ANCHORAGE:
So many memories: NSAA Photo Contest

EAGLE RIVER:
Youthful enthusiasm from skiers, volunteers

MAT-SU:
Twice the racing fun with Icicle Double

FAIRBANKS:
Wax up and explore the Trails Challenge

BONUS SECTION!
Visit anchorgenordicski.com/newsletter/ for four extra pages of fun photos, Olympic athlete profiles and Alaska Nordic news!

Anchorage . . . . . . 2
Eagle River . . . . . . 9
Fairbanks . . . . . . 14
Girdwood . . . . . . 11
Kachemak . . . . . . 12
Mat-Su . . . . . . 10
Snow on the ground, skiers on the trails

Message from NSAA staff and Board of Directors

‘Tis the season for Nordic skiing!

We are excited that December welcomes us with snow on the ground, both manmade and the natural kind. Snowmaking guns at Kincaid Park got a lot of skiers excited in early November as our NSAA Operations crew led a team of incredibly talented volunteers in running the equipment. Laying down that first layer of base early in the season is good for all skiers – recreational and competitive. Racers from our high school teams are prepping for their first competition: the Freestyle Snowball Race on December 2. NSAA’s Ski Jumping and Junior Nordics programs are flourishing with happy skiers, as well as new and returning families. Hundreds of kids and coaches are canvassing Anchorage’s trails each night, staying active and healthy. Our December issue of the Nordic Skier is packed with great stories and updates including the unveiling of new technology at the Kincaid stadium. Thanks to Gunnar and Alice Knapp, the new weather camera is catching glimpses of real time conditions at Kincaid and the chance to watch skiers zoom by the lens. The highly anticipated Solstice Tree Tour planning continues with last-minute details for the December 17 community event at Kincaid Park. Thanks to the great work of Sara Miller, the event director, and the countless volunteers, sponsors and organizations – you won’t want to miss it! Along with Santa’s elves, Nordic volunteers are also working especially hard this season prepping for a big event: U.S. Nationals starting January 3 at Kincaid Park. Look for information in the December issue of Coast magazine and the January issue of the Nordic Skier. We hope to see you all there cheering on 400 of America’s – and Alaska’s – top athletes. The NSAA staff, board and volunteers continue working hard for your ski club, striving to do better every day to promote skiing through quality programs, events and trails. That said, holiday schedules typically bring extra down time to ski, so we’ll see you out there!

AROUND THE BOWL

Tour of Trees: A can’t miss holiday tradition

NSAA is proud to bring back the second annual Solstice Tour of Trees, a unique Alaska celebration of winter solstice and the return of longer days! This year’s event is from 4-7 p.m. Sunday, December 17, at Kincaid Park.

As a northern community, Anchorage loves events that encourage all ages and abilities to get outside and celebrate winter. The event allows people to tour decorated trees along the first 2.5k of the Mize Loop. Local businesses will sponsor trees along the route and can decorate trees along the first 2.5k of the Mize Loop. Local businesses, family and organizations are all welcome; there are many possibilities including sponsoring and decorating a tree, sponsoring a feature of the event, or in-kind donations. Please contact alsaramiller@yahoo.com if you are interested or have questions.

AARP, NSAA partner to offer affordable skiing and lessons

A few seasons ago, AARP Alaska teamed up with NSAA with one goal in mind: to help empower people to choose how they live as they age. What better way than with Nordic skiing? Daryl Royce, Community Outreach Director, had the vision: “AARP may be known for discounts, but offering a discount on Nordic ski lessons opens the door to those who have never tried the sport.” This will be the third season of AARP sponsoring 50+ Nordic ski lessons through NSAA. Last year, 23 participants took advantage of a five-week lesson series at half the normal price thanks to the partnership. Instructors walked through the basics of cross-country skiing in small groups, instilling the love of outdoor winter activity in each skier. Learn more about these opportunities by calling the NSAA office at 276-7609.

NSAA Jr. Nordics – And they’re off!

NSAA Jr. Nordics is off to a roaring start – parents and kids are enjoying the after-school practice from 4:30-5:30 p.m. (especially because that means an early bedtime!).
How’s the weather at Kincaid? NSAA lets you see for yourself!

Why doesn’t Kincaid Park have a weather camera? How can we show skiers live footage of the conditions like other ski clubs in Alaska can do? How hard would it be?

A vision several years ago by longtime member, volunteer and avid skier Alice Knapp became reality in November at Kincaid Park’s stadium. Thanks to the Knapp family, funding and a grand thank you to our jacket sponsors ConocoPhillips and UBS.

FYI to parents: The second session is filling up fast!

Register today and learn more about the Jr. Nordic program, coaching and other opportunities at www.anchoragenordicski.com/junior-nordic-coaching.

Explore Southcentral on an NSAA Tour
Get NSAA tours info at anchoragenordicski.com/tours/backcountry-tours. Anchorage Nordic Ski Patrol provides safety, trail sweep and other assistance. Patti Phillips, Co-chair, NSAA contact, 249-3742, phillipsp@chugach.net; Mary Vavrik, Co-chair, Nordic Ski Patrol contact, 396-7686, mrvavrik@gci.net; Karlene Leeper, Co-chair: Denali View Chalet, 440-0049, klkeeper@alaska.net; and Ken DePalma, Co-chair: AT and Tele-ski tours, 449-1562, traveler@alaska.net.

UPCOMING TOURS
December 9 — Iditarod Trail INHT from Eddie’s to Turnagain Pass; Tour leader — Mary Vavrik.
December 15 — Friday Night Fun Ski, North Bivouac Trailhead; Tour leader — Ken DePalma.
January 20, 2018 — Friday Night Fun Ski, Mike 1.2 Campbell Atrium 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 overnights (midweek) at private cabin on Red Shirt Lake; Tour leader — Patti Phillips.

Find all tours and more information at anchoragenordicski.com/tours.htm.

NSAA calendar of events

DECEMBER
Friday, December 1 — First Friday Winter Art and Beer Night, Resolution Brewery
Saturday, December 2 — ASD High School Freestyle Snowball Race, Hillside
Sunday, December 3 — Biathlon Race #1
Saturday-Friday, December 8-9 — ASD High School Lynx Loppet, Kincaid
Saturday, December 9 — NSAA Backcountry Tour — Iditarod Trail INHT from Eddie’s to Turnagain Pass
Friday, December 10 — AMH Anchorage Cup — AMH Freestyle
Friday, December 15 — NSAA Backcountry Tour — Friday Night Fun Ski
Saturday-Sunday, December 16-17 — Besh Cup #1 and #2, Kincaid
Saturday, December 17 — Solstice Tree Tour, Kincaid
Thursday, December 21 — Biathlon Race #2
Saturday-Sunday, December 30-31 — Idice Races, Governor Peak Nordic Area, 5K, 10K, 20K, 30K; classic on Saturday, freestyle on Sunday
TBA — Annual Speedskate/Skate Ski Duathlon
TBA — UAA Friends and Family Relay

JANUARY
January 3-8 — U.S. Nationals, Kincaid Park
Saturday, January 6 — Ski Jumping Competition — All Hills
Tuesday-Wednesday, January 9-10 — Junior Nordic Equipment Return
Saturday, January 13 — Junior Nordic Equipment Pickup
Saturday, January 13 — ASD High School Chugach Stampede, Chugiak
Saturday-Sunday, January 13-14 — AWG Biathlon Trials — Kincaid
Saturday-Monday, January 13-15 — NSAA Backcountry Tour — Two overnights at Sheep Mountain Lodge, Mat Glacier
Sunday, January 14 — AMH Anchorage Cup — Nickew Duathlon
Monday, January 15 — Ski Jumping Competition — All Hills
Tuesday, January 16 — Junior Nordic Session #2 Starts
Wednesday, January 17 — ASD High School Bartlett Relay — Bartlett
Friday, January 19 — NSAA Backcountry Tour — Friday Night Fun Ski
Saturday, January 20 — Sat Triflake Winter Triathlon Ltd.
Saturday-Sunday, January 20-21 — Besh Cup #3 and #4, Homer
Thursday, January 25 — ASD Middle School Race — Kincaid
Saturday, January 27 — ASD High School Skinton — Kincaid
Saturday, January 27 — NSAA Backcountry Tour — Willow Lake and out Middle Fork
Sunday, January 28 — AMH Anchorage Cup — Pat’s Classic
Tuesday-Thursday, January 30-February 1 — NSAA Backcountry Tour — Catch the Lunar Eclipse on January 31
Wednesday, January 31 — Wed ASD Middle School Race — Kincaid

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

The best of Alaska’s Nordic skiing adventures captured in the 2017 NSAA Photography Contest

Last winter, Nathan Jones was lucky enough to score perfect skiing conditions; he was also savvy enough to capture the stunning view with a photo.

This fall, Johnson and his photo won over the judges in the 2017 Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage Photography Contest, who named Jones’ shot Best of Show. Johnson’s winning shot was among nearly 100 entries in the 2017 edition of the annual competition. Top photos were showcased at the recent NSAA Season Kickoff.

For taking top prize, Jones earned a $50 gift card from Alaska Mountainneering and Hiking. Winners in each of the six categories earned $35 gift cards from AMH, second-place entrants received $25 AMH gift cards; third-place entrants received $15 AMH gift cards. NSAA, the Anchorage Nordic ski community and contest photographers thank Alaska Mountainneering and Hiking for the generous prizes.

NSAA also thanks the members who went online to vote for their favorite photos, as well as contest coordinator Amber Adams for her efforts behind the scenes, NSAA office staff Erin Beam and Tamra Kornfield for their assistance in proofing and editing, and Justin Ritter formerly of CRW Engineering Group, LLC for his graphic design and technical assistance.

NSAA selected contest photographs for its 2017-18 calendar, which is on sale now. Calendars are $10 at the NSAA office, AMH, Skinny Raven, Kaladi Coffee shops, SkiAK and The Boarding Marmot. The calendar is $12 on the NSAA website at www.anchorgaenordicski.com/merchandise or from adams@anchorgaenordicski.com.

Complete results from the 2017 NSAA Photography Contest:

Grand Prize – Nathan Jones “Sunny Tracks.”

Best in Snow – Nathan Jones. This sunny, perfectly groomed trail inspired the standout photo in the 2017 NSAA Photography Contest. Trails division.

NSAA Jumping Program brings stars to students

Alaska Ski Jumping went back to school this month, visiting Anchorage elementary schools to spread the word about ski jumping and Nordic combined with some special guests.

Coaches and athletes from NSAA’s Ski Jumping Program were joined by two special guests: Jed Hinkley, Sport Development Director for USA Nordic Sports, and Abby Ringquist, a member of the USA Women’s Ski Jumping team and an Olympic hopeful who is currently ranked 19th in the world.

This is the fifth year NSAA’s Ski Jumping Program has toured elementary schools, taking over gym classes and introducing students to the sport while leading them through physical activities that simulate jumping. Each year, the club visits four to six schools reaching anywhere from 300 to 500 students.

The visits help grow the sport in Anchorage – from four jumpers in 2010 to the second-largest ski jumping club in America today! NSAA has programs for kids ages 5 through 18, and adult ski jumping for the young

Kids on Skis – 1. Chris Tomsen “Girls Skiing together at Junior Nordic night”

Kids on Skis – 2. Adeline Wright “ANJL Hawks battling for third place at Ski 4 Kids”

Want to see more amazing photos? Visit anchorgaenordicski.com/newsletter/ and go to the Nordic Sports bonus section’s PAGE 17!
NSAA annual party, Ski Swap big hits

Alaska’s Nordic skiing stars Kikkan Randall, Sadie Bjornsen, Erik Bjornsen, Rosie Brennan and Scott Patterson were the guests of honor at NSAA’s annual season kickoff in early November at Kincaid Park. Mother Nature also showed up with a nice blanket of fresh snow, too!

Young aspiring skiers patiently waited in line to get posters signed and photos taken with the Olympians while others wished them luck in the 2018 U.S. Cross Country Ski Championships (January 3-8, Kincaid Park) and February’s Winter Olympics.

The kickoff buzzed with party people and an array of winter opportunities with local outdoor programs, vendors and community partners. Folks renewed NSAA club membership, connected about volunteer options and shopped auction items. NSAA staff and board addressed the crowd of around 200 with Nordic news, upcoming projects and club business.

The evening resulted in happy faces, full bellies and fun prizes!


Ski 4 Kids: Sheer joy for kids ... and everyone involved!

Jean Miller grew up skiing in Anchorage. As a mother, she spends time with her kids on the trails around Anchorage; as a second-grade teacher at Spring Hill Elementary School, she is now igniting a love of skiing and outdoor activity in the 120 kids who take part each year in a hugely popular after-school ski training program that culminates with their participation in the annual Ski 4 Kids.

Miller’s school’s ski program is so popular that registration fills in one day and a waiting list of 60 to 70 kids is not unusual. With enthusiastic support from fellow teachers and staff, some of whom don’t even ski, the only thing that limits growth of her school’s program is sufficient equipment.

The Ski 4 Kids event started in 1995 as a fundraiser to purchase ski equipment for Mountain View Elementary School. It has grown into a partnership between the Municipality of Anchorage, Healthy Futures and NSAA that nets between $7,000-$15,000 each year, which is given to schools and Municipal Parks and Recreation.

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NSAA Members of the Month: The Schwenn/Veltkamp family

Shelly Schwenn and Brent Veltkamp each started cross-country skiing at the tender age of 4. So it was no surprise years later when their daughter, Hannah, started racing around on skis at an even earlier age.

Another thing the Schwenn/Veltkamp family shares—a passion for supporting the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage and Anchorage’s trails. Brent and Shelly have been NSAA members and supporters for more than 20 years while Hannah is a happy ski for Kids participant. Of course, it was a no-brainer when it came to selecting the Schwenn/Veltkamp family as the NSAA Members of the Month. But our conversation with the family confirmed that they love giving back to their trails and community as much as they love skiing.

NSAA: What do you love about Nordic skiing? We love that you can go all winter, in town or in the mountains. Between skiing, touring and backcountry, there's always a Nordic discipline that will get you out enjoying nature. Skiing and winter sports seem more like a lifestyle than just what you do for exercise. Still, it's a great whole-body and cardio workout and it's all-around good for the soul.

We appreciate your generous support of NSAA! Why do you choose to donate to NSAA? We use the trails a lot and recognize that NSAA puts tremendous effort and expense into maintaining the trails. We want to be a part of supporting the skiing community.

What does NSAA’s mission mean to you? NSAA is a tremendous asset to our community, fostering an appreciation of skiing for all ages and abilities.

Do you have any standout moments from skiing, connecting with NSAA or participating in our programs or events that you would like to share? After skiing our whole lives, it is impossible to pick single standout moments. Whether it's floating down a mountainside of untracked powder, pulling off a great finish in a race when everything went well, nailing the spring crust when it's just right, or hitting the trails when the snow and your skis were just perfect, it seems like there have been hundreds of standout moments. Watching Hannah learn to ski and grow up enjoying outdoor activities has been amazing. We have enjoyed the Tour of Anchorage, the Sven, Ski for Women, and Ski for Kids.

Skiing is a go thanks to NSAA’s snowmaking

BY NSAA OPERATIONS

We think we’re finally getting the hang of this snowmaking thing. For several years, we’ve made snow on the Kincaid Park Snowmaking Loops and the system has proven to be a season-saver more than once. This year, like last year, meteorologists have predicted that the warm, wet weather associated with El Nino is out and La Nina is moving in bringing dryer, colder conditions which are more favorable for making snow.

Ideal snowmaking conditions (low temperatures and low humidity) during the 2016-2017 season allowed NSAA’s Operations staff and volunteers to work, around-the-clock on some days, from November 17-December 14. They completed the Snowmaking Loops, from start to finish, in 22 days. Last winter, we were able to improve our efficiency and decrease the cost of making snow. A better understanding and fine-tuning of the equipment contributed to that success, however the ideal weather conditions were most influential.

Volunteers began making snow this season on November 11. A few tests were run on two days, for six hours each, producing good results with just a few minor mechanical issues. A typical snowmaking shift takes two people for eight hours. The first person controls and monitors the system on the computer at the bunker. As conditions change, this person will tune the system to keep it stable.

For example: the snow guns and lances automatically start to produce more snow when the temperature starts to fall dramatically. While more snow may sound great, it can overtax the water supply and shut down the system. The person in the bunker can compensate for this by manually throttling the guns or lances down so they use less water, or they could just shut off one gun or lance.

The system will only produce between 150-170 gallons of water per minute. For instance, the lances typically run around 16 gallons per minute, but if the temperature falls 10 degrees, the water consumption can double to 32 gallons per minute. With eight or nine lances running at once, the water usage can get out of hand quickly.

FYI: a lance is a tall, stationary pole-like fixture along the side of the trail and a gun looks like a jet engine on a trailer that can be moved anywhere within 100 feet of a hydrant. The hydrants are located in the more open areas like the stadium, soccer fields and biathlon range. The second person spends most of the time in the field adjusting guns and lances for wind direction, and repositioning guns, hoses and wires. They report to the person in the bunker regarding any problems or changes that need to be made. This field person may also be a groomer moving and spreading snow.

As long as good snowmaking conditions last, the crew will continue the effort with the goal of producing 6-8 inches of base to allow for diagonal tracks. It’s very important to build a substantial base layer in order to support the frequent reconfiguring due to the needs of multiple events. An artificial base, even when there is natural snow, adds the durability required to endure this constant manipulation. With fan guns shooting snow, hoses and cords everywhere, and heavy equipment on the trails, we encourage skiers to avoid these loops during the snowmaking process for safety reasons.

The groomers will make, mound, push and spread snow as they go throughout the loop and follow up with grooming. Once the first loop is covered in 6-8 inches of snow and groomed, it will be open for skiers.

We’re excited to provide an opportunity for earlier skiing. This, of course, is a great advantage to competitive skiers, but also a great system to shrink the gap between summer and winter recreation for people who just love to ski.

Even the “cool” sixth grade boys think it’s amazing. “The sheer joy is infectious,” said Brent Veltkamp.

Overseeing NSAA’s coordination of this year’s Ski 4 Kids is Erin Whitney Witmer. She takes over from Iain Millner, who headed the event for NSAA in 2017 and was encouraged to get involved by longtime volunteer lead and former neighbor Alice Knapp Witmer. She has put together a leadership committee, but is looking for dozens more volunteers for event day.

“Whether you have children participating or not, consider coming out and experiencing the joy of the kids as you volunteer to help direct, guide or support them during the skiing and other activities,” she said.

Local schools, generous donors, registered participants and volunteers are all important to the event’s success. This year’s Ski for Kids is February 24, from noon-4:00 p.m., at Kincaid Park. To register, go to www.anchoragenordicski.com. Information on the grant process will be included in future NSAA newsletters.
Considering a new Nordic challenge? Take aim at biathlon!

BY MARTI PAUSBACK
NSAA BIATHLON

By now, you’ve probably heard of biathlon. This fast growing sport is a combination of cross country and precision rifle shooting. It’s become quite popular in Alaska and it’s growing across the nation. Biathlete Jennifer Gersten is a former Anchorage resident and she’s frequently featured in the Anchorage Press, the Anchorage Daily News, and Alaska Ski Racing. She recently discussed the sport in this month’s Alaska Ski Racing Magazine. Check it out online at alaskaskimagine.org. An awesome feature is the race schedule for Anchorage’s NSAA Biathlon: winter races in Anchorage, the Alaska State Championships in Fairbanks, and the Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse. The 2018 winter games will take place in PyeongChang, South Korea.

Biathletes are poised to do well – Low-ell Bailey placed first in a 2017 World Cup biathlon race and Susan Dunkeen is second. It is exciting to see Alaska biathletes are poised to do well – Low-ell Bailey placed first in a 2017 World Cup biathlon race and Susan Dunkeen is second. It is exciting to see biathletes compete in the 2018 Arctic Winter Games trials, the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, and the 2018 Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse.

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The Anchorage NSAA biathlon community will host the final race in the Winter Games trials and a team of young Alaska biathletes will be named to Team Alaska. Young athletes will then travel to Slave Lake, Canada, to compete in the 2018 Arctic Winter Games.

In February, we will all be glued to our TVs watching the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang. Two U.S. biathletes are poised to do well – Low-ell Bailey placed first in a 2017 World Cup biathlon race and Susan Dunkeen placed second. It is exciting to see U.S. biathletes stand on the podium in World Cup races. We have high hopes for them in the Olympics.

NSA's final race of our series will be the Alaska State Championships. These two races will combine the last race in the Alaska Gold Rush Series with the NSA’s State Championships. Top finishers can win handcrafted awards. Total points from the state-wide Gold Rush Series are tabulated and the best Alaska biathletes are recognized. We will celebrate the end of the season with a potluck and awards ceremony.

Check out biathlon and see what it is all about. You can compete, volunteer and just join in the fun. There’s also bowls of soup and a welcoming community.

NSA’s Biathlon 2017-18 race schedule includes:

ANCHORAGE RACE SERIES
1 p.m. Sunday, December 3 — Race #1 Sprint
7 p.m. Thursday, December 21 — Race #2 Sprint
11 a.m. Saturday, January 13 — Race #3 Individual (Arctic Winter Games Trials & Community Race)
12 a.m. Sunday, January 14 — Race #4 Sprint (Arctic Winter Games Trials & Community Race)
7 p.m. Wednesday, February 14 — Race #5 Sprint
11 a.m. Saturday, March 3 — Race #7 Pursuit

NSA BIATHLON STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS
(In conjunction with AK Gold Rush Series)
6 p.m. Friday, March 2 — Race #6 Sprint
1 p.m. Saturday, March 3 — Race #7 Pursuit

Register online and learn more about NSA at anchorage nordic ski.com/biathlon.

www.anchoragenordicski.com/merchandise 907-276-7609 203 W 15th Ave #204, Anchorage, AK 99503

Do you have the mettle to win these Alaska State Championships biathlon medals? Sign up for biathlon and start practicing today!
NSAA Partner Spotlight: Ayleska Pipeline Service Company

Many equate the first big snowfall with shoveling driveways and brushing off cars... and then there are Nordic skiers. To them, snow means skiing and skiing means happiness! Ayleska Pipeline Service Company staff knows this familiar feeling firsthand – many of its employees, from Anchorage to Fairbanks to Valdez, love to hit the trails and backcountry each winter. Stressing safety and personal healthiness, Ayleska encourages healthy living through activity and values what NSAA does to achieve this: trail work and winter opportunities to keep all Alaskans active.

“The prevalence and accessibility of Nordic skiing in Anchorage make our town special,” according to Katie Pesznecker, Stakeholder Relations Manager at Ayleska Pipeline. “We talk a lot about how unique our state is, and what sort of quality of life factors make it an attractive place to live and work. More than 95 percent of our 800 employees live in Alaska, so it’s important to support work that makes this place even better.”

She added, “NSAA performs truly unique work that is tangibly making Anchorage a better place.”

Ayleska supports NSAA each year with financial gifts and its employer match and volunteering programs. Supporting organizations that make Alaska communities vibrant is an essential part of Ayleska’s philanthropic mission. NSAA is doing that: making Anchorage vibrant and special, providing unique service to the community.

“Anchorage’s trails are a true gem and NSAA is definitely making the community healthier and more lively with its work,” said Pesznecker.

Congratulations to Ayleska Pipeline Service Company for its 40th year of operating the Trans Alaska Pipeline System and moving oil in Alaska, and for showing a strong commitment to making Alaska a better place! Thank you for your continued support of NSAA, making Anchorage a great place to live and keeping our community skiing!

NSAA Volunteer of the Month: Liz Butera

Liz Butera has been skiing for nearly 50 years, including a stint on Team USA, and spent more than 30 of those years with NSAA. She has volunteered intermittently since NSAA hosted the World Masters Races. NSAA spoke with Liz recently to talk about her passion for skiing and volunteering.

NSAA: What kind of volunteering are you doing for NSAA these days?

LIZ BUTERA: Currently I am a Green Grunt mainly for high school races. Alice Knapp, Meg Stehn and I sort and distribute team bibs. Once the bibs are distributed I usually work the finish line collecting them again! There are always different volunteer opportunities throughout the year.

For instance, brushing out trails in the fall, shoveling snow onto trails during low snow years, helping with feed stations at races, course monitor during races, helping at the ski swap.

What do you love about Nordic skiing?

I love classic skiing and the endorphin rush that comes with it! I love the Nordic Ski community – the shared love of skiing brings so many amazing healthy people together.

We appreciate your time, energy and unique skills that you volunteer with NSAA. Why do you choose to volunteer?

I raced cross-country skiing in college and was briefly on the U.S. Ski Team. My ski racing experience provided me with many life experiences and opportunities that I never would have if it had not been for all the ski race volunteers in my youth! I want to give back to the ski community.

NSAA Volunteer of the Month: Liz Butera

What is special to you about volunteering?

The camaraderie volunteering provides.

Can you please talk about the role that NSAA and its volunteers play in Alaska’s Nordic skiing community?

I am so grateful for the trail systems such as Kincaid Park and Hillside Trails that NSAA and its volunteers have developed and maintained over the years. Our community is incredibly lucky to have access to these trails year-round.
AROUND CHUGIAK/EAGLE RIVER

Where there’s Will (and others), there’s ER Junior Nordic
CERNSC thanks Will Taygan, longtime Eagle River Junior Nordic coordinator. The Eagle River Junior Nordic program has thrived over the past several seasons under his community-minded leadership. Will led the program into a burgeoning membership nearly topping off at 200 children.

However, with his own children aging out of Junior Nordic, Will is helping the program transition to new leadership. During the 2017-18 season, Will will remain involved in Junior Nordic, but two new volunteers, Rish Harty and Ryan Caldwell, will step into leadership roles.

The Eagle River Junior Nordic Program starts December 4 and 5 and goes through March with Monday-Wednesday and Tuesday-Thursday options. The program relies on parent volunteers to keep costs low, and offers an attractive ski rental program. For more information about Eagle River Junior Nordic, visit our website at cernsc.wildapricot.org.

Skis like teen spirit – ER High ready to rock

The Eagle River High School ski team is ready for the 2017-2018 season! We have 43 athletes on our roster, which is a larger team for our school. We have several returning skiers, and also a large group of skiers who have never skied before and decided to give the sport a try! The team is about evenly split among male and females. We have several freshmen, but the team is mostly made up of upper classmen.

Due to grizzly bears located on the trails and around the high school, the team was forced to dry land train the first two weeks of the season. Skiing in Alaska is always an adventure! Luckily the bears have moved on, and we were able to get on snow the third week of the season. The snow pack is thin in the Eagle River area, but we are making the best of what snow we have. The athletes are all enthusiastic and ready for some more snow time!

Coach Jan Buron

2017: AWS 20-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

CONGRATULATIONS
Annual meeting also an annual reminder of the impact of skiing

Message from President Hans Hill

I’m always hesitant to write about the club’s annual meeting after the fact. The objective could be to entice people to attend next year, but I think we all can agree that this is a bit of a fool’s errand, however; we had something special this year. Sure, we had the same venue, the same MC (your truly) and the same fare (it was the first year that the pizza was demolished in the first 30 minutes). It wasn’t the addition of fermented-carbonated beverages (though, Arskoe Brewery has been very good to us this past year) or the great door prizes from Backcountry Bike and Ski, or the acknowledged generosity of the wonderful volunteers who were pivotal in making the GPRA Phase II trails happen (Thank you Ed and Mark Strabel, Lucas Parker and Dave Werner), though all of these things were awesome. No, I really believe the special thing that brought out the crowds was our guest speaker, Holly Brooks.

Her notoriety of being a two-time Olympian, who has been so successful at the national and international level, not to mention her two wins at Mount Marathon, surely put her in the top tier, but the takeaway from her presentation was probably a bit different for me than everyone else.

Turning back the clock a bit and changing the topic back to me … I came to this sport slightly later in life than Holly. My mom’s second cousin (which I’m not sure makes us related) was perusing an Olympic dream by competing in the team trials. During his training regimen, he convinced my parents that my family should get into cross-country skiing. This might have been prompted by my relatively sedentary existence in doors. I was 11 years old and I thought my mom’s second cousin was a god amongst men.

Fast forward to my freshman year of high school, I had spent several years in Junior Nordics, and my family had recently moved to the Matanuska Valley. I had struggled to make new friends, and those I had acquired were described by my folks as “questionable.” My grades had begun to suffer and those parental units began wondering what to do. Then began my first season of high school skiing.

Being part of the ski community was a transformative experience. I might as well have been prescribed a pill called “teen-turned-right.” Those kids and their parents made me want to be better, to ski and be a better person. My transcripts reflected this change, as well as my types of extracurricular activities and volunteer efforts. I joined the cross-country running team that following year to further increase my aerobic capacity … and to expand my time to hang out with my friends. I spent the remaining years of high school focusing my life around Nordic skiing and those involved with it. One perfect anecdote of this occurred the beginning of my senior year. As I sat in our pre-meet class counseling session, it became apparent that my teammates/classmates were all enrolled in the advancement placement English class. They convinced me to enroll, too. Thankfully nobody checked to see if I had the prerequisites …

I still keep in touch with some of Junior Nordics kids and those same high school ski team members. And because of those experiences, I consider the members of our sports some of the best people. It is why I try to return the favors the sport has done for me by participating in the MSSC.

Which brings me back to Holly. As I was talking in the back of our annual membership meeting, I mentioned to one of our members how great her presentation was. His reply, “Yeah, but she’s such an inspiring person and great speaker. I want to be friends with her …” All true. Fortunately for me I can give credit to that member’s observations. Her story is awesome, in the literal sense, actual Merriam-Webster definition sense, but as my astute fellow member pointed out, there is more to her than an accomplished athlete.

Holly is one of my major points to my thesis; Nordic skiers are some of the great people of the world and as such, to be part of this community/sport makes you a better person. Thankfully, she (and Rob, too) have helped expand that number of good people with their family addition of twins.

Annual meeting also an annual reminder of the impact of skiing

Message from President Hans Hill

I’m always hesitant to write about the club’s annual meeting after the fact. The objective could be to entice people to attend next year, but I think we all can agree that this is a bit of a fool’s errand, however; we had something special this year. Sure, we had the same venue, the same MC (your truly) and the same fare (it was the first year that the pizza was demolished in the first 30 minutes). It wasn’t the addition of fermented-carbonated beverages (though, Arskoe Brewery has been very good to us this past year) or the great door prizes from Backcountry Bike and Ski, or the acknowledged generosity of the wonderful volunteers who were pivotal in making the GPRA Phase II trails happen (Thank you Ed and Mark Strabel, Lucas Parker and Dave Werner), though all of these things were awesome. No, I really believe the special thing that brought out the crowds was our guest speaker, Holly Brooks.

Her notoriety of being a two-time Olympian, who has been so successful at the national and international level, not to mention her two wins at Mount Marathon, surely put her in the top tier, but the takeaway from her presentation was probably a bit different for me than everyone else.

Turning back the clock a bit and changing the topic back to me … I came to this sport slightly later in life than Holly. My mom’s second cousin (which I’m not sure makes us related) was perusing an Olympic dream by competing in the team trials. During his training regimen, he convinced my parents that my family should get into cross-country skiing. This might have been prompted by my relatively sedentary existence in doors. I was 11 years old and I thought my mom’s second cousin was a god amongst men.

Fast forward to my freshman year of high school, I had spent several years in Junior Nordics, and my family had recently moved to the Matanuska Valley. I had struggled to make new friends, and those I had acquired were described by my folks as “questionable.” My grades had begun to suffer and those parental units began wondering what to do. Then began my first season of high school skiing.

Being part of the ski community was a transformative experience. I might as well have been prescribed a pill called “teen-turned-right.” Those kids and their parents made me want to be better, to ski and be a better person. My transcripts reflected this change, as well as my types of extracurricular activities and volunteer efforts. I joined the cross-country running team that following year to further increase my aerobic capacity … and to expand my time to hang out with my friends. I spent the remaining years of high school focusing my life around Nordic skiing and those involved with it. One perfect anecdote of this occurred the beginning of my senior year. As I sat in our pre-meet class counseling session, it became apparent that my teammates/classmates were all enrolled in the advancement placement English class. They convinced me to enroll, too. Thankfully nobody checked to see if I had the prerequisites …

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All systems go ... and so is Chelsea Holmes!

BY BRIANA SULLIVAN
Girdwood Nordic Ski Club

The ground has frozen, the resort is mak-
ing snow nearby, and Girdwood Nordic Ski Club is ready for white to continue falling from the sky. How about without abandon? Fortunately, flakes are swirling and drifting downward as I type, landing snugly on the trails and meadows around Girdwood. Skiers, groomers and winter enthusiasts are hoping for the layers to thicken and remain solid so our familiar season resumes for the Earth, the animals, our ecosystem, but especially for the fun that lies ahead.

Girdwood’s volunteer groomers are set to comb and now have a brand-new pair of bridges to cre-
tate corduroy along! GNSC recently completed the swift replacement of two bridges behind Our Lady of the Snows Chapel. Local contractors built the fresh connectors stout and strong, continuing an awesome loop for multi-use winter recreation in the Girdwood Valley. Park near Moose Meadow or Our Lady of the Snows to reach all the trails with a fun warm-up or as a place to meet your family, four-legged friends, or pull some bundled kids. When Moose Meadow has ideal snowpack, reaching the bridges is simple, and the outing ads kilometers.

On this side of the valley, where the first snow is always the best place to ski for miles around, our 5K-only loop may begin your outing. The park-
ing lot at the end of Arlberg Road offers a great loc-
ation to start a healthy classic or skate ski loop up and down the intermediate and advanced groomed trail. Alongside, giant spruce trees look over gliding skiers and big sky above gives light to our darkest days.

Celebrate Solstice and skiing on December 22

They are only getting shorter for a few more days. Join us for Ski to the Light on Friday, De-
cember 22, around 7 p.m. The fun will be ready for skiers donning headlamps and festive lights to ski a loop and then gather by the bonfire for hot choco-
late and company at the GNSC kiosk. If you haven’t become a member yet for the 2017-18 season, join on Winter Solstice and get a moose mug to keep your cocoa warm. We look forward to sharing the celebration of daylight with you as we extend the outdoor fun of holiday break with our skiing com-

munity! We are so fortunate to have maintained trails in Girdwood’s beautiful valley. Just add snow and our volunteers bounce into action. Check ski-
girdwood.org for maps, updates, and snow condi-
tions. Share photos too!

Holmes represents Girdwood and America on the biggest stages

While we yearn for winter at home, Girdwood’s Chelsea Holmes begins her season in Finland to ski in the World Cup. From Finland, Holmes will ski in Norway, Switzerland and Italy. Over the next five weeks, she plans to compete in nine World Cup events. Sometime after these races, the U.S. Ski Team will be decided. The APU skier and Girdwood native won the overall SuperTour (granting her World Cup starts for this year’s first session), and won the U.S. Nationals 20K classic mass start in January at Soldier Hollow. Just days before that, Holmes initially made her championship presence felt as she placed second by 2.2 seconds in the 10K ski at nationals. When the 2016-17 season was officially in the rearview, FasterSkier unveiled its annual award winners for the past winter. APU’s Chelsea Holmes and Scott Patterson were named the FasterSkier’s Breakthrough Skiers of the Year! Votes are taken from the FS staff, which is across the U.S., Canada, and Europe. FS says, “This un-
scientific review is intended to reflect the broader sense of the season, and the set of honors goes to breakthrough U.S. skiers.”

By virtue of her lead in Europe in the Super Tour last spring, she will aim to uphold her standings. For a recap, in March 2017, Holmes captured 13th place in the women’s 30K freestyle race in Lahti, Finland. She finished 1 minute, 28 seconds behind the winner, Marit Bjoergen of Norway. As Chelsea was making her debut at the Worlds, she also secured the best international result of her career. That day, she helped the Americans put two skiers in the top 15. Jessie Diggins finished 5th, the best World Championship 30K finish in history by a U.S. skier. Chelsea plans to be back in Alaska to prep for U.S. National Championships in early January at Kincaid Park!

In Alaska, we are fans of many athletes over the next few months, so when you wake up on winter weekend mornings, scroll through the World Cup results list looking for podiums and beyond. Do-

mestically and internationally, U.S. women are breaking into the podium scene and making the European jump, according to FS. Keep these skiers on your radar and read up on fasterskier.com.

Chelsea recently wrote, “In the next five weeks I am planning to compete in nine World Cups. I am certainly a stronger distance athlete. As Super-
tour overall leader for 2016-2017, I have Period 1 start rights for the World Cup to both sprints and distance races. I plan to start all the races as I am always working to get better in sprinting, but I must look forward to the distance races which are all 10km in Period 1.

“Ski racing is a fickle sport – so much depends on your immediate results that you often only have an idea of a schedule. After Europe, it’s back to Alaska to prep for U.S. National Championships which will be held in early January at Kincaid Park. After that … I’ll have to see how fast I go…”
Making sense of our club’s dollars, equipment and membership

Message from KNSC President Mike Gracz, “King of the Mountain”

The members of the Kachemak Nordic Ski Club (KNSC) deserve to know where their dollars are being spent and how the club funds its operations. A good chunk of our funding comes from your membership contributions and the fees you pay when you register for a program, such as Junior Nordic or an event like the Marathon. The pie charts in this story show the breakdown of revenues and expenses for last season.

Overall, because revenues are larger than expenses, KNSC appears to be in good financial shape. You can easily see that individual and family memberships make up the largest slice of the revenue pie. The source of revenue from the community is even larger when these memberships are combined with the money received from our extremely supportive local businesses. You can also see that our programs and events pay for themselves while generating additional revenue for the club.

You can also see that equipment purchase and maintenance is by far the largest slice of the expense pie. Last year, about half of that expense was the purchase of a new tracked ATV and a mower for the McNeil trail system. With that purchase, all three ski trail systems now have a mower and a tracked ATV for grooming.

But don’t get too excited by the surplus revenue. The revenue and expense pies do not exactly reflect only operating expenses. The budget in the pie shows some revenues and expenses due to equipment, which would ideally be tracked separately, along with depreciation, in a capital budget. We are working on it.

The purchase of the mower and ATV were 80 percent funded by a Federal Highway grant administered by the State of Alaska (more than half of the State slice of the revenue pie). However, changes to that grant program make it impossible to fund such equipment purchases in the future, which could seriously impact the ability of KNSC to keep updating our fleet.

KNSC now has a fleet of three tracked ATVs, nine snow-machines and three mowers, along with numerous grooming implements. This equipment depreciates and that depreciation is partly reflected in our increased maintenance costs, which were nearly $20,000 last year, the highest ever. The ATVs are aging and expensive. Our outstanding equipment crew has learned a lot from last year’s breakdowns, and they should be able to reduce maintenance costs this year with a preventative maintenance program. However, maintenance expenses will remain relatively high as long as KNSC owns the fleet of grooming equipment required to produce great conditions on three trail systems.

The bottom line is that KNSC may need to rely more heavily on our membership and business community to keep its grooming fleet maintained, up-to-date, and efficient. Thanks for your continued support, and enjoy the fine trails! Ski you out there!

AROUND THE BAY

2017-2018 winter season gearing up – Wax your skis!

As of this writing, Kachemak Bay is still waiting for a good dump of snow to make the winter ski events possible – and fun. Watch for details on these and more events in future newsletters, the KNSC website (www.kachemaknordicskiiclub.org), and occasional emails.

Ongoing events

October 16-April – Kachemak Women’s Nordic: Kachemak Women’s Nordic is intended for those skiers looking to improve their technique and establish a regular training program. Racing is encouraged but not required. The groups focus on both skating and classical techniques. Practice is held three to six times a week. Dry land training started in October. Participants must be members of KNSC. Training Dates: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday from noon-1:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. noon. For details, visit kachemakwomensnordic.com.

Jan. 27-Feb. 24, Saturdays – Junior Nordic Program: This learn-to-ski program for youth from kindergarten through sixth grade offers five Saturdays of winter fun. The program teaches the young skiers about the different trailheads. Rental equipment is available. First session: Saturday, Jan. 27 at Lookout Mountain Recreation Area, 1-2:30 p.m. Other locations TBA.

DECEMBER

Groomers Clinic and Refresher – Date and time TBA at Lookout Mountain Recreation Area. This is an important review for all KNSC groomers and an opportunity for those interested in becoming a groomer to sign up and learn the basics. Questions: 235-6018 or homerbram@gmail.com.

December 26 – Skis Your Age: Location TBA. Ski any time between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. You can pick a category to ski in if you want: Skis Your Age in Kilometers; Join the Century Club by skiing 100 kilometers minus your age in kilometers; ski the most kilometers as a family; or ski 50 kilometers.

January 20-21 – Besh Cups at Lookout Mountain Recreation Area. First session on Jan. 27 at Lookout Mountain Recreation Area, 1-2:30 p.m. Other locations TBA.

FEBRUARY

February 3, 10, 17, 24 – Junior Nordic Program: Saturdays at Lookout Mountain State Recreation Area, 1:30 p.m. Other locations TBA.

February 4 – Ski/Walk/Run for Women: At Lookout Mountain State Recreation Area.

February 11 – Wine and Cheese and Wooden Ski Tour: Noon-4 p.m., location TBA.

BACKCOUNTRY FILM FESTIVAL – 7 p.m. at Homer Theatre. Dates and more details TBA.

MARCH

March 10 – KNSC Nordic Ski Marathon: At Lookout Mountain Ski Trails (starting line); Check the website and Facebook at Kachemak Nordic Ski Club for updates and more information.

Sea to Ski – TBA, based on snow. For more details, check out the KNSC website or Facebook page closer to March.

The elves working behind the scenes for KNSC

As yuletide spirits brighten up this dark time of year, so do the efforts of the hardworking people – elves, if you will – who tend the scenes to brighten Homer’s winter ski trails. Say hello to two of these incredible volunteers.

Bill Hague – Mechanical marvel for grooming equipment

In 2000, Bill, a retired vocational technician, heard an announcement that KNSC was looking for someone to repair equipment. He responded and started working on equipment for KNSC.

Hague still repairs equipment for KNSC and the Alaska Nordic Ski Club. His expertise is needed as the club has acquired a fleet of equipment, including four snow machines, nine snowmobiles, three snowblowers, and three trail groomers.

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agricultural teacher, moved to Homer. One of the first people he met was Dave Brann, the unofficial “grandfather” of Homer’s Nordic ski trails.

“Dave is one of my best friends,” Bill says. “He influenced me a lot. I love working with Dave and being involved with what he does.”

Like Dave, Bill bought his property and built his house close to the Baycrest Ski Trails. Like Dave, Bill got involved with the KNNSC. He said, “Being able to fix things is something I enjoy doing, and it needs to be done.”

Bill fixes everything mechanical involved with the trail grooming: three ATVs, 6-8 snow machines, plus all of the grooming equipment at Homer’s three major ski areas: Lookout Mountain, Baycrest and McNeil/Eveline Canyon/Eveline State Recreation Area. Most of the equipment has a list of steps for the groomer to go through, along with Bill’s phone numbers if the groomer can’t figure out how to repair it.

In winter, Bill drives 25 miles round-trip to get to the McNeil/Eveline Trail systems and 25 miles to get to Lookout Mountain. He makes these journeys once a week for maintenance and more often as mechanical problems arise. If multiple sites call Bill, he tries to work first on the machines involved in an upcoming event, such as school ski races.

Bill designed his house so that he could move grooming equipment inside to work on. In winter, he moves a lot of machines to meet ski events at different sites. From December through March, he puts in 30 to 40 hours a week maintaining the ski equipment.

In the offseason, Bill puts in 10-20 hours a week on the ski trails.

“When I have time, I’m either out on the trails grooming (not much) or with a chainsaw or weed cutter,” he said. “I stay busy and it’s fun. This is like a full-time hobby. Normally I don’t know what day of the week it is or what time it is.”

Diana Carbonell – Fueling the grooming at McNeil/Eveline

Bustling around the Fritz Creek General Store half of the week, Diana moves so fast that you blink twice to see her. She’s even faster on the ski trails. With championships under her belt, such as her age class at the National Masters Championships, her age class in the Anchorage Cup, and a close second at the 40K Tour of Anchorage a few years back, Diana still blisters the tracks at McNeil/Eveline whenever she finds time to head out.

And she makes sure that everyone else who skis at McNeil/Eveline has the opportunity to enjoy the trails.

For the past 8 to 9 years, the Fritz Creek General Store, owned by Sean Maryott and Diana, has been providing gas for the McNeil Canyon/Eveline trail. The store gives the ski club a charge account for $1,000 a year. If the funds don’t get used up one year, the money rolls over to the next year.

“Directing some of the profit back to the community is how I’m able to sleep at night,” Diana said. “We support a wide variety of causes, but recreation is selfishly important to me. I’ve been enjoying skiing for years and since I am one of those people who love skiing with their dog, I pretty much only ski the Eveline/McNeil trails.”

She added: “Paying for the gas seems like a small contribution when I get to reap the hours of work that the groomers put into making the trails such a pleasure to ski. Thank you to all the volunteers who make trails happen.”

And thank you, Diana.

ALASKA ADVENTURES

Exploring the Arctic: A special ski journey and ‘most incredible experience’

BY ALASKAN ARCTIC EXPEDITIONS

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

This statement by Ralph Waldo Emerson strikes at the heart of what it’s like to ski and explore Alaska’s vast Arctic region. The sense of freedom that you feel while crossing the endless white expanse of rolling hills and the awe-striking feeling of being among jagged mountain peaks that stretch into the blue. When you slip into your skis and glide down the gentle slopes, you might wonder how such a pristine wilderness had been hidden from you. No doubt the Arctic is Alaska’s hidden jewel.

It’s a rare opportunity to travel into the Arctic wilderness with the support of a purebred Alaskan malamute dogteam. The dogs haul the entirety of gear, clothing and groceries while you ski ahead across the ocean swells of hills. The dogs love to pull, to say the least. This dogteam of 22 malamutes are world-known for their strength and stamina. And the team is also credited for accomplishing the longest unsupported Arctic expedition in recorded history. These brutes “Know their stuff!” That said, even though the dogs are large and powerful, they are also very friendly. They love people and tummy rubs. You will find them as soft and gentle as teddy bears.

Many folks who join our expeditions return the following year. One of whom, Angus Mill, returned four consecutive times. Here’s an insert from one of his articles: “To travel with Joe and his team is genuinely to see living history. The traditions and techniques Joe uses have for the most part disappeared and been replaced by a lighter, more race oriented, dog sledding (at least that’s certainly true in Alaska). Joe’s interest in these older traditions, and particularly his reliance on Alaskan Malamutes, has allowed him to travel unsupported, for longer and into more remote locations than anyone else. The upside for you is that you should have the place to yourselves; you really will be the only people out there.”

Please join our team for the 2018 season; 6-day and 10-day trips are available. Contact us at teammalamute@yahoo.com or visit www.alaskanarcticexpeditions.com for more information.

“A trip into the Arctic, with Joe and his dogs, is a most incredible experience. The novelty of the experience reminds you that there is so much left in this life to see and do. But at the same time, there is nowhere on this earth that you would rather be.”

– ReAnn Caldwell Johnson

the ALASKA nordic skier
Q&A with Anna Sorensen, NSCF Board of Directors treasurer

Q: How are you involved with the NSCF?

This spring, I joined the NSCF Board of Directors as the treasurer. The role is challenging and simultaneously rewarding. I have found a generous and patient support team in the finance committee, our club’s administrator, our dedicated staff, and my fellow board members. I also serve the club as Chief of Timing.

Q: What do you remember about your first time on skis?

I can’t recall my first adventure on skis, but photographic evidence suggests at the age of two my parents, both avid skiers, saw fit to strap boards to my feet and push me down the bunny hill. I suppose my earliest memory on cross-country skis took place on the Beach Lake Trails at Chugiak High School. We were getting ready to move to Fairbanks and Dad was making an earnest attempt to convince me that cross-country skiing was cool. While I eventually came to love and excel in cross-country, my attitude towards hills has never changed: “I only ski up to glide down.”

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

Fairbanks is a magic place in the winter. Out on the trails, I am surrounded by hoar frost reflecting and refracting the low, golden glow of winter’s sunlight. Dr. Seuss trees bend under their burden of airy snow. The crystalline snow crunches softly as I glide across it’s corduroy surface. The rhythm of my skis and breath are meditative. With every new year I increasingly relish the sensory awakening of a solitary morning tour.

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

The most convenient are the multi-use trails of the Goldstream Public Use Area, which I can access from my front door, but cross-country skiing in Fairbanks doesn’t get any better than the Jim Whisenhunt Trails at Birch Hill Recreation Area. An incredible team of NSCF volunteers and groomers maintain the world-class system of trails. The maintenance and grooming are entirely funded by donations! During a youth exchange in Switzerland and time on the UAF ski team, I was lucky to experience a diverse range of trails, but those on Birch Hill are hands down some of the best cross-country trails I have ever skied on.

Q: What other activities do you enjoy besides skiing?

A good deal of my recreational time is spent with my five Alaska huskies, all “retired” sled dogs who still have a passion to run. The dogs, my husband and I love exploring the trails of Goldstream Valley and taking trips to more remote locations. I can also be found enjoying my husband Joe’s delicious cooking, taking long vacations planned by Joe, or snuggling with a cat while watching Star Trek. Summers are a whirlwind of house projects, gardening, operating our food truck, and dreaming up our next getaway.

An on-ramp to outdoor fun thanks for community partner: REI Co-op

BY AELIN ALLEGOOD

NSCF is fortunate to be a recipient of generous annual REI Co-op grants since 2014. Previous grants have targeted trail development and maintenance, as well as grooming equipment repairs. In 2017, REI Co-op awarded the ski club $15,000. Two-thirds of this funding is directed toward improvements to the Birch Hill trail system to better serve the needs of our community. The additional $5,000 is focused on increasing access to these world-class trails.

Equipment is listed as one of the main access barriers faced by those new to the sport. There are many choices in ski gear and it can be hard to know where to start. Others want to give skiing a try before committing to the purchase. As skiing ambassadors in our community, NSCF members are now able to share a new option with folks who have “always wanted to try cross-country skiing.” The $5,000 grant from REI Co-op has been used to purchase skis, bindings, boots and poles for use in the learn-to-ski programs: Junior Nordics and adult lessons. The goal is to introduce the joy of skiing to brand-new skiers.

REI Co-op Fairbanks’ store manager, John Junke, said, “REI Co-op is excited to partner with an outstanding organization like the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks. This grant will build on-ramps to outdoor recreation opportunities for the community of Fairbanks and beyond. We are so happy to help create access for Alaskans to live their best outdoor life.”

The youth equipment hit the tracks at the beginning of Junior Nordics this season. The adult lessons equipment will make its debut during Session II, which begins in early January. Quantities are limited. More information can be obtained by emailing adultlessons@nscfairbanks.org. There are other great options for trying gear before purchasing. Beaver Sports, Trax Outdoor Center and UAF’s Outdoor Adventures offer ski equipment rentals.

Thank you to REI Co-op for this new opportunity to share cross-country skiing with the Fairbanks community. We are so grateful for the people and the organizations that help the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks fulfill its mission to provide the opportunities, programs, facilities and expertise to grow and support lifelong cross-country skiers.

AROUND THE INTERIOR

NSCF seeking Junior Nordics coaches

Our youth skiers are in need of your help! We have lots of excited, budding Nordic skiers ready to enjoy this amazing snow but not enough volunteer coaches to go around. The number of Junior Nordics participants is growing along with the interest in our awesome sport! You do not need experience to coach; just a positive attitude and love of skiing that you are willing to share. If you are interested, please contact Sally Endestad at juniornordics@nscfairbanks.org. Junior Nordics take place 6:30 p.m. Mondays 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 the club website at www.nscfairbanks.org for more information.

See AROUND THE INTERIOR, Page 15
**Ski Fest: Skiing, learning, mixing and having fun**

**BY KATE CAREY**

The NSCF and Alaska Nanooks ski team joined forces on November 11 to celebrate the start of a new ski season with Ski Fest at the Birch Hill Ski Center. The event brought hundreds of brand new and returning skiers to Birch Hill. The event was sponsored by Interior Women’s Health. REI was also on-hand to offer free ski rentals to those trying out the sport for the first time; this encouraged many new faces to the cross-country trails.

The Nanooks skiers worked with youth and adult skiers, teaching technique, offering assistance, fun games on skis and a scavenger hunt for the youngest participants. The fresh snow and warm temperatures made for excellent conditions and the sun even made a brief appearance as did the skiing Nanook!

The afternoon ended with warm homemade soup as Alaska Nanooks head coach Nick Crawford introduced the 2017-2018 ski team. This annual event celebrates the return of snow and marks the official start to the UAF season and NSCF winter kickoff.

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**AROUND THE INTERIOR**

Continued from Page 14

**The Alaska Nordic Skier**

in your inbox!

Get your Alaska Nordic Skier online and the links below are just a click away. To get only a PDF version, or both a PDF and printed version, please send an email request to nordicskiereditor@gmail.com. You can also get PDF versions at www.anchoragenordicski.com/newsletters.htm. Getting the newsletter only online saves our club money, too!

**NSCF Calendar keeps you updated**

Remember to check the NSCF Calendar for upcoming club events. The ski season will be getting busy soon, so check for competition events, social activities and more. Visit www.nscfairbanks.org for more! You can also “like” the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks on Facebook to keep up with local events.

**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 grades 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 information 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.

**PHOTO BY**

AELIN ALLEGOOD

An eager group of Ski Fest participants new to skiing – note the jeans – take instruction from the Alaska Nanooks Ski Team.

**PHOTO BY**

KATE CAREY

Wilson Rasic, left, and Bridger Petersen pose with the Skiing Nanook at Ski Fest 2017.

**BY KATE CAREY**

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The Nanooks skiers worked with youth and adult skiers, teaching technique, offering assistance, fun games on skis and a scavenger hunt for the youngest participants. The fresh snow and warm temperatures made for excellent conditions and the sun even made a brief appearance as did the skiing Nanook!

The afternoon ended with warm homemade soup as Alaska Nanooks head coach Nick Crawford introduced the 2017-2018 ski team. This annual event celebrates the return of snow and marks the official start to the UAF season and NSCF winter kickoff.

**A ROUND THE INTERIOR**

Continued from Page 14

**The Alaska Nordic Skier**

in your inbox!

Get your Alaska Nordic Skier online and the links below are just a click away. To get only a PDF version, or both a PDF and printed version, please send an email request to nordicskiereditor@gmail.com. You can also get PDF versions at www.anchoragenordicski.com/newsletters.htm. Getting the newsletter only online saves our club money, too!

**NSCF Calendar keeps you updated**

Remember to check the NSCF Calendar for upcoming club events. The ski season will be getting busy soon, so check for competition events, social activities and more. Visit www.nscfairbanks.org for more! You can also “like” the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks on Facebook to keep up with local events.

**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 grades 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 information 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.

**PHOTO BY**

AELIN ALLEGOOD

An eager group of Ski Fest participants new to skiing – note the jeans – take instruction from the Alaska Nanooks Ski Team.

**PHOTO BY**

KATE CAREY

Wilson Rasic, left, and Bridger Petersen pose with the Skiing Nanook at Ski Fest 2017.

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Another season of exploring: Fairbanks North Star Borough Trails Challenge returns

BY BRYANT WRIGHT
Trails Coordinator FNSB Parks & Recreation Dept.

Need an excuse to get outdoors this winter? Tired of your old routine and looking for something new to stay active and beat the winter blues? Heard about all of those great trails, but don’t know where to go? Take the Fairbanks Winter Trails Challenge and explore the winter wonderlands throughout the Fairbanks North Star Borough!

The FNSB Parks & Recreation is hosting another round of the Fairbanks Trails Challenge this winter from mid-December through March. The Trails Challenge is free and open to anyone who wants to participate. The rules are simple. First, venture onto the local trail systems around Fairbanks found on the Trails Challenge list. Next find the special Trails Challenge signs hidden along the trails. Finally, snap a selfie with the sign and share your photos on social media using the hashtag “#FNSBtrails” or by emailing your photos to parks@fnsb.us. Enjoy the memories, smiles, trials and triumphs with all the other challengers! Finishers who find and photograph at least 10 of the Trails Challenge signs will receive a special Trailblazer award and be entered in a prize drawing.

This winter’s challenge features trails at local recreation areas like Birch Hill, Tanana Lakes, Chena Lake, Isberg Recreation Area and more. There will be mix of multi-use trails, non-motorized trails, and some ski-only trails to suit a variety of tastes and skill levels. The Trails Challenge signs are typically placed within 1-2 miles of the nearest trailhead and will be marked with orange reflective trail markers.

Whether you grab some friends, take the kids, bring the dog, or just go it alone, take the Fairbanks Trails Challenge and get to know the tremendous trails crisscrossing our community! For updates and information on the trails in this year’s challenge, visit the Borough’s Parks & Recreation Facebook page or www.fnsb.us/pr, or call the trails coordinator at 459-7401. The list of this winter’s trails and prize sponsors will be posted in December.

View of the Skyline Ridge Trail – No. 7 in the FNSB 2017-2018 Trails Challenge.

Ashley and Jonathan Bradish have fun and ski in style as they complete the 2016-2017 FNSB Trails Challenge.

Photography by Ashley Bradish

Optimizing recovery after exercise

BY ZUZANA ROGERS
PT, SCD, SCS, COMT
Advanced Physical Therapy

I often get asked questions regarding improving sports performance. How can athletes find that extra 1% (5%, 10%) that would set them apart from their (sometimes stale) performance?

The answer is in optimizing training and optimizing recovery. In other words, train hard, train smart, and recover well. Recovery can be a vital and yet neglected part of athlete care. Even beyond working with athletes, do we get the recovery we need?

Think about these points on improving recovery:

1. Increased physical or emotional stress requires an increase in recovery quality and time.

2. Plan your training sessions so they change gradually and incorporate recovery.

3. Simple recovery is the best. Rehydrate, refuel, rest, sleep. There is evidence of the benefits of cryochambers, NormaTec sleeves and other devices, but it is not convincing.

4. Sleep is key. Aim for 7 to 9 hours per night; more if you are training/racing hard. Naps during the day are great!

5. Massage therapy is gaining in popularity and has been effective especially in endurance sports.

6. Develop a post-workout routine to optimize recovery – healthy snack right after workout, rehydrate, eat a well-balanced meal, sleep.

7. Mental prep and meditation do wonders.

8. Nutrition! Do I need to say more? You cannot outrun a bad diet.

Source: Tom Gooch, BSc, MCSP. The Running Physio.

Sponsored by advanced physical therapy

Do you want to learn more? Come see us at Advanced Physical Therapy! Call for an appointment at any of our five locations statewide.

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These are the signs to watch for as you work your way through the FNSB Trails Challenge. Have fun!
More from the 2017 NSAA Photography Contest

Fun Ski Events — 1. Elizabeth Knapp “A beautiful day for skiing”


Recreational/Casual Skiing —
  3. Adeline Wright “Oliver Wright & Berit Meyers finding jumps at Eklutna.”

Racing — 3. Adeline Wright “Winner of Men’s 10k Sven Johansson”

Racing — 2. Shannon Donley “Quincy Donley ASD Middle School Race”

Touring/Backcountry — 1. Eric Parsons “Camping near Anaktuvuk Pass”
More from the NSAA Kick Off

PHOTOS BY JOSH NIVA

EVENT ON MARCH 24, 2018
Get Tix at AnchorageNordicSki.com

RIDE THE SKI TRAIN

the ALASKA nordic skier
As club and team grow, so do opportunities to race outside Juneau

BY FRANKIE PILLIFANT

The Juneau Nordic Ski Team (JNST) was resurrected eight winters ago by parents whose kids expressed a deeper interest in progressing their ski skills. JNST began with five skiers and a couple of practices a week. Since then they have grown into a team of 25 teen athletes (with a maxed trail list), 20 coaches and foundational community support by the Juneau Nordic Ski Club (JNSC) and Eaglecrest Ski Area. The goal of the JNST is to share the love of skiing and provide an environment where all athletes train to improve ski skills and race. Skiers of all abilities join JNST and, thanks to scholarship support, no one is turned away due to money.

For the 2017-18 season the JNST is almost equally split with returning skiers and new skiers, with some athletes donning their first ever pair of skis Saturday November 11. Because of varied abilities, the coaching squad, coordinated by Frankie Pillifant, consists of a lead coach and at least several assistant coaches for each team practice. In the recent past, JNST benefited from clinics by visiting Alaska Nordic ski experts Kikkan Randall, Nina Kempell, Megan Corazzo and Lars Flera. To add some more ski fun and technique work this season, the JNST will join coach Lars Flera, Keith Conger (Nome) and athletes from Nome and Unalakleet for a Thanksgiving clinic in Anchorage. The JNST and JNSC also support a biweekly community race series. Beginning on December 16, the series ends March 10 with JNST’s version of the Border to Border ski event modeled after Finland’s (and includes feed stations stocked with pickles, lingonberry juice and chocolate). To increase the JNST skiers’ exposure to competition, they endeavor to join peer racers in Alaska and the Yukon. The 2017-18 season has our race sites set on the Lynx Loppet in December and the Mt. Lorne Loppet in Whitehorse, Yukon, in mid-February. More details about each community race can be found at www.JNSKI.org.

The JNST owes its existence in great part to the amazing army of parents and friends who’ve stepped in and up to order and disburse gear, coordinate races, organize three-day event travel, develop the carpool and oversee registrations. JNST operates under the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Cooperative Extension Services, 4-H Youth program. JNST also engages in community service projects such as volunteer trail work efforts and youth coaching youth.

Big Alaska races fuel state’s best for even bigger challenges, stages

BY LAURI BASSETT

ConocoPhillips Besh Cup Races

From Homer to Fairbanks, the ski trails have been full of smiles this year. For those ready to test their mettle with others within their age groups, the ConocoPhillips Besh Cup race series begins December 15 and 16 at Kincaid Park in Anchorage. A spectator favorite, the skate sprint event is held on Saturday. Skiers under age 12 start the day competing in sprint heats. These young skiers flock around the awards podium to celebrate. After the ceremonies and photo shoot, they become spectators to cheer on the U14 and older skiers in their qualification sprint loop. The top skiers of the qualification race then move on to a series of heats held in the afternoon, with the top skiers finishing their final heats near sunset. One of two scheduled mass start races of the ski season are held on Sunday. Skiers are lined up based on their USSA standings and prior season ConocoPhillips Besh Cup results. Mass start races are not frequent occurrences; but they give skiers head to head competition and a chance to hone in their technical ski skills around the race course.

Those of you familiar with ConocoPhillips Besh Cup races know you have until the Wednesday prior to the race weekend to sign up online. In-person registration is possible, though a late registration fee is assessed. For more information, please click the Besh Cup races tab at www.countryalaska.org. Prior to registering, please visit the USSA membership site to get your current license (either General or Competitive).

If you’re hungry while watching the action, Yeti Dog and Main Event Catering food trucks will be on site each day to keep spectators, officials, volunteers and skiers fed. Kaladi Brothers Coffee and the Alaska Winter Stars provide coffee and hot beverages in the Kincaid bunker.

Team Alaska

Many of these ConocoPhillips Besh Cup skiers are looking to make Team Alaska for either the USSA Junior Nationals or the Arctic Winter Games. Many also consider this weekend of racing a tune-up for the U.S. Cross Country Ski Championships (Senior Nationals) being held in early January at Kincaid Park.

In early March, members of the Team Alaska for USSA Junior Nationals will travel to Utah and compete on the Olympic ski trails of Soldier Hollow. After spring break, members of Team Alaska for Arctic Winter Games will head to South Slave/Hay River of Northwest Territories, Canada. If there are coaches and interest for U14 skiers to attend the Inner Mountain Division Championships in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Alaska will once again send a team.

Senior Nationals

The Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage last hosted the U.S. Cross Country Ski Championships (Senior Nationals) in 2010, when Anchorage skier Holy Brooks secured her spot on the U.S. Olympic team. This time around, she and her husband, Rob Whitney will celebrate the top finishers as volunteer organizers of the flower and award ceremonies after each race. They are starting early in showing their twins how much fun it is to be part of their local ski community! Brooks and Whitney are excited to celebrate the successes of the top skiers; fully expecting to present a medal or two to a fellow Alaskan. Some skiers are trying to secure Olympic positions via the World Cup circuit. Depending on those results, there could be Olympic slots available at Senior Nationals. For those of you unable to attend PyeongChang, South Korea, this will be your chance to see the finest United States cross country skiers. Races are January 3, 5, 7 and 8 at Kincaid Park; a complete schedule is available at www.usnationals2018.com. For a complete program of Senior Nationals, look for the December issue of the Coast magazine.

International Junior Teams

Competing at Senior Nationals also gives junior skiers opportunities to make the World Juniors team or the U18 Nations Cup team (formerly known as the Scando team). Members of these teams will be named at the awards banquet at the ConocoPhillips atrium on January 7. They will have a short rest period because at the end of January members of these teams travel to either Goms, Switzerland, for World Juniors or to Kuokkala, Finland, for the U18 Nordic Nations Championship – each a week of racing. Additionally, the U23 World Championship team is named after the final race on January 8. The U23 races are held in Goms, Switzerland, along with the World Juniors Championship races.

Host clubs around the state offer a variety of ski races for youth and adults. For youth skiers who want experience outside of ConocoPhillips Besh Cup race, you can visit the website of your local club. The Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks offers a series for all ages and the Tsalteshi Trails Association is offering opportunities, as well. An Anchorage cooperative of APU Nordic Ski Club, Alaska Winter Stars, Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage, Cross Country Alaska and Healthy Futures is offering a Tuesday Night Ski Race Series beginning Tuesday, January 16, at Kincaid Park. Visit their Facebook page of www.facebook.com/Anchorag etuesdayNightSkRaces/.
Meet some of Alaska’s top skiers before they race around the country and world

BY LEX TREINEN

With the Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea, coming up in February, NSAA caught up with a couple Olympic veterans and hopefuls who are hard at work training for the qualification period. World Cup racing began November 24 in Ruka, Finland, while domestic SuperTour racing begins on December 2 in West Yellowstone, Montana.

Sadie Bjornsen
■ World Cup medalist
■ 2014 Olympian

How was the summer of training?

I had three awesome weeks of training up on Eagle Glacier in some perfect snow and sunny conditions. Despite being a bit of a wet summer, it was a real miracle we had such great conditions up high!

Do you feel more pressure to be in top shape for the Olympic year?

There is some real excitement going into these Olympics. With some success coming out of the past couple of years on our women’s team, we finally feel like we belong. I am lucky in that I never feel pressure from this. Instead, it is more of an internal expectation. It is when you believe in a goal or a dream that you feel most nervous.

Have you had any special Alaska adventures this year in your time off from training?

My top adventure stories from the summer are adventuring up Resurrection only to be surprised by getting engaged to my boyfriend of seven years. My other favorite adventures have been biking up high and ptarmigan hunting. I feel like the true Alaskan when I am eating ptarmigan noodle soup later that evening!

Rosie Brennan
■ Four-time national champion
■ World Cup medalist

Describe your best workout of the summer:

Since I have been working on my power, I have really enjoyed doing threshold with speed changes. More specifically, we do a threshold double pole at Kincaid, somewhere around 10 minutes per interval with two L4 surges in each interval. This is great practice for mass start racing, something we see a lot on the World Cup and something I am hoping to improve on. Kincaid is great for this with slightly undulating terrain.

What are some things that people might not know about being an Olympic hopeful?

I spend a lot of time explaining that I am not actually qualified, nor is anyone on the U.S. Ski Team at this point. Our qualifying period starts just before the first World Cup and ends mid-January. As World Cup skiers, we are required to report our whereabouts every day of the year to the U.S. Anti-doping agency. They can then show up at any time for a random drug test, urine, blood or both. In an Olympic year, more people are added into this testing pool as all Olympic team members need at least one random test done prior to showing up at the games. As a result, we are subject to some of the most consistent and strict testing in the world. I am happy to comply to support anti-doping progress, something we are seeing a big challenge in sports today.

How do you deal with the added stress of qualifying for and representing the USA in the Olympics?

I try to focus on what I can control which is what will be at training, what workouts I need to do to improve some of my weaknesses, how to schedule my days to maximize training and recovery, and other things like that. I am working hard to train my mind to not think about the specific results I need to get there, but to think about my love for racing and pushing myself.

Follow Rosie at rosiebrennan.blogspot.com and on Instagram @rosiebrennan.

David Norris
■ 2015 American Birkebeiner champion
■ Mt. Marathon course record holder

How has your training been this summer?

Overall my training has gone really well this summer. I tried not to change things up too much from previous years. I added some focused work-outs to a few areas I saw as weaknesses throughout last winter’s racing season.

Are you feeling pressure to qualify this Olympic year?

I have certainly placed more pressure on myself this season leading into the Olympics, but it is a healthy pressure. I have decided to turn down some sheep and duck hunting opportunities to stay in town for training and recovery – on a non-Olympic year I would normally try to fit the extra activities into my fall schedule. In regards to qualifying, I basically have to race really well twice between Thanksgiving and the second week of January. I’ll have four distance races that count towards qualification and my two best results will be counted and measured against my competitors to see who has earned a spot to South Korea.

What races are you looking forward to most?

For the Alaskans, Anchorage will be hosting the U.S. National Championships during the first week of January. It would be awesome to have as many people cheering as possible for all the local athletes pursuing the Olympics.