ANALBORAGE: Explore AK's backcountry with NSAA tours

STATEWIDE: Alaska athletes represent their regions, state, country

KACHEMAK: Homer youth aiming for 2020 Paralympics

Anchorage 2
Eagle River 11
Fairbanks 14
Kachemak 12
Mat-Su 9
Statewide 8
Riding momentum into a new ski season

Message from NSAA President Joey Caterinicbio

The calendar is packed full of exciting ski season beginnings, starting with the NSAA Season Kickoff on November 4. It’s also the kickoff of our season financially.

With a new fiscal year, a new budget has been approved and executed. The usual projections have been made on generous trail support, event participation, grooming expenses and fuel costs. New to this year’s budget include the U.S. Junior Nationals program and event improvement initiatives, and finalizing ongoing capital projects. This prestigious national event brings together more than 450 of the country’s best junior skiers to Alaska.

New projects from this summer have been completed. In addition to hiring of our new Program Director, Sara Kamahele, we worked with an HR consultant, updated the NSAA employee manual and rolled out a new employee medical plan. Streamlining employee benefits makes the NSAA transparent and an attractive organization to work for and invest in. With lots of collaboration, our biathlon program has been reorganized and the Kincaid infrastructure upgrade at Kincaid Stadium continues to be finalized adding the final touches of internet, race timing and an advanced sound system. In conjunction with the Municipality of Anchorage, trail signs are going into the ground to help our trail users find their way! NSAA is also busy working on our usual amazing items, such as snowmaking, trail preparation, events and the implementation of terrain parks at Kincaid and Service are being planned and implemented by summer 2019.

We have an amazing group of board members, volunteers and employees and I can’t think of a better organization to lead. Thank you all for being part of our NSAA community. We have big plans for the coming season. We are excited to bring new life and energy into our Nordic community with these opportunities, and we couldn’t do it without the support and volunteer time from you. Let the season begin!

See you on the trails!

The Trails: A love story

On Tuesday, October 9, hundreds of runners gathered at Kincaid Park for the Tuesday Night Races. NSAA was the spotlight on race night and folks were excited to see the ‘I heart trails’ stickers and Jr. Nordic information were excited to see the ‘I heart trails’ stickers and Jr. Nordic information. The collaboration of the Tuesday Night Races (Anchorage Parks & Rec) and NSAA that night was a strong reminder: the Anchorage community loves its trails and everyone uses them. Thank you to everyone who stopped by to renew their trail membership and say “Hello!”

The NSAA Season Kickoff: A party for all

Celebrate the start of the ski season at the annual NSAA Season Kickoff! The Expo will feature groups such as the Anchorage Nordic Ski Patrol, APU Nordic Ski Center, Anchorage Parks & Rec, and many more! Place your bid on items found in the Silent Auction, featuring generous donations from organizations including Premier Alaska Tours, Eagle River Nature Center and the Anchorage Museum. Join us for a potluck at 4 p.m. and bring your favorite dish to share! Then the kickoff starts at 5 p.m. including music and adult beverages. We will see you at the Kincaid Chalet on November 4.

The official Ski Train costume announcement!

The Ski Train tickets are flying out of the NSAA office! March 23 marks the annual run on the Ski Train chugging along the tracks to Curry, AK for a fun-filled day of skiing, polka music and train festivities. (drum roll) And now! The official reveal of the Ski Train car costume themes!

- Matanuska Brewing: Rock Stars
- Glacier Brewhouse: Comic book villains

See AROUND THE BOWL, Page 3
AROUND THE BOWL

Continued from Page 2

- Alaskan Brewing Co.: Super Heroes
- Trek: Star Trek
- REI: Hawai’i
- Wildcops: Animal Kingdom
- CHI: It’s going to be a surprise...

Don’t miss out on the fun, get your tickets today: anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-train.

Junior Nordic:

More visible than ever

NSA Junior Nordic skiers will be easy to spot this season in snazzy new jackets, thanks to generous donations from ConocoPhillips and UBS. Keep a look out for those brilliantly colored jackets skiing on the trails this winter.

The Junior Nordic program will also have new banners to help skiers and parents find their coaches, which will result in less time sorting kids, and parents find their coaches, which also have new banners to help skiers jackets skiing on the trails this winter.

A look out for those brilliantly colored jackets, thanks to generous donations from ConocoPhillips and UBS! Keep an eye out for those brilliantly colored jackets skiing on the trails this winter.

Junior Nordic coaching positions and Site Directors positions are available at all of our venues (Russian Jack, Hillside, and Kincaid.) This is one of the most entertaining and rewarding jobs out there. Visit the website for more information: anchoragenordicski.com/junior-nordic-coaching/ or contact Shannon Donley at jnordic@anchoragenordicski.com.

Mark your calendar and tell your boss to buy a tree!

Your business wants to be in on this awesome tradition! NSA brings you the third annual Solstice Tree Tour: a unique Alaska celebration of Winter Solstice and the return of longer days. Businesses decorate trees on the Mize Loop at Kincaid Park and during this special one-time only event, NSA permits people to walk as well as ski on the groomed trails.

Mark December 16 on your calendar then contact Sara Miller to buy a tree because they’re filling up fast! Sara Miller: aksaramiller@gmail.com or visit the NSA website: anchoragenordicski.com/solstice-tree-tour/ for more information.

NSAA Volunteer Opportunities

The Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage is always looking for volunteers for trails, events, and programs. No experience necessary, there’s a role for everyone! This organization is volunteer driven and a little help goes a long way:

Nov. 4 — Season Kickoff (multiple positions)
Dec. 16 — Solstice Tree Tour (multiple positions)
Various dates — Ski Bear costume
Various dates — Trail work
Hospitality Crew — New this year!

A couple of hours makes a difference! If you’re interested in helping, please contact the NSA Volunteer Coordinator at volunteer@anchoragenordicski.com or visit anchoragenordicski.com.
NSAA Volunteer Spotlight: Mike Miller

Mike Miller’s NSAA journey started in 1984 when his oldest daughter, Heather, skied for Goldenview Middle School. Back then, races started at Jodhpur and Mike was just a spectator, but not for long. He helped with post-race cleanup, rolling up nylon fencing and this was his first volunteer job, but was never his favorite.

Mike’s time helping with ski races increased. He was quickly recruited by a friend to help with timing, which he still does today and enjoys. Being involved with racing led to volunteering with the trails, then to serving on the Board, which Mike still does today. Mike took on a new volunteer role in 2017 as the Director of Operations. Mike says his favorite jobs include mowing in the summer, and snowmaking and race timing in the winter.

Mike has traveled the world timing races. One of his favorite memories was during the 2002 Olympic Games in Salt Lake City where he was an International Ski Federation delegate and Assistant Chief of Start. He and 26 other people from Alaska spent a month in Soldier Hollow as part of the task force. Mike was invited to be an international technical delegate for Japan’s Miyasama Games in 2005. Volunteering with races here in Anchorage provided Mike exciting opportunities.

When asked what he’s working on now, Mike says, “the normal stuff.” He stays busy with NSAA Operations: year-round trail work, grooming and maintenance. Mike looks forward to the snow every year and says that all the work during the summer just makes for better skiing.

NSAA Member Spotlight: The Waitman Family

NSAA is always thrilled to celebrate and thank its special members. This season, NSAA is spotlighting a handful of those supporters with short stories in the Nordic Skier. November’s NSAA Members of the Month are the Waitman family – Kay Waitman and her kids, Rainey, Elias and Lauren. Kay recently chatted with NSAA about her family’s connection to the organization and the fun they have on Anchorage’s trails.

NSAA: Years you’ve been Nordic skiing?

KAY WAITMAN: I grew up skiing around Anchorage with my parents, and my children, Lauren, Elias and Rainey have been skiing with Junior Nordic since they each were 6 years old!

What do you love about Nordic skiing?

We love being outdoors and active as a family. I love it when my children come home from Junior Nordic practice and tell me about the “most awesome” sunset, or the hooting owls they heard while out skiing at Kincaid Park.

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

It’s important for my family to support NSAA’s mission through membership. We really appreciate and enjoy being able to ski and be outside in nature, even if the snow conditions aren’t ideal.

What does NSAA’s mission mean to you?

NSAA’s mission means getting families outside and supporting trails. I take the time to mention to others how lucky we are to have world-class trails to ski on all winter.

Can you share a standout moment from connecting with NSAA and its programs and events?

We loved the opportunity to pass out medals to the skiers at the U.S. Nationals ski races this past winter. It was inspiring and fun for my kids to meet the elite athletes! We also enjoy skiing at Russian Jack through Junior Nordic and getting to cheer on the mushers during the Iditarod!
NSAA scholarships awarded to four exceptional Alaska student-athletes

Each season, the NSAA awards a handful of talented young student-skiers with scholarships. Funds for the scholarship program come from the Sven Johansson Memorial Ski Race and the Elizabeth Tower memorial scholarship fund. This year $4,500 in scholarship funds were awarded to four outstanding student-athletes:

- Abby Amick of the University of Alaska Fairbanks and South Anchorage High School received a $1,500 NSAA Scholarship.
- Jania Tumey of Harvard University and West Anchorage High School received a $2,000 NSAA Scholarship.
- Vanessa Duhnen of Stanford University and West Anchorage High School received a $1,000 NSAA Scholarship.
- Sarah Freestone of the University of Alaska Anchorage received the $1,000 Dr. Elizabeth Tower Memorial Scholarship.

The NSAA Scholarship application can be found online on February 1 and will be due in March 2019. Learn more at anchoragenordicski.com/races/asd-high-school-racing/nsaa-scholarships.

Alaska Ski for Women provides grants to three non-profits in 2018

Each year, the all-volunteer ASFW grant committee awards $35,000-$50,000 in grants to organizations around Alaska who are working to stop the cycle of domestic violence and/or supporting survivors of domestic violence and their families. The committee is happy to announce the three 501(c)3 organizations supported through funds raised at the 2018 event: Abused Women’s Aid In Crisis (AWAIC), YWCA Alaska, and Standing Together Against Rape (STAR) ($47,000 was awarded).

These funds come from sponsorships, race entries, silent auction proceeds, and the sale of event merchandise.

Thanks to our community for coming out year after year and supporting these amazing organizations who are doing important work around the State of Alaska.

Mark your calendars for February 3, 2019! The all-volunteer event committee is seeking two additional committee members (Four-hour time commitment each month Nov-Jan). Email alaskaskiforwomen@gmail.com for more information.

Learn more about Alaska Ski for Women at anchoragenordicski.com/events/alaska-ski-for-women.

Food for the Entire Team!

For over 9 years, South Anchorage residents have been coming to locally owned and operated Firetap Alehouse and Restaurant for its signature pretzel sandwiches, gourmet pizzas, hearty salads and a great selection of appetizers. Firetap Alehouse has 36 different beers to choose from, the majority made in Alaska, and you can even get them to go at the growler bar in the liquor store.

There is something on the menu for everyone on the team and plenty of space to accommodate large groups.

Firetap Alehouse is a strong supporter of our community athletics including Nordic Skiing, Soccer, Wrestling, Basketball, and Baseball. Firetap also supports numerous charities and participates in school-business partnerships with many South Anchorage schools.

Firetap is conveniently located at 10950 O’Malley Centre Drive, near the corner of Old Seward Highway and O’Malley Road. Call ahead to order your food or pizza to-go at (907) 561-2337, then grab a growler and/or some wine. The menu is online at firetapalehouse.com.
Take a tour, savor the season with NSAA Tours 2018-19

Attention all you hungry-for-adventure skiers! Check out NSAA’s delicious menu of backcountry ski tours for the 2018-19 ski season. 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. Many thanks for their assistance! We look forward to skiing with you out on the trails.

If you have questions about tours or program, visit www.anchorangenic.com/programs/backcountry-tours/ or contact Mary Varvik at 907-396-7686 or mavirus@gci.net.

NSAA Backcountry Ski Tours 2018-2019

NOVEMBER 23

21st annual Turkey Day Shakeup – Archangel Road, Hatcher Pass, Talkeetnaa
Level – Easy III; Distance: 8 miles; Elevation Gain: 800-1,100 feet; Tour Leader: Mason Wick, 907-982-7809; maseguy@gmail.com.

Join us for our first tour of the season. Travel under the rugged and beautiful peaks of the Archangel Valley and past old mining ruins in Hatcher Pass for a spectacular day of skiing. This is a great opportunity for those who want to learn about skiing in the mountains, or start skiing for the season. Meet at the Cars Muldoon parking lot near the bakery at 9 a.m. From there we’ll head to the Archangel Road trailhead about 0.8 miles up the road from Gold Mint Trailhead. If you’d rather meet us at the trailhead, expect to see us about 10 a.m. We anticipate arriving back at the cars about 3:30 p.m., depending on how much fun we are having and how far we ski. The first portion of the trail, to the Red Rocks trailhead, is flat gaining only 0.3 miles in 2.5 miles. This is a great turnumaid spot for beginners skiers. The trail to the gate is another 1.5 miles, gaining 500 feet and will be a great downhill run for those with more experience. We expect to ski about 8 miles roundtrip.

DECEMBER 8

Iditarod National Historic Trail (INHT) Turagain Pass, Kenai Mountains
Level – Moderate II; Distance: 8 miles; Elevation Gain: 1,000-1,100 feet; Tour Leader: Mary Varvik 907-306-7688; mavirus@gmail.com.

Enjoy a great ski on a part of the INHT. We will start at the bathrooms on the east side of the highway at Turagain Pass. We will begin with a gradual ski on a well-developed trail through the forest with short climbs on a narrow trail under various snow conditions, then continue north to Ingram Creek where we will enjoy lunch before the return trip. There is a downhill section coming down to the parking area. Meet at the Chugach State Park Headquarters (by the train south of Potter Marsh) at 9 a.m.

January 4

Friday Night Fun Ski, Hillside ski trails
Level – Easy II; Distance: 3-6 miles; Elevation Gain: Rolling terrain in groomed ski trails; Tour Leader: Ed Kamienski, 907-223-6194; akbiker@hotmail.com.

Meet at the Abbott Road parking lot at 6 p.m. We will ski the groomed ski trails. There is potential to make this a short or long trip, depending on the group. The trails are rolling hills through a beautiful forested area. Bring water and warm clothes. Check the weather forecast before heading out. Optional apres ski food and grog at a nearby restaurant if there is interest from the group.

January 11

NSAA Backcountry Tour participants had a spectacular adventure to Skookum Glacier last season.

Friday Night Fun Ski, Hillside ski trails
Level – Easy II; Distance: 3-6 miles; Elevation Gain: Rolling terrain in groomed ski trails; Tour Leader: Ed Kamienski, 907-223-6194; akbiker@hotmail.com.

Meet at the Abbott Road parking lot at 6 p.m. We will ski the groomed ski trails. There is potential to make this a short or long trip, depending on the group. The trails are rolling hills through a beautiful forested area. Bring water and warm clothes. Check the weather forecast before heading out. Optional apres ski food and grog at a nearby restaurant if there is interest from the group.

FEBRUARY 9

Middle Fork Loop, Chugach Mountains
Level – Moderate I; Distance: 8 miles; Elevation Gain: ~700 feet; Tour Leader: Mary Varvik, 907-306-7688; mavirus@gmail.net.

Ski with spectacular views of Rusty Point, Ptarmigan and O’Malley Peaks with grand views of the surrounding mountains. This is one of Anchorage’s most accessible backcountry tours. We’ll meet at the Prospect Heights trailhead at 9 a.m. and start touring to the south of the trailhead. If weather and snow conditions are favorable we’ll ski the Middle Fork Loop. Otherwise, if we have high winds or icy trail conditions, we’ll ski the many of the nearby hillside trails in the trees. Expect to return to your vehicles about 3:30 or 4 p.m. You’ll need to purchase an Alaska State Parks Day Use Pass for $5 if you don’t currently have one. Be prepared for cold, wind, and good times. You’ll need warm clothes including some for breaks, food for a lunch stop and plenty of water. The trail climbs from the start and while there are some relatively flat portions, be prepared for ski upgill and negotiating some downhill drops. Much of the trail is wide snowmachine groomed trail, but a lot of it will be skier made trails packed with some foot traffic. The first third of the trail will be characterized by uphill, the middle third will be relatively flat, and the last portion will be downhill.

FEBRUARY 16-18

Manitoua Mountain AT/Teile-ski and Touring options, two overnights
Level – Manitoba Advanced I, Touring Easy II; Distance: Manitoba ~6 miles, Touring 3-8 miles; Elevation Gain: Manitoba – 2300 feet, Touring 100 feet; Tour Leader: AT/Teile ski: Michael Henrich 907-632-6440; mhenrichgci.net; reservations and tour leader: Karleen Leeper at 907-440-0049; kbleepergci.net.

Join us for two overnights over President’s Day weekend at Manitoba Hills for telemarking. At skiing or touring. This tour is for beginning to intermediate skiers. If climbing Manitoba Mountain, you’ll need skis for your skis. You should also have available gear (beacon, probe and shovel) for the telemark or AT portion of skiing. If you’d like to kick and glide instead, there are a couple tour skiing options to beautiful Summit Lake or rolling hills to the north on old gold mining trails (no skis required). There is also a sauna to enjoy! There will be a fee for lodging. Bring your own breakfasts and lunches and a potluck dish to share for dinner. Because the weather is often variable, bring clothing for wind, cold and snow. Reserve your bunk and discuss logistics with tour leader Karleen Leeper at 907-440-0049.

See BACKCOUNTRY Page 7

The ALASKA Nordic skier
Volunteer and contribute to Ski 4 Kids: February 23, 2019

BY DARCY DUGAN

Each year, several hundred kids take over Kincaid Park for a festival of skiing, racing, and other outdoor activities. For some, the annual Ski 4 Kids festival is the first time they compete in a race or try snowshoeing and other outdoor sports and recreation. For others, it is an event they look forward to all year. Regardless, everyone has a good time. Mark your calendars for Saturday, February 23, to take part in this year’s event.

Volunteers needed

Ski 4 Kids runs smoothly due to a small army of spirited volunteers. You do not need to know how to ski, apply wax, or wrangle kids holding long pointed sticks (although these options are available, too). Volunteer roles range from set up, clean up, and food distribution to running outside activity stations and helping along the ski courses.

“The energy of the kids is contagious,” said volunteer Rob Whitney, who was the announcer at last year’s event. “I think it’s what brings most of us back.”

It is not too early to plan ahead, as volunteer sign-ups have already begun. Please visit the “Volunteer” tab on the Ski 4 Kids website at anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-4-kids/, or contact volunteer coordinator Lia Slemons at liaslemons@gmail.com.

Help support ski grants

Thanks to the generous support of the community, Ski 4 Kids raises over $5,000 per year to disperse in grants to support youth skiing through funding of equipment, transportation, and other needs of Anchorage schools and programs, as well as the Municipality of Anchorage’s Ski Outreach Program. Since event registration fees cover the costs of the Ski 4 Kids festival, 100 percent of additional contributions go towards ski equipment grants for local programs. These contributions come from corporations, foundations, small businesses, individuals and families.

Andrew Bydlon is a physical education teacher at Ursa Major Elementary School, a former grant recipient. “The funds made a huge impact,” he said. “Over the past several years we have combined the Ski 4 Kids matching grant and a PTA grant to purchase skate skis and skate boots. Our Nordic ski program at Ursa Major now allows two classes to ski at a time at PE, and we have a 50-student after school classic program, a 20-student skate ski program, and a 20-student fall and spring roller ski program. I truly believe our PTA stepped up only because there were matching funds.”

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

If you would like to make a donation to the Ski 4 Kids, contact the NSAA office at business@anchoragenordicski.com. More information about the Ski 4 Kids program, including event details, sponsor forms, and the grant application process, can also be found at anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-4-kids/.

Ski 4 Kids would like to thank its recent sponsors …

Anchorage Parks & Rec; Anchorage Pediatrics; Banker Law Group; ConocoPhillips; CRW Engineering Group; Elsberg Family Foundation; Great Harvest Bread Company; Healthy Futures; Kaladi Brothers Coffee; LaTouche Pediatrics; Nordic Ski Assoc. of Anchorage; and REI Co-op.

BACKCOUNTRY

Continued from Page 6

MARCH 3-1

Denali View Chalet, two overnight, Peters Hills

Level — Easy II; Distance: 8 miles one way to chalet; Elevation Gain: Generally flat; rolling terrain; Tour Leader: Karline Leeper at 907-440-0049; kbleeper@gci.net

Enjoy the weekend at a rustic Alaskan lodge on Kotsa Lake south of Mt. McKinley. Ski 8 miles into the lodge with just a day pack. Your gear and food will be brought in by the chalet owner on snowmachine. Enjoy awesome views of Denali, fantastic company, wonderful group cuisine, sauna and more skiing on various trails in the area. Because the weather is often variable, bring clothing for wind, cold and snow. Space is limited. A deposit to hold a spot is required by February 15. For more information, contact the tour leader.

MARCH 10

Beach Lake to tidal grasslands

Level — Easy II; Distance: 6 miles round trip, 3-4 hours; Elevation gain: Generally flat; Tour Leader: Ray Cammina; 907-726-7977; raybdi68@hotmail.com

From the lake parking lot, if conditions allow, we will ski the lake side to the north end and pass over the mushing trails and onto Cook Inlet Upper tidal grasslands. Beautiful views of the coastal flats, meandering channels and maybe a muskrat lodge. Meet at 11 a.m. Directions: From MP 20.9 George Parks Hwy. Take South Birchway exit and turn east past Chugach High School. Drive roughly 9 mile to Beach Lake Road. Take a left on Beach Lake Road and drive 2 miles to Beach Lake.

MARCH 17

Skookum Glacier, Kenai Mountains

Level — Moderate I (for distance); Distance: 12 miles; Elevation Gain: 400 feet; Tour Leader: Mary Vavrik; 907-306-7686; mvavrik@gci.net

This will be a kick and glide tour up to the Skookum Glacier. On a sunny day, you’ll enjoy incredible views of the glacier, Byron and Carpathian Peaks. Because it’s spring, we have to worry about the warmth instead of the cold. In our case, we may need to negotiate some snow bridge crossings. The ski is flat until the last two miles as we approach the glacier. There are beautiful views of the glacier from ~mile 4. To get to the toe of the glacier, we will need to continue on, ski down and up Skookum Creek valley and up the glacier moraine. We’ll meet at 9 a.m. at the Chugach State Park Headquarters parking lot (the trail south of Potter Marsh).

MARCH 30-31

Reed Creek overnight ski in

Level — Moderate I; Distance: 8 miles; Elevation Gain: 500 feet; Tour Leader: Mary Vavrik; 907-306-7686; mvavrik@gci.net

Travel under the rugged and beautiful peaks of Anchorage Valley and up Reed Creek for a spectacular weekend of skiing and winter camping. Plan on meeting at the Cars Muldoon parking lot near the bakery at 9 a.m. on Saturday. From there we’ll carpool to the trailhead at the intersection of the Anchorage Road and the Hatcher Pass Road. This is about ¾ mile past the former Mothetode Lodge. If you’d rather meet us at the trailhead, we’ll meet about 10:30 a.m. Expect to ski about 3 ½ miles before we set up camp, gaining about 500 feet of altitude in that distance. Camp will be set up between Goodhope Creek and the former mine buildings near Snowbird Creek. We’ll dig a pit for a common area for cooking and set up tents near the pit. Bring your camping gear and food. A permit is available. Be prepared for the elements, wind, cold and precipitation, including rain. For those skiing with their dogs, porcupines are in the area.

APRIL 7

Gold Mint Trail, Hatcher Pass

Level — Moderate I; Distance: 10 miles; Elevation gain: 800 feet; Tour Leader: Ray Cammina; 907-726-7977; raybdi68@hotmail.com

Travel under the rugged and beautiful peaks of the Little Susitna Valley in Hatcher Pass for a spectacular day of spring skiing on the Gold Mint trail. Plan on meeting at the north end of the Eagle River Fred Meyer parking lot at 10 a.m. From there we’ll carpool to the Gold Mint trailhead. If you’d rather meet us at the trailhead, expect to see us about 11:30 a.m. We intend on skiing about 5 miles up the valley with an overall elevation gain of 800 feet. The trail is relatively steady with just a few fast downhill. There are several short steep hills to ascend and descend which will be a bit of fun. Be prepared for the elements: wind, cold and precipitation. Although this time of year it could be warm and sunny! Bring adequate water and food including something for a lunch break. For those skiing with their dogs, porcupines are in the area.
Alaska skiers represent state, country

Check out all the awesome Alaskans and Alaska-based skiers rocking new LL.Bean/Swix Sport uniforms with their US Ski & Snowboard Cross Country teammates!

Back row, third from left is Hannah Halvorsen, who skis with APU Nordic Ski Center; fourth from left is Hailey Swithul, APU Nordic Ski Center; fifth from left, Sadie Bjornsen, APU Nordic Ski Center; front row, third from left, Erik Bjornsen, APU Nordic Ski Center; sixth from left, Scott Patterson, APU Nordic Ski Center; and seventh from left, Gus Schumacher, Alaska Winter Stars. Learn more about the team and athletes at usskiandsnowboard.org/teams/cross-country, facebook.com/usskiandsnowboard and instagram.com/ussskiteam.

From the Tang Cup to Olympic gold: How does CCAK work?

BY LAURI BASSETT

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. 2018 saw success at each of these levels; all the way to Olympic gold medal.

CCAK is a board-driven organization of volunteers with one paid administrator. The Board of Directors is comprised of representatives from around the state who have a connection to their regional ski club and want to be part of continuing to offer youth cross country ski racing. Members of the Board of Directors bring business skills, technical skiing knowledge as well as community and nationwide connections to the organization.

The CCAK Competition Committee consists of coaches, ski club representatives, and officials who manage the racing protocol throughout the season. Besh Cup races are sanctioned by US Ski & Snowboard which drives the competition rules including the formation of regional teams for the US Junior Nationals Championships and coaching requirements that now include Safe Sport training and background checks. The CCAK Competition Committee has an established protocol for selecting Team Alaska coaches and athletes, managing team travel as well as recruiting and retaining race officials. Race officials, known as Technical Delegates (TDs) are certified by US Ski & Snowboard. TD certification is maintained by officiating races as well as attending training sessions offered by US Ski & Snowboard.

Statewide racing to select members for Team Alaska existed before CCAK was formed. Many remember the Tang Cup. In the early days each ski club would put together a weekend of racing and an effort was made to keep a tally of points to select the skiers who would represent Alaska at Junior Nationals; and in the even years to represent Alaska at the Arctic Winter Games. While this system wasn’t broken, it was not sustainable to grow the sport. To offer consistent racing for Junior Nationals Qualification (JNQ) races, it was obvious that one central driving force needed to be in place so as not to need to re-create the wheel for each JNQ race. The Competition Committee developed consistent race formats that mirrored what skiers could expect on the national stage. A points system was developed for the race administrator to properly seed skiers based on results from previous ski races. Additionally, a Besh Cup traveling trophy award was created. The male and female skiers of the U18/U20 combined age group with the most race points at the end of the season receive this award and pass it on to the next year’s top skiers.

After CCAK as an organization was established, it also focused offering races to skiers younger than the Team Alaska age group. Each year an increasing number of elementary age skiers check out a Besh Cup race, often as younger siblings of those seeking Team Alaska spots. More often these days, young skiers are interested in lining up at a start line and getting through a grueling 2K looking for a chance to stand on the podium to receive a medal. ConocoPhillips has become a household name with sponsoring ski events across Alaska and as the title sponsor of the Besh Cup races, many of our youth skiers have photographs in front of the ConocoPhillips awards banner.

CCAK also has a focus in developing future coaches and is calling for interested parties to contact CCAK to learn about possible opportunities. This year with Junior Nationals being hosted by the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage, coaches have the luxury of working close to home; and CCAK has more flexibility in taking on a larger staff. If you are a new coach to the scene, this would be a chance to see how things work at a national event. Coaches need to have US Ski & Snowboard licenses prior to applying and the deadline to apply is November 1. Specifics can be found on the CCAK website: crosscountryalaska.org.

Additionally, CCAK would like to offer a US4 trip to the Intermountain Division Youth Championships in February 2019. This weekend of racing is for middle school age racers (U14) but it coincides with the Alaska State High School Cross Country Ski Championships; so many of the usual suspects are unavailable. This is an excellent opportunity for a low-key trip for a coach; along with a few supportive parent helpers. Please contact CCAK for more information.

There have been many parents and ski enthusiasts who have been part of the CCAK Board of Directors and Competition Committee.

Currently the Board of Directors are: Lin Hindermid (President), Anson Moxness (Vice President), Calisa Kastning (Secretary), Kevin Donley (Treasurer), Mark Strabel, John Pothast, John Estle (Chair of Competition Committee), Susan Faulkner, and Ja Dorris. CCAK thanks outgoing Treasurer, Randy Kanady and Vice President, Trond Jensen for their many years of service and support to the Alaska cross country ski community. A very important “behind the scenes” person that makes so much of CCAK possible is Cory Smith who built and maintains the scoring, seeding, and registration program.

Finally, CCAK would not be as sustainable as it is today without the financial support of ConocoPhillips Alaska. Thank you to ConocoPhillips and to all the volunteers who make it possible for our organization to provide excellent ski racing opportunities to our youth.

If you would like to learn more about CCAK; with possible aspirations of joining the board, becoming a coach or an official, please contact Lauri Bassett at info@crosscountryalaska.org.
**Mat-Su Ski Club summer projects report**

**By Ed Strabel**

Skiers have been very active in the Sub-Arctic Camelot known as the Core Area of the Mat-Su Valley this past summer. The Mat-Su Ski Club finished off the new competition trails at the Government Peak Rec Area. Volunteers installed several additional culverts to improve drainage, emplaced an additional 30-foot-wide bridge, and regraded several sections of trail to increase skier enjoyment as they are physically challenged on the challenging climbs. The new trails were seeded in late July by club volunteers.

The ski club was able to recruit a brother-sister duo to assist the club through service learning projects en route to the highest scouting awards. Julia Colver and her crew of volunteers worked almost 300 hours hand lettering over 125 routed signs and then placed them on posts throughout the new trail system. Her brother Callum, and his crew of Scouts and other volunteers constructed, by hand, a 2.3 KM winter trail, eight-feet wide through the southern portion of the Government Peak Rec Area. Callum’s crew worked a total of 374 hours on the relatively flat Flattop loop. Skiers can access the trail at the bottom of the Eska Loop while bikers snowshoers and folks with dogs can follow the Fiddlehead Mountain Bike Trail south of the sledding hill.

Purchases like these do more than temporarily satiate my gear obsession. It allows for me to abide my time while the ski conditions produce themselves. First, I look forward to their arrival, envisioning how they are going to make me a better skier, propelling me to the tops of hills, to the front of the packs, and to podiums (or more likely to the next break spot). Secondly, when I do have those precious planks in my hands, the fun begins. I enjoy mounting bindings and waxing the boards. Nothing quite like preparing your own skis for their cold debut. And lastly, or more like an ongoing process, is to get in shape to justify my purchase. Dryland training is hardly my ideal sport and with the normal life schedule this usually equals many post-hunting and pre-ski season, an approach like this helps me stay in a better mood and keep my roommates from kicking me out.

Whatever your means for passing the time is, know the season is near. As Red Green would say, “Remember I’m pulling for ya. We’re all in this together!” And if you have not figured out your own PDP and would like to give mine a shot, try heading down to Backcountry Bike and Ski in downtown Palmer (a great supporter of the MSSC) and have the wonderful staff help you find the perfect pre-season distraction.

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AROUND THE VALLEY
Continued from Page 9

years. Why 350? Because we only have so many hours in the week that we can offer the program and we can only accommodate 150 kids on the trails at any one time. Junior Nordics is made possible by dedicated volunteer effort including the Junior Nordic Steering Committee, 40 coaches, and our sweeps. This coming year, the head coaches will be Mark Stigar and Brent Taylor.

Our Adult Ski Lessons program continues, with lessons during the week and on weekends, coached by Daryl Farrrens and Mark Stigar. Daryl underwent a knee replacement this year but will be back on the trails to coach beginning in December.

The Icicle Double race, our flagship competitive event, is as ever, the weekend after Christmas. Our Mat-Su Ski for Women is in early February. Note that the Ski for Women is for women, but not necessarily by women; we encourage men and boys to participate and give donations to Alaska Family Services, which operates a women’s shelter in the Mat-Su. We also host and run logistics and timing for local high school races.

And then there is the ongoing trail maintenance and grooming by club members and our volunteer groomers, who put in massive amount of time at all hours of the day and night to make the trails as close to perfect as possible.

This past two years, we raised over $350,000 to build the new Comp Loops at GPRA, which added just under 6 km of new trails. We started trail construction in June 2017, and the project was near enough completion by freeze-up to allow the community to ski the new trails all of the 2017/18 winter. This summer our volunteers reshaped the trails to make the downhill a little more manageable and the uphill a little less steep, as well as installing new bridges and signs and refining drainage issues. We think you will appreciate the changes. Thank you to Mark Strabel and Lucas Parker for volunteering their time on the heavy machinery, Dave Werner for being our chain sawyer, and Ed Strabel for being onsite most of the summer.

We want to thank the people and organizations that make our club’s work possible. To our members, your annual dues are much of our that make our club’s work possible. To our

New winter trail at GPRA
The Colver family has been extremely helpful to the club. Calum Colver, as part of his Eagle Badge, organized Boy Scout Troop 367 to build a new winter-only, multi-use trail at GPRA: the new Flattop Trail. It is accessed by skiers from the bottom of the Eika Loop, other users access it from the Fiddlehead Singletrack trail. The Flattop trail is narrower, more old-school and woody, than the other ski trails at GPRA. It is not machine-buffed smooth so will require good snow cover before it can be groomed for skiing: expect it to open later than the other ski trails.

New terrain Park This Winter at GPRA
We also built a “Nordic Terrain Park” with jumps and bumps that will be available this winter for your enjoyment. The park is located between the Denali and Pioneer Loops and features six lanes: four downhill with bumps and jumps and two uphill to return to the top of the park. It is designed for cross-country skis and little kids, not downhill skis or snowboards, so the jumps and bumps are not as severe as a downhill area terrain park. It will be accessed from the Pioneer Loop. Junior Nordics, enjoy. And you will probably find high school racers doing balance and technique drills there also.

New mowers
The club is buying one of its most expensive pieces of equipment yet. And it is a lawn mower. Well, you’ve got to do what you’ve got to do. And the trails need mowed, or they will revert back to jungle. After the trail expansion at GPRA, mowing with a homeowner’s garden tractor was becoming ludicrous. So, by combining a $10,000 grant from the Mat-Su Borough Bed Tax Fund with $23,000 provided by our members, we have a diesel-powered utility tractor with an 8-foot wide cutting deck out front and super-wide floaty turf tires to maintain the 31 acres of ski trails, and world-class cross-country-croquet (xcc) grounds, at GPRA. The close-mowed ski trails are a popular summer running, strolling, dog-walking, and picnicking destination for locals and tourists alike.

Race to the Outhouse – November 3 in Hatcher Pass
If you followed my protocol above, you’ll have been perfectly prepared and amped to give your newly serviced snow sliders a chance to prove their worth. Every year for over a dozen seasons, the MSSC has offered a fantastic first race of the ski season. Typically the race is held on Archangel Road, covering the distance from the gate up to the outhouse at the Fern Mine Gate, 7K and 1,000 feet of elevation gain. The event is a low-key, everyone’s welcome event that is a great way to kick off your season of racing. Plus, in April the Race to the Outhouse #2 occurs, allowing you ambitious types a chance to show off your season’s V20 Max increases. Registration starts at 9:30 a.m. on race day. Wave starts commence at 10:30 a.m. Cost is $5 per skier or $10 per family. In the event of little snow at Archangel, the race will be relocated uphill at Independence Mine. I look forward to seeing everyone’s new skis there.

Moonlight Ski – November 24 at Independence Mine
Everything is better at night; dancing, neon bowling and of course skiing! Each month the club offers a Moonlight Ski at a different location throughout the Valley. This month the event is being hosted at the highest groomed trails in the area, Independence Mine. Nothing says adventure like skiing between the historic mining buildings with only the glow of the moon to navigate your way (bring your headlight in the off chance a cloud shows up …). Meet at the parking lot at 7 p.m. pray to Ullr for clear skies.

Trail pins
Remember November 6 is the General Election. If you do vote, you’ll be presented a sticker to proudly to claim to your fellow citizens that you did one of your civic duties. Do you know what feels better than wearing that sticker? Displaying your lovely Trail Pin while cruising the local trails, or the grocery store, or your kid’s school. Adding this small piece of flair to your attire will remind all your friends and colleagues that you are a supporter of the MSSC and the work we do to keep our trails skiable. Head over to our website (www.matsuski.org) and make sure that your are not left out of the “in” crowd with the latest fashion trend. And to you folks rocking a trail pin already, thanks for your support.

Calendar of Events
See www.matsuski.org for updates
November 3, 10:30 a.m. – Race to the Outhouse #1 at Archangel/Valley Road
November 6, 5:30 p.m. – MSSC board meeting at GPRA Chalet
November 24, 7 p.m. – Moonlight Ski at Independence Mine
December 4, 6:30 p.m. – MSSC board meeting at GPRA Chalet
December 22, 7:00 p.m. – Moonlight Ski at Archangel/Valley Road
December 29-30, 9:30 a.m. – Mat-Su Icicle Double Race at GPRA

the AlAskA nordic skier
Fired up for fun Jr. Nordic season in Eagle River/Chugiak

Jr. Nordic impacts the health and well-being of our community by getting kids and parents alike outside for some winter fun. We are so excited for the upcoming Jr. Nordic season! We are hoping for lots of ski-worthy snow and our session starts December 3 at the Beach Lake Chalet. Lessons run from 6:45-8 p.m. Last season was an amazing turnout with tons of eager youngsters and a wonderful group of volunteers. Our program is only successful because of the dedicated volunteers willing to come out and support their skiing community. We kick off our season with the Ski Swap and Ski Rental on November 10 from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Birchwood ABC. If you have any questions about the Jr. Nordic program, please email us at erjnrnordic@gmail.com. We look forward to seeing your rosy cheeks this winter and ski on!

Former Eagle River skier helps start the McCarthy Nordic Club

BY ROS SINGLETON

This summer, former Eagle River skier Hannah Rowland e-mailed me about her desire to help start a Nordic ski club in McCarthy. Veteran board member, Bob Stehn, provided advice to help Hannah plan the first steps. We were excited to receive Hannah’s report of a successful initial steps to a new ski club in Alaska!

Various people in the McCarthy community are interested in beginning a McCarthy Nordic Club. The McCarthy Area Council agreed to accept funds for the McCarthy Nordic Club via the McCarthy Area Council (MAC) account payable to MAC. The treasurer has agreed that she will accept any money donated to the club under the MAC name and will keep a record of it. Individuals making donations to the McCarthy Nordic Club through the MAC need to notify Hannah Rowland at skilkeakabash@gmail.com so she can keep track of donations.

Hannah’s goals for this coming season are:

1. Have 4 or 5 people step up to work with me as a “board.”
2. Make a simple classic track setting groomer and a groomer for a skate course, or have approved access to one that already exists (until we have funds to buy one).
3. Come up with main trails that will be regularly groomed this winter every other week, and appraise certain people to use the groomer. Require small donations for personal use, to approve certain people to use the groomer.
4. Hold a few group skis this winter, weather permitting, with tips on technique and anything about skis or skiing if wanted.
5. Offer a lesson on how to take care of your skis (waxing and scraping your skis).
6. Offer a lesson on how to take care of your skis (waxing and scraping your skis).
7. Hold a race in the middle of February if there is enough interest.
8. Offer a sports club for the young kids around McCarthy; it will meet two days a week for about two hours: one day will consist of summer training for skiing and the second day we will cover a different sport such as soccer, baseball/softball, ultimate frisbee, etc. This may also include a day where we look into range and gun safety for biathlon. This “camp” will cost some money for participants to cover costs and help raise money for the club.

Congratulations to Hannah and the McCarthy community. Join me in welcoming the McCarthy Nordic Club!
How we slice the pies for a great ski season

Message from KNSC President Mike Gracz

Last year in this space, I showed a breakdown of revenues and expenses, and it’s probably a good idea to make that an annual thing. The members of Kachemak Nordic Ski Club deserve to know how their membership dollars are used to meet the expenses of keeping our great trails groomed and ready for events, programs, and tons of fun skiing!

A good chunk of KNSC’s funding comes directly from your membership contributions. This is the fees you pay when you register for a program, such as Kachemak Women’s Nordic, or an event such as the Marathon. This year, the pies show how the current year’s operating budget, which we discuss and pass every October, is sliced by revenues and expenses.

The Board of Directors strives for a balanced budget. On the revenue side, you can easily see that individual and family memberships create the largest slice. This revenue slice of pie from the community is even larger when combined with the money received from our extremely supportive local businesses. You can also see that programs and events pay for themselves, while generating a little surplus to meet the expense of keeping the trails groomed for the events and programs. Last year, the basic operating costs to the club of maintaining our trail system ran to about $110 per member, including kids. Annually, KNSC typically now has almost 700 members and a little under $70,000 in basic expenses (not including programs and events).

On the expense side, you can see that equipment eats the largest slice of the pie. One change in the annual operating budget this year is that we have decided to track equipment by how much it depreciates every year, rather than as a one-time expense. We’ll track a separate capital budget for those expenditures. We hope that the maintenance portion of equipment expenses will actually be lower than the amount shown this year because of our continuing preventative maintenance program, and because last year we had some real disasters, described in the previous edition of the Nordic Skier. One ATV lost two engines in almost as many days! We keep hoping that our preventative maintenance program will limit these expenses each year. However, costs are inevitably high to own and operate eight snow-machines, four tracked-ATVS, four ginzu-groomers, two mowers, and numerous other implements at three different buildings (including a new building under construction on the Sunset Loop funded by a generous grant from the Rasmusson Foundation). The board feels that these costs are necessary to keep our volunteers happy and our trails in super condition!

Changes in grant programs and declining state and local revenue sources could seriously impact the ability of KNSC to keep ahead of the depreciation expense of our grooming equipment. The board will keep looking for new sources, however, as these old sources dry up, 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!

Spotlight on Youth - Angelica Haakenson

Homer youth sets her sights on sit skiing in the 2020 Paralympics

BY CHRISTINA WHITING

Athletics are a part of every day life for 14-year-old Angelica Haakenson. What sets her apart from her fellow Homer athletes is that she does so without legs.

“I swim without legs, sit ski without legs and do track in a wheelchair,” she said.

Haakenson lost both of her legs on Christmas Day 2014. Her family’s car broke down on the side of the highway and while she was standing between two vehicles, an oncoming car hit them, pinning her between the two.

She was hospitalized in Anchorage through January and in Seattle until mid-March. While in Seattle, she kept up with her schoolwork by attending a school near the cafeteria that helped children in the hospital stay on track with school. She was back home in late March and returned to school just a few weeks later.

Britta Restad, Zoe Stonorov, Fischer Corazza Spurkland, Megan Corazza and Angelica Haakenson taking a rest during high school practice last Christmas break.

While some kids get new shoes every year as they go through their growth spurts, Haakenson gets new legs. She has gone through about five different sets of prosthetic legs that are fitted to her as she grows.

Born in Homer and raised in Anchor Point, Haakenson attended Chapman School until this year, where she is currently in ninth grade at Homer High School.

“I had heard that the school was really academic and athletic and I’m really enjoying it so far,” she shared.

A skier since she was 5-years-old, Haakenson spent this winter learning to ski on sit skis, sitting on her knees with her legs strapped in with Velcro on the upper leg and a snowboard-like binding on the lower part.

She shared that she found her niche in racing.

“My coach encouraged me to race and when I started I was kind of trying to just find my sport,” she said. During her first race, a ski meet in Kenai, she raced against and beat Addison Gibson, a senior at Kenai P.S.I.

See Haakenson, Page 13
Continued from Page 12

Haakenson shared she was inspired by other youth at the camps, including 16-year-old Michael Masters, who is also a double, above-knee amputee.

Haakenson shared that prior to her accident, she skied and swam, but that losing her legs has made her a better athlete.

“I feel like I would have gone on to do sports if I still had my legs, but that I wouldn't be as good as I am now, or as inspired,” she said. “Before, I was just a regular person with legs that I took for granted. Now, I work really hard to be as good as I can at whatever I'm doing and I've met some very inspiring athletes.”

Among those who inspire her is Homer youth, Katia Holmes and Michael Masters, who is also a double, above-knee amputee.

Haakenson is one of six children in her family.

“My brothers and sisters tell me that I used to be a mean kid,” she shared. “They tell me that I'm nicer now that they like me better without my legs, which is okay, it means they accept me. I was just little and I don't know why I was mean, but now I try to make people feel better.”

Every day, Haakenson works hard to be positive and helpful.

“I can get sad about some kinds of things other kids my age get sad about, like if a friend isn't talking to me,” she shared. “That makes me more sad than the leg thing. I don't want to feel sorry for myself, but sometimes I do and if I'm having a bad day, I might want others to help me, but I definitely don't want them to feel bad for me. I try to be happy and make the most of life.”

Haakenson's short-term goals include skiing against other sit skiers from the Lower 48. Her long-term goals include competing in the 2022 Paralympics and being a professional athlete or a veterinarian.

Reprinted with permission from author Christina Whiting. Article first appeared in the Homer Tribune on April 20, 2018.

Kachemak Women’s Nordic Training dates — Mon., Wed., and Fri. from noon-1:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m.-noon. For details, visit kachemakwomensnordic.com

January 26 — Junior Nordic Program — Saturdays Jan. 26-Feb. 23. First session on Jan. 26 at Lookout Mountain Recreation Area, 1:30 p.m. Other locations TBA.

November 7 — Ski and Winter Gear Swap — 5:30 p.m. at Homer High School Commons. Find great gear, sell your gear, get your skis waxed, and register and pick up skis for the Junior Nordic Program.

November 17 — Annual Meeting, Dinner, and Auction, 6 p.m., Elis Lodge. Bring your potluck dish, a hearty appetite, and money for the silent and live auction items. You can also vote on KNSC board members and learn details about the winter's Nordic events.

December 6 — Ski Your Age! At Lookout Mountain Ski Area. A record number of skiers of all ages get out to ski off their holiday food indulgences. Watch for details.

February 9, 16, 23 — Junior Nordic Program — Saturdays at Lookout Mountain State Recreation Area 1:30 p.m. Other locations TBA.

March 9 — KNSC Nordic Ski Marathon — Saturday at Lookout Mountain Ski Trails (starting line)

March 31 — Sea to Ski — Sunday, location TBA, based on snow conditions.

More information and updates for these events can be found online at kachemaknordicskiclub.org or on Facebook @Kachemak Nordic Ski Club.
Ladies of Leisure set to begin new season

Are you a woman interested in cross-country skiing? Want a low-key, supportive environment? The LOL might just be for you!

Ladies of Leisure (LOL) are a group of cross-country skiers made up of women of all ages with varying levels of fitness and skiing skills. The group is in its tenth year under the direction of Chris Broda, the group’s founder and most ardent motivator.

The LOL philosophy is Fun, Fitness, Friendship and Food. Knowing that it can be hard to keep a balance of work, family and fitness, LOL provides a constant during the long winter season. It gives women a vacation from their regular lives and provides an opportunity to enjoy the beauty and peace that comes from a combination of physical exercise, splendid surroundings, and companionship.

The LOL encourages and supports women to push themselves a little beyond their individual expectations by skiing new trails, improving their ski skills and meeting new women. The group meets on the snow, ready to ski, at 6 p.m. on Monday and 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. During the 90-minute sessions there are usually several mini-groups that ski at various speeds, from a relaxed pace to a faster tempo, depending on ability levels and group desires. The ski always ends with tea, chat and snack time inside. LOL is non-competitive and offers a supportive environment with an emphasis on fun.

To keep motivation high, Broda has instituted some fun ideas. One is an optional LOL scavenger hunt with fun items spread throughout the trails. A second invites skiers to ski every trail, including cutoffs, at Birch Hill. For some, skiing each trail might be too challenging, so they are encouraged to accomplish an attainable goal worthy of a skiing attitude and love of skiing. If you do not need experience, just a positive attitude and love of skiing. If you are interested, please contact Sally Endestad or Jennifer Williamson (juniorodics@nscairbanks.org; 907-371-9564). Junior Nordics lessons take place Mondays at 6:30-7:30 p.m. at UAF West Ridge, Tuesday/Thursday at 6:30-7:30 p.m. at Birch Hill and Sunday at 2-3 p.m. at Birch Hill. There is also a new daytime program at 1-2 p.m. at Birch Hill Ski Center intended for home school children.

Help NSF by going shopping
Help the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks simply by shopping at Fred Meyer or Amazon. If you have a Fred Meyer Rewards Card you can link it to NSF through the store’s Community Rewards program. Fred Meyer makes donations to participating non-profits on the spending of the customers linked to each nonprofit. Amazon donates a portion of its profits through its AmazonSmile program. Find out more about each program at nscfairbanks.org/support-nscf/ to Affiliate Programs.

Skiing info from your smart phone
Use your smart phone’s browser and go to the NSF’s website. For weather: in the menu (top right corner) choose Weather. Scroll down to Mobile Weather. Click on that link. (iOS users can get the Birch Hill App from the App store.) For grooming: in the menu (top right corner) choose Trails. Then scroll down a bit and you’ll get the latest grooming updates. Scroll down farther to get to the grooming chart. Turn your phone sideways for easier reading.

NSCF Calendar keeps you updated
Remember to check the NSF Calendar for upcoming events. You can check competition events, social activities and more. Visit nscfairbanks.org > calendar for more! You can also “like” the Nordic Club of Fairbanks on Facebook to keep up with local events. Some of the upcoming events include:

- Nov. 7 – Wednesday Night Race
- Nov. 10 – Free-up Funk Fest
- Nov. 11 – Birch Hill Gold Nugget races #1 and #2
- Nov. 17-18 – Town Series #1 and #2
- Nov. 23 – Turkey Day Relays races

NSCF volunteer opportunities
Interior Alaska is one of the greatest cross-country ski communities in the country! We have an amazing group of dedicated volunteers who help make Fairbanks skiing great. The NSF has several volunteer opportunities. If you want to volunteer or have questions see nscfairbanks.org/support-nscf/ to Volunteer or contact NSF president Steven Hansen at president@nscfairbanks.org.

NSCF is on Instagram! NSF has an Instagram page. Just search for Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks or go to: instagram.com/nscfairbanks/nscfairbanks.org

For more information and to sign up as an instructor, please contact Andie Levigne at adultlessons@nscfairbanks.org.
There have been many personnel changes at NSCF. Last issue, we included a story about Alasdair Tutt replacing NSCF-FXC head coach Pete Leonard, Rebecca Heaton replacing Aelin Alleged as our Sponsorship Coordinator, and Don and Tracy Pendergrast and Maria Case (Taylor) sharing duties as the interim Adult Lessons Coordinator, a role previously filled by Rebecca.

This issue we introduce two new assistant coaches for FXC: Åsne and Tobias. Previously, Alasdair had been one of two FXC assistant coaches. The other assistant coach, Hilaire Saucy, is now coaching with the Canmore Nordic Ski Club in Canmore, Alberta. We also introduce our new Adult Lessons Coordinator: Andie Levesque.

If you get a chance, say hi and welcome to them all!

Åsne Honered Hoveland
I grew up in Alta, Norway, but moved to Salcha, Alaska, when I was 5 and lived there for two years before returning to Alta. Later I moved further south in Norway to Trondheim. I attended UAF and skied for the Alaska Nooks for three years. Because I was injured for most of my time there, I spent my last two years as a volunteer assistant coach.

My competitive skiing career began for the Salcha Elementary School ski team at the age of 6. I took a break from competitive skiing at the age of 13 to focus on skijoring. I competed nationally and internationally in skijoring for several years before returning to competitive cross-country skiing with the Nooks in 2013.

I am very excited about getting this opportunity to work with so many awesome and talented skiers, as well as coaches and volunteers. Winter and snow couldn’t come any sooner!

Tobias Albrightsen
I grew up above the Arctic Circle in Tromsø, Norway, for my first eight years and then moved to the sunny city of Boulder, Colorado. I started competitively skiing at the age of 17 and competed two years later at the 2012 Junior Nationals in Fairbanks, representing Team Rocky Mountain. I am excited to switch disciplines to Team Alaska while coaching for FXC.

After graduating in 2015 from CU Boulder with a BA in Integrative Physiology, I coached Nordic skiing in Tahoe, California, and Madison, Wisconsin, at middle school and high school levels.

When there isn’t snow, I am a competitive runner with top 10 finishes in national trail running races. I am also a freelance videographer, going by the name of Untraceable Global.

Peter races in local Fairbanks ski races as well as helping to organize the NSCF Wednesday Night Races.

Science, skiing, and the outdoors keep Delamere active
We try to regularly feature Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks members on these pages. So many of them deserve lots of kudos for helping out the club and doing other things to keep people skiing in Interior Alaska. This is one way we can thank them. It’s also a good way to find out more about people who share your love of skiing.

This month we feature Pete Delamere, an NSCF board member, a longtime NSCF volunteer, and one of the co-organizers of the popular Wednesday Night Races. Pete encourages people to come try one of the fun, low-key, short-distance races. Check the NSCF Calendar for upcoming races and find out more on the Wednesday Night Race page at: http://tinyurl.com/yb7v6r27. My first skis were wood skis with three-pin bindings. I began skiing in Colorado at age 9 and skied competitively through high school (Boulder) and college (Carleton College, Northfield, MN).

Choosing UAF for grad school was easy because: a) I saw the aurora for the first time in Minnesota and was amazed and b) access to skiing and ski racing was very important.

What do you like about cross-country skiing and why?
I really love to work at UAF where I can enjoy lunchtime skiing. But naturally I spend considerable time at Birch Hill with FXC activities. And we are really lucky to have a facility like Birch Hill. For backcountry, I ski from the Wickersham Dome parking lot in the White Mountains National Recreation Area and in Chena River State Recreation Area. The Chena River to Ridge race is one of my favorite events. I find it amazing that we have so many kilometers of trails in the Fairbanks area that can accommodate both skis and bikes and accommodate endurance-level distances (without excessive looping).

What other activities do you enjoy besides skiing?
I love the technical aspects of both technique and waxing (lots of cool physics and chemistry), but I mostly enjoy the freedom of movement and endurance aspects of the sport. Much as I love the 5-kilometer Wednesday Night Races, I really live for the long distance races e.g., the Sonot Kłooax̱ṯ Backcountry skiing has also been a passion.

Where do you like to cross-country ski and why?
I am really lucky to work at UAF where I can enjoy lunchtime skiing. But naturally I spend considerable time at Birch Hill with FXC activities. And we are really lucky to have a facility like Birch Hill. For backcountry, I ski from the Wickersham Dome parking lot in the White Mountains National Recreation Area and in Chena River State Recreation Area. The Chena River to Ridge race is one of my favorite events. I find it amazing that we have so many kilometers of trails in the Fairbanks area that can accommodate both skis and bikes and accommodate endurance-level distances (without excessive looping).

What other activities do you enjoy besides skiing?
I love to play Ultimate Frisbee (still...!)

When and why did you move to Fairbanks? What do you like about living in Fairbanks?
I was a graduate student at UAF from 1991 to 1998 and a post doc until 1999. My wife Jen and I moved to Boston for 18 months, then back to Boulder, and then back to Fairbanks in 2012. When we left Fairbanks in 1999, it was our intention to return within five years. We loved Fairbanks as graduate students. We, it took a bit longer than planned. But we made it back. Now I am a faculty member in the UAF Physics Department and the Geophysical Institute. The outdoor opportunities in Fairbanks are unparalleled. First, we have world-class Nordic skiing facilities. Second, Fairbanks offers a perfect mix of terrain for all sorts of activities, e.g., from the relatively gentle Pinnell Mountain Trail to technical Alaska Range ascents. In the summer, I enjoy hiking trails such as the Pinnell Mountain Trail, Chena Dome Loop, and the Summit Trail near Wickersham Dome. Occasionally, we venture down to Anchorage for skiing and other activities. This summer, Sam and I completed the soggy Bottom bike race over resurrection Pass on the Kenai Peninsula.

Is there anything more you want to tell us about yourself?
I love to play Ultimate Frisbee (still...!)
BY ALASDAIR TUTT
Another year and another seemingly quick summer with lots of activities for the NSCF-FXC programs. We began summer programming in late May for all participants in our Camp, Bridge and Prep Jr. Devo programs.

Early June saw our Comp Team travel to the East Alaska Range for a weekend training camp, held at the Estile Cabin (Thanks John and Norma), where the athletes got to bag some peaks, and do some clean up of old Army ration cans that we found on top of a mountain overlooking the Gulkana glacier area. Whilst the weather was overall great, on our last day it started to get a little damp, and the first mosquitoes made themselves known in the mountains. As a bit of a reward though, we got to penguin slide a thousand or so vertical feet on the last of the snow around the Devil’s Thumb. The entire program got to do our annual hike up Mount Heal, with some Jr. Devo athletes getting almost all the way to the top by the four-hour turnaround time.

Throughout June our Comp Bridge team learned the ropes of rollerskiing, how to throw 180’s and most importantly, how to stop. Within a few hours they were zooming around looking as confident as they do on skis and ready to take on the rest of the summer’s training.

Late June saw an excellent opportunity arise with an overnight hiking trip on Kenai Ridge for the Comp Bridge athletes. What was thought to be 30 miles, turned into 34 very quickly as the vagaries of the track added a little more than what we could see on the map. We enjoyed good weather, which was very fortunate as we hiked until 1 a.m. on the first day before finishing the hike the next day.

July brought with it better weather to the Interior, and more fun activities. Our Comp Bridge team travelled to the Fireweed bike race to service an aide station. A couple of our Comp athletes were participating in the 100- and 200-mile events, as well. The camp concluded with a 22-mile hike into Houseblock Valley off the Denali Highway. The wildlife observed has yet to be determined by any Alaskan I’ve met, so if anyone has info on what a carnivorous looking, silvery coated, long-tailed, marmot/weasel-like creature may be, please let us know!

The following week five current and former FXC skiers attended the Regional Elite Group camp on Eagle Glacier outside of Anchorage, and enjoyed several days of sunny klister skiing and learning about the future of U.S. skiing and how they are involved. We had a hasty departure before the weather turned, and ended up being one day earlier off mountain than planned, but we’d already had a very successful time.

Immediately following that we had a camp in Denali National Park with the Comp Team, rollerskiing on the Stampede Road and on the bike paths, running the Savage Alpine Trail, and climbing Sugarloaf Mountain. Then we headed back to Fairbanks for a farewell barbeque in honor of Pete Leonard, head coach of 12 years.

Throughout July our Prep and Devo teams continued to build their skills at orienteering, mountain biking, running and bounding, along with some gymnastic skills which are becoming an ever more important aspect of athlete development and injury prevention.

August brought with it the specter of the dreaded school year, and we capitalized on that to give one last hurrah for the summer, with our Prep and Camp Bridge athletes riding about 25 miles on the Compeau Trail and a teamwide hike on the Granite Tors Trail before sending them off to the classrooms.

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

In the last issue of Nordic Skier, we talked about body adaptation – in other words, if everything goes as it should, the body adapts to training loads and we get stronger, faster and more resilient. What happens when this balance is disrupted? Have you ever dealt with nagging injuries that just don’t go away? Shin splints? In fact, shin splints are very common condition in youth runners and cross-country skiers, especially in athletes with low body mass index.

Shin splints (or tibial stress syndrome) happen when the pull of the muscle exceeds the capacity of the bone to resist, leading to local inflammation and pain, most commonly on the inside edge of the shin bone, the tibia.

Here’s the big deal – many times, it’s not ‘just a muscle injury.’ It’s a part of a bigger picture. Relative Energy Deficiency Syndrome (RED-S) describes a clinical syndrome resulting from energy deficiency (an imbalance between dietary energy intake and energy expenditure required to support normal bodily function, regular activities, growth and sport). It’s also known as the Female Athlete Triad. It affects many aspects of physiological function such as bone growth and healing, hormonal balance, immune system, concentration and mental energy. In other words, when the demand for the body to expand energy is larger than the energy going in as food, the body goes into a self-preservation mode and ‘tells’ the energy from elsewhere – the menstrual period gets irregular and sometimes disappears, the bone loses its mineral density and microfractures happen.

If you are dealing with shin splints, have a closer look at how much you are training, how well you recover, and how well you eat to fuel your training. Because if left untreated, shin splints can progress to bone stress injury and stress fractures.

To prevent, recognize and manage shin splints/ stress fractures:

1. Training – Make sure the progression is gradual and consistent. For runners, maintain some self-preservation mode and ‘takles’ the energy from elsewhere – the menstrual period gets irregular and sometimes disappears, the bone loses its mineral density and microfractures happen.

2. Eating well – If your training load increases, make sure the meals and energy in your food follows!

3. Sleep – Get plenty of Zzz’s – this is one of the best recovery methods after exercise.

4. Vitamin D supplementation – This is the most legal form of performance enhancement! Great for bone health, immune system, recovery, and many other aspects of well-being. Consult your medical provider for exact dosage.

5. Footwear – Make sure your running technique and footwear are optimal. Your physical therapist can assess your running technique and recommend appropriate shoes.

6. For girls – If you miss your menstrual period for 3 or more months or your periods become irregular, talk to your PT or pediatrician! This is a big red flag!

Dealing with a bone stress injury? Depending on symptoms, you may need to see a physician, dietician, physical therapist and/or sports psychologist. Optimizing the energy availability is the core of treatment. You need to maintain a high intake of nutritious food – it can’t be potato chips and brownies. If you have adequate nutrition to compensate for the energy you are spending, things should reset and go back to normal.

Resources:

• www.uwhealth.org/health-wellness/red-s-syndrome-what-athletes-need-to-know/51699

• bjhm.bmj.com/content/487/4812/short

OFF THE TRAIL
Bone Stress Injuries – Something to worry about?

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