COMING SOON: A special edition program for the 2019 U.S. Cross Country Junior Nationals, which take place in Anchorage from March 11-16!
Last season we made a few changes to the AMH Anchorage Cup schedule and this season we tried to continue those things that seemed to work well. Alaska Winter Stars and APU signed on for another season, and we added Anchor Junior Nordic as a new cohort. We offered 3K and 5K courses at each distance event again, to give younger and more recreational skiers suitable events. We put out another ski-cross course and worked with Junior Nordic coaches to bring out more youth involvement. And we drew up more fun, new course maps.

We had the earthquake, warm December weather, the course and sponsor changes to the Moose’s Tooth Classic, and the UAA race just hours before the Sven. These were all things that asked for a lot of flexibility and patience, both from racers and organizers. So this spring, I just want to say thank you. To everyone who put in so many volunteer hours to work registration or move v-board. To all the co-hosts and sponsors. To the parents who signed-up, paid for, and drove their kids. These races don’t happen without all of you. And it was really great to see so many people out on working, racing, and cheering each Sunday.

Last year, I mentioned the idea that, to me, skiing is about community. Throughout each season of work, I try to keep that idea in mind. Our goal is always to work towards making the Anchorage Cup an event that draws together our ski community— from beginners to Olympians—and puts smiles on faces. So I want to invite everyone to give us your feedback, your ideas, your visions. If there’s something you want to see at the Anchorage Cup next season, let us know. Help us work towards making things bigger and better. And we hope to see you all out on the trails again next winter!  

~By Branden Fontana

Going Green and going strong: NSAA’s awesome Green Grunts

Hardworking and dedicated. Before, during and after every race, you see them: The Green Grunts. This group is fiercely committed to this Nordic skiing community, and are well-loved and respected by Alaska’s young and old skiers. Thank you to our Green Grunts for all your devotion and enthusiasm to Nordic skiing.

The 2019-19 crew of Green Grunts includes: Scott Belyea; David Hulen; Celia Rozen; Anne Billman; Peter Johnson; Tim Samuelson; Tim Brahts; Alice Knapp; Buzz Scher; Ed Brewer; Elizabeth Knapp; Jim Singleton; Tom Brooks; Gunnar Knapp; Ross Singleton; Sally & Jim Burkholder; Dave Kochevar; Dick Snyder; Liz Butera; Robin Kornfield; Bob Stehn; John Christopherson; Ove Madsen; Meg Stehn; Joan Darnell; Patrick McGownd; Tim Stone; Joe Darnell; Iain Miller; Fred Stutzer; Paul Denkewalter; Michael Miller; June Takagi; Rob Dolan; Mike Miller; Bruce Talbot; Georgia Gustafson; Peter Mjos; Tina Tomson; Colin Hawkins; Steve Morris; Peter Tryon; Lin Hinderman; Diane Monness; Gail Hoefler; and Molly Mylius.

Tour of Anchorage arrives on March 3, 2019

The Tour is almost here, and here’s what you need to know before the race:

Tour of Anchorage ski racing starting info— 50K freestyle, 9:30 a.m. (Service HS); 40K freestyle, 10:30 a.m. (Service HS); 25K classic, 11 a.m. (APU); 25K freestyle, noon (APU)

Inaugural Fat Bike Tour of Anchorage race info— 50K, 2 p.m. (Service HS); 40K, 3 p.m. (Service HS)

Bib pickups— Friday, March 1 from 3-7 p.m. (APU Moseley Center); Saturday, March 2 from 10 a.m. noon (APU Moseley Center).


Awards Ceremony and Post-Race Party— Wednesday, March 5, at 49th State Brewing, 6-8 p.m.

More information and late registration: tourofanchorage.com

Take a tour, save the backcountry with NSAA

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

March 1-3 — Denali View Chalet, two overnights, Peters Hills

Level: Easy II; Distance: 8 miles one way to chalet; Elevation Gain: Generally flat, rolling terrain; Tour Leader: Karlene 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 Cammisa; 907-726-7977, raybird68@hotmail.com

See AROUND THE BOWL, Page 3

AMH Anchorage Cup recap: A successful, and thankful, season

Check out these AMH Anchorage Cup highlights!

the AlaskA nordic skier
The trials – and trails – of snowmaking

BY NSAA OPERATIONS

The snowmaking process at Kincaid Park was unexpectedly interrupted this winter due to the malfunction of the primary pump. The pump was pulled from the well and taken to Alaska Pump for inspection and diagnosis. A new pump was ordered and installed and the system, after a few fits and starts, was up and running by mid-February.

Our snowmaking volunteer Tim Brabets explained the details as follows: “The electrician wired in the new breaker, reconnected the power line to the new pump and wired in the new VFD (Frequency Variable Driver) … which is like the throttle for the pump.” Once the electrician finished, Tim gave things a test and noted that all signs were positive. He was only able to leave the system on for a few minutes since it was so warm, but all lights indicated “green” … and that’s good! He said, “Both pumps turned on in addition to one of the high-pressure pumps before I had to stop the system. The well line pressure looked good (100+ psi) and the line pressure was good as well (200+ psi).”

This new pump is smaller and better matched to the well’s capacity than the old one and the crew is cautiously optimistic: “We needed to continue running the system in cold weather to see if it is working properly, but for now all signs are positive.”

NSAA CALENDAR

MARCH


Sunday, April 7 — NSAA Backcountry Tours: Gold Mint Trail, Hatcher Pass

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

MARCH 23 • CURRY, AK

Get your tickets today!

www.anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-train/

Fatbike and snowshoe demo, Raingate Garden (tafelgate party), Polka Music, and themed Carst Best of all, untouched powder for your pleasure!

©2019 The Alaska Nordic Ski Association
Happy spirits break through murky skies at the 23rd annual Alaska Ski for Women

BY JENNY DI GRAPPA
Director, Ski for Women

Although preceded by a rainy week, we received some snow and cold weather to make for perfect trail conditions at the 2019 Alaska Ski for Women at Kincaid Park. Gray skies blocked the sun but provided warmth for our 653 attendees and hundreds of volunteers and community members as we celebrated the 23rd year of this successful community event. We had 42 women participate in the duathlon, 117 in the freestyle/skate race, and 120 women in the classic event. Over 250 women participated in the “party wave,” many of whom were skiing for the very first time! The Mardi Gras of the North costume contest provided some tough competition this year – coming in second place in the group costume were the Fur Rondy Pin-Ups with each team member dressed as a different pin from Rondy’s past! Additionally, they were the team with the most team members and donated the most funds! The final events of the day included a successful silent auction and our second time hosting a refreshing mimosa reception.

Equally important to the skiing, this event raised awareness and funds for a very serious issue facing women in Alaska: domestic violence. 100 percent of race entries, donations, merchandise sales, and funds raised during the silent auction will be donated later this year to programs and organizations that actively work to stop the cycle of domestic violence against women and children. Funds are also distributed to organizations that provide resources to domestic violence victims and their families. Grants will open in late spring – if you know of an organization that might qualify, please email alaskaskiforwomensgrants@gmail.com.

Events like the Alaska Ski for Women couldn’t happen without the support of major sponsors. Please help us by thanking ConocoPhillips, our 2019 Platinum Sponsor and race bib sponsor. We would also like to thank our Gold Sponsor, KTUU, for their continued support and promotion of the event. Other sponsors include: Anchorage Women’s Clinic, The Alaska Club, Banker Law Group, Denali OB-GYN, Great Harvest Bread Co., PREMIER ALASKA TOURS, Bristol Bay Native Corporation, Moose’s Tooth & Bear Tooth, Kalsali Brothers Coffee, REI, Magic 98.9, R&L Distributors, TOKO, Skinny Raven, SAUCE, Alaska EyeCare Center, Hartman Orthodontics, Fur Rondy, Hydrate Alaska, Turnagain Training and Alaska Medical Solutions (swag bags). Additionally, we received over 50 in-kind donations for our silent auction from Anchorage businesses and community members.

Finally, I would like to give praise to our 2019 ASFW all-volunteer event committee: Meg Stehn, Diane Morensen, Greg DuBois, Paullette Compston, Julie Truskowski, Celia Rozen, Tamra Kornfield, Kelly Fehrman, Deborah Hansen and Amber and Sara with NSAA.

RACE RESULTS —

COSTUMES —

SAVE THE DATE —
Alaska Ski for Women arrives on February 2, 2020. It takes numerous volunteers to put on this great event for the community. Whether you can commit a few hours, or a few hours each month to help with the 24th annual event, there are a variety of ways you can help! Email alaskaskiforwomen@gmail.com to learn more!

PHOTOS BY
JAN HAZEN
NSAA Member Spotlight: Tim Middleton

I’ve always loved being outside! We started skiing with our daughter and now, we’re out cheering on our grandkids.

What does NSAA’s mission mean to you?
Connecting people to trails and getting kids outside. After I was no longer board president, I wanted to get kids together to ski, so we gathered 20-30 kids from the neighborhood including my wife and other parents and called ourselves Munchkins. This volunteer youth group was so popular, we formed a committee and over the summer, we hired coaches and organized more groups to ski around Anchorage. I also helped establish ski touring programs through the club to connect members to trails.

Do you have some standout moments from skiing, connecting with NSAA and/or participating in programs or events that you would like to share?
As board president, myself and other well-known skiers advocated for the lighted trails at Russian Jack, Service High School, and Kincaid. We knew more people would ski if the trails had light, helping to draw folks outside during long winters.

I had been attending ski races outside Anchorage, and we needed longer ski race distances like 50k, but Anchorage didn’t have the trail system in place to support a 50k ski race. I worked on the committees that created the Tour of Anchorage race, and the committees that advocated for more trail systems that could support a 50k ski race, including writing to Mayor Tony Knowles. I also was the co-chief of the 1992 World Masters race held in Anchorage!

Make tracks to TRAX on your way to Kincaid!

TRAX Outdoor Center 2.0, Anchorage’s newest Nordic ski shop, is situated perfectly on your way to Kincaid Park in the Tastee Freez mall. We rent skate skis and classic skis from race to touring styles. We wax with same-day service, and yes, we do kick wax.

TRAX Outdoor Center is the No. 1 dealer for the most exciting ski brand in the world: Salomon! You can demo any gear, any time, because sometimes you have to see it and ski it to believe it.:)
A 100-year-old skiing surprise

BY TIM KELLEY

For 20 years I had been driving by what could be Anchorage's oldest known cross-country skis. I'd drive, run or hike past these skis sometimes four or more times a day. I made many thousands of trips past these ancient skis. But I didn't have a clue they were there, out in the open, watching me go by.

I live in the Goldenview Drive area of Anchorage. Back in 1936 Harold and Ruth Moen established a homestead in the South Goldenview area. There’s still a remnant of their old homestead where their daughter Janey Moen and her husband live and have a horse boarding stable. Also in this area is Moen Park and an old homestead trail called the Moen Trail.

I had been to Janey’s horse stables a number of times. But this summer I stopped by to attend a barbeque with a bunch of New Zealand horsemen (some bloody fine Kiwi blokes I might add). I asked Janey some questions about the history of her place. Come to find out, she has the bulldozer that made the original Goldenview Drive. And she has a shed that was actually an outhouse from the 1917 railroad construction camp at Potter, that was dragged up to the Moen homestead with the bulldozer.

And then I noticed some long, weathered, old cross skis leaning up against the 1917 shed. “And what is the story with those old skis leaning against the shed?” I asked.

“My father found them in the Potter work camp,” Janey replied, “and used them to travel between this homestead and the Potter railroad stop.”

When I heard that my head started spinning. From the last 12 years of working on the Alaska Lost Ski Areas Project (www.alsap.org), I’ve got a lot of ski history facts floating around in my head. Numbers started lining up. March 4, 1917, was the first known cross-country ski race in Anchorage. This shed was from 1917. The skis were found near this shed. Could these skis have been used in that first cross-country ski race?

I knew they were old and needed to be rescued, so I broached obtaining and restoring them with Janey. She thought it over, and a couple of months later she gave the skis to me.

I consulted with friends who are antique ski experts: Greg Fangel of Tolte, MN (woodenskis.com), and my ALSAP cohort Dave Braun of Homer. Cable bindings had been put on these skis at a later date, so Greg said to remove them and make the skis period-authentic. Dave advised me to be very careful sanding the skis so no markings would be lost.

We concluded that the skis were likely from the late teens or twenties of last century. So, these skis could be up to 100 years old. Stamped markings on the bottom side of the tips indicate these skis were manufactured, and not homemade. But unfortunately, there is no way to know if they were used in Anchorage's first ski race in 1917.

I told Janey that if she gave me the skis, I would find a good home for them. These historic skis were once a Norwegian's skis and nobody embraces Norwegian heritage more than Norwegians. So I contacted Tom Falskow, president of the Anchorage Sons of Norway club.

Tom was excited about the skis and put me in contact with board member Martin Hansen, who I knew from 1980's Ildtaksi races. Soon the Moen Homestead Skis had a place of display in the entry-way of the Sons of Norway Bernt Balchen Lodge in Anchorage. The perfect home for a Norwegian’s skis, that are perhaps the oldest skis with Anchorage history in Alaska.

Stumble upon these old skis, obtaining and refurbishing them and seeing the enthusiasm as they were passed on to a good home was a fun experience. And from this experience, there were a couple take-away points.

A sense of heritage helps bond a community. Just ask any Norwegian. Talk to old-timers, read about the past, and keep your eye out for relics of our Alaskan heritage. Your bonds to Alaska will only grow stronger.

And if you find something really cool from Alaska's past, share it with other Alaskans. You'll find that others will be happy that you shared. And that will make you happy that you shared.

For further information about Anchorage's first known cross-country ski race, visit alsap.org/4thAvenue/4thAvenue.htm. See pictures of 1917 Alaska railroad work camp at Potter Creek (South Anchorage) at vilda.alaska.edu/digital/search/searchterm/potter%20creek

BY LAURA WRIGHT

There are so many trails to ski in Talkeetna it is just phenomenal. What a great season it has been so far and now that it is March there is so much more time to enjoy winter. DNSC trailmeister and friends have focused their energies on putting up the Oosik Ski Race trail, which arrives on Saturday, March 16. Registration is underway (www.denalinordicskiclub.org/oosik-ski-race) and the trail is still a remnant of their old homestead where their friends have focused their energies on putting in the Talkeetna Lakes park are groomed with tracks.

March Ski Madness in Talkeetna

BY TIM KELLEY

A familiar sight for Oosik racers – this old sign is in use every year.

The course covers 25 and 50 kilometers of excellent rolling wooded terrain, several lakes and a few bogs so it makes its way toward the Talkeetna River. There won’t be any river miles this year so we can avoid the unpredictable freeze and thaws that seem to become more normal.

The finish is at the Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge. Some of you may remember two years ago the huge hill to get up to the finish. Well, you’ll have to do that again but we’ve found an easier route up that won’t be as intimidating; still uphill though! I recommend stopping and taking in an amazing view of town, the railroad tracks, State airport and the Alaska range that is a view not seen from other vantage points.

Saturday, March 16 – Let the afterparty begin! We will only have one official party and it will be at the Talkeetna Alaska Lodge. This allows racers and their non-racing friends and family to celebrate in a larger space. In past years we always had a party downtown at the Sheldon Arts Hangar but we’ve decided against that this year. Of course, you are downtown with great restaurants and live music at the Fairview Inn.

Saw – We’ve got a new Ski Talkeetna hat. They will be available for purchase at registration for $35. Volunteers: yes – we need you. There are lots of things you can help us with such as signage, registration, parking, aid stations, road crossings, clean-up and more. The Oosik race director is Laurel Steck. Please register to volunteer using the online form at denalinordicskiclub.org/oosik-ski-race/volunteer-for-the-oosik/. All volunteers receive a Ski Talkeetna hat.

Ski you in Talkeetna!
Chugiak, Eagle River high school skiers represent at regionals, on the trails, in the classroom

BY MAX BEIERGROHSLEIN

The Chugiak High ski team turned a new leaf in this 2018-19 ski season. The season started off with a bang or more appropriately a big earthquake. Several races were cancelled due to the quake which really was unfortunate as early season races are necessary to get those racing jitters out of the way. The team right from the get-go was strong and confident. We all came to practice with smiles on our faces and were rearing to get on the skis.

Going into Regionals, we were all confident in our abilities and knew we could maybe, just maybe, come out on top. Sure enough a day later we stood in the Kincaid Park Chalet with Chugiak’s first ever region title. It was a joyous moment that we, the varsity members, shared with the entire team. Then to our surprise we won the GPA award with an average of 4.13.

Our team success has been in part from this season’s amazing coaching staff. Branden Fontana, the new head coach, brought a new energy to the team which has worked well as results have shown. Assistant coaches Sarissa Lammers and Autumn Person were also a huge help. A special thanks also has to be given to Stan Carrick who has been coaching most of the varsity kids since they started skiing. He has been a huge support to the team and is one of the best coaches out there. The regionals weekend was awesome and will definitely be remembered. We hope to create even more awesome memories at the State Championships in the week to come.

First-year skier learns from Chugiak Mustangs (front row) celebrate regionals racing.

When you think of an intense sport, the first things to come to mind are sports like football and hockey – you would never think of Nordic skiing. Or may not have even heard of cross-country or Nordic skiing. Nordic skiing is one of the toughest, most demanding sports of all time. It requires impenetrable mindsets, complete concentration, long endurance, and immense power.

Why would anyone want to compete in a sport that requires so much? Personally, I do it for the fitness, skiing allows me to tone my body and maintain great physical standing. I also enjoy the camaraderie, and the spirit of other skiers. The people on the ski team have become a sort of second family, a very diverse one with every color imaginable. In just one year, I’ve made countless unforgettable moments with my family and friends. One of my favorite memories being the whole team singing songs together on a bus ride back from the Regionals meet. For the whole ride we sang “Don’t Stop Believin’,” “Africa,” and other iconic songs like “Sweet Caroline.” Moments unique, that could never be duplicated. I highly suggest that if you don’t participate in a winter sport, you try Nordic Skiing with ERHS. You’ll have some of the best times of your life with us. Just make sure you don’t use up all the ski wax.

Welcome to cross-country skiing!

BY ETHAN JENNINGS

The flag is up and they’re off! The sound of poles stabbing the ground and skis gliding fill my ears and I know I am now racing. So many thoughts fill my head: what if this happens or that, but I have to focus on my race. As I take it kilometer by kilometer, every corner is taken with precision, speed and finesse. The final kilometer is coming up and I get just as nervous as when I started my race. Adrenaline is pumping through my veins and tunnel vision sets in. The only thing in my mind is finishing my race. I see the final stretch, just me and 100 meters until I’m done. I hear the crowd’s roars and the cowbells ring, I hear my coach yelling, “hyah hyah hyah,” and telling me I’m doing great even though I don’t think I am. I cross the line and am exhausted thinking of what I just accomplished knowing other people still have their race to finish.

I think to myself, “Why do I put myself through all the pain?” and I think “Is it the people on my team, the sense of pride and accomplishment, or just improving physically?” I realize it’s all of them. I ski because of the sense of pride I get at the end of a race, my teammates that cheer me on, having fun, and just staying in shape.

Others do it because their cross-country running coach told them to, some because it keeps them happy and fit, a few because they love pushing their body past its limits and love seeing how far they can go, or some because they’re not good at basketball. In the end I realize I wouldn’t want to be on any other team, because when it comes down to it we’re a family. I wouldn’t want to be on any other team because I know this is where I belong: skiing at Eagle River.
As Besh Cup closes, Junior Nationals presents next challenge for Alaska’s top young skiers

BY CCAK

Despite Mother Nature posing challenges for most of the ConocoPhillips Besh Cup racing season, all the Alaska Junior Nationals qualifying races were held. The first weekend of races, usually held in Anchorage, was relocated to the Government Peak Recreation Area (GPRA). The second weekend of races was held in Soldotna at the Tsaltleshi Trails as planned. The final weekend of racing in Fairbanks was jeopardized by a bitter cold temperature forecast … but the famous Birch Hill inversion factor came through, allowing for a Saturday sprint race and a beautiful Sunday mass start race in balmy 12 above temperatures.

United States Ski & Snowboard, the governing organization of U.S. Cross Country Junior Nationals, divides the U.S. into five regions; usually allowing 42 athletes per region to compete at the March championship event. This year, each region was allowed to take up to eight additional athletes; so Alaska formed a base team of 50 athletes. In addition, 11 of 14 athletes who prequalified based on results in January either at U.S. National Championships in Craftsbury, Vermont, or U18/U20 Guest Member (non-US) — Patrick Marbacher.

Alaskans make mark — and history — at international events

The vision of Cross Country Alaska is to have Alaska’s cross-country skiers succeeding at the highest levels of competition. Once again, this vision was realized with many skiers making marks internationally. Alaskans made a mark in Estonia’s Nordic Nations’ Cup. Proffitt and her team members posted results which earned them opportunities for start positions at the World Cup races being held in Quebeck at the end of March. Kramer and Schumacher each placed fourth in the classic mass start event. Schumacher missed the podium by 0.2 seconds and

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 athletes including Nordic Skiing, Soccer, Wrestling, Basketball, and Baseball. Firetap also supports numerous charities and participates in school-business partnerships with many South Anchorage schools.
the next U.S. skier was Alaskan Zanden McMul- len in 32nd place. Team USA found its way to the top of the podium on relay day with two Alaskans bookending the lineup. Schumacher, a member of the 2018 silver medal history-making relay team with two Alaskan teammates (Hunter Wonders and Luke Jager), once again anchored the relay team with Jager as the scramble leg. (Wonders participated at World Junior Championships as a member of the U23 team.) Going into the relay as a favorite for a medal, the U.S. skiers pushed the pace on every leg making for a very exciting race for all who were watching the online video stream in the early hours of January 26. At the end of the race, Team USA topped Russia by 3.8 seconds and Germany by 6.3 seconds thanks to each member of their team going out and doing their job. (Read more about the team’s historic race on Page 9 as part of the Junior Nationals preview.) Alaska skiers in the U23 competition had their own various successes with Hunter Wonders being the top U.S. skier in the 15K free-style race and Hanna Halvorsen and Hailey Swir- bul as top U.S. sprinters. Swirbul landed in the top 10 for the 15K classic mass start race and is eligible to compete in the Quebec World Cup races with Kramer and Schumacher. By all standards Alaskans had great showings; and we’ll likely be cheering for these young skiers in the coming years.

INTERNATIONAL
Continued from Page 8

the Alaskan nordic skier
AROUND
THE VALLEY

The family that skis together …

I am going to take some editorial freedom and talk about that other form of skiing: downhill. I am also going to take that same “right” and talk about my child. So bear with me. My kiddo turned the life-changing 4 this last month and while birthdays are noteworthy, well, to those below the age of 21, this particular month meant quite a bit to his folks …

Exhibit A) My wife spent the morning playing with him on the “magic carpet” in Girdwood trying his 80 cm Blizzard Blizzi skis. I would love to report to all Nordic types that he completely rejected this riff-raff, and promptly requested his Nordic skis. However, to our dismay he actually enjoyed the experience and after a few hours he was requesting to take his first chair lift. Even better yet, my wife who has snowboarded most her life, was asking for skis so she could help the boy learn to ski. In case any of you non-Charlie Sheen folks do not understand the word “winning,” this is it.

In previous articles, I’ve spent some time talking about this sport and its amazing value to families. And while the previous example doesn’t include the “skinny” skis, it nevertheless gives an n+1 case study of getting ones kids out on skis. They naturally love sliding on snow with sticks. I might even make an argument that it is innate, but I haven’t yet got my masters in anthropology. My point being is innate, but I haven’t yet got my masters in anthropology. My point being is that kids take energy and what better way to burn that energy then throwing them down a hill on skis, or have them chase you on skis, or have them just stare at you on skis. It all pays dividends in the end …

— By Hans Hill

Ski for Women Mat-Su

On Sunday, February 10, 143 skiers, fat bikers, and snow-shoers gathered at Government Peak Recreation Area (GPRA) for the Mat-Su Ski for Women. Patterned after the Anchor-age event, this community event was a fundraiser for Alaska Family Services. Participants went a variety of distances on the beautifully groomed trails. The event started at 2 p.m. and was followed by a raffle and potluck at 3. Costumes were encouraged and ran the gamut from super heroines to “Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg” cyclists. The costume contest was won by a two-person team of snow fairies, who were awarded the “Golden Ski Pole.” While the event was free to participants, donations were encouraged and $4,316.41 was raised to help Mat-Su families in need.

We must mention those wonderful sponsors who made this event a substantial success: Mat-Su Health Foundation; Mat-Su Womens Health Specialist, Backcountry Bike & Ski; REI; Skin Like A. Rose Aesthetics; Midnight Sun Yoga; Alaska Massage Clinic; Brew Haha; Northern Edge Physical Therapy; Valley Performing Arts; Alaska Artisan Coffee; No More Mat-Su; and Gagnon Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery.

Pick.Click.Give

As you are receiving this you are entering the last month for apply for your PFD, but I am sure all of you have already applied. Nevertheless, whether you have or not applied, you can still donate to the Mat-Su Ski Club through Pick.Click.Give. For those unfamiliar, when filing for your PFD it is an option for you to donate to those non-profits that you support … and as it would happen MSSC is one of those non-profits you can donate to. FYI, you can elect the amount to donate, not necessarily the whole PFD amount. And not to mention, this deducts from your taxable income!

Help needed – Groomers

So maybe you’ve seen that shiny red MSSC groomer making it rounds around GPRA and said to yourself, “Gee, that looks fun,” or some derivative of that. If so, the MSSC is looking for a couple folks to fortify our groomer ranks. Normal volunteer hours are 8 p.m.-midnight, but the schedule is flexible. Obviously qualified applicants would be cold weather “compliant.” No experience necessary. Please give Ed Strabel a call if interested at 354-7524.

Race to the Outhouse #2

Obviously, you all are now ramping in to your serious distance races, but it is not to lose your sight on the premier short distance race, the Race to the Outhouse #2. I am sure you all partook in the #1, so April 6 is your season peak event. Conditions allowing, we will be at Archangel Valley Road. So make sure it is on your calendar.

Calendar of Events

March 5 — MSSC Board Meeting, GPRA 6:30 p.m.
April 2 — MSSC Board Meeting, GPRA 6:30 p.m.
April 6 — Race to the Outhouse #2, TBA
April 6 — MSSC Spring Social, GPRA 6:30 p.m.
Kachemak Nordic Ski Club
Homer, Alaska

AROUND THE BAY

March – The last chance for great skiing

While some expert KNSC Nordic skiers claim they can ski until June, most great skiing happens on the groomed trails around Homer during March. The sun is up for 12 hours. The snowfall is recent. The groomers are out almost every day making the trails shine.

So if you haven’t tried Nordic skiing on the Homer trails this year, March is the best time. A few events, like KNSC Nordic Ski Marathon on March 9 and the Sea to Ski event on March 31, will give you more thrills.

Before an event, always check the KNSC club website (Kachemaknordicskiclub.org) and our Facebook page for updates, as well as occasional emails and future newsletters. Enjoy!

Saturday, March 9 — KNSC Nordic Ski Marathon: Lookout Mountain Ski Trails (starting June)
Sunday, March 31 — Sea to Ski: Location TBA, based on snow

More information and updates for these events can be found online at kachemaknordicskiclub.org or on Face- book @ Kachemak Nordic Ski Club.

Dare to ski the legendary Kachemak Nordic Ski Marathon

Do you want to add completing Alaska’s toughest Nordic ski marathon to your resume? If so, come to Homer on March 9 for the Kachemak Nordic Ski Marathon. Starting again this year from the Lookout Mountain Ski Area trails, the race offers 25K or 42K runs or lap races of 13K, 21K and 39K.

The shorter races are scenic and challenging. The longer races, however, truly take your breath away.

Hardy skiers attest to the race’s difficulties. Marylou Burton has done the 25K and 40K Tours of Anchorage several times, and says, “They are way easier than our local marathon, when held on the traditional route.”

“I did the 42K race here one year, came in second from last, and it about killed me,” she admits.

Groomers are tested every year when they carve the marathon trail out of rugged terrain.

“Putting in the trail is a lot of work,” says groomer Dave Stutzer. “It is a wildland trail located in terrain that anyone would have difficulty traversing in the summer.”

The groomers first pack the wildland trail with snowmachines. Then they make multiple passes with a steel drag to level the trail.

Heavy snow before the race means more dragging with a big roller: “One year, the week before the Kachemak Bay Marathon, we got five feet of snow,” Stutzer adds. “We managed to get the trail ready for a successful race.”

The connector trail, which is included in the 42K and the 25K, runs 12 miles between the Lookout and Baycrest ski areas. Both races ascend and descend the 1,345-foot Crossman Ridge and the 1,060-foot Diamond Ridge, ending up in the Baycrest parking areas.

“We sometimes get people doing our 42K who also do the Tour of Anchorage 40K, only to find themselves a little over their head,” adds Burton. “I used to try to emphasize – in a joking way – that the 25K is pretty hard and is a good place to start if you haven’t done the KNSC race before.”

Despite the effort to groom and or to ski these difficult races, Dave Stutzer says, “Personally, I feel it’s worthwhile. The payoff, for me, is gliding through the meadows and forests, hearing only the sound of my breath, the hiss of my skis and enjoying the stunning views of Kachemak Bay and Cook Inlet.”

On race day, March 9, the Kachemak Nordic Ski Marathon opens for registration at 9 a.m. Races will begin at 10 or 10:30 a.m. Online registration is also available at the KNSC website under “Events.” The event includes an awards ceremony and afterparty at Alice’s Champagne Palace.

Kids have it good when it comes to skiing. Ski clubs like the KNSC offer lots of inexpensive ski classes for kids of all ages.

What about adults that want to learn how to ski? Try Stephanie Dickerson’s new program for beginning adult skiers.

Coaching skiing is in Dickerson’s blood. She started coaching alpine skiing while in college through the Professional Ski Instructors in America (PSIA) program. Moving to Homer after college, Dickerson became involved with the KNSC, ranging from teaching in the Junior Nordic (JN) program to serving on the KNSC board.

She took time off from ski club activities when starting her family six years ago. With her oldest child now

in his second year of JN, Dickerson began coaching the program again in the spring of 2018.

“I’m expecting my third little skier this April,” Dickerson said, “and I wanted to do something more low-key than coaching littles! I knew I wouldn’t be able to help myself if I was going to be around it – I love coaching skiing at all levels.”

She added, “My friends often find out how deep this (my coaching streak) runs when our impromptu ski runs at Alyeska turn into lessons!”

When Dickerson started her adult beginning ski program in January 2019, more than a half dozen adults signed up.

One adult student, Pam Gavilla, says, “I am taking the classes to learn the basics and to acquire some confidence in skiing alone. I like her teaching because she makes it fun. She personalizes the experience according to each of our needs. She includes tips on gear and trail etiquette. I definitely recommend the classes and hope to pick up more next season.”

Dickerson adds, with a smile, “It’s been so fun and gratifying, and I’ve gotten so much wonderful feedback.”

**KNSC offers new class for beginning adult skiing**

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**KNSC adult beginning skiers, left to right:** Jodi Andrews, Jessica Reed, Stephanie Dickerson, Peg Gavillot, David Prince, Patti Prince and Jessie Mattsson.

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kachemaknordicskiclub.org
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**KNSC Nordic Ski Marathon**

Ski Marathon on March 9 and the Sea to Ski event on March 31.
Homer youngsters thrive with KNSC Junior Nordic program

In spring, the ski hills in Homer are alive with the squeals and thrills of youngsters learning – and mastering – skiing with the KNSC Junior Nordic program.

More than 110 kids turned out in late January for this season’s program. Lessons run 90 minutes every Saturday, for five Saturdays running through the end of March. At the start of the lessons, the children are divided into six groups, according to abilities, and KNSC parents and adults do the coaching.

Kim Sweeney helps Miranda Wiess, Anna Raup and other volunteers coach the youngest skiers, Sea Stars. They don’t use poles and may spend more time lying on the ground than standing up.

“These sprouts do not use poles and learn to get up from a fall, shuffle, duck walk up a hill, and snowplow down,” Sweeney says. “They progress from moving tentatively to zipping around independently. There have been a varying number of Sea Stars from week to week, but generally between 15 and 30 kids.”

The Puffins group learns beginner classic skiing with head coach Charlie Trowbridge. These youngsters gain more confidence, mostly by watching and copying the adults. As the season progresses, the Puffins move on to the fun stuff – like skiing backwards down hills without poles and playing games on skis.

Catie Bursch and Cindy Sisson co-coach the Coho group – the kids who are advancing their classical skiing skills. About a dozen students show up each week, ranging in ages from 4 to 11 years old, with different ranges of abilities.

“We can all go along without leaving anyone too far behind,” says Bursch, “and they can all come to a stop using snowplow on a steep hill. Last week we taught them how to sidestep up and side-slip down steep hills. We also took them off trail to show them how to see terrain, how to get up after falling in deep snow, and how to identify animal tracks.”

The Sockeyes progress from her-ringbone to single-pole skating, and learn to use single or double poles if hills are too steep.

Youngsters with intermediate skate skiing abilities join the Harbor Seals group. Coach Annie Ridgely says seven skiers participate every week. “They are learning how to transition through different skate techniques based on terrain. They are fast, tuck-ing down hills, and fearless with trying new things on skis.”

The Salmon Sharks are the ad- vanced skate skiers, under coach Emily Lint. These young daredevils ski some challenging terrain and learn from their coaches how to change their techniques. As with the other JN groups, these youngsters learn most by watching and copying the advanced moves made by their adult coaches.

And the coaches make sure the les-sons are fun.

“I coach Junior Nordic because I love kids,” says coach Chris Jacobson. “I love seeing the enthusiasm and energy these kids bring every week to our sessions.”

The Sockeyes progress from her-ringbone to single-pole skating, and learn to use single or double poles if hills are too steep.

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“Even if you’re 12, you’ll be having fun.” Obi Ridgely, age 6 says, “It was so awesome and Coach Kathy squirted water in my mouth!”

Riley Dickerson, age 5, says, “It was really fun. We went through some hoops and did a really fun big downhill. And we bend our knees in how we go down fun twisty hills! I like Junior Nordic a lot.” His sister, Taylor, age 2, hasn’t started Junior Nordic yet, but has watched her brother from the sidelines. “I really like Junior Nordic too,” she adds.
UAF Biathlete Grace Miller: Overcoming the challenges of skiing and shooting with one arm

Normally, we feature an NSCF volunteer in our Q&A profiles, but this month we thought we’d feature Grace Miller, a UAF freshman student and member of the ski team who competed last year in the Paralympics.

Grace was born without a left forearm. She has been skiing a long time, but she has recently taken up biathlon.

How long have you been a cross-country skier? What do you remember about first learning to ski? When did you start biathlon?

I started skiing when I was 4 years old. My mom loved the outdoors and skiing so she shared her passion with me. When I first started skiing I remember wanting to lie in the snow to make snow angels and being really tired. So, actually not very much skiing going on. Thankfully, now I can go at least three hours before I want to lie down and make snow angels.

My mom used to be the U.S. biathlon coach so I’ve always had some interest in biathlon. Also biathletes look so cool skiing and shooting in the snow. It wasn’t until I join the U.S. Paralympic team though that I got the opportunity to try biathlon. I started training to shoot this past July and I just had my first race six months later. I’ve had an amazing transition into biathlon with the help of the Eagle Eyes Biathlon club in Anchorage and the UAF rifle team.

What do you like about cross-country skiing? Biathlon?

I love Nordic skiing because it is the perfect sport to do in cold, dark Fairbanks, Alaska. It keeps you warm and allows you to do something with the three hours of daylight we have. Honestly, though, when I ski it is the most peaceful and stress-free I feel in a day. Especially, now that I am in college, training with the team has been a huge stress reliever for me and gives me a break from school.

I just had my first biathlon race so I’m still in the learning process but I love it. It is a completely different mental mindset than normal ski racing. It feels more like interval racing but you have to keep your heart rate low, which is really contradicting.

What sort of challenges have you had to overcome competing in skiing and biathlon without a left forearm?

I’ve been skiing since I was 4 years old, but I was never very fast at it. It wasn’t until junior year of high school that I considered trying to be competitive in skiing. I can train exactly like everyone else on the team, except I’ll just ski with one pole. Skate skiing is usually easier because it requires less arm strength than classic skiing. It’s hard to make up skiing with one pole, but being extremely fit and having perfect technique will definitely help. I’m still working on becoming fit and learning every day on how I can improve my technique. To ski with one arm you honestly just need to really love the sport and be driven. You can do anything if you have a passion for it and know how to work hard.

Surprisingly competing in biathlon has been pretty smooth. Since I only shoot with one hand I always shoot in prone position (laying down) and shoot with a stand that helps hold up the gun.

What was it like competing in the 2018 Paralympics? Were you nervous? Were you happy with your performances?

Going to Pyeongchang (South Korea) was an amazing experience that I was entirely unprepared for. I got voted in as a wild card athlete and learned a month before that I was entirely unprepared for. I was a really good fit for me when I was going. It was honestly a life-changing event to go to because it allowed me to see other people race exactly like me. Currently, I am still getting beat by my competition, but that is really exciting for me because it gives me no excuses for being slow. It shows me how much I can improve and how fast I can go. When I go to Beijing 2022 I am really excited to represent my country again and hope to bring back a medal.

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

Honestly, I have never been to a bad location to ski. You can ski on lakes, forests or mountains, which is partly why I love it. Skiing is also a year-round sport and involves a lot of cross-training, like running, hiking, roller skiing, or rock climbing, which makes it really exciting. The main reason I love skiing, though, is the community of people. The Nordic ski community is full of awesome, cool, supportive people who just love to ski. If it wasn’t for how supportive my hometown and college ski community has been I would have probably quit skiing.

What other activities do you enjoy besides skiing?

Currently 98 percent of my time goes to school, training, and sleeping. In my extra free time though I really enjoy reading. I find it really relaxing to take my eyes off of a screen and take my mind away from training and school.

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

University of Alaska Fairbanks was a really good fit for me when I was applying to colleges. It had a ski team and is a ski community town, I have in-state tuition, and it was math-and-science focused. Also, ski coach Elisha is one of the best ski coaches I have ever had and has helped me grow so much. (Elisha Allbrigsten is assistant coach with the Nanooks.)

Borough Try-Athlons make for interesting mashups

BY ERIC TROYER

Want to try mixing up your skiing with other winter sports? Like disc golf? The Fairbanks Borough’s Winter Try-Athlons series might be what you’re looking for.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough is holding its unique winter triathlon series over three days in March. The races will be held in different parks on different days of the week. These events are family-friendly. The first race will be at 6 p.m. Thursday, March 14, at Tanana Lakes Recreation Area. It will be an run/ski/
BY ERIC TROYER

Fairbanks skiers head to Junior Nationals, IYC

The NSCF-FXC Program recently qualified its largest ever team to compete in the 2019 Junior National Cross Country Ski Championships in March in Anchorage. A handful of other Fairbanks-area skiers not associated with FXC will also be racing in the championships. And a few FXC skiers also qualified for the Intermountain Youth Championships, which were held in late February.

These teenagers have shown an incredible amount of dedication, attention to detail and hard work over many years to reach this point, all whilst performing strongly in academia, music and volunteering in the community for an average one hour each month (several complete more than two hours per week),” wrote Alasdair Tutk, FXC head coach.

The Junior Nationals will be held March 11-16 at Kincaid Park in Anchorage. Junior Nationals are the pinnacle event at the national level for junior cross-country skiers in the U16-U20 age brackets (ages 14-19). (The U stands for Under, as in Under Age 18.) The Intermountain Youth Championships, held February 23-24 in Jackson, Wyoming, is a two-day event for U14 and U16 skiers that alternates every 1-2 years between Jackson, WY, and Sun Valley, ID. For Alaskans, it takes the role of the Arctic Winter Games every second year to provide a travel and competition opportunity for Alaska’s U14 athletes.

Skiers for the teams were chosen based on points earned at certain races, such as the U.S. National Cross Country Championships and the Alaska Besh Cup race series. The last two Besh Cup races were held in Fairbanks in early February. Results from those races finalized the team. Here is a lineup of Fairbanks-area skiers competing in the two events and the teams they compete for:

JUNIOR NATIONALS — U16 Girls - Victoria Bassettie (West Valley, FXC); Hannah Delamere (West Valley, FXC); Abigail Haas (Lathrop, FXC); U16/U20 Girls - Kendall Kamer (West Valley, FXC); Jenna Difolco (UAA, FXC); Maggie Drackenmiller (West Valley, FXC); Tjern Bress (Lathrop, FXC); Emma Baurick (West Valley, FXC); Maggie Whittaker (West Valley, FXC); Anja Maajala (UAF); U18 Boys - Josh Bauck (West Valley, FXC); Eli Merrill (West Valley, FXC); U18/ U20 Boys - T Dillon (Montana State University); An Eindestad (West Valley, FXC); Samuel Delamere (West Valley, FXC); Dale Bauck (West Valley, FXC); Jonathan Burrell (Lathrop, FXC); Eric Difolco (West Valley); Karl Dwyer (West Valley, FXC); Josiah Alverts (UAF).

INTERMOUNTAIN YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS — U14 Girls - Zarah Laker-Morris (FXC Prep); U14 Boys - Elias Engman (FXC Prep); Peter John Bragonier (FXC Prep).

BY ERIC TROYER

Denali State Bank Sonot Kkaazoot offers fun at many distances

Shoveling snow is just one of the important tasks done by Sonot volunteers.

Skiing in the Denali State Bank Sonot Kkaazoot is only one fun way to participate. Another great way is to volunteer to help put on this great event.

Volunteering is delightful fun! You can cheer on skiers, work with other friendly volunteers, and feel good knowing you’ve helped another wonderful community event succeed. Just be prepared. There is usually a lot of laughing and smiling involved!

Organizing the Denali State Bank Sonot Kkaazoot takes many volunteers. If you do not plan to ski, please consider volunteering to help out on race day. Many Sonot participants are the volunteers who staff other Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks events, so this is their one big event to race. We especially need people who can help with timing or staffing the various road and alpine hill crossings on Fort Wainwright.

We also have other volunteer tasks that racers can do before the race. See the “Volunteers” page on the Denali State Bank Sonot Kkaazoot webpage for specifics or to sign up: sonotkkaazoot.org/volunteers/.
**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 (junior nordics@nscfairbanks.org; 907-371-9546). 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 homeschool children.

**Help NSCF 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 NSCF through the store’s Community Rewards program. Fred Meyer makes donations to participating nonprofits based 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 > Affiliate Programs.

**To ski, or not to ski. Duh.**

If you’re in Fairbanks for some spring skiing, 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 3 miles from Birch Hill Cross Country Ski Center.

Welcome to your home away from home.

**NSCF Calendar keeps you updated**

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

- **March 3** — Tour of the Skarland 12-Mile Loop
- **March 10** — Skijet
- **March 19** — Junior Nordics Spring sessions start
- **March 20** — Interior Youth Festival (day one)
- **March 23** — Sonot Kkaazoot
- **March 27** — Interior Youth Festival (day two)

**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 NSCF has several volunteer opportunities. If you want to volunteer or have questions see nscfairbanks.org/support-nscf > Volunteer or contact NSCF president Steven Hansen at president@nscfairbanks.org.

**TRY-ATHLONS**

Continued from Page 13

**ice skate format.**

The second race will be at 6 p.m. Monday, March 18, at Birch Hill Recreation Area. It will be a ski/run/disc golf format.

**The final race will be at 1 p.m. Saturday, March 30, at Chena Lake Recreation Area. It will be a ski/run/basketball format.**

Each portion of the race is about 1.5 kilometers (though that probably doesn’t include the basketball). People can enter as individuals doing all the sports, teams doing all the sports, or relay teams. Check-in begins one hour before the race start times and racers must provide their own equipment. Youths are free and adults pay $5. All participants must pre-register. Visit http://parks.fnsb.us/ (under Register > Programs) or call 907-459-1070 to register and for more information. Or check out the FNSB Parks and Recreation Facebook page. The series is sponsored by Design Alaska.
Skiathon at UAF has an old and continuing history

BY LIZ PAWELKO

Ski races can be fun. They can be exciting. How often is it that they are truly historic?

Skiathon is the historic ski racing and touring event of the Interior. You can be a part of its continuing history by entering this year’s Skiathon on Sunday, March 18. It starts near the University of Alaska Fairbanks ski hut on the West Ridge. This joint event of the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks and the UAF Trails Club benefits trail funds and follows quite a historic course. For info, check the UAF Trails Club website (https://uaftrailsclub.weebly.com/) or contact Stan Justice at 479-5017.

The history of the Skiathon started in the 1920s when six students University of Alaska Fairbanks crossed the threshold of the campus on the hillside west of Fairbanks. Skiing was how those students commuted to downtown, or to their jobs at mines along Ester Dome. The trails that would become the bedrock of the Skiathon, the Skarland trails, started right where the Wood Center stands today.

Young Fairbanks was surprisingly in sync with the rest of the world. The first ski race of Fairbanks occurred sometime in the 1923-24 winter. In 1924, the first Winter Olympics were held in France featuring among other sports like curling and mountaineering, something called Nordic skiing.

As far back as the 1933, UAF skiers hosted a spring ski event on a two-mile trail down to the farm on campus and back. In 1936, the first ski club officers were elected. The 1940s saw UAF skiers competing against Army skiers, envying that it was their “job” to ski.

Ginny Wood and Celia Hunter, local pioneers and activists, had their hand in Skiathon. In the 1950s, they lived in the Dogpatch subdivision east of Ballaine Road and worked with the UAF ski team to connect the campus trails with the hillside trails. They helped create the network of trails that were the bedrock of the original 20K race that was officially started as “Skiathon” in the 1960s.

Another Fairbanks phenomenon touched Skiathon – Joe Vogler. Yes, this vigilantly independent soul protested that the Skiathon crossed his property, despite the trail existing before his ownership. He was known to sabotage the trails, sending one racer to the hospital with a broken collar bone, which happened when the skier crossed a bulldozered section of trail.

The Skiathon and Equinox Marathon are linked because in 1963 Nat Goodhue, athlete and trails advocate, went along with the idea of creating this innovative running race trail in order to expand 42 more kilometers of skiing trail.

After an inactive period caused in part by the exodus of ski racing to Birch Hill, the UAF Trails Club resurrected the Skiathon in 2001, using a course that avoided any road crossing by staying completely on campus. The “classic” character of the event was maintained by disallowing skating, having a wooden ski division, and keeping it the 20K distance. In 2014, a new course was implemented using the 6-mile trail that returned the event to its roots following more of the historic route. Pesky figure 8s from recent events have been removed.

Thanks to Jane Parrish for her scholarly work investigating the history of trails in Fairbanks.

S P O N S O R E D

OFF THE TRAIL

Starting running again ...

BY ZUZANA ROGERS, PT, SCO, SCS, COMT
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It has been a break-through cross-country skiing season for APU, Alaska and America, and I would like to extend my congratulations to athletes and supporters at all levels. You’re riding high on the possibility of new heights for American skiing and you want to do your part. And while this ski season is nearly over, you’re already making training plans for the season to come.

Let me help you with a safe transition from skiing to running.

1. Taking your run outside

A Decrease your distances. Let your body slowly build up bone, muscle and tendon strength. Allow appropriate rest time between runs so your body can repair. Run every other day, or even every two days if you haven’t been running much over the winter. Don’t worry about your pace for the first few weeks. Let your body adapt to the increased demands you are placing on it.

B Vary terrain and intensity. Variety will not allow your body to repeat a movement mistake over long periods of time.

C Write down your goals and make a training plan. Start with your end goal in mind and then work backwards. Gradually build up your distance, intensity and terrain tolerance.

2. How about your feet?

A Chose the right footwear. Have professionals help you; they can assess your feet, gait and find the right shoes. Your running shoes should feel comfortable right away; there is no “getting used to it.”

B Do not forget to address the strength of your feet and lower legs! Our feet weaken and atrophy during the winter. Lift and spread your toes, walk on toes, walk on heels (Check the January issue of Nordic Skier for more on this!).

3. Cross training

A Hip and core strength are tremendously important. Cross training prevents injuries, makes you fit and you won’t get bored. Body weight and free weights exercises, balance, plyometrics, and mobility give you more benefit than machines. Did I mention the Nature Gym? The Alaska outdoors has it all!

4. Address your weaknesses

A You cannot be stronger than your weakest link! By nature, we practice and develop skills or exercises that come relatively easy to us. We usually don’t go out of our way to learn a skill that is awkward, unfamiliar or challenging. It is difficult and we may feel uncoordinated and weak just like a baby giraffe! Ask for help from your fellow runners and coaches, or seek professional help from a physiotherapist.

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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