceremony for the new lights was organized by the Mat-Su Borough, and some of our kids stood next to the mayor and other dignitaries when the ribbon was cut. Of course, we had 150 kids do the Junior Nordic cheer for the audience.

We are extremely fortunate to have the best coaches. Without them, there would be no Junior Nordics. They are enthusiastic, caring and energetic. A little secret that few know if they are not a coach is the rewards that they get from working with kids. They are always amazed at how quickly the kids learn and how devoted the kids become to their coach.

Snow is coming down now as I write this, so the trails should be in great shape for the next few weeks.

Junior Nordics, Junior Nordics, Let’s Go Ski!
Kids get to go crazy on skis at Winter Carnival
All young skiers are invited to the ConocoPhillips Winter Youth Carnival held in March at Birch Hill Recreation Area. The carnival gives youngsters a chance to do some crazy things on skis! At the carnival, members of NSCF-FXC, the junior race-training program of the NSCF, help run different Olympic-themed stations, each with a fun activity aimed at the appropriate age and skill level. Past activities have included, Pea-on-a-Plate Relay, Obstacle Course, Tag, Short Track Relays, Ski Jumping, (Ski) Hockey, Slopestyle Skiing and Dual Slalom. Kids rotate between the stations, before concluding the afternoon with a scavenger hunt. The carnival is open to all skiers from kindergarten through 8th grade. It starts at 11 a.m. Saturday, March 12.

NSCF Calendar keeps you updated
Remember to check the NSCF Calendar for upcoming club events. Things are quiet now, but they will be getting busy soon, so it’s good to check it regularly.

Help NSCF by going shopping
Just by shopping at Fred Meyer with your Rewards Card you can earn donations from Fred Meyer to help NSCF. Just by shopping at Fred Meyer with your Rewards Card you can earn donations from Fred Meyer to help NSCF. Just by shopping at Fred Meyer with your Rewards Card you can earn donations from Fred Meyer to help NSCF. Just by shopping at Fred Meyer with your Rewards Card you can earn donations from Fred Meyer to help NSCF.

Who’s Who in the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks
JUNIOR NORDIC HOTLINE 457-4437
PRESIDENT Bruce Jamieson president@nscfairbanks.net
VICE PRESIDENT Steven Hansen
SECRETARY Liz Pawelko secretary@nscfairbanks.net
TREASURER Mike Donaldson treasurer@nscfairbanks.net
AT-LARGE MEMBERS board@nscfairbanks.org
Robert Hannon
Helena Rueter
Eric Rueter
Mark Winford
ADULT LESSONS COORDINATOR lessons@nscfairbanks.net | 371-9543
FAIRBANKS JUNIOR NORDICS jmnordics@nscfairbanks.net | 371-9564
FAIRBANKS CROSS COUNTRY Pete Leonard Head Coach, Program Director pete@leardent.net
RACE PROGRAM DIRECTOR John Estle racing@nscfairbanks.net
MEMBERSHIP membership@nscfairbanks.net
BIATHLON Helena Rueter membership@nscfairbanks.net
TOURING Mika Schmoller mitsfcski@gmail.com
NEWSLETTER EDITOR Eric Troyer fbcskierparent@gmail.com
SPONSORSHIP COORDINATOR Alakayruak sponsorship@nscfairbanks.org
WEBSITE WEBMASTER Chris Carlson website@nscfairbanks.net

NSCF board seeking candidates
BY ERIC TROYER
The Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks is seeking people who are interested in serving on the club’s Board of Directors.

Liz Pawelko, who is serving as board secretary, is stepping down from the board at the end of her term in March. Robert Hannon left the board earlier this season due to conflicts with other obligations. He still volunteers for the club by helping with Alaska Nordic Skier and with organization of the Sonot Kizzazoot. The board currently has seven members, but can have up to 15. Interested candidates need a desire to strengthen the Fairbanks cross-country skiing community and a willingness to devote at least 15 hours a month to board duties. If you are interested in being considered, please contact Steven Hansen (stevenseanhansen@gmail.com) or Liz Pawelko (lpawelko@hotmail.com).

The board’s business is critical to keeping NSCF programs running. Here are just some of the issues that the board, often with the help of volunteers, has currently been working on:

• Approving proposals for a new website with Don Kiely and maintenance of the website with John Schauer (see story this issue).
• Approving purchases equaling $3,750 for equipment for the new maintenance building, including a new computer, printer and television screen. (Funds for these come from a technology grant.)
• Approving a wage table for club trail groomers and an increase in apprentice groomer wages as requested by the head groomer.
• Approving contracts for the club administrator and race director (both positions held by the same person).
• Overseeing efforts by the club sponsorship coordinator in finding new club sponsors.
• Approving the creation of a club Instagram account, which was suggested by a club member.
• Directing the club treasurer to start separate budgeting for the upcoming Distance Nationals, which the club is sponsoring.

• Investigating the feasibility of using a DSL line for connection of the weather station because the wireless connection drops out during periods of deep cold.
• Approving up to $8,000 to pay for insurance for the new FXC van. (Funds for this may come from van sponsorships.)
• Approving $13,000 from the special projects fund to complete the purchase of the FXC van and trailer. (A majority of the funds for this project came from donations and grants.)
• Discussing how to deal with declining revenues and membership. (While the club is generally in good shape right now, membership is down and donations to the trail fund are down.)
• Discussing and ultimately deciding against a proposal by the school district to have the club run the high school skiing programs for $15,000. (The club estimates it would cost about $40,000 to take on the programs.)

The AlaskA nordic skier
Multiple ways to prep for the Sonot

BY ROBERT HANNON

Couch potatoes be warned: time is fleeting. The 30th annual Sonot Kkaazoot is scheduled to launch on Saturday, March 25, on the Chena River. While that might seem a comfortable distance in the future, experienced ski coaches say it is all too soon, if you are planning to participate in the 40- or 50-kilometer options of the race. Here are some key pointers from experienced participants and coaches.

Minimal advice for maximal trainers

Perhaps the most enigmatic response to a request for tips came from the race’s founder and longtime organizer “Bad Bob” Baker. Thirty years ago Baker wanted to see Fairbanks host a little more challenging Nordic ski race. That’s when he came up with an idea of skiing 10K along the Chena River and then ascending the hill leading to Birch Hill Recreation Area and the Jim Wiesenhaust Cross Country Ski Trail system, and then returning back along the Chena. While Baker has handed over the organizational reins, he still actively helps in preparation, grooming the Chena River and the section of the course that crosses Fort Wainwright and links up with the Sonot Connector. He also competes in the race annually. When asked what he does to prepare, the corners of Bad Bob’s mouth turned up in a wry smile. “I just wait for the race to come around again each year.”

Of course, this comes from a guy who, despite a massive heart attack last summer, still competes in races and can be found training almost every day.

Detailed advice for the rest

And that may be key in determining whether you should attempt the longer distances of the race, according to John Estle. John is legendary in running and Nordic skiing circles having coached the University of Alaska Fairbanks Nanooks and national ski teams. He still offers training classes and organizes and times races in Fairbanks and elsewhere.

“If you’ve been sitting on the couch eating bon-bons,” he replied when asked for tips, “several months preparation time might be ambitious to be in shape for the race. But if you ski even three or four days of the week, you can probably do it.”

Strengthen your weaknesses

John says Nordic skiing is a demanding sport, calling on large power outputs from more muscle groups. He says there are two key principles at work when training for a race: First, the volume of training is the single most important determinant of success. You have to get out there and ski and do it properly.

“The second key point John lists is the principle of specificity. He calls up an old saying: “Race to your strengths, practice to your weaknesses.” He continues, “If your weakness is handling downhill sections of the course, you should go out there and train on downhills as much as you can so you are comfortable on them.” In fact, John says it is helpful to ski every section of the racecourse multiple times.

“Ten to twenty percent of your training time, depending on your age and fitness level, should be dedicated to higher intensity efforts, such as interval training or time trials. The rest of the time you should be skiing at an easy and relaxed pace.”

“Work output in the physiological sense, such as with cross-country skiing, can be measured in watts. A skier’s training needs to be specific with respect to work output,” he offers. “If you always ski at 75 watts, the vast majority of your training at around 60-70 percent of your maximum output is ideal, with occasional interval sessions of high intensity effort thrown in.”

Practice drinking and eating

That conscious attention to training extends to nutrition as well, according to Estle. He recommends testing your feeding and drinking strategies on long training skis. Some people can tolerate commercial fluid replacement drinks, others do better with straight water. And keeping hydrated is critical, he says. “Roughly speaking, a fluid loss equivalent to a small percentage of body mass produces a disproportionately large loss in performance.”

In terms of solid food, he again recommends experimentation. He prefers bite-size squares of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Other racers he knows like gels or high-performance snack bars.

Train with a group

Finally, he says it is always helpful to train with a group or a class. However, he says you have to choose the right group for your ability. If you train with a high-level group you may be struggling each session and training too hard. Doing the vast majority of your training at around 60-70 percent of your maximum output is ideal, with occasional interval sessions of high intensity effort thrown in. Estle says group training also helps motivate skiers to tackle sections of the race or training exercises like speed drills they wouldn’t normally approach.

“If you are thinking of tackling the 40K or 50K options of the race, a great place to start is the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks Adult Lessons. This season the club is offering a class specifically geared to those preparing for the Sonot Kkaazoot. Contact the Adult Lessons Coordinator Kathy Bue at 371-9543. Here is a link to the lessons’ registration sheet: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0JCFXRm-
Meet the board
Eric Buetow

Buetow wants to contribute to ‘vibrant ski community’

My earliest memories of cross-country skiing are olfactory in nature, butane torch in hand, applying pine tar to the lovely wood of my first skis. That’s why I like using the Start Tar waxes! The scent of pine tar in a tube brings me back to those early days in northern Minnesota when we’d step into our three pins and go. Trails! We don’t need no stinking trails!

Fast forward 45 or so years and here I am, involved in one of the best ski organizations anywhere. I decided to join the NSCF board in an attempt to play some small role in the organization’s continuing efforts to foster a vibrant ski community. We’re incredibly fortunate in Fairbanks to have a combination of world-class facilities and organizers along with dedicated volunteers and club members. My family has enjoyed NSCF on a variety of levels, from FXC to SCUM to many years of Sonots and race volunteering. It’s all about celebrating our longest season and the joys and benefits cross-country skiing offers.

In the working world, I’ve had a dental practice in North Pole since 1981.

Liz Pawelko

Pawelko wants skiing available to all Fairbanksans

In 1995, I moved from Chicago to Fairbanks with no job, no plan and no idea what I was doing up here. I soon bought a pair of $18 skis (with no camber) and shuffled loops around my house. I’ve upgraded to seven pairs of skis and I routinely enjoy ski trips to recreation cabins, day skis with my husband, friends and dogs, and participating in ski marathons like the Sonot, Osik and Chena River to Ridge.

For more than two years, I’ve served as the Secretary on the NSCF Board of Directors and I have represented the interests of recreational skiers. I am excited to be a part of NSCF actively working to make skiing available to all Fairbanksans. When not skiing, I work as a mental health counselor at Headwaters Wellness & Counseling.

Mike Donaldson

Donaldson seeks to help advance club’s mission

I grew up primarily downhill skiing in Colorado, but do have fond memories of some family cross-country outings back in the day of wooden skis and cable bindings. For more than two years, I’ve volunteered for the club’s weather station, which will be installed in the near future.

The Birch Hill App, built by volunteer Gary Holton, is separate. Holton has left the state but another volunteer, Nathan Vonnahme, has graciously agreed to take over its maintenance.

Yet another aspect of the club’s online operations is its membership management system. This is web-based software that allows the club to keep a member database and have online registrations and donations, among other things. The club is currently using Wild Apricot. Aspects of the club that use Wild Apricot are being handled by a mix of volunteers and the club administrator. Wild Apricot also has a content management system for websites, but it is more limited than WordPress.

The listerv and Facebook page are each separate from Wild Apricot and the club’s website. They are also run by a mix of volunteers and the club administrator.

Fortunately, cross-country skiing can still be quite simple and basic if you’re not interested in getting into complicated gear and techniques, but the information required to run the club has grown more complicated with the evolution of the information age.
Snow in Juneau: State capital of Nordic skiing fun

Juneau is a fjord landscape and climate and therefore subject to microclimates. This winter’s snowfall has allowed Juneau skiers to be on the trails since late November. The Juneau Nordic Ski Club grooms trails at Montana Creek, Mendenhall campground and Mendenhall Lake. Each location is subject to weather different from the other. When it’s wet down low, many times trails are also good at Eaglecrest Ski area on Douglas Island. Additionally, in spring crust skiing is fabulous with a favorite location being Spaulding Meadow.

To learn about current status of groomed trails or divine the weather please visit our website, www.jnski.org.

The JNSC race series is season-long and oriented towards citizens and teams. We are three races into the 2017 series having hosted the Resolution Race and the I Have a Dream race. That schedule can be found on our website. The JNSC has two programs oriented towards teaching and coaching youth skiers. The racing-focused Juneau Nordic Ski Team (JNST) is for youth ages 12-18, essentially middle and high school ages. Because the youth program is independent from the school district, the skiers enjoy competing in Besh Cup races, the Tour of Anchorage and the Buckwheat Classic out of Skagway. Additionally, they compete in the local race series every two weeks. Starting in January on Sundays there is also a 10-week series of learning to ski for 1-12 grades. Both these groups are under the 4H program in Southeast Alaska.

Learn more about the JNSC at www.jnski.org.

Find the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage on Facebook at —

**facebook.com/anchoragenordicski**
Alaska National Guard biathletes bring gold, experience back from Canada

BY ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD STAFF SGT. BALINDA O’NEAL DRESEL

Two Alaska Army National Guardsmen competed in the North American #1 and Calforex #1 Biathlon Cups at the Canmore Nordic Centre Provincial Park in Canmore, Alberta, Dec. 3-4. Pfc. Travis Cooper, 207th Engineer Utility Detachment, took first place in the junior men’s 10 km sprint and the 12.5 km mass start. His teammate, Spc. Tahdg Nakada, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, placed 15th overall in the men’s 10 km sprint and 15 km mass start.

Nakada, 22, of Anchorage, and Cooper, 20, of Kenai, train year-round and compete on the National Guard Biathlon development team, coached by the Vermont Air National Guard’s Staff Sgt. Sarah Lehto and Tech Sgt. Travis Voyer. Cooper, 20, of Kenai, Cups at the Canmore Nordic Centre Provincial Park in Canmore, Alberta, Dec. 3-4. Pfc. Travis Cooper, 207th Engineer Utility Detachment, took first place in the junior men’s 10 km sprint and the 12.5 km mass start. His teammate, Spc. Tahdg Nakada, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, placed 15th overall in the men’s 10 km sprint and 15 km mass start.

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