U.S., and AK, strike GOLD!

ANCHORAGE: Fun and fundraising at Ski for Women

STATEWIDE: Alaska skiers representing, racing on world stages

FAIRBANKS: Spring has sprung, so have Wilderness races

Olympics .......... 16
Anchorage .......... 2
Eagle River .......... 11
Fairbanks .......... 14
Kachemak .......... 10
Mat-Su .......... 7
AROUND THE BOWL

Ready to race? The Tour of Anchorage is back!

The 2018 Tour of Anchorage brings the tradition of Alaska's great ski race with new start times! This season, all races are moved back one hour!

The racing begins Sunday, March 4; the 50K freestyle starts 9:30-9:42 a.m. at Service High School; the 40K freestyle starts 10:30-10:40 a.m. at Service; the 25K classic starts 11-11:06 a.m. at Alaska Pacific University; and the 25K freestyle starts noon-12:14 p.m. at APU.

There are three bib pickup opportunities: Noon-7 p.m. Friday, March 2, and a 10 a.m.-noon Saturday, March 3, at the APU Moseley Center; and at the starting areas on race morning.

Registration continues until March 3 – there is no race day registration this season. Online registration ends at 10 p.m. March 1; and registration is available at bib pickup on March 2-3.

Learn more about the race, the course, and even register if you haven’t already at anchoragenordicski.com/races/tour-of-anchorage/. Contact the race director at touranchorage@gmail.com.

It’s time to pull an all-nighter at SKAN24

Sign up for the fun you will have this winter while skiing for a ridiculous long time. Registration for the SKAN24 is open and we are excited for this season’s race on March 23! Don’t feel up to skiing for 24 hours? Sign up for the 6- or 12-hour race.

Ski 4 Kids equipment funds fuel ski equipment for schools; apply today!

Ski 4 Kids 2018 took place in February, but there are still opportunities to be part of the fun and make an impact for youth in our community. Funds raised at this event support grants to Anchorage schools and programs to purchase cross-country ski equipment.

Learn about the grants and how to apply to get involved this season at anchoragenordicski.com/programs/ski-4-kids.

Purchase of cross-country ski equipment, boots or poles (no indirect or administrative expenses). Applications must be approved by the school principal, and funds are disbursed directly to the vendor for the equipment purchases. Preference will be given to schools that have not received prior grants, have participated in the Municipality’s Outreach program during the previous school year, and have a source of matching funds (AESP, PTSA, School Business Partners or private donations).

Get a copy of the application online at anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-4-kids/ski-4-kids-grants/ or email business@anchoragenordicski.com. Grant applications may be hand delivered or mailed to the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage at 203 W. 15th Ave, #204, Anchorage, AK 99501; emailed to business@anchoragenordicski.com or faxed to (907) 258-7699.

Ready for exploration? Attend an upcoming NSAA backcountry tour

Learn about NSAA backcountry tours at anchoragenordicski.com/tours. All tours are accompanied by members of the Anchorage Nordic Ski Patrol, who provide safety, trail sweep, and assist skiers with broken equipment or any other issues. Questions? Contact Patti Phillips, Co-chair: NSAA contact, (907) 240-3742, philippsj@chugach.net; Mary Vavrik, Co-chair: Nordic Ski Patrol contact, (907) 306-7686, mjavvrik@geci.net; Karlene Leeper, Co-chair: Denali View Chalet, (907) 440-0049, kbleeper@alaska.net; and Ken DePalma, Co-chair: AT and Tele-ski tours, 907-440-1562, traveler@alaska.net.

UPCOMING TOURS INCLUDE:

March 2 — Friday Night Fun Ski, Glen Alps; Tour leader — Ken DePalma.

March 2-4 — Denali View Chalet, two overnights, Peters Hills; Tour leader — Karlene Leeper.

March 10-18 — Denali National Park, fly-in and out of Kantishna, ski to mountain passes; see article in this month’s Nordic Skier for more information; Tour leader — Bob Sutherland.

March 18 — Skookum Glacier, Tatuman Arm, Kenai Peninsula; Tour leader — Patti Phillips.

March 30 — Friday Night Fun Ski. Prospect Heights Trailhead, Tour leader — Ken DePalma.

April 7 — Tatuman or Hatcher Pass - TBD; Tour leader — Mary Vavrik.

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

NSAA calendar of events

MARCH

Friday, March 2 — NSAA Backcountry Tour: Friday Night Fun Ski

Friday, March 9-10 — NSAA Backcountry Tour: Denali View Chalet two overnights

Saturday, March 10-18 — NSAA Backcountry Tour: Denali National Park, fly-in and out of Kantishna

Saturday, March 10 — Anchorage Junior Nordic Equipment Return — Bunker

Sunday, March 11 — NSAA Backcountry Tour: Skookum Glacier

Monday, March 19 — Junior Nordic Equipment Return — Bunker

Tuesday, March 20 — Anchorage Junior Nordic Equipment Return — Bunker

Saturday, March 24 — Ski Train

Saturday-Sunday, March 24-25 — SKAN 24 Race

Friday, March 30 — NSAA Backcountry Tour: Friday Night Fun Ski

APRIL

Saturday, April 7 — NSAA Backcountry Tour: Tatuman or Hatcher Pass - TBD; Tour leader: Mary Vavrik.

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

the AlASKA nordic skier
Fast and fun updates to AMH Cup

BY BRENDAN FONTANA
AMH ANCHORAGE CUP RACE DIRECTOR

With a couple of less-than-stellar winters lately, there’s been a decline in participation numbers in the AMH Anchorage Cup series. So the primary goal for this season has been to bump those numbers back up — event organizers have gone about that in a couple of ways. Skiing, for me, has always been about the community here, so we wanted to bring a little more of that atmosphere to the series. I think with the Hickok and APU events, we already had a good model in place. So we invited Alaska Winter Stars to co-host a race too, and we’d have a potluck planned for the series-ending Sven Johanson. Nothing brings skiers together like post-race soup.

We’ve also tried to encourage participation from our younger skiers. A lot of this has been great work from our NSAA Jr. Nordic coaches by pushing information to kids and parents. We also received some good feedback about course lengths, so I’ve tried to keep the youth race around 3K, and have a 5K option, too. That 5K distance has also been a good fit for some of our more beginner and recreational adult skiers.

And we tried to add a little more fun this year with a SkiCross event at the Sprint Relay. That was a new challenge. We used the Gong Hill to make a short course with some fast hills, tight turns, a jump, and some hoops to ski through. The World Juniors crew (Gus, Luke, Molly) came out to do a course preview with the kids, and to do the announcing. And a couple food trucks really added to the festive spirit.

For the more competitive skiers, I’ve tried to draw up some new, challenging courses. Changing conditions have required some flexibility on that front — plans to use Compression and Lake Loop had to be scrapped. And at the Sven, our 30K racers will have skied both the Horsehoe Loop and the full 7K Lekisch. I think racers are enjoying the new mix of courses. It’s been a solid season and series, and there are so many people to thank for that! And I’m already excited for the next one. We definitely want the series to grow, to be big community events. So if any readers have feedback, I’d love to hear the ideas. Contact us and learn more about the series at anchorgenordicski.com/races/amh-anchorage-cup-series/.

NSAA Members of the Month: Joan, Joe and Anna Darnell

As a family, the Darnells — Joan, Joe and Anna — have been Nordic skiing from more than 100 years. They say, “That is our cumulative family total. We put Anna on baby skis that fastened to her extra small boots as soon as she could walk.”

The family’s connection to NSAA isn’t quite as long, but it’s equally passionate.

“We have taken advantage of most every program that NSAA offers, starting with backcountry tours, Ski Train outings, cabin retreats and lessons (highly recommended!),” Joan said. “Then more kid-centric offerings like Junior Nordic, middle and high school ski racing, and the Tour, and finally, volunteering as Green Grunts. It’s been a progression.”

The Darnell family has been giving to NSAA for so long, in fact, they can’t exactly remember when they started. “The car with some of our original NSAA stickers is long gone,” Joan said, “So just guessing, a few decades.”

Meet the family that loves skiing and giving back to their ski community in many different ways.

NSAA: What do you love about Nordic skiing?

Joan Darnell: It’s a healthy combination of experiencing the peace of watching the trees go by and the exhilaration of being outdoors in the cold. And, if you don’t set out skiing with friends we invariably see someone we know on the trails, so it’s an enjoyable way to socialize as well.

We appreciate your generous support of NSAA! Why do you choose to donate to NSAA?

The ski trails are near the top of the list. NSAA has been behind the construction, maintenance and the all-important grooming of trails on municipal park land for decades. And the numerous programs, especially for kids, provide active, healthy, winter fun for all ages.

Donating to NSAA means not only a direct benefit to Nordic skiers, but also to the community of Anchorage which includes bikers, hikers and dog-walkers who use many of the same trails for recreation at other times of year.

What does NSAA’s mission mean to you?

Joe and Anna Darnell

We get to support a vibrant, local, community based organization that is devoted to providing superb Nordic ski programs and trails — how cool is that!

Do you have some standout moments from skiing, connecting with NSAA and/or participating in programs or events that you would like to share?

Participating in Nordic skiing and NSAA has created so very many memorable moments. We hope a good collection of racing chairs to review them from someday. In the meantime, we’re off to make more skiing memories.

Anything else about skiing or NSAA?

Happiness is a groomed ski trail.

PHOTO BY BRYAN DONNELL

NSA Jr. Nordic skiers are all grins after meeting the local stars from the World Juniors during the recent AMH Cup SkiCross.

PHOTO BY JIM STREETER
NSAA Volunteer of the Month: Jack Porter

We at NSAA would like to thank Jack Porter. He has a tremendous impact as a volunteer and has been a driving force behind a technological revamp at Kincaid Park: installing internet, a new sound system and the incredible webcam that lets us view the stadium live. All in time for U.S. Nationals! Not to mention the many hours he has spent volunteering with snowmaking, biathlon and winter and summer trail work. If you see Jack out working on the trails or equipment, be sure to thank him.

NSAA: How many years have you been Nordic skiing?
Jack Porter: Tried it in ’72, broke two pairs of skis, then got back into it in the ’80s.

NSAA: How many years have you been involved with NSAA?
Six years of volunteering beginning with biathlon, and now I help a great deal with NSAA Operations as well.

What do you love about Nordic skiing?
Our trails are great, they are in the middle of a park and give one the opportunity to see wildlife or see nothing at all. You can be by yourself to ski and enjoy the outdoors.

Can you please talk about the importance and role that NSAA and its volunteers play in our community and state?
There’s a need to do it, otherwise it wouldn’t get done. It’s easy to see that there has gotten to be a large impact to the community from what NSAA and volunteers do, and that the general age of the volunteers are getting old. If we don’t continue to do what we do and refresh our volunteer population, some of the wonders of what we have will go away.

Ready to volunteer? There’s a place for you and your talents at NSAA! Learn about NSAA volunteer opportunities at anchoragenordicski.com/volunteer/.

Alaskan-owned, local eatery
Open at 11am
South Anchorage
10950 O’Malley Centre Dr
(907) 561-2337

Healthy choices, delicious indulgences.

The hoarding marmot
Alaska’s Technical Outdoor Gear Consignment Store
907-334-3333 Open 7 Days a Week

Springsale!
Winter Gear up to 75% Off
Starting March 15th

Visit our Firetap Liquor Store!

Get your Growlers Filled!

Our liquor store is conveniently located within our South Anchorage location. Grab beer, wine or spirits on your way out!

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NSAA Partner of the Month: CRW Engineering

“Sometimes it’s the simple things that really make a difference,” Brian Looney reflected on the beginnings of CRW Engineering when the office culture involved putting phones on hold for the afternoon and staff heading out to Kincaid Park for a group ski. “A few times each spring a group of us would sneak out to ski for a long lunch break,” Brian added. “It’s helpful when the entire office of five back then skied.”

The company founder, Willy Van Hemert, and his wife Rose still ski today. The passion for staying active through skiing naturally connected CRW to the Nordic community.

Playing hooky at Kincaid turned into “real work” when CRW became an integral part of numerous park projects with the Municipality of Anchorage. For Brian, it was a dream job. He said: “We were paid to apply our passion for Kincaid Park and civil engineering to solve the challenges and improve the park.”

From 1994-2008, CRW provided the planning, design and construction management to upgrade Kincaid’s parking lots, road, pathway, utilities and stadium. CRW’s recreational background led to successful solutions for vehicle access, trail impacts, bridge design and tunnel design that has made Kincaid a world-class facility for Nordic skiing and mountain biking. CRW is proud of its big role in the transformation, with help from NSAA and dedicated volunteers.

Established in 1981, CRW has done significant infrastructure work around Anchorage to improve commuting options by designing and building a network of walkways and roadways that keep pedestrians and cyclists safe. As a Silver-level bicycle friendly company, CRW encourages active staff and is committed to community improvement and transportation projects.

CRW’s professional contributions to the Nordic community are vast, but are equalled by decades of individual giving of time, skills and donations. Many programs and events have been profoundly impacted by involvement from staff, especially Mike Jokela and Brian Looney. Jokela, a CRW principal, has been a part of NSAA’s Ski Jumping Program since 1988. He’s a volunteer crew member who maintains and grooms the jumps. He was also lead coach for over 10 years and served as Chief of Competition or Chief of the Hill at five Nordic Combined Jr. Nationals. Mike’s extraordinary design, surveying and constructing skills recently led the rebuilding of the entire jump structure. Finished a year ago, it completely reshaped the profiles, installing synthetic turf surfacing that allows year-round jumping.

CRW’s legacy of supporting Nordic skiing remains strong. According to Brian, “happy employees at CRW love to fulfill the ‘Play’ part of the Live-Work-Play balance and this is where NSAA shines.” He added that four CRW principals grew up in Anchorage, participated in high school skiing and running, and are still active 30 plus years later. CRW fun runs sound competitive. And to dispel the notion that ski jumping is only for people with a death wish, Mike has jumped in Alaska and around the world for 30 years without any major injuries.

NSAA appreciates CRW, its employees and their rich history of incredible contributions to our ski community!
NSAA scholarships support outstanding Alaska skiers, ski community members

Deadline for 2017-2018 academic year scholarships is April 1

The benefits to being a member of the Anchorage Nordic ski community never end. And now it’s time for high school and college skiers to take advantage of one more opportunity – the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage (NSAA) College Scholarship program. To recognize college-bound high school seniors or college students for their scholastic performance, cross-country skiing, and participation in their community, NSAA annually awards multiple scholarships of up to $1,500.

Applying for a scholarship is a fitting way to finish your ski season. To be eligible, students must be Alaska residents, members of the high school cross-country ski team during their junior and senior years and must have individual or family memberships in the NSAA for the current and preceding ski season. The application process is now open for scholarships for the 2017-2018 academic year. Applications are due by 5 p.m. Sunday, April 1, 2018. Qualifications, selection criteria and additional details are posted on the NSAA website, anchoragenordicski.com/scholarships.htm, and the Alaska Community Foundation website, alaskacf.org/scholarships. Applications are accepted online at ACF Foundation Website at alaskacf.org/blog/scholarships/nordic-ski-association-of-anchoragescholarship.

Young Americans, Alaskans make history around the world

BY LAURI BASSETT
CCAK

The mission of Cross Country Alaska is to create and support a cross-country skiing culture and environment that allows Alaskan cross-country ski racers to succeed at regional, national and international competitions. In addition to providing the opportunity to secure a few Olympic team spots for Alaskan skiers, the 2018 U.S. Nationals Cross Country Ski Championships held in Anchorage in early January also gave 12 junior and two senior skiers from Alaska opportunities to race internationally.

Fairbanks skiers Kendall Kramer and Ti Donaldson, Anchorage skier Zanden McMullen, and Palmer skier Annika Hanestad qualified for the U18 Nations’ Cup trip at U.S. Nationals. (Anchorage skier Quincy Donley als. (Anchorage skier Quincy Donley was not eligible as a first-year U16 skier.)

The goal after competing at the 2018 Junior World Championships in Goms, Switzerland. The quartet featured three Alaskans, from left, Luke Jager, Hunter Wonders and Gus Schumacher, with Ben Ogden of Vermont (far right).

The U.S. men’s relay team made history with their silver medal performance at the 2018 Junior World Championships in Goms, Switzerland. The quartet featured three Alaskans, from left, Luke Jager, Hunter Wonders and Gus Schumacher, with Ben Ogden of Vermont (far right). Each skier was on a 5K relay team that placed sixth or better, capping off a fun week of racing. The skiers also traveled with Alaskan coach Rachel Kanady, who helped these young skiers with their first experiences of international ski racing.

The next goal for athletes who attend World Juniors is the U23 World Championships. Also in Goms, Anchorage skiers Lydia Blanchet (Dartmouth) and Thomas O’Harra (APU graduate) represented USA.

Congratulations to all of the skiers of the U18, World Juniors and U23 teams. Alaska is proud of you!
Junior Nordic veteran Sophia Kristich and her Blue Grizzly group.

Photos by Peggy Kristich

Sophia Kristich

Junior Nordic testimonial

My name is Sophia Kristich. I am 12 years old, and I’ve been in Junior Nordic since I was 4. From skiing at Archangel or at the River Park it was always a lot of fun. When I started Junior Nordic, there were only 20 or so people, and now there are hundreds. When GPARA opened it was amazing! Then there was the chalet and lights. It has been a lot of fun watching it expand. One of the best things about Junior Nordic is getting out and having fun. Sking in Junior Nordic is an experience every kid should do.

Sophia Kristich is a Blue Grizzly who is a sixth grade at Teeland Middle School. This is the ninth season for the MSC Junior Nordics, which now has 357 skiers.

Race to the Outhouse 2

The season is not over (hopefully) and there is still a month until the club’s last race: Race to the Outhouse 2. That means there is still time to put in a few more interval sessions, tempo skis and refine your technique prior to the ski season’s pinnacle race.

The 7.5K course climbs 880 feet from the start at 2,160-foot elevation to the State Parks outhouse before the Fern Mine gate. The first half is gentle; the second half is steep. Classic and skate options are available. If the season is being late the race is held at the nearby Independence Mine trails, starting at 3,100-foot elevation. This is the perfect chance for you to set a personal best. Registration occurs on the day of race: 9:30 a.m. on April 7. Check out the website for more details

Trail pins show off the club’s last logo, your connection to club

With a growing club comes the need to come out with a new image. We are excited to announce that our new logo can now be proudly displayed on your ski jacket. What better way to show your fellow skiers that you are proud donor to the club, not to mention it is quite the fashion accessory. Head on over to the MSSC website and make donation of $15 or more and you too can join the latest fashion craze. Also are the very anticipated, newly updated ski sleeves to keep your skis from finding new dings and scratches while in transport. Stay tuned for updates on this fantastic new technological release from the MSSC.

GPRA chalet under new management

Lifetime Adventures was recently selected to manage the chalet at GPRA. Beyond their managing of the chalet rentals at our favorite ski area comes a great opportunity for those of you who might have out-of-state guests, non-skier friends and ilk. Life time Adventures is now offering rentals of snowshoes, skis and other outdoor equipment. This is a fantastic opportunity for you to get out skiing with your visitors/friends/family. For rental information, visit www.lifetime-adventure.net.

Ski chariots for the family

Maybe you have been using the excuse of youngin’s to stop you from getting on your skis. Excuses no more. The club has four chariots for club member use (two singles and two doubles). Chariots can be loaned out for two weeks at a time and really provide a fantastic workout over skiing by yourself, not to mention the benefits of getting your kiddos outside. Please visit the website for details or email Ed at edstrabelak@gmail.com to reserve yours.

the ALASKA nordic skier
Putting the sun and fun in fundraising

Another amazing, inspiring and impactful Alaska Ski for Women took place on February 4 at Kincaid Park. There was sun, racing, tons of costumes, amazing ladies of all ages, and so much fun. And it all made a big difference for women and children in our community. Race entries, donations, merchandise sales and funds raised during the silent auction will be donated later this year to programs and organizations that actively work to stop the cycle of domestic violence against women and children. Funds are also distributed to organizations that provide awareness and offer resources to domestic violence victims and their families.

The final tallies of participants and monies raised at the 2018 event are still being compiled, but the Alaska Ski for Women team would like to thank all participants, volunteers and sponsors for their generous support of the event. Special thanks to Platinum Sponsor ConocoPhillips; Gold Sponsors KTUU Channel 2; Silver Sponsors Anchorage Women’s Clinic, Banker Law Group, Denali OBGYN, Great Harvest Bread Co. and Premier Alaska Tours (which provided transportation!); and Bronze Sponsors REI and Bristol Bay Native Corporation.

Learn more at anchorgenordicski.com/events/alaska-ski-for-women/.
Got tickets? Final planning underway for Ski Train on March 24!

Ski Train keeps getting better and the 2018 event on Saturday, March 24, is no exception! Volunteers are working to provide a high quality experience for this year’s participants. Gear drop off on Friday, March 23, makes the early Saturday morning haul easier. VIP parking passes sold out quickly, ensuring 20 lucky car-loads close access to the train depot.

Our Ski Train teams are also putting the finishing touches on details of each train car with help from generous sponsors. Family friendly seats are still available on Trek Store’s Star Trek car; Wild Scoops’ wild animal car (ice cream included) and Conrad Houston Insurance’s Incredibles car.

The new Ski Train logo is featured on this year’s merchandise: hoodies, T-shirts and new this year, engineer hats! The menu will offer food choices that are sure to please, including gourmet hot dogs in Curry. Ski Patrol is excited and the Polka band is tuned up!

Big thanks to Ski Train event director Travis Taylor for his tireless energy and leadership during these last weeks of planning.

If you have your tickets, see you on March 24! If you don’t, get them now at anchoragenordic-ski.com/events/ski-train/!
Junior Nordic program hits the trails with fun, lessons for life

The future for Nordic skiing in Homer is vibrant, judging from the nearly 100 children who showed up for Junior Nordic (JN) skiing this season for five Saturdays from late January through February.

Nationwide, the JN program focuses on children from kindergarten through sixth grade. The program emphasizes fun on skis while working with the youngsters on balance, agility, and fundamentals of technique.

Homer’s program started in 1998 with two coaches, Kenton Bloom and Louise Sequela, and a handful of kids. By 2008, Homer’s JN program had 2-4 coaches and 15-20 kids. Kathy Sarns came to Homer that year after working in Anchorage with JN for 24 years and offered her experience to the local kids. Carlin Rauch led the JN program in Homer for 11 years. Most recently, Deb Moseley now serves as the group’s president.

“Since 1984, every single child I’ve known personally that gets into Nordic skiing grows into self-motivated, successful healthy adults that contribute and make the world a better place,” says Sarns. “Cross-country skiing teaches kids that hard work leads to fun and adventure, and self-confidence. Junior Nordic is a great program on so many levels — that’s why I love it so much.”

Today, as on any of the five Saturdays, the kids are out practicing. The ski trails ring with the laughter of nearly 100 children, over 25 volunteer coaches, and lots of parent helpers. Tiny tots barely two feet high totter speed around the trails and zoom down the big hills with their coaches.

The ski season starts for these youngsters in November, when they sign up to rent skis, poles and boots for $25 a season. “We have a phenomenal rental program,” says Moseley. “In my opinion, this is the best rental program ever. The proceeds from rentals are used primarily to buy more gear.”

On the first day of practice, the kids do a 1K “cookie tour” (with cookies from local Two Sisters Bakery). Coaches watch the youngsters on the tour to evaluate each skier’s ability. Homer’s JN program has six groups, based on abilities:

- Seastars (classic), coached by Michelle Stenger — Kids split into four groups, and each group reports to one of four stations. At the station, the kids play a game or work on a skill for 15 minutes, then move to the next station.
- Puffins (classic), coached by Cindy Sisson — The kids work on good body position, using edges to slow down, stop and turn, balance, weight transfer, kick and glide.
- Cohos (classic), coached by Bill Gee — These youngsters learn body positioning, weight transfer, hip placement, kick, uphill (diagonal stride and hiking pole), kick double pole, diagonal, and tuck.
- Sockeye (skate), coached by Kathy Sarns — These youngsters learn V1 and V2 with smooth transitions, terrain challenges, tricks and timing.
- Salmon Sharks (skate), coached by Emily List — This advanced group learns V1, V2, V1 alternate, free skate, efficient transitions, speed, balance and agility.

Ridgely says, “Being able to simplify and break down a skill into a progression of learned steps has been very fun and educational for me. These kiddos are fearless and full of excitement for life!”

Sarns says she loves “seeing the sparkle in kids’ eyes when they realize how much fun Nordic skiing really is. They are happy go lucky and love playing on skis, either games, skiing backwards, singing, exploring off trail, or holding hands down a crazy hill.”

Sisson adds, “Being around children on skis is delightful. They’re having a ton of fun and it’s contagious. This is my sixth season of coaching Homer JN. The Homer JN skiers are excited, they want to have fun, and are eager to learn.”

In another decade, some of these kids will stand with the winners on ski race podiums. And chances are they will still be having fun.
AROUND CHUGIAK/EAGLE RIVER

Chugiak/Eagle River Jr. Nordic skiers, parents and coaches always have a good time.

**Chugiak/Eagle River Jr. Nordic having a blast**

Chugiak/Eagle River Jr. Nordic is having a great season! Since we did our snow dance, we have had good conditions and tons of fun. Over 140 kids signed up this season and with them a bunch of new and excited coaches. Everyone is working together to ensure that the kiddos have a positive experience and develop a lifelong love of skiing, and, above all, appreciate the outdoor beauty of Alaska. There is an intangible joy in a parent’s heart when they see their kids following their coach like little ducklings and having a blast at 0 degrees. The Eagle River and Chugiak communities are filled with tightknit families and Jr. Nordic is a reflection of that togetherness. If you are curious about Jr. Nordic, come visit at Beach Lake at 7 p.m. every Monday-Thursday; the program continues until Spring Break. You can’t miss us; just follow the line of ducklings.

**Mustangs make moves at Regionals**

Both Chugiak Girls A and Boys A teams came in second in their respective relays at the recent Regional Championships at Kincaid Park. Chugiak is coached by Cody Priest with assistance from Alex Loan and Stan and Gretchen Carrick and others.

Homer Sea to Ski: Last, best event of the ski season

On Sunday, March 25, bikers, runners and skiers will hit the pavement and ski trails in Homer for the annual Sea-to-Ski triathlon. “The Sea to Ski is the fun last event of the ski season in Homer,” says organizer Derek Bynagle. “This is a great event for all levels that begins with a run from the base of the Homer Spit, continues with a bike ride up to the trailhead, and finishes with a ski on KNSC’s amazing corduroy.”

The three legs of the triathlon can be run individually or in teams of two to three. The run segment is usually 5K long, with the bike ride around 7K, and the ski segment around 5K. The route typically includes the run from the end of the Homer Spit to West Homer Elementary School, the bike ride from the school to Roger’s Loop off of the Sterling Highway, and the ski from Rogers Loop to the DOT trailhead, closer to Homer off the Sterling Highway. As always, routes in Homer may change because of volatile weather conditions that tend to come in March. The event concludes with an awards ceremony thanks to Homer’s generous business sponsors.

The number of participants depends on the weather. In 2017, 40 men and women signed up individually for the triathlon, and 28 more people participated on teams. Bynagle participates in the Sea to Ski, as well as organizes it. He says, “As with all KNSC events, my favorite memories are of all the happy people out having a good time in the outdoors. Some come to compete, some come to relax, but everyone is always so encouraging and having fun.”

For details on registering for the Sea to Ski Triathlon, check the KNSC website and Facebook page in the coming weeks.
Be a positive sports parent

BY U.S. SKI & SNOWBOARD

It’s important to be supportive and respectful, not only of your child, but also of the others on the team and of the coaches. As a parent, you have the power to help shape your youth athlete’s attitude about sports. It’s natural to get excited when watching your child compete but it is important to keep your emotions in check on the big day. Here are some tips to help you:

1. **Be supportive before the competition even starts.** Tell your youth athlete you are proud of him/her, regardless of how well he/she performs.

2. **Remind them that it’s normal to be nervous and to have fun even when conditions are tough.**

3. **Let the coaches coach; avoid instructing your child or other athletes from the sidelines.**

4. **Cheer for good runs and great efforts by all competitors.**

5. **When the competition ends, set a good example for your child by thanking the officials, coaches, teammates, volunteers and ski area personnel for their efforts.**

After following these guidelines, go ahead and give yourself a pat on the back! And know that your support role doesn’t end there. Consider these three tips when talking with your children after they compete:

- **Talk only when your child is ready.** If your youth athlete wants to talk about the competition, she will bring it up, maybe even on the ride home. If it seems like she doesn’t feel like talking, respect that. Pushing your child to discuss a competition, run-by-run, especially if she did not perform well, may turn them off sports and decrease her desire to share her thoughts with you or ask your opinion.

- **Ask open-ended questions.** Once the conversation begins, keep it going by asking questions your child can’t answer with a simple “yes” or “no.” For example, ask, “What did you think of the course?” and “How did you feel about the snow conditions?”

- **Listen carefully.** If you’re experienced in the sport your child participates in, it might be tempting to jump in and share your own stories as they are telling theirs. Be patient; make a conscious effort to listen to what they have to say about their experience. When you support your child before and during a competition, and communicate with them effectively after the competition, they will not only have a strong mental attitude, but they will also be more coachable, optimistic, and better able to handle the inevitable losses that are part of the youth sports experience.
A classic Alaska spring ski and party returns

The 2018 Oosik Classic Ski Race/Tour arrives on Saturday, March 17

BY ARTHUR MANNIX
SECRETARY, DENALI NORDIC SKI CLUB

It’s been about 12 years since former Olympic skier Adam Verrier gifted Talkeetna’s Denali Nordic Ski Club the Oosik Classic Ski Race. His original event, based out of Sheep Mountain since the late 90’s, was as simple as a ski race could have been: A couple of guys busting out a snow-machine trail in wide-open subalpine terrain, pulling a simple track-setter over a course of non-predicted length and profile. He went with word-of-mouth advertising and a minimalist organizational style. It was visionary and it was seat-of-the-pants event management at its purest — before the existence of Facebook — when only one in three Americans even used the Internet.

But the babe-that-was-the-Oosik started growing and godfather Adam realized the Sheep Mountain area – though spectacular as a setting for a cross country ski venue – was limited in both its accommodations and lack of community to give it a cozy home. He approached our club and we adopted his Nordic brainchild.

That child was born in the mountains but has been raised in a small town down in the boreal forests of the Upper Susitna Valley. Consequently, the Oosik has changed significantly from the simple spirit of the original event, as the waywardness of time and the complexities of most anything contemporary has steered it (not necessarily guided it) into a creation that nonetheless remains a Nordic celebration of Spring.

Talkeetna has embraced the Oosik for many reasons: it has provided our ski club with revenues which support our Junior Nordic Program and keeps our limited trail grooming equipment operational. It provides a bit of an economic spark to a tiny town at a hungry time of year. And it gets a festive crowd of revelers outside to celebrate the lengthening days, the sun bouncing off the snow, the maze of wax stations with the smell of klister, the profusion of silly costumes and the impromptu aid stations tended by locals enjoying the parade. You’ll not get any beta on the course in this little article, nor any wax recommendations. In this Age of the Internet – when access to information has somewhat supplanted spontaneity – it’s good to keep a few things mum.

Celebrate the end of the ski season Talkeetna style at the 17th annual Oosik Classic Ski Race/Tour, which takes place on Saturday, March 17. The fun and funky 56K/25K cross-country classic ski race and tour is always followed by a great party!

Register today and learn more about the event at denalinnordicskiclub.org/oosik/.
BY ERIC TROYER

The Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks has figured out a way to make mobile weather information available for all smart phone users! Our Birch Hill App has been really popular, but it was available only for iOS users. Android users were jealous! But we figured out how to make the same information available to everyone (and even one-up the BH app).

Here’s how you access it: Use a browser and go to the NSCF website, nscfairbanks.org. In the menu (top right-hand corner) choose Weather. Then scroll down to Mobile Weather. Click on that link and there it is! Bookmark it to save yourself the hassle of navigating to it each time.

That page has everything on the temperature page of the Birch Hill app plus the temperature for Fort Wainwright! The fort’s temperature isn’t from the Birch Hill downhill ski area, but it will give you a good idea of the temperature at the lodge in case you want to ski down the Cliffs or Sonot Connector trails.

Grooming updates are also available for smart phone users. The Birch Hill app still can’t read the grooming chart from the new website, but everyone with a smart phone can access the latest grooming updates.

Here’s how: Use your phone’s browser and go to nscfairbanks.org. In the menu (top right-hand corner) choose Trails. Then scroll down a bit and you’ll get the latest grooming updates so you can ski on most recently groomed trails. You can scroll down farther to get to the grooming chart. We’ve reconfigured it so that it’s more mobile-friendly, especially if you turn your phone sideways. Thanks to Nathan Vonnahme and Don Kielty for making this all happen!

NSCF Calendar keeps you updated
Remember to check the NSCF Calendar for upcoming club events like competition, social activities and more. Visit nscfairbanks.org and “like” the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks on Facebook to keep up!

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! It’s not too late to complete your Ks skied. Ski with a friend, parent or coach and keep track of your distance (or add up the kilometers you’ve already skied thus far and keep going) – you will be surprised how far you skii! Registration information is available at Junior Nordics and online. Awards for all finishers and each grade level and there’s a mid-way prize once you get to 25K! Those that complete the challenge will be entered in a drawing for fun ski gear, which will be awarded in March. For more information or questions, contact Kate Carey at katecarey907@gmail.com.

Sonot Kkaazoot registration underway; race on March 24
The NSCF is proud to announce that registration for the 31st annual Sonot Kkaazoot is now available. Fairbanks’ annual spring skiing marathon will take place Saturday, March 24, and will include 50K, 40K and 20K options. Register and learn more at sonotkkaazoot.org.

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 anchoragenordicski.com/newsletters.htm. Getting the newsletter only online saves our club money, too!
Spring fever in Fairbanks – Wilderness Ski Races arrive in March

BY ERIC TROYER

Skiers interested in taking on bigger and wilder ski races than what the club offers will have two options in March.

The Chena River to Ridge happens in early March in the Chena River State Recreation Area; the Tanana River Challenge happens at the end of March west of Fairbanks. Many skiers have started out with NSCF races and gone on to compete in these races. And neither race conflicts with the Sonot Kkaazoot or any other NSCF race, so you can get them all in!

The White Mountains 100, a 100-mile adventure race in the White Mountains National Recreation Area, also happens in late March and has a ski division, but it is already filled up. If that one intrigues you, make sure to keep an eye on Facebook or the website in early November when the registration opens.

Here are some details on the races that still have openings:

Chena River to Ridge
The sixth annual Chena River to Ridge multi-sport endurance race will be held March 3 in the Chena State Recreation area. The event features skiing, running and biking categories with 25- and 50-mile distance options.

The hilly course links the Compeau, Colorado Creek, Stiles Creek, and Yukon Quest trails system, and is best attempted with classic ski gear. Although recently, the top finishes have gone to skate skiers.

Aid stations with drinks, snacks and a warm tent are staffed by event personnel at the midpoints of each loop. Hamburgers, hotdogs, snacks and a warm place to hang out after the race are provided at the start/finish at Twin Bears Camp on Mile 30 CHSR. The event is sponsored by Beaver Sports. For more information visit rivertoridge.org and facebook.com/Chena-River-to-Ridge-1876195148028890/.

Tanana River Challenge
The fifth annual Tanana River Challenge (TRC) is set for Saturday, March 31. The TRC is a non-motorized, winter endurance race in beautiful Interior Alaska. It is open to fat-bikers, skiers, skijorers and runners. The TRC experience is one of shared, multi-use trails, in a semi-remote setting. This year’s course follows the wide-open Tanana River and loops through the hilly, scenic Rosie Creek forest. Trails are groomed 5- to 10-feet-wide, but without set tracks. You can choose between 25- and 45-mile distances. The race includes many aid stations and an after-party with food and bonfire.

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The TRC’s presenting sponsor is Metropolitan Garage. Additional sponsors include North Pole Veterinary Hospital, Water Wagon, Goldstream Sports, and Beaver Sports. For more information, visit tananariverchallenge.org and facebook.com/TananaRiverChallenge.

White Mountains 100 information can be found at wm100.endurance.cc and facebook.com/WhiteMountains-100-154010412481/.

PHOTO BY ERIC TROYER

Mike Schmoker, Corrine Leistikow and Jim Brader take a break on the Compeau Trail during the 2013 Chena River to Ridge.
Three reasons athletes need Pilates

BY JENNAH JONES
PT, DPT, COMT, STOTT
Pilates Rehab Instructor

Strength, balance, coordi-
nation, and flexibility – these
are attributes recreational and elite
athletes need to perform at the top
of their games. Pilates training is
a gentle yet challenging training
tool to help athletes develop move-
ment awareness, improve their core
strength, correct imbalances, and
prevent injury.

1 Pilates trains the brain.
Pilates is a “Mind-Body”
exercise, which helps athletes feel
imbalance within their bodies,
teaches them to control their move-
ments and correct imbalances to
optimize movement efficiency.
Pilates exercises start slow and pre-
cise to ensure a safe foundation, but
can advance to high level exercises
that challenge the strength and
coordination of even the most elite
athletes.

2 Pilates develops a strong
core. The foundation for Pi-
lates exercises is focused on de-
veloping strength and integration
of the muscles of the trunk, pelvis,
hips, and shoulder girdle to create
a stable core. A comprehensive Pilates
program designed to strengthen
the trunk in all planes of motion
can improve dynamic stability of
the core, creating greater power
generation and efficiency during
sport while reducing the chance of
developing low back pain.

3 Pilates balances the body to
prevent injury. Many athletes
develop muscle imbalances and
poor posture from combining a
sedentary occupation with repeti-
tive motions or postures required
for their sport. Pilates trains the
whole body to ensure that your
entire musculature system is
evenly balanced and conditioned.
A specifically designed Pilates
program can cross-train the body
and improve symmetry, helping an
athlete perform daily activities and
sport with better performance and
reduced chance of injury.

Sounds great! Where do I go
from here?

Make sure you seek a move-
ment professional who is specially
certified to teach Pilates; ask about
their qualifications and experience
before taking a class.

Do a private lesson or introd-
tory class first. Don’t jump into any
Pilates class – this may not be the
right level for you, which can put
you at risk for injury.

If you want to start Pilates but are
suffering from an acute injury or
have a history of chronic pain or
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cal therapist trained in Pilates first.
They can evaluate your injury and
prescribe a Pilates program that is
safe and appropriate for you.

For more information about
Pilates training and class offerings,
please contact Advanced Physical
Therapy’s Pilates Program at
Pilates@aptak.com.

Sources: balancedbody.com, ideaft.com

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