FAIRBANKS: Candles, skiers will brighten a winter night

KACHEMAK: Meet the members who fuel the club

ANCHORAGE: Ski for Women: Super fun fund-raising
Racing into the New Year

We are off to a late start with the cancellation of the first AMH race, but rest assured, race organizers are looking at creative ways to resched- ule, so keep your fingers crossed! The season has finally kicked in with snow so it’s time to gear up for the next race! The upcoming AMH Anchor- age Cup is the Hickock Duathlon on January 13 at Kincaid Park and is co- hosted by the APU Nordic Ski Team. Race updates and registration can be found at www.anchoragenordicski.com/amh-anchorage-cup-series.

For longtime skiers like Junior Nordic Site Director Dave Ward, the AMH Anchorage Cup is a “winter highlight ... a chance to renew acquaintances that have been dor- mant all summer. And there is the challenge of proving (usually unsuccess- fully) that another year older has not made me another year slower!”

That’s exactly what the AMH Anchor- age Cup strives for – opportunities for the ski community to come together, enjoy the trails, and maybe test your fitness along the way.

Yes, we offer some challenging courses for those who are looking, but no competitive streak is required to come out and enjoy a 5K. As local skier Otto Gilbert says, “It’s a racing environment for everyone. It’s great to ski the local trails at a race tempo and experience them in a new way.” See you on the trails, January 13!

All aboard the NSAA Ski Train!

The Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage’s Ski Train departs the depot on Saturday, March 23, and you should be on it! Every winter, this special day and very unique event brings together skiers and outdoors enthusiasts to celebrate winter in an unforgettable way: a journey to a remote, abandoned town, an old rail- road whistle stop, on Ski Train.

Ski Train is not just for expert back- country skiers, nor even reserved for adventurous types. This day can be enjoyed by all levels and types of cross-country Nordic skiers, as well as snowshoers, telemark skiers tak- ing powdery turns, and even friends, families and coworkers who just want to enjoy a getaway train ride.

The 200-mile journey aboard the Alaska Railroad offers spectacular views of Denali and wildlife along the Susitna River as it travels to the Curry whistle stop. Along the way, a Polka band roams the cars playing tunes, adding to the fun and festive vibe. Many people bring food and drink to enjoy on the way to and from Curry. Raffle tickets to win a Farley Fat Bike donated by the Trek Store of Anchorage will be on sale and the winning ticket will be drawn on the return ride.

Join the adventure and ride the NSAA’s Ski Train: tickets start at $140. Purchase tickets and learn more about Ski Train at www.anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-train.

Zero reasons not to hit the range

Alaska has produced five biathlete Olympians. With our world-class biathlon range at Kincaid Park, we plan to send more Alaskans to interna- tional races. The biathlon range has hosted trials races for junior biathletes to qualify for Team USA and National Guard Regional Cham- pionship races. In the past four years, Alaska has sent youth biathletes to races in Europe and we plan to send more as the sport increases in youth participation.

For the 2018-19 season, NSAA Biathlon is hosting a race series at the Kincaid Range. Visit www.anchoragenordicski.com/biathlon-races for more information about the races, or just come out to cheer and volunteer.

Give gear to help NSAA, ASD keep kids skiing

Are your kids growing out of their ski gear? Anchorage elementary schools need your equipment! A collaborative project between ASD schools and NSAA is in process. NSAA volunteers Alice Knapp and Chris Zafren are going into ASD schools (that express an interest) to inventory their ski equipment and do minor repairs. The goal is to help schools get their students on skis this winter. Many schools have ski equipment but need to keep adding to their collections. NNN boots sizes 30-47 and no wax or waxed skis 100- 180 cm would be appreciated. Email a.knapp.ai@gmail.com if you have equipment to donate and we’ll ar- range a pick up.

NSAA Volunteer Comer

Alaska Ski for Women is looking for an assistant race hostess!

Are you a natural host? This vol- unteer position is all about hosting skiers, making sure they have a great experience on the trail and that every- one gets through the ski course safely and with smiles on their faces. All skills and duties will be learned with the help of the current race director and the famous NSAA Green Grunts. Race participation experience is help- ful but not required. This is a great event full of wonderful women and girls who love to ski and especially ski in costume. Please email volunteer@ anchoragenordicski.com if you are interested in this fun experience!

Check the NSAA Volunteer page for more opportunities! anchoragenordic- ski.com.

Take a tour, savor the season with NSAA Tours’ 2018-19 schedule

If you have questions about NSAA’s Backcountry Tours or program, visit anchoragenordicski.com/events/backcountry-tours/ or contact Mary Vavrik at (907) 306-7686 or mvavrik@ gcmail.com.

January 4 — Friday Night Fun Ski, Hilside ski trails

Level: Easy II; Distance: 3-6 miles; Elevation Gain: Rolling; rental: $123-223; 907-223-6194; akbiker@hotmail.com

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

January 11 — Friday Night Fun Ski, Hilside ski trails

Level: Easy II; Distance: 3-6 miles; Elevation Gain: Rolling; rental: $123-223; 907-223-6194; akbiker@hotmail.com

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

January 20 — Sheep Mountain Lodge, two overnights, Talkeetna Mountains

Level: Easy III; Distance: Pick your distance, up to 15 miles (24 km) or more! Elevation Gain: 50-300 feet; Tour Leader: Elizabeth Bluemink, Elizabeth Bluemink.
NSAA Member Spotlight: Henry Wheeler

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. January’s NSAA Member of the Month is Henry Wheeler. Henry is a pilot who actually lives in Colorado, but loves Anchorage’s trails and NSAA’s mission so much, he’s become a passionate supporter. He recently chatted with NSAA about his unique connection to the organization, the fun he has skiing around Anchorage and his skiing roots.

How many years have you been Nordic skiing?
I started Nordic skiing in 1976 on Bonnie 2400 wood skis with Silvertta cable bindings. Originally, I started skiing as a means of access to winter camping.

How many years have you been involved with NSAA?
I don’t remember what year I started supporting NSAA, but I have five windshield stickers lined up on my car back in Colorado. It is usually “but not always” the only car in the parking lot with NSAA stickers.

What do you love about Nordic skiing?
It’s the times when I find myself alone in the silence of a snow-covered woods, as if it were only there for me. And then, when I discover that I am not really alone after all, that the others who are there are the kind of people I love sharing it with.

We appreciate your generous support of NSAA! Why do you choose to give to NSAA?
When my job as a commercial pilot started sending me to Anchorage, I discovered that I had access to some of the best ski trails I had ever skied right in town for free. Not only could I ski on my days off at home, I could also ski at work. Anything that seems too good to be true usually is, but not always. I saw the NSAA posters and signs describing the volunteer donation support that allows all this to be available, and it just felt right to be a part of it.

Anything else you’d like to share about skiing or NSAA?
I really like the way NSAA works to bring the joy of Nordic skiing not only to those of us who could go to a paid ski area, but also those who can’t. When I think about the good times I have skiing here, I realize the Karma gods would look poorly upon me for not contributing my fair share. Alaska is my “would be” second home. Keep up the good work, NSAA!
A Christmas card perfect night at this season’s Solstice Tree Tour

An Anchorage holiday tradition returned and this season’s NSAA Solstice Tree Tour was bigger and better than ever! A large and enthusiastic crowd enjoyed 45 decorated trees, hot cocoa, coffee and s’mores, falling snow and holiday fun on a perfect winter night along Mize Loop at Kincaid Park on Sunday, December 16. Like a Hallmark holiday card, snowflakes fell from the sky at this celebration of winter and community. Dressed in their warm clothes, some covered in festive Christmas lights, many walked and dragged sleds with their kids, a few wore snowshoes, and many skied, this year’s event had near perfect conditions with new snow and comfortable temperatures.

Participants gushed in excitement over the cups of “bacon shots,” compliments of Alchemy Orthotics and Prosthetics. Selfies with Santa thanks to Reger Physical Therapy and Christmas movies on a pop-up screen provided by Children’s Hospital of Providence were also popular. Sponsors outdid themselves creating magical winter experiences with their decorated trees.

This year’s winning tree belonged to the Children’s Hospital at Providence; Alaska Rock Gym and Alchemy Orthotics and Prosthetics earned second and third place, respectively. Solstice Tree Tour souvenir cups were available this year, and nearly sold out (we have only a few left, call the office if interested)! Filled with Kaladi Brothers cocoa or used at the beer garden, these mementos offered an earth-friendly, earthquake-resistant drinking option, and a reminder all yearlong to support Anchorage trails.

One Solstice Tree Tour fan, Valesa Linnean, raved about the evening. “Another great event! We’ve gone every year and it seems like it keeps getting bigger. Well done.” Valesa certainly captured our sentiments as well – thank you to everyone who came out to celebrate with us!
Barbara and John Kagerer, owners of the Horn Doctor, have been part of the NSAA community for years: supporting at the Trailmeister level for 10+ years; raising their three kids on Junior Nordic skis (one became a coach a few seasons ago); and enthusiastically sponsoring the Solstice Tree Tour since its inception three years ago.

“NSAA is a part of our family. We always told our kids the two non-negotiables in the week were music lessons and Junior Nordic!” Barbara said.

Recently, Barbara submitted a community service grant proposal on NSAA’s behalf to her Rotary club. Anchorage East Rotary. Rotary agreed that NSAA benefits the entire community and awarded NSAA with a check for $1,000 in support of the Solstice Tree Tour! Connecting NSAA to the service club just makes sense to Barbara.

“Both of these organizations have an amazing history of doing great things in our community;” she said.

The Kagerers have a heart for community and kids, and they have an even broader connection to NSAA: their love of trails. Barbara noted that “trails are more than just a physical asset. They are my mental health!” John and Barbara are firm believers in having something to get you out the door, especially in the winter when it can be hard to keep active and stay out of the “darkness doldrums.” John is an especially strong advocate, having reached a point where he felt like he had no consistent exercise in his life.

“My husband is not a ‘gym guy,’ so about three-four years ago, he was moping about being out of shape and feeling like a slug,” Barb explained. “I was skiing pretty consistently that year, and I think he was a little jealous. So, I signed him up for an APU Masters’ ski group that winter as a birthday present. He still works out with them year-round! It’s not exaggerating to say it has changed his life.”

Their two older sons, Stephen and Andrew, are off on their own now, but the Kagerers still have one child in Junior Nordic, Kristina, age 10. Barbara smiles and boasts, “I’ll bet we’re the oldest parents in Junior Nordic!” It seems she wouldn’t have it any other way, and neither would we!

Thank you, Team Kagerer and The Horn Doctor, for your loyalty, commitment and passion for trails, and representing NSAA so well to others.

Season’s first flights for NSAA Ski Jumping program

BY ADAM LOOMIS

As humans, we treasure firsts. First day of school, first snow of the year, first words, first kiss. In ski jumping – a sport that might seem repetitive to the outside observer – we’re given a wealth of firsts.

On the second Saturday of December, the NSAA Ski Jumping program had its first session back on snow at the Karl Eid Ski Jumps. Coaches, parents, and the kids were all thrilled to be back at it. It had been a long break since fall session, and the last few weeks of waiting are always the most challenging.

To get back into the swing of things, we had all the athletes start with a landing hill ride before taking a jump. For a few new members of the club, this ride was their first taste of ski jumping. While there’s no need to catch air on the landing hill, it’s still a steep, committing hill for a new skier to conquer. Many new participants will stay on the landing hill for one or more practices before establishing the balance and courage for their first jumps. This season, I’ve had the privilege of watching a few first ever ski jumps, many of which came (impressively) on their first day of practice.

After that first ride on the 10-meter hill, the firsts keep coming. Most skiers start on alpine gear and have a first day on ski jumping equipment later on. As the athletes progress, they’ll have their first time on a 10-meter, a 20-meter, then a 40-meter and so forth until the large hill of the Olympic size – usually a 120-meter or larger. To make things even more interesting, every ski jump is unique. The first-time off Lake Placid’s high flying, 1980’s era 120, for example, is a completely different experience than the first jump off Park City’s large hill.

Many of our athletes will have their first opportunities to travel for competitions, such as Junior Nationals and Western Regionals in the Lower 48. A select few of ours have already had their first trips to jump in Europe, which is guaranteed to be a memorable experience.

For any athlete who has had the privilege to ski jump, these firsts will be some of their most treasured memories. As they increase in skill and hill size, not only does their flight time rise, but their confidence and mental fortitude grows with learning to conquer new challenges step-by-step.

Learn more about the NSAA Ski Jumping program, or join today, at anchoragenordicski.com/ski-jumping/.
Ski 4 Kids: A special day with a lifelong community impact

BY DARCY DUGAN

Apply for a ski equipment grant for your school!

Looking for ski equipment for your school or ski program? Grants between $500-$2,500 are available through Ski 4 Kids! Applications are due March 15, 2019, and more information can be found on the Ski 4 Kids website (anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-4-kids/).

Williwaw Elementary School is an example of a thriving ski program in the Anchorage School District which has benefited from Ski 4 Kids equipment grants. Williwaw, a Title I school, is located on the flanks of Russian Jack Park, and thanks to a number of grants over the years from NSAA and Ski for Kids, students are now on skis multiple times a week.

When talking to coach Jeanni Brooking, the enthusiasm for the ski program is evident in her voice. “It’s incredible,” she said. “For most of these kids, it’s a totally new experience. Watching them get out on the snow and ski for the first time … I would describe it as a lighthearted moment.”

Williwaw’s history with Nordic skiing started more than eight years ago when Margaret Timmerman, former director of Parks & Rec for the Municipality, brought a busload of skis, poles and boots for school groups to borrow and use at Russian Jack Park. For the kids from Service High School who skied, these opportunities are unique and sometimes lifechanging. Williwaw is home to a large Hmong population, and most students would otherwise never have the chance to try out skiing. “We love the program. It has brought skiing to so many kids,” Brooking said. “And some have potential to be very good skiers!”

Brooking and fellow ski coach Mara Rosenthal are former downhill skiers who now enjoy the cross-country opportunities on Anchorage’s endless trails. Brooking noted that the program has motivated adults to get outside, as well. One adult is needed for every five kids, which has resulted in a growing number of teachers joining the program and also recruiting their spouses, parents, and former teachers. Brooking also noted the impact of the program beyond skiing. “The experience for the kids not only teaches athletic skills but also other life lessons, like how to be responsible outside, how to take care of equipment, how to act around moose. The kids are proud to be part of the program and pick things up quickly.”

A busload of Williwaw students will be showing up to the annual Ski for Kids event at Kincaid Park. Mark your calendars for Saturday, February 23, to join the all ages fun.

Donate to the Ski 4 Kids Grant Fund

You can help schools like Williwaw! In addition to hosting an annual ski and outdoor festival, Ski 4 Kids dispenses annual 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. If you would like to make a donation, contact the NSAA office at business@anchoragenordicski.com or (907) 276-7609.

Volunteer for Ski 4 Kids

Help out with Ski 4 Kids on Saturday, February 23! Roles range from setup, clean up, and food distribution to facilitating outside activity stations and helping along the race course. This event runs smoothly because of caring people like you. Sign up at anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-4-kids/.

By Darcy Dugan

The lead pack of fat bikers races during the 2018 Frosty Bottom.

ANCHORAGE JANUARY 2019

Tires on the Tour? For sure!

On March 3, the Tour of Anchorage will become the first ski marathon in Alaska to include a fat-tire bike race.

The TOA, Alaska’s largest ski race, has in recent years experienced declining participation due to inconsistent snow coverage and perhaps the growing popularity of fat biking. Organizers hope the change will boost overall participation while bringing in a new group of outdoor recreationists.

Dubbed the Fat Bike Tour of Anchorage, bikers will ride the same 30- and 40-kilometer courses as the skiers from Service High School to Kincaid Park. For the 50K, this includes the Spencer Loop on the groomed Hillside Trails and part the Sisson Loop at Kincaid (the Sisson section will also be in the 40K). However, the bike races will start several hours after the ski races to limit potential skier-biker overlap.

“By including bikers, we anticipate getting back over 1,000 participants and keep growing from there,” TOA race director Matias Saari said. “We expect there to be significant interest in the bike races, in part because they’ll be allowed to ride on several trails that otherwise are closed to bikers.”

The TOA was founded in 1988 and peaked in 2007 with more than 2,000 entrants. In 2018, approximately 800 skiers participated.

Starting times for the ski races remain the same: 9:30 a.m. for the 5K, 10:30 a.m. for the 40K, 11 a.m. for the 25K classic and 12 p.m. for the 25K freestyle. The bike races will begin at 2 p.m. for the 50K and 3 p.m. for the 40K. The first bikers are expected to reach the Sisson Trail turn-off 6 kilometers from the finish at about 3:45 p.m.

“Last year at 3:45 p.m., only 13 skiers remained on the course,” Saari said. “We believe the trails are plenty wide to accommodate skiers and bikers simultaneously, if necessary.”

Registration and more information, including an FAQ section, is now available at www.anchoragenordicski.com/tour-of-anchorage-bike/. Fees for bikers are the same as for skiers. Switching entry from the ski race to the bike race, or vice-versa, will be permitted through bib pickup on March 2.

Several ultradistance winter events in Alaska — such as the White Mountains 100, Susitna 100 and Homer Epic — are open to bikers, skiers and runners simultaneously. And the Frosty Bottom fat bike race each January uses the Tour of Anchorage multi-use trails for the majority of its course. However, while several events in the American Ski Marathon Series — in which the Tour of Anchorage participates — have fat bike events, previously none of the ski marathons in Alaska did.

“We take the ‘Tour’ part of our title seriously,” Saari said. “Both the ski and bike races are suitable for anyone, whether they’re competitive athletes or relative beginners seeking to enjoy a traverse of town.”

31st Tour of Anchorage
Sunday, March 3, 2019

• Registration ongoing at anchoragenordicski.com/tour-of-anchorage (early registration rates apply until Jan. 15)
• Bib Pickup: 3-7 p.m. March 1 and 10 a.m.-noon March 2 at APU Moseley Center
• Event start times: 50K freestyle at Service HS, 9:30 a.m.; 40K freestyle at Service HS, 10:30 a.m.; 25K classic at APU, 11 a.m.; 25K freestyle at APU, noon
• New for 2019: Fat Tire Bike Race
• Awards Ceremony: Tuesday, March 5, at 49th State Brewing (details TBA)
• Registration and more information: anchoragenordicski.com/tour-of-anchorage or tourofanchorage@gmail.com.
Eagle River Nordic Ski Club
Eagle River, Alaska

AROUND EAGLE RIVER

Lots of young skiers, lots of outdoor fun at Jr. Nordic

We are off to a fantastic start to the Jr. Nordic session! With over 160 kiddos signed up, the snow could not have made a more welcome appearance! We were concerned that maybe the earthquake would put a damper on our first day, but our resilient Alaska families came out ready to play! We’ll also like to extend a special thanks to the ski teams at Chugiak and Eagle River high schools. Both teams have members who graciously agreed to support our program by assisting us as volunteer coaches. We currently have a waiting list for new families hoping to join Jr. Nordic, so if you’re interested, please check out our new website at cernsc.org.

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Life’s a beach for Beach Lake skiers

The Foyle Family – Aaron, Courtney, Beckett and Isla – took advantage of November snow and skiing at Beach Lake trails in Eagle River.

Beach Lake Trails had early snow followed by a freeze thaw cycle which left the trails intermittently icy, but careful grooming preserved the trail base. Skiers from Anchorage to Mat Sis Valley have enjoyed the groomed flat trails at Beach Lake in November and early December.

Early snow made Jr. Nordic a go for these Polar Cubs!

BY SARISSA LAMMERS

A long time ago in a galaxy far far away, AKA – six millennia ago give or take a couple thousand years – Isaac Lammers graduated from Chugiak High School and this is his story from then to now!

After finishing his high school ski career with a bang as State Skimeister, Isaac began his next big adventure: college skiing at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Before committing to UAF, Isaac weighed his options at multiple universities. When looking at schools, he had two main criteria that they had to meet: they had to have a ski program and an engineering program. The availability of scholarship money was an added bonus that was also strongly considered. His top choices were UAF, Montana State University and University of Colorado Boulder. With the best offer of scholarship money and a great engineering program, Isaac signed early in November of his senior year with UAF. The weight of looking for a school and team off his shoulders, he was able to focus on racing fast and graduating with great honors. The summer following his senior year of high school, Isaac spent his time working as a coffee barista at Jitters, adventuring in the mountains with friends, and of course training for his first season of college skiing.

The summer flew by and before he knew it August rolled around and he was packing for school. Isaac also chose to run cross-country for UAF, which meant each summer would be cut short to train with his running team at a preseason camp. Over the next four years, Isaac spent his time making the most of all the opportunities at UAF. He trained and studied hard but always managed to find time to do all the fun activates he loved, such as rock climbing, backcountry skiing, and mountain biking. As all people do, Isaac has ups and downs over the course of his four years at UAF; with some of his biggest highlights being finishing in the top 15 at Regionals and qualifying for the sprint heats at U.S. Nationals. All in all, his time at UAF is one to remember but by the end of his four years he was ready to start a new chapter in his life, one without racing.

Making the choice to stop competitive ski racing wasn’t an easy one but it was the right one for Isaac after graduating in 2016 with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering with an emphasis in aerospace and a minor in math. Even though he loved racing, he knew it was time to take a break from competitive skiing and have a little bit of fun.

The following year, Isaac moved to Grand Junction, Colorado, with his girlfriend, Mira Hopkins.

He spent the year working part-time and playing in the mountains, something he had been itching to do for many years, while Mira finished her last year of school at Colorado Mesa University. He spent most of his time mountain running, hiking, rock climbing and fly fishing during the summer and fall. Once the snow hit, the fat skis came out and he was hitting the slopes almost every weekend.

In May 2017, he and Mira moved back to Alaska for what they hoped to be for a long while. They spent that summer commercial fishing with Andy Hall and looking for engineering jobs in Anchorage. Unfortunately as it was, they were unable to find work in Anchorage and ended up moving back to Colorado as they both found jobs in Denver.

Isaac has now been living in Denver with Mira for over a year and is absolutely loving life. He moves from one extreme sport to the next pretty quick and just over a year ago he decided to pick up paragliding. He has always been fascinated with flying and paragliding satisfied his adrenaline junkie itch and flying fever all in one. Whenever the weather is in his favor and he isn’t working at the engineering firm, he spends all of his free time paragliding and adventuring with Mira and their dog, Teton. While at some point down the road he would like to move back to Alaska, for now he is making the most of his time in Colorado and truly living his dream!
BY JENNY DI GRAPPA
ASFW Director

Sunday, February 3, might be known to many as Super Bowl Sunday, but it is also the day 1,000 Alaskans come together to ski and celebrate at the Alaska Ski for Women, North America’s largest women-only cross-country ski event.

Each year we kick off the day with coffee and treats, and Toko waxing provided by Patrick and his crew. The timed events are not only for seasoned skiers but new skiers who might be on the Kincaid Park trails for the first time. For most, the costume contest is the favorite part of the day, where some groups have spent months and countless hours designing and putting together their costumes. The party wave is an opportunity to showcase these costumes and ski a fun 4K around the loop. The day wraps up with more food and drinks and massages in the chalet, as well as an ever-growing silent auction.

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.

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With winter’s arrival, the 23rd annual Alaska Ski for Women is on the horizon

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Besh Cup season begins with venue scramble, classic finishes

BY CROSS-COUNTRY AK

The kickoff to the ConocoPhillips Besh Cup season adapted to the whims of Mother Nature; and the venue location was relocated to the Government Peak Recreational Area. The Mat-Su Ski Club graciously rallied their fleet of volunteers along with the extra assistance from the Anchorage veterans who regularly volunteer at NSAA events from citizen races to state high school meets.

It was a learning day for everyone, including the skiers. Skiers learned all about the challenging trails that have been developed over the recent years, and all were put to the test in races varying from 1.5 kilometer to 15 kilometers. The Mat-Su Ski Club made its mark as being a go-to location for ConocoPhillips Besh Cup races, as well as other statewide races.

Find results from the weekend of racing at crosscountryalaska.org/2018/01/24/besh-cup-results-2/. The second weekend of the series is in Soldotna on January 19-20. Watch the CCAK website (crosscountryalaska.org) for updates to be made to the technique and format of the final four races. Registration for that weekend of racing closes on the Wednesday prior to the race competition.

The CCAK Competition Committee agreed to form a U14 spring trip in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. This team will be coached by Rachelle Kanady, Marion Woods and Sarissa Lammers, all former CCAK racers and Team Alaska members. CCAK is fortunate to have past athletes give back to the community of ski racing as volunteer coaches. The dates of the trip are February 22-24, 2019. Watch crosscountryalaska.org for more information.

America’s, and Alaska’s, top young skiers compete in the 2019 Junior Nationals

Ski Soldotna: Tackle the trail system in the Tour of Tsalteshi

BY JENNY NEYMAN

Touch every loop of Soldotna’s Tsalteshi Ski Trails in the annual Tour of Tsalteshi ski race Sunday, Feb. 17, 2019. The inaugural race in 2018 was meant to diversify community ski races at Tsalteshi with a distance event while encouraging skiers to get out and see the entirety of the ski trails system. Two distances are offered — the 20K race winds around the ski trails once, while the 40K event sends skiers on a double tour.

The Tour of Tsalteshi also serves as a tune-up for other distance ski events in the region, including the Tour of Anchorage on March 3 and the Nordic Ski Marathon in Homer on March 9. And keep an eye out for the Facebook page, which is coming soon! Who’s racing and representing Alaska? Keep up with 2019 Team Alaska points and skier results at snowio.com/ccak/index.php?io_view=points.io_points.

TOUR OF TSALTESHI

40K skate race will receive a unique award made by the Kenai Central High School metals class. Classic skiers may choose the 40K distance, as well, but are on their own to finish in the three-hour timeframe.

Tsalteshi offers a variety of terrain that keeps even the most daydreamy skier engaged. The 20K course involves 750 feet of elevation gain, though little of it is in long, sustained climbs. The trails are a constant rollercoaster of ups, downs, curves and corners (none too sharp, though), offering changing views and cardiovascular challenges. If you’re interested in a scenic afternoon trek through the woods, you’ll get it, from the bald eagles perched overhead to overdue looks of Soldotna and Mount Redoubt volcano. If you’re seeking to test your endurance, strategy and technique, the Tour of Tsalteshi can be that, too.

Aid stations will be available at 10K, 20K and 30K marks, with additional refreshments at the finish line. A post-race, no-host party will be held at Kenai River Brewing in Soldotna to give out awards and raffle prizes. All skiers will be entered into the raffle drawing, but you must be present to win.

Ski with AARP

Brought to you by the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage & AARP of Alaska

5 LESSONS (FEB-MAR) COST: $40
REGISTER: ANCHORAGE.NORDICSKI.COM
AARP MEMBERS (5 SKIERS OVER 50) GET 50% OFF WITH CODE “PLN50”

Learn the basics of cross-country skiing and enjoy the snow this winter.

Need gear?
Registered participants are entered to win a Classic Ski Package brought to you by AARP!
Meet the KNSC’s dedicated – and busy – Board of Directors

BY JEANNIE WOODRING

Getting a Nordic ski club Board of Directors (BOD) to tell their story is like herding cats – they’re too busy supporting the local ski club at all levels and skiing on all the great trails. Without these devoted volunteers, however, Nordic skiing would be a lot harder in Homer.

KNSC President Mike Gracz, for example, began skiing out his back door in up-state New York at age 12. Back then, he and his friends “groomed” trails by breaking careful tracks for each other. Moving out East Road to Homer in 1989, he began skiing out his back door into the beautiful Caribou Hills. “I soon discovered the great trails that were being groomed by KNSC for skate skiing near McNeil and at Baycrest and so immediately I became a member of the newly-formed KNSC when the club was four years old.”

A Ph.D. biologist, Mike lives in Homer year-round. In summer, he uses the Homer Spit Trail for roller skiing. A board member since 2015 and president since 2016, he “feels a responsibility to contribute to keeping the trails in great shape” and “enjoys working with the large and very positive group that shares this community-minded spirit!”

KNSC Vice President Stacey Buckalew also grew up on the East Coast, where she skied alpine. After moving to Homer in 2007, she got her first pair of Nordic skis and joined the Women’s Master Program in 2009. Today, Stacey helps to coach the Women’s Nordic programs, and volunteers with the KNSC Junior Nordic program, and the Skiiku/ Nondry Journeys ski program. She has served on the board for five years, the last two as vice president. Why does she volunteer? “At the heart of KNSC is a handful of super humans who dedicate tireless energy and the ski infrastructure I have grown to love,” she says. “I am in constant admiration of those heroes who make our ski community great! Volunteering with the KNSC BOD is my small way to give back."

KNSC Secretary Christine Anderson moved with her husband to Homer more than 20 years ago. Like many Homer families, “we bought new skis and hit the back country, dragging our three young boys along with us,” she says. The Anderson boys stayed with Nordic skiing from grade school to high school teams, and Christine followed them volunteering. “In fact,” she says, “the ski season has become the backbone of my social calendar, my primary program of activities, and my foremost opportunity to train and challenge myself in unexpected ways.”

When she’s not working as a nurse at South Peninsula Hospital, Christine’s volunteered for the KNSC BOD since 2016, volunteered for a program that teaches Nordic skiing to rural children, and skied in races and tours around the state, in the Lower 44, and even at the National Masters.

KNSC BOD Treasurer Richard Burton has been a mainstay of the BOD since 2006, serving as secretary for two years and treasurer since 2010. “I’m also the webmaster,” he adds, “and have primary responsibility for web design and underlying programming for things like online membership.”

Richard tried alpine and backcountry skiing but in the early 1990s got serious about cross-country skiing when he and his wife Marylou moved to Fairbanks. Here, he found excellent snow and trails and “SiSCUM (Susan’s Class for Untrainable Men), a local men’s master class that is still going strong today. In the 10 years I skied with the group, I don’t think we ever cancelled a session – you just added another layer of clothes and rubbed some Vaseline on your cheeks!”

In addition to his multiple tasks with the BOD, he admits, “Skiing has become my main winter activity. Being on the board has made me aware of the amazing amount of work needed to provide the really excellent trails that support our sport. I feel privileged to be able to contribute to this.”

BOD member Bob Glen, a retired pilot and law enforcement officer, moved to Homer with his wife Monica in 2013. The couple had lived in Anchorage since 1969, raising their four children in ski programs like Junior Nordic and Alaska Winter Stars, with two of the kids going on to ski on college teams.

Robert grew up skiing in Vermont and Norway. In Anchorage, he volunteered for the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage as a Green Grunt and at the 2002 Salt Lake Winter Olympics as a police officer and translator. In Homer, he has served as KNSC’s equipment manager since the 2002-2003 season. “No, skiing has been a large part of our family’s life,” he adds. “It is a pleasure to serve with such a great group of volunteers for our community.”

Board member Derek Bynagle grew up playing in the snow of East-
When opportunity knocks, MSSC rocks

Who the heck enjoys this sport? It’s so fickle. A week ago I’m navigating my Subaru through driving rain towards Hatcher Pass, ascending some 2,000 feet, hoping the temps drop and that liquid in the air turns solid. Up til this point in the season, Hatcher has been the reprise for those of us dying from snow starvation.

Fast forward to this weekend, last night brought 4 inches of fresh cold smoke to our beloved Government Peak Recreation Area. This added to the week’s snowfall for the trails of nearly a foot of the white stuff. So much so that our club was brought a proposal this week. Would we host the first two Besh Cup races at GPRA?

I asked around, questioning my recollection, has a Besh Cup race ever occurred in the Mat-Su Valley? The collective agreed with my sparse memories. This weekend would be the first time ever. Another first for the club.

I try to be a wordsmith when crafting these monthly submissions. The reality is the Besh Cup #1 Race at GPRA was a beauty that left me lost for words. Fresh snow clinging to trees, still air, moderate temperatures, and a blessing of a bit of sunshine … and while a number of my fellow club members would say, “Well, yeah GPRA is a gorgeous place,” there was so much more to the day. There was some 60 plus volunteers putting a race on that had never previously occurred in the Valley, with some 200 plus athletes doing their very best to show their prowess in a venue that six years ago barely existed.

Personally it resonated as such a success for all parties involved: MSSC, CCAK, NSAA, MSB and so many others who helped develop this area. I had grown up in the Valley racing in the back yard of College High School, Crevasses Moraine, or Hatcher Pass. I was reminiscing with APU’s coach Eric Strabel about those days (it should be noted that while Eric and I were on the same high school team, our athletic accomplishments are slightly differing …) and he had mentioned how those of us who had “race skis” rarely had a chance to use them in the Valley due to the thin veneer of twigs and branches or scarce snow coverage that continually plagued our available trails. Rock skis were our normal skis. Yet, some 20 years later, the Besh Cup series has landed in our hometown, and not by accident.

As I Mosesed about the stadium and the adjacent areas, I kept hearing too many voices complimenting this area, and for good reason. It has snow and a lot of times more than most of the Southcentral region. The competition loops live up to their name, but more than that they provide amazing vistas that most do not expect. While all these things make for an amazing area, there is one thing that can casually be overlooked and that is the wonderful folks who helped develop this fantastic terrain and those who give up their Saturdays and Sundays to allow Alaska’s elite race series to take place at one of the best locations Alaska has to offer.

— By Hans Hill

Moonlight Ski

I’ve spent many years promoting the fun of a Moonlight Ski, to the point most might skip this paragraph, but don’t! Why, might you ask? Well this month’s venue is Moose Range and it’s a spectacular area to explore at night, and the advantages of doing in a guided event rather than a solo expedition are many. First off, the name Moose Range implies the Beasties that reside in these parts are numerous. Second, while our Moose Range Bretterhen do their best to mark the trails, at times it can feel like the trails were designed by the very same namesake. So please pencil in January 19 for a fun ski with good people and maybe a moose or two?

Icícle Double

Unfortunately, timing of this publication doesn’t align itself for reporting on the club’s premier race event. The Icícle Double. So if you were unable to attend, find a friend to bend their ear, or wait for next month’s issue of the Nordic Skier to see a recap of the race we hope to imprint on the Alaska race map. But I can mention and thank the great race sponsors we had this year: All Seasons Clothing Company, Arkosse Brewing Company; Alaska Earth Sciences; Soloy Helicopters; Alaska Pacific Rentals; Reading Write Alaska; Backcountry Bike and Ski; HEI, and RECON, LLC.

Northern Lights Race series begins this month

If you are unaware, the MSSC puts together a key low-frequency weekly race series during January and February. Races begin at 7 p.m. on Wednesday beginning January 16, with skier’s choice in technique and distance options of 1.5, 2.5 and 5K. Cost is just $5 for individuals or $10 for families. It is a great way to build some VO2 max workouts into your weekly routine.

Calendar of events
January 1 — Junior Nordics begins
January 16 – Northern Lights Race Series begins (Races start at 7 p.m.)
January 19 — Moonlight Ski at Moose Range, 7 p.m.
February 5 — MSSC Board Meeting, 6:30 p.m. at GPRA Clubhouse
March 30 — MSSC Race at Hatcher Pass, 7:30 p.m.

Learn more about MSSC events and programs at matsusi.org and facebook.com/MatsuSkiClub.
NSCF seeking adult lessons instructors

Want to share your love of skiing with people new to the sport? Help them gain confidence and skills? Share in-depth techniques and training strategies? The NSCF Adult Lessons program is looking for instructors and substitute instructors.

Instructors need to be NSCF members and need to undergo a background check. Instructors get paid $45 per hour for group lessons and are covered by club insurance for those lessons. Instructors need to be First Aid and CPR certified. (The club will provide an opportunity to gain these certifications.) The club also provides instructor training alongside the Jr. Nordics program instructors.

For more information and to sign up as an instructor, please contact Andie Levesque at adultlessons@nscfairbanks.org.

NSCF seeking Junior Nordics coaches

Our youth skiers are in need of your help! We have lots of excited, budding Nordic skiers ready to enjoy this amazing snow and not enough volunteer coaches to go around. You do not need experience, just a positive attitude and love of skiing. If you are interested, please contact Sally Endestad or Jennifer Williamson (juniornordics@nscfairbanks.org; 907-371-9564). Junior Nordics lessons take place on Mondays at 6:30-7:30 p.m. at UAF West Ridge, Tuesday/Thursday at 4:45-5:45 p.m. at UAF West Ridge, and Saturdays at 10:30-11:30 a.m. at UAF West Ridge.

Check out the beauty of Nordic skiing and a Fairbanks winter night at Birch Hill. The Fairbanks community is invited to a midwinter candlelight ski. Please join us from 4:7 p.m. Friday, January 11, at Birch Hill Recreation Area as we turn off the trail lights and instead brighten and warm the snow with hundreds of candles. This is a free event and all ages and abilities are welcome, so bring your family and friends. A beginner loop around the stadium will be available, and a special trail will be uniquely flickering.

Ski amidst the peaceful glow of frosted candles. Bring your own bright “bling”: glowsticks, headlamps or light-up jewelry. Take as few or as many loops as you’d like and stop inside for a warmup with hot chocolate and cookies. This event is generously sponsored by Goldstream Sports and NSCF in hopes of seeing many new faces enjoying these beautiful Fairbanks trails and to have those familiar with Birch Hill see it in a different “light.” See you there!

Questions? Contact membership@nscfairbanks.org. If it is colder than 10 below at 3 p.m. on event day, it will be postponed until January 18.
Backcountry Film Festival celebrates winter, helps the ski club

BY ERIC TROYER

The Backcountry Film Festival brings the world’s winter wonderland to Fairbanks in January. The Fairbanks showing, organized by the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks, will be held Saturday, January 26, starting at 7 p.m. Watch the NSCF website (www.nscfairbanks.org) and Facebook page for more information.

Produced each year as a celebratory, backcountry community event by the Winter Wildlands Alliance, the 14th annual Backcountry Film Festival film lineup is full of snowy, cinematic adventure sure to inspire both the local backcountry and general communities. Winter Wildlands Alliance is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving winter wildlands and a quality human-powered snow sports experience on public lands.

The Backcountry Film Festival aims to entertain while helping raise funds and awareness for Winter Wildlands and its like-minded partners. The festival premieres in Boise, Idaho, and then travels to more than 100 locations worldwide. Funds raised by the festival showings stay in local communities to support human-powered recreation and conservation efforts and to raise awareness of winter management issues, avalanche training/safety and winter education programs.

See a teaser of this year’s films and learn more about the films and the festival at winterwildlands.org/backcountry-film-festival.

Sweat, slide, glide. Repeat. …and don’t forget to sleep.

When in Fairbanks, keep to your routine and stay in comfort. At Wedgewood Resort, enjoy condo-style one- and two-bedroom suites with fully-equipped kitchens. All suites are surrounded by a 75-acre wildlife reserve with nature trails for cross-country skiing, next to the groomed trails at Creamer’s Field and only 5 miles from Birch Hill Cross Country Ski Center.

Welcome to your home away from home.

Club seeks tour leaders to guide adventures around Fairbanks

BY ERIC TROYER

Do you have a favorite trail that you would like to share with other cross-country skiers? If so, the NSCF Touring Program wants your help.

Touring program organizer Eric Troyer is looking for other club members to lead a tour or two. You need no special training to lead a ski tour, though knowing where you’re going is a plus! The only requirements are a love of cross-country skiing and a desire to share that love with others.

If you are interested in leading a tour, please contact Eric (fbxskierparent@gmail.com). It would be great to see a range of different tours offered in terms of location, length and difficulty. Whether you like long, challenging skis, or prefer shorter, less challenging outings, rest assured that other club members may want to join you.

As the touring schedule develops, some tours will be planned far enough in advance to be listed in the Alaska Nordic Skier, while others will be organized with a little less lead time. All tours will be posted to the touring page on the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks website (see Touring dropdown menu), and announced through the club’s Facebook page and emails. Make sure you check the website for updates and that your membership is up to date with your current email address.
Tracie Curry: From novice to backcountry skier in just four years

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 Tracie Curry, who gives hope to beginning skiers. Despite learning to ski just four years ago, Tracie has become accomplished enough to do backcountry camping trips and backcountry races.

How are you involved with the NSCF? I’m a member of NSCF and an occasional race volunteer. I got involved when I had just moved to Fairbanks. My weekends were fairly free. I wanted to see the fast racers, plus Norma promised hot soup and Carolines.

How long have you been a cross-country skier? What do you remember about first learning to ski? I started xc skiing my first winter in Fairbanks four years ago. Before that I had never been on skis. I’ve always been a runner and, when I discovered the running trails turn into ski-only trails in the winter, I figured I might as well learn. I bought a pair of cheap skate skis and signed up for a beginner class at Birch Hill. I started with skate skiing because someone told me it was easier to pick up than classic. I now disagree. My first class I didn’t know how to put the skis on. I remember asking which ski was the left and which was the right. I also didn’t know how to use the pole straps. I skied without them for at least a couple months.

It always strikes me how people who are good skiers seem to have forgotten what it’s like to be a beginner skier. I went on a few terrifying “beginner level” ski tours that first year and also had plenty of falls. I’ve mostly practiced falling since then. I still fall often. Additionally, I realize that you must have a lot of balance and body control.

Where do you like to cross-country ski and why? Any trail I haven’t done before. Finding new trails is a hobby for me. I also love skiing in the White Mountains Rec area. Just an hour drive north of town and you’re in this huge natural playground with beautiful views and lots of variation along the trails. For example, just when you’re getting tired of skiing through a narrow alley of trees you pop into a wide-open space with views of distant mountains . . . then the wind hits you and you look forward to the next alley of trees.

What other activities do you enjoy besides skiing? Running! I ski when there is snow and run all other times of year. I also like gardening, all kinds of fishing, and food preservation (which I guess goes along with the former two things).

When and why did you move to Fairbanks? What do you like about living in Fairbanks? I came to Fairbanks to start my PhD in natural resource management at UAF in August 2014. My research is related to climate change adaptation and planning in northern communities so coming to Alaska was a no-brainer. I like living in Fairbanks for easy access to all the outdoor activities I enjoy. The community of people here is also pretty great. Lots of fun, quirky, and down-to-earth people that like being outside and are always up for a challenge.

Are there any other things you want to tell us about yourself? Your family? I grew up in Southern California so I’ll always have love for sunshine and warm weather. I’m not a fan of the cold, but I put up with it so I can continue living in this amazing place.

Tracie Curry smiles during a ski off of Old Murphy Dome Road in last winter.
The turkeys of the Turkey Day Relays

BY ERIC TROYER

Just before the start of the Turkey Day Relays, I felt good but had no idea I was about to lead off a stellar relay team performance. First-place finish? PRs all around? No such mundane achievements for us. Ours was a different kind of triumph.

The NSCF Turkey Day Relays are held the day after Thanksgiving. Teams of three race around a 4.5-kilometer course. Costumes and silliness are part of the fun. This year one team of high school girls skied on tandem skis wearing reindeer costumes pulling a Santa dog and a boombox in a sled. It’s that kind of race, though many participants do race hard.

Ours was one of two complete SCUM teams. SCUMs are members of Susan’s Class of Untrainable (Unbalanced, Uncoordinated, etc.) Men. Greg Kahoe, a newer SCUM, had asked Steve Clautice and me to join him.

The online sign up foreshadowed our performance. The race organizers, lacking our genders and ages, emailed for the information. Steve replied that he was 70 and his “gender preference” was male. I was unclear. Did he prefer being male but was open to options or did he just prefer males? Fortunately, Steve’s wife Karen understood that his answer was just typical SCUM behavior and not a Freudian slip.

On race day we arrived at Birch Hill Recreation Area separately but not a Freudian slip. (Owen fell twice, so I got a turkey)!

I made it around the course, only falling once. (Owen fell twice, so I got ahead of the other SCUM team!) But I felt bad. I was pretty sure I had ruined someone else’s race by accidently taking their skis and poles.

As I approached the exchange zone, announcer Kent Karns (another SCUM) said I would be tagging off to Greg, which I knew was right. But I looked up and saw Greg in the exchange zone. “Where’s Steve?” I wondered. Then he appeared at the fence on my left.

“You have to tag off to Greg!” he yelled. “Someone took my skis and poles!”

“Two minutes to race start!”

“Looks like you did!” I yelled back.

Sure enough, after I tagged off to Steve, which I knew was right. He had taken Steve’s equipment, and that he might have to do another lap.) Suddenly, people started yelling “He’s coming! He’s coming!” Steve came flying down the course, one pole unstrapped, to tag off. Steve had been distracted talking to Chris Puchner, the anchor of the other SCUM team. (See a pattern?)

Another “fowl” up! More laughter and eye-rolling. We cheered on Steve, who had a great lap. Then we headed to the finish line, but Steve wasn’t there! Instead, he headed to the exchange zone! The astute volunteer, seeing Steve’s middle-leg bib, pointed him to the lap lane. In very un-SCUM-like manner, Steve properly followed her instructions. The lenient and forgiving timekeepers let him “finish” in the lap lane, though Kent made sure to announce it to all.

More laughter and eye-rolling. Bruce Jamieson, the middle-leg on the other SCUM team, came over to laugh with (or maybe at) us. Then he told us that despite all our “fowl” ups we still beat their team. We had truly out-SCUMmed them.

After the race, I at first felt sorry for Greg. He skied well and hadn’t made any mistakes. Or did he? After all, Greg picked Steve and me as teammates. The biggest blunder of them all!

That’s a lot of “fowl” ups for one Turkey Day Relay Race. There ought to be an award for such a performance. Maybe a plaque with a drawing of skiing turkeys. I know three guys who could model for the artist.

Skiing the second leg, Greg Kahoe tried to school a college skier on proper technique, but the young whippersnapper wasn’t listening!

As I poled to my start spot, I saw blue out of the corner of my eye. I looked down, saw my blue ski baskets, and tried to remember how long I had blue ski baskets. I couldn’t remember and it wasn’t important, so I forgot about it. I got into the track, chatting with Owen Hanley, from the other SCUM team. As I talked I tried to strap on my poles, but the straps didn’t work properly. Finally it hit me. I had someone else’s skis and poles!

“Two minutes to race start!”

“Really?” I yelled back.

“Looks like you did!” I yelled back. Sure enough, after I tagged off to Greg, Steve came over and pointed at “my” skis. “Those are mine!”

“Two minutes to race start!”

“Really?”

“Looks like you did!” I yelled back. Sure enough, after I tagged off to Greg, Steve came over and pointed at “my” skis. “Those are mine!”

After much laughing and eye-rolling (by us and the spectators) we cheered on Greg, who skied adorably. Steve stopped cheering early to prepare for the last leg. As Greg neared, I walked over to the exchange zone. Greg approached. No Steve. Greg entered. No Steve. Greg kept skiing. (He knew “someone” had taken Steve’s equipment, and that he might have to do another lap.) Suddenly, people started yelling “He’s coming! He’s coming!” Steve came flying down the course, one pole unstrapped, to tag off. Steve had been distracted talking to Chris Puchner, the anchor of the other SCUM team. (See a pattern?)

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Eric Troyer is the Fairbanks editor of the Alaska Nordic Skier.

January 2019

FAIRBANKS

THE ALASKA nordic skier

PHOTOS BY ERIC TROYER

Anchor leg skier Steve Clautice finishes in the exchange zone while spectators watch at the finish line.
Here’s how you can help keep our club running

Our club is nothing without its volunteers. We need help with everything from races to helping kids learn to ski to putting on events. Please see the list below for some of the many volunteer opportunities our club has to offer. If you’d like to help out, please contact the program director listed below or send an email to fxcski@alf.com.

**Races:** It takes a lot of people to put on a race, and we have a lot of races! We need experienced volunteers as well as those who are brand new to ski racing and even skiing. To help out, either contact the race director for a specific event (you can find who that is on each race’s page here) or our Competitions director at competitions@nscfairbanks.org.

**Junior Nordics coaches:** Help kids from 5-14 years old learn to love skiing! Junior Nordic sessions last one hour and are held on Tuesday and Thursday nights and Sunday afternoons. Help one, two or three days a week. Or offer to be a substitute. Contact the Trails and Grooming coordinator at trails@nscfairbanks.org.

**Spring Gala:** The big season-ending social event for people interested in Nordic skiing and other winter outdoor activities. It combines music, dancing, food and drink, a silent auction, and some auction items. Contact the FXC Volunteer coordinator at fxcski@gmail.com.

**Backcountry Film Festival:** A night of short films celebrating human-powered backcountry activities, usually held on a Saturday evening about the third week in January.

**Ski for Women:** This spring social ski and potluck luncheon benefits the women’s shelter in Fairbanks. It is usually held on a Sunday in early April, and includes door prizes and a silent auction. Costumes are encouraged! Skiing distances up to 5 kilometers. And there are lots of other ways to help, including serving on our Board of Directors and its various committees.

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**OFF THE TRAIL**

**Taking care of your body during winter**

**BY ZUZANA ROGERS, PT, SCD, SCS, COMT**

**Advanced Physical Therapy of Alaska**

Welcome back! Now that we are in the winter. Mobility is important for ideal function and performance. It is so wonderful out there — do you know one or more of the skiing trails around town? Want to show them off to other cross-country ski enthusiasts? If so, please offer to lead a tour. You choose the place and time. Contact our Touring coordinator at touring@nscfairbanks.org.

**Trail maintenance:** During the summer and fall our trails need some TLC so that they are ready for ski season. Work mainly involves brushing, raking, and helping haul away downed trees. Contact the Trails and Grooming coordinator at trails@nscfairbanks.org.

**Tour of Tsalteshi ski race**

Sunday, Feb. 17 — Tsalteshi trailhead behind Skyview Middle School (46188 Sterling Hwy., Soldotna)

- **Divisions:** 20K classic, 20K skate, 40K skate
- **Start time:** 11:30 a.m. 40K skate, other divisions start shortly thereafter
- **Early online registration deadline:** Jan. 31
- **Online registration deadline:** Feb. 16
- **Day-of registration:** 10 a.m. Feb. 17 at the start line
- **Bib pickup:** Day of race at the start line

Registration and information — touroftslateshi.org

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**TSALTESHI**

Continued from Page 9

The first 100 entrants will receive a Tour of Tsalteshi buff featuring an original design from local artist Amy Kruse. Should the race be canceled for snow conditions, all early registrations will be offered a choice of donating their entry fee to support the race or getting a voucher for free entry to the 2020 event.

Online registration is available now, with discounts for early registration before Feb. 1 and Feb. 16. Additional discounts are available to members of the Tsalteshi Trails Association, Kachemak Nordic Ski Club and Seward Nordic Ski Club. For more information, maps and a link to registration, visit touroftslateshi.org.

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**PLANTAR FASCIA STRETCH**

- **hold 10 seconds**
- **modify with a foam roll or a pillow as needed**

Several things to remember when you are performing these:

1) If it is painful, don’t do it!
2) If it is difficult to do, ease into it slowly over two weeks.
3) Stretch AFTER your hard workout or race (it can decrease performance).

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**CHOOSE A PHYSICAL THERAPIST**

Do you want to learn more? Come see us at Advanced Physical Therapy! Call for an appointment at any of our five locations statewide, or visit us online at: aptak.com

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**FOOT STRENGTH**

- **Shuffle walk**
  - Three parts: lift toes, ‘shuffle’ your foot forward, put toes down
  - Forward and backwards, 20 steps

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**FOOT STRENGTH**

- **Calf stretch**
  - Knee straight (gastrocnemius), and knee flexed (soleus)
  - Feet pointing forward
  - Hold 20 seconds each

---

**QUADRICEPS STRETCH**

- **Bottom’ knee should be past your body line (use a towel around your foot if it is too difficult)**
  - Hold 20 seconds on each side

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**THORACIC ROTATION**

- **Forward and backwards, 20 steps**
- **Feet pointing forward**
- **Hold 20 seconds each**

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**CIRCULAR MOTION**

- **Press your ‘top’ knee down on a foam roller or a pillow**
  - Reach with your opposite hand towards the ceiling
  - Hold for three breaths

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**SI APPLIED MOBILITY**

- **Each side, hold 20 seconds**
- **Hold 20 seconds on each side**
- **Feet pointing forward**

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**FOOT STRENGTH**

- **Piriformis stretch**
  - Perform either one — you will find one that works for your body
  - Hold 20 seconds on each side

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![Image of a ski track with a trail marker.](Image)