U.S. NATIONALS
America’s top skiers
hit Alaska’s trials
8-10

THANK YOU
Remembering Randy,
grateful for Jan
5, 11

SKI FOR WOMEN
Annual events arrive in
Anchorage, Mat-Su, Kachemak
3, 7, 12

PHOTO BY CHARLIE RENFREW
A year brings new opportunities to be grateful, connected and excited

Message from NSAA’s Board of Directors

What an amazing year 2017 was! Happy New Year to our Nordic family and friends. We are looking ahead to 2018 with excitement and reflecting on so many things to be thankful for especially with a phenomenal start to this ski season!

Sadly, NSAA and the Alaska ski community suffered some very painful losses in 2017: incredible people like Randy Berg and Jeff Scott, among others. But tragedy brings our tight community even closer and we find strength in each other and in our connectedness to skiing and friends.

Just as Randy and Jeff did, the men and women of NSAA are rising to the occasion, especially with upcoming events in 2018. We are looking forward to the 2018 U.S. Nationals with close to 250 volunteers coming together to have a great event. Recent weather changes with little snow have made it clear how essential snowmaking capabilities are today. Focusing on snowmaking is saving our ski season and community.

Our partnerships with the Nordic community and Municipality of Anchorage are so vital and important. High school and middle school racing, Junior Nordic, and community programs are all dependent on these relationships. Thank you to all the volunteers and partners who help us provide winter recreation for all through quality trails.

One area we often find ourselves reflecting on about NSAA is the phenomenal people within the organization. Hardworking, dedicated and extremely talented. What a beautiful NSAA staff. Operations team and group of volunteers we have. Together we are strong and keeping our community healthy; coming together with programs and opportunities to recreate, race, ski, jump, learn, socialize and give back.

Thank you all for your support of Nordic skiing in Anchorage, across Alaska and beyond.

AROUND THE BOWL

Props to the Knapps for a lifetime of support

Recognizing individuals with the NSAA Lifetime Membership Award is a longtime tradition within our ski club. This year, a well-known couple, longtime NSAA members who have served on the board and given countless hours toward NSAA were the recipients and were recently presented the award.

One of them started racing in elementary school when her mother signed her up, without her consent. The other, according to his daughter, is up for any race no matter how little training he gets in with his travel schedule, and has raced against her for over seven years.

Both of these individuals are passionate about skiing, those closest to them would say that they’re “major groupies” on the World Cup circuit. When they aren’t watching these races on their computer, they are planning trips to Europe to physically follow the World Cup and cheer on U.S. skiers.

Today, both are Green Grunts: one newer to the crew, being trained this year to be a timer! The other has been a Green Grunt for 11 years, known to most as the bib lady and also the voice behind the microphone at most school races.

She has been a Skikipi Nordic coach for three years. She has also introduced many young skiers to the wonderful sport of skiing at Chugach Elementary and is an avid supporter of the APU program. And if we haven’t given it away already, she has headed up Ski 4 Kids for more years than she wants to count.

NSAA is excited to recognize this year’s Lifetime Membership Award recipients: Gunnar and Alice Knapp. Thank you!

Ready for exploration? Attend an upcoming NSAA backcountry tour

Find more information about NSAA tours at anchoragenordicski.com/tours.htm.

UPCOMING TOURS INCLUDE

JANUARY 13-15, 2018 — Two overnight at Sheep Mountain Lodge, includes Matanuska Glacier tour (below) Tour leader — Mary Vavrik

JANUARY 15, 2018 — Tour out to Matanuska Glacier along Caribou Creek; Tour leader — Ken DePalma

JANUARY 19, 2018 — Friday Night Fun Ski. Mile 1.2 Campbell Airstrip Road, Basher Trailhead; Tour leader — Ken DePalma

JANUARY 27, 2018 — Willow Lake and Middle Fork; Tour leader — Patti Phillips

JANUARY 30-February 1, 2018 — Catch the Lunar Eclipse on January 31 Two overnight (midweek) at private cabin on Red Shirt Lake; Tour leader — Patti Phillips

February 9, 2018 — Friday Night Fun Ski. Upper O’Malley Trailhead; Tour leader — Ken DePalma

February 11, 2018 — Portage Lake and Pass; Tour leader — Patti Phillips

February 17-19, 2018 — Two overnight at Manistoa Huts – Hole/AT and touring options;
Are you ready to party? 22nd annual Alaska Ski for Women arrives on February 4!

BY JENNY DI GRAPPA
ASWP Director

Can you believe we are already counting down the weeks until the 2018 Alaska Ski for Women event? Last year, over 800 women (and an additional 100 volunteers) of all ages made their way to Kincaid Park on Super Bowl Sunday to enjoy a warm, mostly sunny day of skiing, socializing and supporting Alaska non-profit organizations committed to improving the lives of domestic violence victims and their families. In total, these wonderful community members donated over $60,000! This money was granted to AWAIC, Running Free, YWCA, STAR, Catholic Social Services, and Seavey Community Services in Seward — organizations that are administering programs to help victims of domestic violence, as well as provide awareness and education to help stop the cycle of violence in Alaska. The all-volunteer event committee is working hard to ensure another successful year at Kincaid Park.

There are 3 options to register for the 2018 Alaska Ski for Women event:

1) Sign up online now through January 31: anchoragenordicski.com/events/alaska-ski-for-women/
2) Late registration takes place at bib pick-up on February 2 at REI from noon-7:30 p.m.
3) Race day late registration 9-11 a.m. – Racers who sign up on race day can only participate in the timed party wave.

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

There is a suggested donation of $50 or more will receive the 2018 Signature Buff (race entry included).

This year’s Ski for Women merchandise can be purchased at bib pick-up, and skis/boots/polls can be rented from REI for a discounted rate.

There are four races scheduled for 2018 (start times will be announced online):
1) The Duathlon, an 8K (4.8 mile) course, timed. The skate race is 4K in length (2.4 miles), timed. The classic race will also be 4K, timed. Finally, the party wave will start at 12:15 p.m. and is 4K in length. The party wave is an unlimited fun ski – take your time and enjoy the trail. Prizes will be awarded to the top three skiers in each of the timed events.
2) The costume contest is the greatest part of the Alaska Ski for Women, where hundreds of women each year dress up in elaborate costumes, many of them taking between several months to a year to put together. We encourage all of our participants to dress up and participate in the Mardi Grass of the North costume contest! Contest will take place from 11:30 a.m.-noon. Prizes will be awarded to the best team and best dressed individual.
3) Another great silent auction is planned this year with numerous items that have been generously donated including sports equipment, hotel stays, art and more! For those that do not own kick wax or would prefer some help, bring your skis to the wax tent from 9-11:30 a.m. to get waxed for free.

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

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

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

RIDE THE SKI TRAIN

Get a ticket at AnchorageNordicski.com

EVENT ON MARCH 24, 2018

RIDE THE SKI TRAIN

Day by day, 15/1, offer to win a free stay at the NSAA cabin!
Reconnect with your inner child — Get involved with Ski 4 Kids!

BY CARLA BEAM

On February 24, several hundred kids will take over Kincaid Park for a festival of skiing, racing, and other outdoor activities. For some, the annual Ski 4 Kids festival will be the first time they compete in a race or try snowshoeing and other outdoor sports and recreation. You can re-experience that first-time excitement when you volunteer.

According to volunteer coordinator Lia Slemons, “We have a smorgasbord of roles to make the event a success. We can use registration hosts to help the table traffic at REI on Thursday, February 22. We need day-of event people, indoors in the Chalet and outdoors at the activity stations and along the race course. Chalet volunteers will make drinks and lunch available for the skiers and assist with setup and cleanup. Stadium volunteers will make the activities accessible and visible for the participants and cheer on racers out along the course.” Online volunteer sign-up is available through http://goo.gl/MQafnC.

For one volunteer, Duncan Wright, Ski 4 Kids is an extension of his love of skiing and interest in and involvement with coaching. An APU student and member of the university’s ski team, he’s coached NSAA Junior Nordic for years and hopes to become involved in high school coaching next season. Wright has also been a part of the NANA Nordic Program, which has taken him to Nome, Utqiaġvik and Noatak where he coached the area’s kids. He has volunteered at the Ski 4 Kids several times, enthusiastically sharing, “It’s an awesome event that helps kids discover a love for skiing and the outdoors.”

Duncan’s sister, Addy, has also volunteered at the Ski 4 Kids, and his father, Geoffrey, encourages employees at his company, Pango Technologies, to support the winter festival.

The Ski 4 Kids committee hopes to net close to $10,000 this year to give out in grants that support youth skiing through funding of equipment, transportation and other needs of Anchorage schools and programs, as well as the Municipality of Anchorage’s Ski Outreach Program. Registration fees help to-wards the fundraising goal, but a significant amount comes from corporations, foundations, small businesses, individuals and families. Their contributions help cover the costs and overhead involved in putting on the Ski 4 Kids and boost the amount available for grants.

Erin Witmer, this year’s Ski 4 Kids volunteer lead, encourages NSAA members to consider a donation. “As you’re planning your annual philanthropic donations, please consider giving the gift of skiing to others. You’ll not only be helping to create access for all to a sport you love, but you’ll be building an even stronger community of skiers to support trails and programs in the future.” If you would like to make a donation to the Ski 4 Kids, contact the NSAA office at tkornfield@anchoragenordicski.com.

This year’s Ski 4 Kids is February 24 from noon to 4 p.m. at Kincaid Park. To register, visit anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-4-kids/.

2017-18 Events
Dec 3: Clinic
Dec 13: Show&Go
Jan 13: Tour
Jan 17: Show&Go
Jan 21: Kincaid Classic
Jan 27: Clinic
Feb 10: Bartlett Relay
Feb 17: Tour
Feb 21: Show&Go
Feb 24: Chugiak Chinook
Mar 14: Show&Go
Mar 20: Skiquinox Race
Details, visit: www.skijoring.org (907) 346-WOOF event weather hotline

Proud to Support NSAA and Anchorage skiers!
Offering a large menu of salads, appetizers, grilled chicken, sandwiches, gardenburgers, sweet ice cream treats and more! Call 248-3068 for orders to go or visit www.TF2GO.com
Celebrating 60 years in 2018
Jewel Lake TASTE•FREEZ 1958 - 2019

Wear your NSAA Trail pin to Taste Freez and save 10%! 
Remembering Randy Bergt

ANCHORAGE

Anchorage skiing community mourns the loss of passionate leader, friend and outdoorsman

Randall Derril Bergt (1957-2017)

Randy Bergt made his last ski turns with friends in the Talkeetna Mountains near Hatcher Pass on Nov. 22, 2017. His life ended the way it began, surrounded by the beauty of Alaska.

Randy was born on Jan. 30, 1957, to Ronald and LeNelle Bergt at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Fairbanks. His love of the outdoors was soon evident, and his mom LeNelle observed, “If I hadn’t been there, I would have thought he was born on skis.” Raised in Anchorage around many of the pioneers of Alaskan aviation, Randy enjoyed many opportunities to explore the wilds of Alaska. He graduated from Dimond High School in 1975, and later received a Bachelor of Arts in Business Management from the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

It was at UAF that Randy met the love of his life, Tasha. They married on the Riverboat Discovery in Fairbanks and spent nearly four decades sharing their passion for outdoor adventure. During their early years together, most summers were split between enjoying their cabin on Farmers Loop and construction jobs across Alaska, where Randy gained skills in project management that he would use throughout his life.

Randy was born on skis. “Raised in Anchorage with friends while drinking a good beer was one of his favorite pastimes. He spoke to the wildlife and birds he encountered on his outdoor explorations as if they were family, and adored spending time with his kitties, Oscar and Marley, or playing fetch with his buddy Babe.

Randy is survived by his mother, LeNelle; siblings Charie (Ron) and Steve (Lisa); brother-in-law Doug; and many aunts and uncles. He is also survived by his wife, Tasha; her mother, Dorothy; siblings Leif (Claudi), and Kiana; and sister-in-law Svetlana. He especially loved his nieces and nephews: Amy, Matt, Brad, Erik Kris, Steven, Heidi, Kevin, Shayla, Sophia, and Alya. Randy was preceded in death by his father Ron, sister Traci, father-in-law Lane, and brother-in-law Yancey.

The family would be honored by contributions in Randy’s memory (tagged with his name) to the following organizations: Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage (anchorage norski.com); Friends of the Chugach National Forest Avalanche Center (cnfaic.org); Hatcher Pass Avalanche Center (hpavalanche.org); Friends of Pets (friendsofpets.org); and Alaska Humane Society (adopt-a-cat.org).

When Randy and Tasha eventually settled in Anchorage, they became entrenched in the Alpine and Nordic skiing communities. At first they worked weekends for the Ski Patrol and Ski School at Alyeska. Then they began coaching for the Anchorage Junior Nordic League, where they guided the same group of kids for many years, culminating with coaching the powerhouse Service High School Boys and Girls Ski Teams in the 1990s. Ever since, they volunteered regularly for outdoor events, giving generously of their time and expertise. Randy was beloved by many for his kind encouragement and inspiration to others, and is remembered fondly as a pillar of the Nordic skiing community.

In his work life, Randy also had a passion for getting people moving—literally. He was instrumental in developing transit and transit-to-trail systems throughout Anchorage during his 20-year career in transportation, which included work for HDR Engineering and culminated as project manager for Anchorage People Mover. Randy believed that integrating pedestrian and bike friendly routes into our transportation systems helped improve the health of our community, and he was able to implement this philosophy through his work.

Randy’s many other interests included a passion for aviation, a love for music, and a huge heart for animals. He earned his private pilots license at 19, and flew commercially for a few years in the 1990s. Playing the guitar with friends while drinking a good beer was one of his favorite pastimes. He spoke to the wildlife and birds he encountered on his outdoor explorations as if they were family, and adored spending time with his kitties, Oscar and Marley, or playing fetch with his buddy Babe.

...
NSAA operations team member Bill Brion grooms the Beach Lake Trails.

NSAA groomer work magic at Beach Lake Trails
Thanks to the skill of NSAA groomers, the Beach Lake Trails adjacent to Chugiak High School were groomed to perfection by December 2 this year. Although warm weather has affected skiing around Southcentral Alaska, hopefully the good base will hold until new snow arrives.

Welcome Rish Harty and Ryan Caldwell, new Junior Nordic Coordinators.
CERNSC is excited to introduce Rish Harty and Ryan Caldwell as new coordinators for Eagle River Junior Nordic.
Ryan was born and raised in northern Pennsylvania, where his parents owned a small side business selling and renting cross-country ski equipment. He started skiing when he was 4 years old and spent a lot of time on snow as his parents educated and skied with their customers. His dad signed him up for a nearby citizens race when Ryan was 16. After winning the race, Ryan realized his passion and wanted to enter more races. He went on to win three Pennsylvania state championships and raced in numerous 50K events. With no college Nordic programs in Pennsylvania, Ryan decided to run cross country and track for the Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). He met his future wife, Heather, at IUP. A few years after graduating from college, Ryan joined the Army, graduated from Officer Candidate School and became a commissioned officer. His first duty assignment at Ft. Drum, New York, was close to Lake Placid and other great Nordic skiing areas. Heather and Ryan had two boys, Ian and Declan, while they were at Ft. Drum, and after a brief stint at Ft. Gordon, Georgia, they found themselves stationed at Ft. Richard- son -- again close to great ski trails. After leaving the military, Ryan and his family decided that Alaska was home, and they continue to enjoy the tremendous ski trails in the Anchorage area. This is Ryan’s fourth year coaching in the Eagle River Junior Nordic program, and he is excited to see the kids’ progress and learn the sport he loves.

Rish’s family moved here from Colorado six years ago. Her and her husband, Jim, are former Air Force. They moved to Alaska because it was Jim’s first duty station as a young lieutenant and he had always wanted to come back. So the family packed up and pursued the dream, Rish said, “and here we are!” She said they love to hike and ski in winter and love the camping and fishing of Alaska’s summers. They have three daughters that are all in Jr. Nordic, starting as Polar Cubs. Jr. She said, “Nordic is near and dear to my heart as I believe that getting out in the dark and chilly winter is instrumental to the well-being of our family and I want other families to join our awesome skiing community.”

Welcome and thank you, Rish and Ryan! If you see them on the trails, say hi.

A group of CERNSC skiers enjoyed a cold crisp outing on Eagle River on November 30. If you’re interested in CERNSC ski tours, contact Ros Singleton at rosasingleton2@gmail.com. Future tours planned for Eagle River Nature Center, Eklutna Lake and Symphony Lake as conditions allow.

Chugiak Ski Team turning heads this season
BY CODY PRIEST
Chugiak High School coach
For the past two seasons, the Chugiak High Mustang girls have brought home the second place team award from State Championships. This season it won’t just be the girls that garner success; the boys find themselves in the hunt for medal contention behind the powerhouses of Service and West.
With the hard work of the existing boys and influx of successful freshmen, coaches have had to make hard decisions for the varsity squad; leaving out some fast boys. The culture of the boys’ side has slowly evolved to a point where it is a positive environment for success. Everyone is motivated to go the extra mile and make that extra effort with podiums on the mind. Part of this shift has been created by Brian Wing, the lone senior on varsity who is a positive, hardworking, and enthusiastic leader. He has been sculpting this dedicated culture on the boys’ side the past couple seasons and is a major factor to the team’s current success – not just in results but by being a role model.
On the ladies’ side, the team will still remain strong with the help of experienced racers and a group of hardworking underclassmen. The shot at a state team title is within range but teams like West Valley, South and West will make it challenging.
Overall there is a lot of energy this year. Team captains have been doing great keeping the environment fun but serious when needed. Skiers have had positive attitudes with the snow, sunshine and recent rain. We are looking forward to a great season!
That time of year
I always find this time of year kind of odd, deep into winter, but lately not a ton of snow. We’ve made it past the holidays, 10 plus pounds different (emphasis on the plus) and now it’s time to enact those New Year’s resolutions. If you are reading this publication, the odds are that one of those resolutions may relate to skiing, which is a good thing. But as Alaskans, after-work skiing this time of year is a deep dark ambition (figuratively and literally), unless of course you are heading to GPRA.

This is where your ski club really helps out. Sometimes I need a goal or an obligation or some means to be accountable to ensure I do get out and place those bindings on in the colder, darker evenings. Thankfully the MSSC has many opportunities to ensure you don’t ski tonight’s ski. Whether it is a big goal, like the Icicle Double or a regular, weekly event like our community races, or our monthly moonlight skis, we are here to support you. “It is a great day to be a skier!”

— By Hans Hill, MSSC Vice President

President’s Corner:
Dave Musgrave
As the new president of the Mat-Su Ski Club, I’d like to initiate a monthly update of issues before your Board of Directors.

We have 13 board members, who are named in the sidebar. We have three members leave the board over the past year: Mike Norton, our former secretary, Marritt Youngblood, our reelected treasurer, has provided a professional approach to our accounts and accounting during a time when our total funds (membership, Junior Nordics, grants, etc.) have more than tripled. Without her professional help, we would be hopelessly lost. Our former secretary, Mike Norton, did yeoman’s service in providing detailed minutes from our meetings. I wish to thank all of them and our other board members for their service over the past few years. As we move forward this year, there are several issues that I would like address in this forum over the next year. The board has short-, medium- and long-term goals. In the short term, we will be finishing the new trails, which will take additional work to get them in final shape, including removing rocks and seeding the trails. In the next five years we will be considering how to make our grooming and trail maintenance sustainable. Our groomers are all volunteers, but with the increase in number of trails, we will be considering compensation for groomers. In the three to eight-year future, we will need to invest in additional equipment and infrastructure, including a tractor for summer mowing and a storage building to house our groomers, Centaur, tracked vehicles, snowmachines and other equipment. I invite your thoughts on the direction the club will be taking. You can contact me at dave.musgrave@matiaski.org. Board meetings are the first Tuesday of each month and the date and location are posted on www.matsiaski.org. We will be posting the agenda for you to peruse and see if there are things that you may want to address in person. Your input is always welcome.

Let’s Go Ski, Dave!

Northern Lights Race Series
I suppose this may come as a surprise to some, but I work out somewhat regularly. Once upon a time I enjoyed training for long distance events, but a myriad of life changes (work, kids, ... did I mention kiddo?) have left me a bit time restrained. So what to do? Shorter durations at higher intensities is where the MSSC has an offering to those of you who are also time constrained. The Northern Light Race Series. Beginning on January 17

conditions dependent), the club will be offering a community race series every Wednesday until March where participants can “race” in distances of 5K or less. Cost is $5 (cash) per event. Cheaper than a spin class and more time-efficient.

New trail pins
My wife was recently staring at my side of the closet and posed this question, “When’s the last time you bought a new shirt?” To which I replied, “My style is timeless.” I have since been informed that opinion is incorrect. So as my closet needs an update, the club has rolled out a new logo and that means there are new trail pins to be had. Head on over to our website and make a donation of $15 or more and you too can update your ski (or work) attire.

Mat-Su Ski for Women is February
Save the Date for Super Bowl Sunday! Have a lot of munching and watching TV planned for the after-noon? Work out those calories in advance at the 5th annual Mat-Su Ski for Women This fun, un-timed event begins at 11 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 4. Costumes are encouraged and all entry fees go to Alaska Family Services. Registration will be up soon; stay tuned to Mat-Su Ski Club’s site for more information.

Club calendar
January 8-9 — Mat-Su Ski Club Race at Government Peak Recreation Area near Hatcher Pass. (907) 745-SKIS.
January 10 — Mat-Su Nordic Invitational.
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The race is on

U.S. Nationals returns to Anchorage, highlighting country’s best cross-country skiers

BY MELISSA DEVAUGHN
Coast Magazine

On the trails of Anchorage’s Kincaid Park, Olympians have been made. World Cup champions have been groomed. Countless hours of training and nail-biting racing has happened on these corduroy-covered trails. It’s a place where dreams happen.

That’s why the 2018 U.S. Cross Country Ski Championships are not to be missed. This massive event, set for Jan. 3-8, 2018, pits some of the nation’s top skiers against one another, not only for bragging rights, but also for a potential berth on the U.S. Olympic Ski Team that will compete in PyeongChang, South Korea, just a few weeks later.

The dream is real. Just ask Holly Brooks, who competed in the same event when it was held at Kincaid in 2010, and skied her way onto the podium – and the U.S. Ski Team. That accomplishment led her on to a stellar career that included two Olympics and a first-ever U.S. Ski Team World Cup relay victory.

“Last time this event was here I was racing, and I credit the hometown advantage with making the Olympics, and essentially changing the trajectory of my life,” said Brooks, who has had the opportunity to utter those same words, along with many thank yous, to the countless volunteers and experts who put on the races.

This year, Brooks, who retired from racing in 2016, is helping to run the Award Ceremonies with her husband, Rob Whitney, during the races.

The 2018 U.S. Cross Country National Ski Championships – or “Nationals,” as most people call them, includes four days of racing spread over the course of the week. Plan your calendars carefully for race days, which include two sprint races in classic and freestyle; as well as a longer mass start classic race and interval start freestyle race. Skiers ranging from their mid-teens to masters will be there, competing not only for a podium here, but also potentially earning team spots for Junior Nationals in the spring, and even competitions abroad.

Kincaid is no stranger to putting on Nationals, either. Joey Caterinicchio, Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage president and chairman of the U.S. Nationals event, helped bring the races to Kincaid, back-to-back, in 2009 and 2010.

“We are a well-oiled machine running this,” Caterinicchio said – even more so now that Kincaid has snowmaking equipment that it lacked eight years ago. “There are new, improved courses, and snowmaking, and Anchorage rocks as a strong Nordic...
Home-trail advantage
Alaskan athletes aim high at U.S. Nationals 2018

Alaskan skiers compete annually in the U.S. Cross Country Ski Championships, racing on the Upper Peninsula’s frosty rollercoaster trails, the oxygen-deprived Olympic course at Utah’s Soldier Hollow, and on New England’s mostly artificial snow.

This year, Alaska’s skiers are back home at Kincaid Park for nationals. They’ve lined up at the start in this stadium countless times. They know the trails. They know where they’ve crashed, bonked, passed and excelled. APU elite skier Reese Hanneman, is looking forward to the familiar.

“It really is such a cool feeling, to remember back racing so much here as a kid, and now so many years later, to try and ski much faster around these same loops,” he said. “It’s an honor to be able to race at home in U.S. Nationals.”

Reese and his brother Logan Hanneman are just two of the many Alaska skiers to look for at these races.

While the blue Alaska Pacific University (APU) race suits will be prominent at Kincaid, some well-known Alaska skiers might be missing. Four-time Olympic Kikkan Randall, and fellow APU skiers Sadie Bjornsen, Erik Bjornsen, Rosie Brennan, Chelsea Holmes, and Scott Patterson, are overseas competing in the early stages of the World Cup season. Their aim is to qualify for the U.S. Olympic team on that European circuit. If they don’t, they’ll be back in Alaska for nationals, which is another door to the Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea. If any spots still remain by New Year’s, the series at Kincaid Park is a last opportunity to prove up.

APU head coach Erik Flora explained that the competition in Alaska is the final week of racing in the U.S. for the Olympic qualification process and for World Juniors.

“For our APU elite team, this is an opportunity to represent the United States at the Olympics,” the coach said. “This is a goal they have spent the better part of 10 years preparing for and many thousands of hours training.”

His roster of senior Alaska skiers to watch include Reese, Hanneman, Logan Hanneman, David Norris, Tyler Korntfeld, Erik Packer, Forrest Mahlen, Thomas O’Hara, Rosie Frankowski and Becca Rorabaugh. Many of these skiers competed together on Team AK at Junior Nationals.

Rorabaugh said she and her team are looking forward to Kincaid Park and Alaska offering some “good old-fashioned winter conditions” and a chance to shine on the big stage.

“We’ve had time to really cohere as a group and that’s made each of us stronger,” she said. “I think we’ve got an amazing cohort of skiers who will be in the mix for Olympic qualification this year.”

APU’s Flora is optimistic about his athletes’ chances and advises not to underestimate the power of the hometown crowd.

“This is the biggest competition we will have this year in the United States,” he said. “It will be great to see our community out on the trails in January to cheer a tremendous event.”

Olympic slots aren’t the only incentive during this week of racing. For college skiers in the Rocky Mountain division, the first two skate races are NCAA qualifiers. Alaskans Traeven Knopp, Sadie Fox and Jenna DiFoko will be skiing for the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) Seawolves, and Anna Darnell, Sarissa Lamers, Max Donaldson, Seiji Takagi and Logan Mowry will be skiing for the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Nanooks. Further afield, but also returning home to compete with the Montana State team, is Emma Tarbath. Other collegiate Alaskans returning to race are Dartmouth skiers Lydia Blanchet and Taryn Hunt-Smith, Williams’ skiers Jack Consenstein and Andrew Hall, and Middlebury skier Jacob Volf.

Along with Olympic and NCAA goals, younger skiers are focused on qualifying for the World Junior Championships and the U18 Nordic Nations Championships in Vuokatti, Finland. Getting a spot on either of these teams is based on age and points accrued in all four nationals races.

Junior Worlds, explains Flora, “starts the road toward international racing and one day the Olympics.”


AWS skier Gelert scored enough points in last year’s nationals to make it to the Nordic Nations Championships. She said the familiarity of Kincaid Park will be reassuring during the tough week of racing.

“It’s super awesome that nationals are on home soil this year because the races will be on trails we spend countless hours training on,” she said.

Add up all of these athletes and Alaska undoubtedly has a strong presence in this competition, from high school racers to college graduates. There will even be some local senior masters jumping in to see how they stack up against the younger field. The common denominator to this powerful bench of skiers, according to APU’s Hanneman, is Alaska’s support for the sport.

“We have some of the best coaches in the country, lots of options for skiing most of the year, and a community that really gets excited about ski racing,” he said. “A bunch of our junior clubs are really strong right now, and I think we are going to see even more Alaskans competing at a high level.”

Hanneman should know—he’s stood on more than one podium at U.S. nationals, the top step as well.

“Come out and give me the extra boost that helped me make the Olympic Games than ever before,” Brooks said.

This article first ran in the December 2017 issue of Coast Magazine (coast-magazine.com).
Welcome to the races!

The U.S. Cross Country Championships are the premier U.S. event of the season. The races determine all U.S. National Champions. It is open to all USA and FIS competitors and include top club racers, foreign skiers and members of the U.S. Ski Team. The Championships are part of the SuperTour; double SuperTour points are awarded during the championships. SuperTour races are used in selection for elite teams such as World Championships, Continental Cup and the Olympics.

Qualifying races

Nationals allow young seniors and top junior athletes to qualify and represent Team USA for elite international racing teams. Athletes can qualify for: The World Junior Championships Trials: This team is made up from the nation’s top seniors and selected from the U.S. Cross Country Championships. The team will compete at the Junior World Championships in Goms-Kandersteg, Switzerland, Jan. 27-Feb. 2, 2018.

The U-23s: This international race series is in conjunction with the World Juniors, hosting youth senior athletes under age 23. The Junior Scandinavian Championships: Open to U16 and U18 competitors only and the premier international competition for competitors 17 years and younger. Team selected through the nationals freestyle sprint and the classic 5/10 kilometer events. For more information on elite National Cross Country Programs, nomination criteria for the U.S. disabled criteria and elite traveling teams, please visit www.ussa.org.

Rules of engagement

Welcome to Kincaid Park! We’re glad you traveled near and far to take in nationals and we want this to be a spirited and fair event for all. To keep events fair for competitors and fun for spectators, we ask participants to be mindful of the rules.

Competiton days

All race trails are closed to spectators and on-foot traffic. Only racers, coaches and officials are permitted on the courses. Spectators will have designated areas to enjoy the races. Warm-up and wax testing areas are open to racers and coaches only. You can ski the other Kincaid Park trails; no passes required. If you are a skiing for recreation, a donation to the NSAA trail fund would be appreciated: anchoragenordicski.com.

No dogs allowed

Cross-country skiing competitions and dogs don’t mix. Please leave the dogs at home.

Stadium access

All access to the stadium floor will be via the bridge from the Chalet parking lot to “Spectator Ridge.” Spectator routes are designated for each competition day. Walking, and sometimes skiing, will be allowed to access these points. Great viewing spots are on the ridge above the timing building and by the stadium parking lot. The stadium floor will not be open for spectators. Course controllers and stewards will provide direction – it is their job to ensure the competition can occur unimpeded. Information is available at the race office and kiosk in the lower parking lot. Start lists, results, course maps and spectator information will be available at this location.

Parking

The Chalet parking lot will be limited to athletes, officials and select volunteers. Spectator and volunteer parking is available in the stadium parking lot (behind the scoreboard) and overflow lots. Please carpool; if so, you can drop passengers and gear at the chalet before parking in an outer lot.

Non-competition days

All trails are open to all skiers. Kincaid Park has 60 kilometers of groomed ski trails – each is unique and offer great views of Cook Inlet, the Alaska Range, Mount Susitna, the Chugach Mountains, Mount McKinley and Mount Foraker.

Schedule

All races at Kincaid Park; schedule subject to change

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3
10 a.m.-2 p.m. — Men’s 15k freestyle, Women’s 10k freestyle
FRIDAY, JANUARY 5
10 a.m.-4 p.m. — Men’s and women’s freestyle sprints
SUNDAY, JANUARY 7
10 a.m.-3 p.m. — Men’s 30k classic mass start, Women’s 20k classic mass start, Junior men’s 10k classic mass start, Junior women’s 5k classic mass start
MONDAY, JANUARY 8
10 a.m.-4 p.m. — Men’s and women’s classic sprints

Find a full schedule and PDF for printing at anchoragenordicski.com/schedule/.
Jan Buron: The North Star for Alaska’s Winter Stars

BY AWS NORDIC SKI BOOSTERS

Twenty years ago, Anchorage coach Jan Buron began his Alaska Winter Stars ski program. During that time, he has helped develop many of Alaska’s best skiers. He’s arguably one of the best technique coaches you will come across, based on his expertise gained from his early years skiing and coaching professionally in Poland, combined with continued attention and commitment to learning and teaching new techniques as they develop. Many who have known Buron since the early years remember his entrance to the Alaska ski scene: he worked his way across the United States, starting in New York and New Jersey in 1990. After a stint as a fisherman in the Bering Sea, Buron ultimately found his way to Anchorage in 1992.

In 1997, after a few years of working with an early Anchorage training program, the Alaska Sports Academy, Buron started his own program working with skiers aged 10-18: Alaska Winter Stars (AWS). The same year, Buron began coaching at Service High School. During his tenure, his statistics as a high school coach are unmatched by any other school, with 11 state championship titles for girls and eight titles for the boys. Since 1997, 13 of his athletes claimed 21 State Skimeister titles— including Tara Masters (Hamilton) from 1997-2000.

On the national circuit, his skiers often are seen on the podiums and are named to international teams such as the World Junior team or the U18 (previously known as the Scando) team. Buron has twice been named USSA Coach of the Year. AWS has received the USSA Club of the Year award several times, and has had many athletes go on to excel collegiately as well as successfully stay in the sport for years to come. After high school practice, he takes younger junior skiers for a 90-minute workout. And he somehow seems that he is cloned because he gets around to so many places at once. Not only is he waxing skis, preparing a waxing plan. At a ski race, it sometimes about the competition of racing and loves a good cheer in the form of snow. Due to an open tree canopy and the smooth surface of the trail bed, our trail can be open with minimal snow. We can’t wait for the next snowstorm.

We went ahead with a Friday, Dec. 22, Solstice celebration party at our trailhead kiosk at the end of Arberig. Unless it was a full-on monsoon, we had a great time! We’ll let you know in the next issue. Happy winter from GNSC.

Patience is a virtue, but sometimes it’s also really tough

BY PETER ZUG

Girdwood is having a slow start for valley snows. Coverage is great above 1,000 feet, but so far not strong on the Girdwood Nordic 5K loop.

First groomer pack was late November and after another round of grooming we were on our way to a great ski season on December 1. Then came rain and warm temperatures. As of December 14, all traces of snow and ice are mostly gone from our trail (and the valley floor). Since climate changes seem to have affected the start of the season we see this as a new beginning.

The 5K awaits some Christmas cheer in the form of snow. Due to an open tree canopy and the smooth surface of the trail bed, our trail can
A R O U N D  T H E  B A Y

Comming to terms with the future of our trails’ terms

Message from President Mike Gracz aka Fritz Creek Skier
Kachemak Nordic Ski Club is in the process of entering into a 20-year Community Trails Management Agreement with the Kenai Peninsula Borough. A long-term goal of the club has been to gain more permanent status for our trails. KNSC manages trails that cross lands with diverse ownership, but many of our trails and both of our maintenance buildings are on Kenai Borough lands. Currently, the trails on Borough lands are covered by two different types of arrangements: a 10-year lease for the trails at the Lookout Mountain Recreational Area, and 5-year permits for other parcels. The permits and the lease all expire next year, therefore, it is timely to enter into an agreement that will give us longer-term management authority over our trails.

This longer-term authority will require more work upfront, but should lower the workload over the longer term. The load will be lowered because KNSC won’t need to consult with the borough every time we want to perform trail work at one of the permitted parcels, and we won’t need a letter to potential funders stating the Borough’s intention to continue to renew the permits/lease. One especially important funding source requires this sort of long-term agreement with owners of the lands that our trails cross. Moreover, KNSC will only need to renew one agreement every 20 years rather than permits and leases that expire at different times. With that management authority comes responsibility. Most of the application process is straightforward and includes the types of trail construction and maintenance activity that KNSC has been doing all along. The Borough’s land manager thinks we should have no problems obtaining an agreement because KNSC has proven its capacity over the past 31 years. The club intends to continue managing the trails as we always have for the benefit of Nordic skiing in the Kachemak Bay area. However, if we wish to formally restrict any authorized motor vehicle use, we need to enter into a partnership with the borough every time we want to do so.

KNSC has been doing all along. Other parcels. The permits and the lease all expire next year, therefore, it is timely to enter into an agreement that will give us longer-term management authority over our trails.

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KNSC Board of Directors and I are therefore looking to have: for the benefit of Nordic skiing, skiing, racing and playing in this year’s winter racing and playing in this year’s. The program takes youth to different trailheads. Rental equipment is available. First session — Saturday, Jan. 27, at Lookout Mountain Recreation Area, 1-2:30 p.m. Other locations TBA.

Kachemak Women’s Nordic Program — Intended for those skiers looking to improve their ski technique and establish a regular training program. Racing is encouraged but not required. The group focuses on skating and classical techniques. Practice is held three to six times a week. Participants must be KSNC members. Programming begins Jan. 27-Feb. 24, Saturdays – Junior Nordic Program — First session on Jan. 27 at Lookout Mountain Recreation Area. Thirty-five Saturdays of winter fun. The program takes youth to different trailheads. Rental equipment is available. First session – Saturday, Jan. 27, at Lookout Mountain Recreation Area, 1-2:30 p.m. Other locations TBA.

PSIA Coaching Clinics – Wednesdays afternoons. Contact Megan Corazza at 299-6975.

Junior Nordic Program — First session on Jan. 27 at Lookout Mountain Recreation Area, 1-2:30 p.m. Other locations TBA.

Kachemak Bay Marathon Ski — Sponsored by Kachemak Women’s Nordic, to train co-ed intermediate skiers to improve their ski technique and fitness levels. Five-week course with 10 sessions, running from January 27 through February 28, on Mondays, noon-2 p.m., and Saturdays, 10 a.m.-noon. Locations depend on snow conditions. Cost — $50. To participate, phone coordinator Jasmine Maurer at 299-6975.

Co-Ed Intermediate Skate Technique and Tour Preparation Awareness — A new program, sponsored by Kachemak Women’s Nordic, to train co-ed intermediate skiers to improve their ski technique and fitness levels. Five-week course with 10 sessions, running from January 27 through February 28, on Mondays, noon-2 p.m., and Saturdays, 10 a.m.-noon. Locations depend on snow conditions. Cost — $50. To participate, phone coordinator Jasmine Maurer at 299-6975.

Looking for your input on this process, especially if you have specific information on specific Borough parcels that we may not be aware of (see the map on page for updates, as well as occasional emails and future newsletters.

Snow! Our trails cross. Moreover, KNSC will require more work upfront, but should lower the workload over the longer term. The load will be lowered because KNSC won’t need to consult with the borough every time we want to perform trail work at one of the permitted parcels, and we won’t need a letter to potential funders stating the Borough’s intention to continue to renew the permits/lease. One especially important funding source requires this sort of long-term agreement with owners of the lands that our trails cross. Moreover, KNSC will
**New Co-ed Ski Clinic available in Homer**

**BY JEANNIE WOODRING**

The Kachemak Women’s Nordic program, formerly known as Homer Women’s Nordic, has offered Nordic instruction and training to women in Homer for over 11 years. The program has become hugely successful—and many ladies would love to have their significant others ski with them from time to time.

Now the men are welcome—in a new intermediate to advanced co-ed program that starts on January 27.

Jasmine Maurer, one of five directors for the Women’s Nordic Program, has been involved with that program for seven years. “The program has always been evolving to match the changing interests of participants,” she said. “Last year we heard repeatedly from the Nordic community and Women’s Nordic participants of the need for two opportunities to provide for their current interests. One was more technique instruction and the second was to create an opportunity for men to participate in a group setting.”

So the idea for a co-ed training program emerged. The Co-Ed Program will be led by a collaboration of volunteer coaches from the Women’s Nordic Program and the greater ski community. The Co-Ed Program will focus on skate technique. Starting on January 27, the group will meet Wednesdays from noon to 2 p.m., and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to noon, for five weeks and 10 sessions. Cost is $50.

The goal of the program is to improve skate technique and to prepare skiers for the Tour of Anchorage, scheduled for March 4. To sign up for the program, contact Maurer at 907-299-6975.

Meanwhile, the Co-Ed Program will be held at the KNSC clubhouse on 11th Street in Homer. The KNSC is seeking male participants for the beginning and intermediate levels. Contact Brenda at 907-235-4575 or email bchambers@knsca.org for information.

While on the team, Corazza also took on another huge challenge: co-authoring the nation’s technical manual for teaching Nordic skiing. She literally helped write the book for coaching cross-country.

And now she’s offering her coaching skills to Homer—along with the lessons she has learned along her ski journey.

“I got overcommitted and I was asking other people to overcommit,” she says. “Our ski club is entirely run by volunteers. I think there is a healthier way to do it. I gave time to skiing that should have been given to my family and my marriage and the cost was very high.”

Now, she adds, “I am trying to return to skiing with more balance and perspective. I have volunteered to be the director of coaching education for the Junior Nordic Program. And if anyone wants to get their Level I-III PSIA certification, I can help with that.”

As Director of Coaches, Corazza is also leading PSIA coaching clinics, which take place on Wednesday afternoons. To take part, contact her at 299-0687 (text is best).

“I have always believed that coaches are the foundation of the ski community,” Corazza concluded, “but now I am doing it in a much more relaxed manner.”
Q&A with Norma Haubenstock, NSCF Volunteer Coordinator

Q: How are you involved with the NSCF?

I have volunteered with the NSCF for over 20 years, mostly working as the volunteer coordinator for many of the competition events. The first big event that I worked on in Fairbanks was 2003 Junior Nationals and after that I was hooked because the crew was so helpful, kind, and did such a great job. Other events included Distance Nationals 2008, 2009 and 2017, Arctic Winter Games 2014, Junior Nationals 2013, many years of high school championships and our own local town races. Many of the crew members who currently volunteer at our races are also some of the same people who helped in 2003. It is wonderful group.

Q: How long have you been a cross-country skier? What do you remember about your first time on skis?

I have been a cross-country skier since my first winter in Fairbanks in 1982. But my first memorable cross-country ski was around 1977 in the Lake Tahoe, California, area. I remember the smell of pine tar and then slowly meandering up a beautifully snowy trail. The snow was deep and soft and we had a picnic in the sunshine, which included wine slushies.

Q: What do you like about cross-country skiing?

I love the total body workout of cross-country skiing and the silence of being out on the trails. I love skiing alone and skiing with friends. It is a great way to stay warm outside during the winter.

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

I especially like to ski at the Birch Hill Recreation area, because I going up hills to get a great workout and we live very near those trails. I also appreciate the great grooming and the rhythm of skiing there. I also like the many other trails in Fairbanks and surrounding areas.

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

I moved to Fairbanks in June 1982 for a job at the Institute of Marine Science, at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. I love living in Fairbanks because it is so easy to get outside on the trails and quickly be out in nature. I love our circle of friends and our community of kind and great people. I love that “rush hour” only lasts for 20 minutes and doesn’t involve too many cars.

Q: Is there anything more you want to tell us about yourself?

I was born and raised in Tampa, Florida. I am the only one of five siblings who doesn’t live within 45 minutes of the house I grew up in. They don’t get living in Alaska. I have worked at UAF for over 30 years and have been blessed with great supervisors and co-workers. In 2004, I got my massage license and have been practicing part-time ever since. In 2005 and 2007, I traveled with friends to ski across Finland in the Rajalla Rajalla Hiihto.
Skiing through growth/
Growth through skiing

BY OWEN W. HANLEY

The wonderful thing about skiing is the way it can hold different purposes throughout life. Aside from my parents, skiing has been one of the most constant relationships in my life. It has transcended friendships, physical growth and change from youth to young adult to fatherhood. Just like friends that hold special meaning and impact your growth through a particular phase of life, I see the ways in which skiing has supported my growth.

My first memories of skiing are, in fact, some of my first memories. I remember my father’s hands picking me up out of the snow – shuffling a few awkward strides, falling and there he was to pick me up again. A gift of support, perhaps, so much more significant than I could have realized at the time. In my elementary school years skiing was a way to “go fast” and be with friends. I remember climbing up the glacial moraine behind our cabin in the Alaska Range, putting on my skis and pointing them straight down the hill. I would do this for hours with my brother and friends in the spring warmth of the March and April sun.

In high school and continuing into college, skiing became the outlet of my competitive growth. Setting goals that motivated me, working towards those goals … most of the time failing in the attempt, but refocusing each time. The relationships I made through skiing in those years last with me still and those people remain some of my closest confidants. Following college, I continued to ski competitively; in retrospect, I think I needed to see what I was capable of when dedicating myself to one goal.

Transitioning into a professional career with postgraduate training, skiing was my outlet. It brought me away from study and a sedentary life and into the outdoors each day, providing me time in the natural world. I began, once again, to use skiing as a way to get into the backcountry and the rare/beautiful places of the world, something that had become less of a priority during my more competitive skiing years.

Today, 35 years after my first memories on snow, each fall I still await those first snowflakes with anticipation. Skiing is my way of staying healthy and exploring the outdoors as life has brought new diversions with work and family. My two-year-old daughter, who is yet to take her first strides this season, runs around the house with any available stick or similar object mimicking the movements she has seen from her folks and saying, “I ski, I ski!” I hope skiing can have the same influence on her life – a way to develop strong friendships, a healthy body and a sense of appreciation and wonder in the natural world.

**SKIERS DISCOUNT**

**Skiing through growth/ Growth through skiing**

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**AROUND THE INTERIOR**
Continued from Page 14

number of Junior Nordics participants is growing along with the interest in our awesome sport! You do not need experience to participate, just a positive attitude and love of skiing that you are willing to share. If you are interested please contact Sally Endestad at juneorndics@nscairbanks.org. Junior Nordics lessons take place: 6:30 p.m. Monday at UAF West Ridge, 6:30 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday at Birch Hill, and 2 p.m. Sunday at Birch Hill. There is also a new daytime pilot program at 1 p.m. at Birch Hill Ski Center intended for home school children. See www.nscairbanks.org for more information.

**NSCF 50th anniversary – Youth Ski Challenge**

The 2017-2018 ski season marks the 50th year of the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks. We are encouraging kids in grade K-6 to get out on the trails to help us celebrate by skiing 50 kilometers this season! Ski with a friend, parent or coach and keep track of your distance – you will be surprised how far you ski! Registration will be available soon at Junior Nordics, FNSB elementary schools and online – but you can start recording your Ks now! Awards for all finishers and each grade level and a “midway” prize once you get to 25K! Those that complete the challenge will be entered into a drawing for fun ski gear to be awarded in March. For more information contact Kate Carey at katecarey907@gmail.com.

**BY OWEN W. HANLEY**

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My first memories of skiing are, in fact, some of my first memories. I remember my father’s hands picking me up out of the snow – shuffling a few awkward strides, falling and there he was to pick me up again. A gift of support, perhaps, so much more significant than I could have realized at the time. In my elementary school years skiing was a way to “go fast” and be with friends. I remember climbing up the glacial moraine behind our cabin in the Alaska Range, putting on my skis and pointing them straight down the hill. I would do this for hours with my brother and friends in the spring warmth of the March and April sun.

In high school and continuing into college, skiing became the outlet of my competitive growth. Setting goals that motivated me, working towards those goals … most of the time failing in the attempt, but refocusing each time. The relationships I made through skiing in those years last with me still and those people remain some of my closest confidants. Following college, I continued to ski competitively; in retrospect, I think I needed to see what I was capable of when dedicating myself to one goal.

Transitioning into a professional career with postgraduate training, skiing was my outlet. It brought me away from study and a sedentary life and into the outdoors each day, providing me time in the natural world. I began, once again, to use skiing as a way to get into the backcountry and the rare/beautiful places of the world, something that had become less of a priority during my more competitive skiing years.

Today, 35 years after my first memories on snow, each fall I still await those first snowflakes with anticipation. Skiing is my way of staying healthy and exploring the outdoors as life has brought new diversions with work and family. My two-year-old daughter, who is yet to take her first strides this season, runs around the house with any available stick or similar object mimicking the movements she has seen from her folks and saying, “I ski, I ski!” I hope skiing can have the same influence on her life – a way to develop strong friendships, a healthy body and a sense of appreciation and wonder in the natural world.
Skiers take to trails lit by the peaceful glow of flickering candles

Goldstream Sports presents: Birch Hill Canola Light Ski

Check out the beauty of Nordic skiing and a Fairbanks winter night at Birch Hill. The Fairbanks community is invited to a midwinter candlelight ski. Please join us from 4-7 p.m. Thursday, January 4, at Birch Hill Recreation Area as we turn off the trail lights and instead brighten and warm the snow with hundreds of candles. This is a free event and all ages and abilities are welcome, so bring your family and friends. A beginner loop around the stadium will be available, and the warmup loop will be uniquely flickering.

Foot care for the cross-country skiers throughout winter

BY ZUZANA ROGERS
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Now that racing season is in full swing, we may be skiing several times per week in our ultralight (and stiff) ski boots strapped into a pair of skinny skis. As the racing and training ramp up, many of us notice this annoying foot/arch/Achilles pain that just does not go away no matter how much we stretch or rest.

Sound familiar? The biggest issue is that we stop using the muscles in our lower leg and foot appropriately — some get very strong but many lag behind, developing imbalances that eventually show up as pain.

You can do a quick check:
1. Stand on a hard floor, barefoot. Can you lift your toes? Can you stand on the ball of your foot and lift your toes?
2. Hip flexor stretch
3. Plantar fascia stretch
4. Tibialis anterior strength
5. Shuffle walk

Can you go into a full squat with heels on the ground and not fall over? Is your calf restricting you to do that?

Exercises to try:
1. Calf stretch – gastrocnemius/soleus