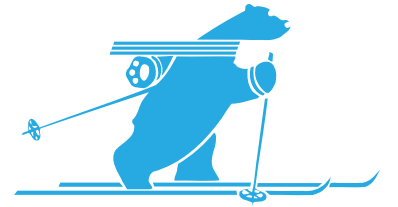
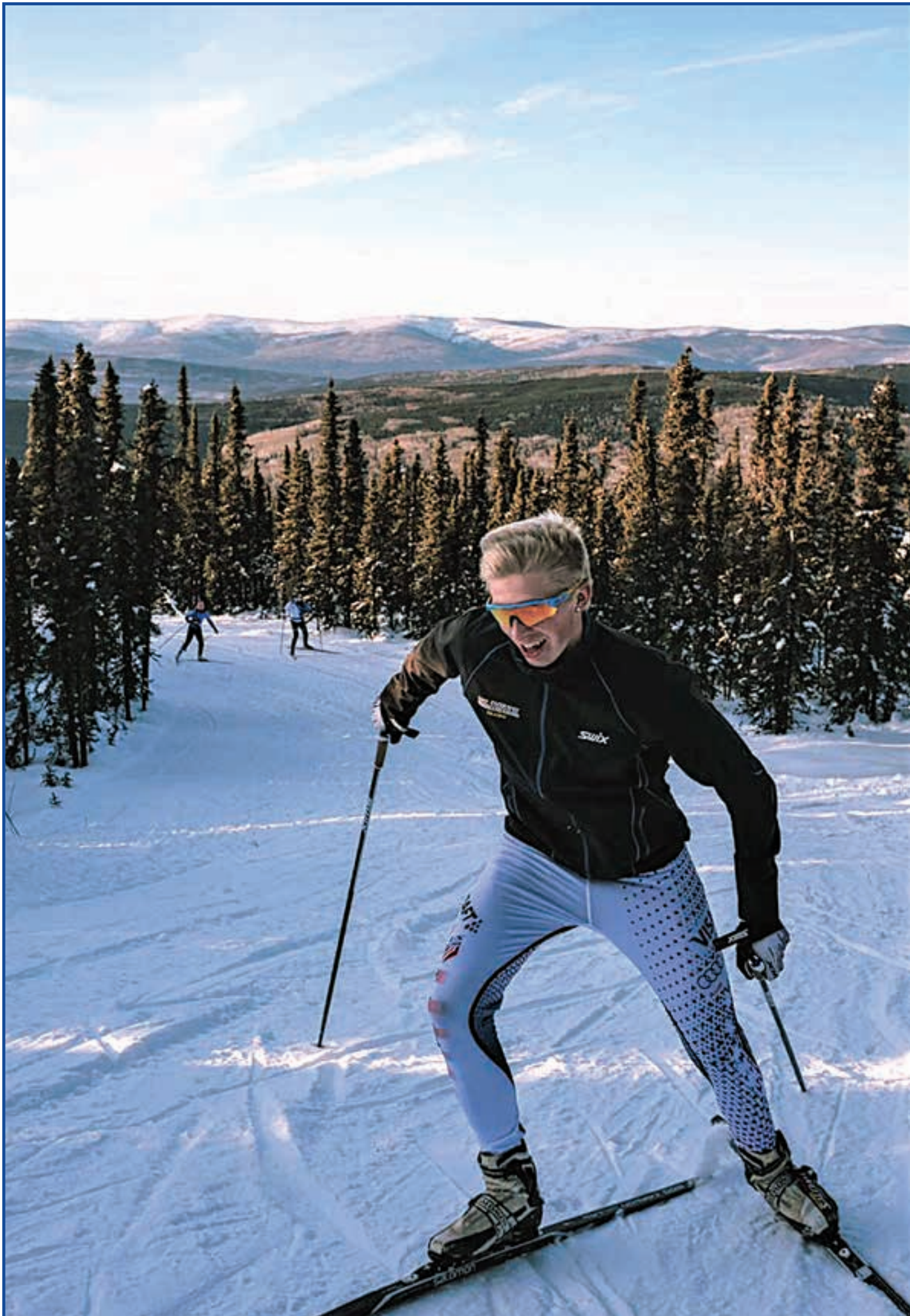


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NOVEMBER 2019, Vol.21, No.2



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# Anchorage Nordic Skier

Newsletter Of The Nordic Skiing Association Of Anchorage, Inc.

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nsaa@alaska.net

## AROUND THE BOWL



### Solstice Tree Tour lights up on the night on Dec. 15

Celebrate Winter Solstice on the trails on Sunday, December 15! The 4th annual Solstice Tree Tour is a one-day-only event that lets Anchorage walk the Kincaid Park ski trails to enjoy the trees festively decorated by local businesses. Bring the family to enjoy s'mores, cocoa and festivities along the 2.5K of the Mize Loop. Worried about parking? We've got you covered! A shuttle system will be set-up along the way – check the website for details! [anchoragenordicski.com/solstice-tree-tour/](http://anchoragenordicski.com/solstice-tree-tour/)

A special thank you and welcome back to ConocoPhillips, Premier Sponsor of Solstice Tree Tour! Banker Law Group has also signed on as the 2019 Solstice Tree Tour Cup Sponsor; the 2019 cups are going to look great!

Is your business interested in sponsoring a tree? There are plenty of trees available along the Mize Loop for your team to decorate and celebrate all that you love about winter. Find the sponsorship packet on the website or email Sara Miller at [solsticetreetour@gmail.com](mailto:solsticetreetour@gmail.com) to get involved!



### Grab your tickets – the Ski Train party is getting packed!

Get your tickets today for Ski Train, the best spring skiing expedition in the state! The train hits the tracks on Saturday, March 14. Learn more at [anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-train/](http://anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-train/).

2020 Ski Train car sponsors have announced their costume themes: Matanuska Brewing: St. Patrick's Day; Glacier Brewhouse: Independence Day; Alaskan Brewing: Thanksgiving; Double Shovel: Cinco de Mayo; Turnagain Brewing: Mardi Gras; Trek: Valentine's Day; and Wild Scoops: Pi-Day Pirates.

Thank you to REI for sponsoring the merchandise/food car!



### Junior Nordic – we go with or without snow!

2019-2020 NSAA Junior Nordics registration is open, but spots are filling fast! Worried about snowfall? The first session isn't always about the snow; sometimes it's about the camaraderie on the trails and it's always about a little bit of exercise and technique. NSAA wants to reassure families that they get the same quality of fun and coaching from the program regardless of snowfall early in the season.

Although the hope is to have sufficient snowfall by Thanksgiving weekend (or earlier!), Junior Nordic coaches are ready with the 'No-Snow' plans; one of which is partnering with the Anchorage Skate Club and Alaska Speedskating Club. The two clubs and NSAA are co-hosting optional speedskating preview nights on December 18 and 19 to give Junior Nordic skiers a chance to try a new fun way to get out in the winter. If we are faced without enough early season snow for skiing, our amazing Junior Nordic coaches will provide a variety of fun outdoor opportunities.

Have questions? Want more information? Want to register your youngsters for Junior Nordic? Visit [anchoragenordicski.com/junior-nordic/](http://anchoragenordicski.com/junior-nordic/).



### Tour of Anchorage – New logo, same fun races on March 8

The Tour of Anchorage race committee is gearing up for another excellent event on March 8, 2020! We would like to welcome back Gold Level Sponsor ConocoPhillips! The event took a new turn in 2019 with the addition of the Fat Bike divisions and we are excited to continue that

See **AROUND THE BOWL**, Page 3

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### SKI TRAIN

Travis Taylor

### SOLSTICE TREE TOUR

Sara Miller

### TOUR OF ANCHORAGE

Matias Saari

### NSAA OFFICE HOURS

10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday

### BOARD MEETINGS

Fourth Thursday of the month, 6:15 P.M. at BP Energy Center or NSAA office. Open to all.

## AROUND THE BOWL

Continued from Page 2

momentum for the 2020 race.

A huge thank you to artist Amy Strohmeyer for her design of the new Tour of Anchorage logo! She's a talented artist and was a first-time skier of the Tour of Anchorage in 2019. Thank you, Amy!

### Turnagain Brewing hosted Selfless Sundays in October

Turnagain Brewing is committed to being an active and engaged community partner, so every month during the fall and winter they select a non-profit organization for which to raise funds. All tips earned during the Sundays in October were dedicated to the Nordic Skiing Association



of Anchorage. We are grateful for community partners who have the trails in mind. Thank you to Turnagain Brewing for their continued support of the NSAA mission and the Anchorage community!

## Volunteer and contribute to Ski 4 Kids, arriving on February 22, 2020

BY DARCY DUGAN

Each season, several hundred kids take over Kincaid Park for a festival of skiing, racing and other outdoor activities. For some, the annual Ski 4 Kids festival is the first time they compete in a race or try snowshoeing and other outdoor sports and recreation. For others, it is an event they look forward to all year. Regardless, everyone has a good time. Mark your calendars for Saturday, February 22, to take part in this season's event.

### Volunteers needed

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

"Watching kids test themselves and try new things was the most rewarding part," said Isabelle Watkins, a volunteer and Service high school student. "It was impossible not to smile amidst all those smiles."

It's not too early to plan ahead, as volunteer sign-ups have already begun. Please click the "Volunteer" tab on the Ski 4 Kids website at [anchorage.nordicski.com/events/ski-4-kids/](http://anchorage.nordicski.com/events/ski-4-kids/) or contact volunteer coordinator Lia

Slemons at [liaslemons@gmail.com](mailto:liaslemons@gmail.com).

### Help support ski grants

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

Last year, grants were awarded to Chinook Elementary, Susitna Elementary, East High School, Rilke Schule, and Anchorage Parks and Rec. Boosted by funding from Ski 4 Kids grants, Susitna Elementary was able to purchase gear to get 250 students grades 3-5 out on skis during Physical Education classes and also run an afterschool ski club for 30-40 3rd-5th grade students during peak winter time.

"Skiing in PE allows us to reach a large number of kids, teaching them a lifelong physical activity that many kids can't experience on their own," said Susitna PE teacher Chris

Putnam. "The students have greatly enjoyed using this equipment."

Erin Witmer, this year's Ski 4 Kids lead organizer, encourages NSAA members to consider a donation.

"As you're planning your annual philanthropic donations, please consider giving the gift of skiing to others," she said. "You'll not only be helping to create access for all to a sport you love, but you'll be building an even stronger community of skiers to support trails and programs in the future."

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

Ski 4 Kids would like to thank last year's sponsors and partners: ConocoPhillips; Banker Law Group; LaTouche Pediatrics; Anchorage Pediatrics; CRW Engineering Group; Elsberg Family Foundation; Midnight Sun Smiles; Murray Orthodontics; Great Harvest Bread Company; Kaladi Brothers Coffee; Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage; Healthy Futures; Municipality of Anchorage; and Trax Outdoor Center 2.0.

the ALASKA **nordic skier**

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The Alaska Nordic Skier is a publication representing the nordic ski clubs of Anchorage, Eagle River, Fairbanks, Homer, Juneau, Mat-Su, Salcha, Seward, Soldotna, Kenai, Talkeetna and Valdez. The Alaska Nordic Skier is published October through April by the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage, Inc.  
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**On the cover** – Logan Mowry and other Interior skiers take advantage of early snow and awesome groom at Moose Mountain. Photo by Patrick Marbacher

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# Early season preparations, snowmaking can “net” high-flying results

BY ADAM LOOMIS  
NSAA Jumping Program coach

At the Karl Eid Ski Jumps, we were fortunate to extend our summer season of jumping well into October. We enjoyed over four months of summer jumping here, but the temps are dropping into the freezing range and snow is starting to fly. It's time to prepare for winter.

The process of converting our facility from summer to winter begins simply by opening and draining our water system. For summer jumping, the steel tracks and plastic landing hills are sprayed with sprinklers, in order for skis to slide smoothly over these surfaces. After clearing our watering system, the next step in the process is to prepare the landing hill.

Each fall, we fix massive snow nets to the landing area. These thick-rope nets span up to 20 meters in length and cover the entire landing zone of the jumps. We support the nets with steel cables that run vertically and horizontally over the hill, which are fixed to cement anchors. Once the hill is properly covered with nets, snow will begin to pile up and stick to the steep, otherwise slippery hills. The “net project” is no small task, but it's one that all ski jumping clubs across the nation must undertake before the season.

And now, like all skiers, we pray for cold temps and early snow. For a few weeks, there's little else that we can do. However, we won't rely entirely on Mother Nature, as we'll be firing up our snow gun and making magical white gold in no time. As anyone with experience in snowmaking knows, this is no easy process, but with the promise of winter ahead, I can't think of many things more exciting!

For more information about the NSAA's Ski Jumping Program, visit [anchoragenordicski.com/ski-jumping/](http://anchoragenordicski.com/ski-jumping/).



PHOTOS BY ADAM LOOMIS  
Above: Setting nets on the K65M to “catch” the coming snow at the Karl Eid Ski Jumps.

Left: Early season snowmaking at the Karl Eid Ski Jumps in November 2018.



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BOOK OR SEE MORE PHOTOS: SEARCH 20 ACRE WOOD, TALKEETNA, ON AIRBNB.COM (HOST SARAH).

# NSAA member spotlight: The Novak family

John Novak has skied the Tour of Anchorage many times, but a couple of races particularly stand out in his mind. First, there was the year he skied it despite passing painful kidney stones. His wife, Vicki, prefers to spare everyone from John's candid details about what happened on the trail, but certainly it wasn't pretty.

The second memory involves a grueling uphill battle with a fellow racer who started in the same wave and was probably about ... 10 years old. On that final uphill near the finish, John gave it his all and passed the youth, who cheered him on with, "Go, guy, go!" The rush of personal victory was fleeting, as the boy skied past John in the stadium, beating him to the finish line. But that friendly, supportive spirit encompasses what the Novaks love about Nordic skiing in Anchorage: community, camaraderie and "the lifestyle."

The Novaks have decades of Nordic experience and, after moving to Anchorage in 1985, soon began

skiing as a family. Vicki fondly remembers taking toddler Jack out on the Hillside trails after his nap, getting a ski in before picking up his sister, Samantha, from school. As mom and son scooted along, high school skiers would race by, taking time to encourage Jack with, "Go, little buddy, go!"

Jack, now 26, soon became too speedy to ski with his mom. After years in Junior Nordic, he started skiing for Alaska Pacific University in 7th grade, racing for them until recently transitioning to coaching. In his teens, Jack also became involved in ski jumping and dabbled in biathlon. A highlight for his parents was watching him win the 2018 Tour of Anchorage.

The Novaks credit NSAA for making it possible for young skiers to try different winter sports as well as compete. "You can't have world-class athletes without supporting trails," Vicki says. "Without NSAA, we can't have ski trails."

Watching Jack race throughout the years has



PHOTO FROM THE NOVAK FAMILY

The Novaks: John, Vicki and son Jack

produced lasting memories with "good people," Vicki says.

"We've had the pleasure of going to so many races, hanging out with skiers, and sharing meals and barbecues with Olympians," John adds.

Both John and Vicki are heading toward retirement in May. These loyal NSAA members look forward to spending more time on the trails, as well as volunteering for NSAA events.



# NSAA volunteer spotlight: J.R. Patee

J.R. Patee is a familiar face around the Karl Eid Jump Facility and he's considered a super volunteer – going above and beyond around the jumps for many years.

When new coaches Adam Loomis and Chris Lamb came on in 2018, J.R. taught them the ins and outs of the snowmaking operation and technique for blowing snow on the jumps. Coach Adam recalls, "As a first year coach, I couldn't have gotten by without him."

J.R. has volunteered with NSAA since the 2014 Junior Nationals. The most notable project that J.R. has partici-

pated in was the plastic project. He gave three summer's worth of time to help Coach Zak and all the rest turn the Karl Eid jumps into a year-round facility. This project would not have been successful without his skills and perseverance. This summer, J.R. helped Coach Zak rebuild the deck around the small hills judges' shack. Once again, he graciously gave his time and energy to this project!

Coach Adam says, "We are incredibly fortunate to have J.R. and his wife Jeanne as volunteers for the club! They are equally loved by the kids, parents and coaches alike!"

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# TRAX

## NSAA scholarships awarded to six exceptional Alaska student-athletes

Each season, the NSAA awards a handful of talented young student-skiers with scholarships. Funds for the scholarship program come from the Sven Johansson Memorial Ski Race and the Elizabeth Tower memorial scholarship fund. This year \$5,500 in scholarship funds were awarded to six outstanding student-athletes:

Have a student in mind for a future scholarship? The NSAA Scholarship application can be found online on February 1 and will be due in March 2020. Learn more at [anchoragenordicski.com/races/asd-high-school-racing/nsaa-scholarships/](http://anchoragenordicski.com/races/asd-high-school-racing/nsaa-scholarships/).



Adeline Wright of Polaris/Service High School, going to Alaska Pacific University, received a \$1,500 NSAA Scholarship.



Ellie Mitchell of West High School, going to Siena College, received a \$500 NSAA Scholarship.



George Cvancara of Family Partnership Charter School/Dimond High School, going to University of Alaska Anchorage, received a \$1,000 NSAA Scholarship.



Maria Paez of Service High School, going to University of Rochester, received a \$1,000 NSAA Scholarship.



Miles Dennis of Chugiak High School, going to Montana State University, received a \$500 NSAA Scholarship.



Zanden McMullen of South Anchorage High School, going to Montana State University, received a \$1,000 NSAA Scholarship.

## Nordic Ski Association of Anchorage Backcountry Ski Tours 2019-2020

Attention all you hungry-for-adventure skiers! Check out NSAA's delicious menu of backcountry ski tours for the 2019-20 ski season. All tours are accompanied by members of the Anchorage Nordic Ski Patrol, who provide safety, trail sweep, and assist skiers with broken equipment or any other issues. Many thanks for their assistance! We look forward to skiing with you out on the trails. If you have questions about tours or program, visit [anchoragenordicski.com/programs/backcountry-tours/](http://anchoragenordicski.com/programs/backcountry-tours/).

### Friday, November 29: 22nd annual Turkey Day Shakeoff

Archangel Road, Hatcher Pass, Talkeetna Mountains

Easy III; 8 miles; Elevation gain: 800-1,000 feet; Tour Leader: Elizabeth Bluemink, 907-952-3956; [elbluemink@yahoo.com](mailto:elbluemink@yahoo.com)

Join us for this post-Thanksgiving shakeoff ski, our first tour of the season. Travel under the rugged and beautiful peaks of the Archangel Valley and past old mining ruins in Hatcher Pass for a spectacular day of skiing on the Archangel Road. This is a great opportunity for those who want to learn about ski touring in the mountains, or start skiing for the season. Meet at Carrs Muldoon parking lot near the bakery at 9 a.m. to carpool to the Archangel Road trailhead about .8 miles up the road from Gold Mint Trailhead. If you'd rather meet us at the trailhead, expect to see us about 10:30 a.m. We anticipate arriving back at the cars about 3:30 p.m. depending on how much fun we have and how far we ski. The first portion of the trail, to the Reed Lakes trailhead, is flat gaining only 300 feet in 2.5 miles. This is a great turnaround spot for beginners. The trail to the gate is another 1.5 miles, gaining 500 feet and will be a great downhill run for those with more experience.

### Saturday December 7: Iditarod National Historic Trail (INHT)

Turnagain Pass, Kenai Mountains

Moderate II; 8 miles; Elevation gain: 1,000-1,100 feet; Tour Leaders: Monica O'Keefe, 907-

350-5300, [monicaokeefe@gmail.com](mailto:monicaokeefe@gmail.com) and Lisa Maas, 812-599-7566, [lismaas@gmail.com](mailto:lismaas@gmail.com)

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

### Saturday-Sunday, January 18-20: Sheep Mountain Lodge, two overnights

Talkeetna Mountains

Easy III; Pick your distance, up to 15 miles (24 km) or more; Elevation gain: 50-300 feet; Tour Leader: Elizabeth Bluemink, 907-952-3956, [elbluemink@yahoo.com](mailto:elbluemink@yahoo.com)

Enjoy two overnights over MLK Holiday weekend at Sheep Mountain Lodge in group cabins. Ski on 24 km groomed non-motorized trails or beyond on 60 miles of multi-use trails at Sheep Mountain Saturday and Sunday. Monday, ski out to Matanuska Glacier along Caribou Creek. Space is limited; contact the tour leader to make your reservation early and to get logistical details. A deposit to hold a spot is required by January 1.

### Monday, January 20: Matanuska Glacier from Caribou Creek (MLK Holiday)

Moderate I, due to distance; 10 miles; Elevation gain: Downhill at beginning and end, generally flat; Tour Leader: Elizabeth Bluemink, Sheep Mtn., 907-952-3956; [elbluemink@yahoo.com](mailto:elbluemink@yahoo.com); Mary Vavrik, (Anchorage Carrs Muldoon carpooling) 907-306-7686; [mvavrik@gci.net](mailto:mvavrik@gci.net)

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Carrs Muldoon where we'll drive up to Caribou Creek pullout (Mile 106 of the Glenn Hwy) to ski to the toe of the mighty Matanuska Glacier. We will meet skiers coming from the Sheep Mountain Lodge weekend. The ski will be on and off the creek and through some brush, but mostly open terrain. Be prepared for cold and wind. Make sure you have lunch and water. If you choose to meet at the trailhead, be there at 11 a.m. For those skiing with dogs, traps are in the area. Please bring a leash for your dog on this tour!

### Friday, February 7: Friday Night Full Moon Fun Ski

Powerline Pass

Easy II; 3-6 miles; Tour Leader: Lisa Maas, 812-599-7566, [lismaas@gmail.com](mailto:lismaas@gmail.com)

Meet at the Glen Alps parking lot at 7 p.m. We will ski Powerline Pass to the German Bridge and back. There is potential to make this a short or long trip, depending on the group. The trail is fairly flat with a wee bit of ups and downs. Bring water, warm clothes, and a headlamp (in case the moon is shy that night). Check the local Anchorage weather forecast before heading out. Optional après ski food and grog at a nearby restaurant if there is interest from the group.

### Saturday-Monday, February 15-17: Manitoba Mountain AT/Tele-ski and Touring options, two overnights

Manitoba Advanced I; Touring option, Easy II; Distances: Manitoba ~6 miles, Touring option 3-8 miles. Elevation Gain: Manitoba ~2,300 feet, Touring option 100 feet; Tour Leader: AT/Tele ski: Michael Henrich 907-632-6440; [mhenrich@gci.net](mailto:mhenrich@gci.net); Reservations and touring: Karlene Leeper at 907-440-0049; [kbleeper@gci.net](mailto:kbleeper@gci.net)

Join us for two overnights over President's

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

Find the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage on Facebook at –

[facebook.com/anchoragenordicski](https://www.facebook.com/anchoragenordicski)

## Alaska Ski for Women provides grants to three non-profits in 2019

Each year, the all-volunteer Alaska Ski for Women grant committee awards \$35,000-\$50,000 in grants to organizations around the state that are working to stop the cycle of domestic violence and/or supporting survivors of domestic violence and their families.

The committee is happy to announce the three 501(c) 3 organizations supported through funds raised at the 2019 event: Abused Women's Aid In Crisis (AWAIC), YWCA Alaska, and Running Free. A total of \$37,000 was awarded. These funds come from sponsorships, race entries, silent auction proceeds, and the sale of event merchandise.

eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywcaalaska**

**AWAIC**  
Abused Women's Aid In Crisis

Celebrating the Redemptive Power of Running

Thanks to our community for joining us for 23 years and enjoying a morning of skiing while supporting these important organizations that are doing critical work around Alaska.

Mark your calendars for February 2, 2020! The all-volunteer event committee is seeking event day help. Visit [anchoragenordicski.com/events/alaska-ski-for-women/](http://anchoragenordicski.com/events/alaska-ski-for-women/) or mail [alaskaskiforwomen@gmail.com](mailto:alaskaskiforwomen@gmail.com) for more information. See you on the trails!

## The Kincaid snowmaking system: Looking back and looking forward

BY TIM BRABETS  
NSAA Operations

The winter of 2014-15 marked the first winter that snowmaking at Kincaid Park went into full operation. Over these past five winters, the NSAA Operations team has become fairly proficient in the system. The team, along with a dedicated group of volunteers, has been able to determine when conditions are best to make snow, and when conditions are not viable to make snow.

Here are a few statistics based on the five years of recordkeeping:

- Approximately 37 million gallons of water have been used either irrigating the soccer fields (22 million gallons, 60 percent) or making snow (15 million gallons, 40 percent)
- The average start date for snowmaking is November 15 and it takes an average of 25 days of snowmaking to complete the current snowmaking loops
- Depending on weather conditions, we have finished making snow as early as December 14 and as late as February 18
- For a typical winter, our eight fan guns are used for 1,390 hours and our 16 lances are used for 713 hours

Looking ahead, NSAA Operations will continue making upgrades to the snowmaking system where possible. The primary obstacle of the snowmaking



Those hardworking fan guns are resting in the clean Kincaid bunker before snowmaking season.

system hasn't changed since operations began: an adequate water supply. The system is constrained (i.e. we can't utilize all the snowmaking equipment at one time) because the water supply wells don't provide enough water. We have explored different ways to increase the water supply (storage pond, storage tank, increase groundwater supply) but all these options are expensive. However, we're always looking for grant opportunities.

One upgrade NSAA worked on this summer was modifying two lances to also accommodate fan guns. The upgrade is fairly straightforward and can be done at a reasonable cost. The basic modification involves: redoing the existing plumbing at each

lance to provide water to the fan gun; and making electric connections to the existing power line. The two lances being modified are #104 and #106, located on the snowmaking loop north of Raspberry Road. When completed and operational, fan guns will be deployed on the Dark Alley and lower Roller Coaster trails and connected to these new hydrants to make snow. If successful, this will add an additional .9 km of trail to the snowmaking system. Once snowmaking begins this season, after the traditional snowmaking loops are completed, testing will begin on the modified lances. If successful, other lances could be modified to add additional kilometers to the system.

NSAA would like to acknowledge Anchorage Parks and Rec for supporting the snowmaking endeavor these past five seasons by paying for the power (approximately \$50,000 per year) to operate the system. In turn, the ops team strives to be good stewards by making snow only during optimum conditions. Working with the Parks and Rec staff this past summer, NSAA cleaned and washed out an unused bunker that will now be used for storing fan guns when not in use. Also, through the Kincaid Endowment administered by the Alaska Community Foundation and several anonymous donors, NSAA has received funds to replace broken parts to make repairs to hydrants where necessary.

## NSAA Partner Spotlight: Banker Law Group

Since its very beginning, Banker Law Group has supported community-oriented ski events in Anchorage. Helmed by Anthony and Amanda Banker, the practice is devoted to helping people who have been injured or exploited. They represent Alaskans with insurance claims concerning bodily injury.

Anthony and Amanda have raised three children in Anchorage, all of whom participated in NSAA's Junior Nordic program. Their oldest, Emory, has been on the trails before she was born – Amanda skied while pregnant! Emory is a Junior Nordic coach and a past Skiku volunteer. Their middle child, Henry, currently skis for West High School and also coaches Junior Nordic. After Junior Nordic, their youngest, Ella, traded in her skis for ballet slippers!

Their family's experience in Junior



Nordic program is a huge reason why their business continues to financially support NSAA. Anthony believes the structure of the Junior Nordic program had an extremely positive influence on his family.

"There's something fantastic about having a routine to meet up with friends and be outside, playing in the snow with the kids," he said, "especially on work nights when you might otherwise just stay indoors."

They love that Nordic skiing is a lifelong activity – you can be hardcore and competitive or mellow and recreational – there's something for everyone within this sport.



NSAA is incredibly grateful to Banker Law Group and the Banker family for their involvement in and support of Nordic skiing in the Anchorage community. This season they will be supporting Alaska Ski for Women, Ski 4 Kids and the Sol-

stice Tree Tour. If you see Anthony, Amanda or any of the Banker clan out on the trails or at an NSAA event, be sure to give them a warm thank you for supporting some of our most community-oriented events!



# Kachemak Nordic Ski Club

Homer, Alaska

P.O. Box 44, Homer, Alaska 99603  
 kachemaknordicskiclub.org  
 kachemaknordicskiclub@gmail.com

## AROUND THE BAY

### Ongoing

**Nov 1-March 15: Kachemak Women's Nordic (Co-ed Masters' Ski Program)** – Tuesday, 2-4 pm; Wednesday and Friday, noon-2 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m.-noon. For details, visit <http://kachemakwomensnordic.com/>.

**Jan 25-Feb 22: Junior Nordic Program** – Saturdays, first session on Jan. 25th @ Lookout Mountain Recreation Area. 1-2:30pm. Other locations TBA.

**November 6: Ski and Winter Gear Swap**—5:30-8 p.m. @ Homer High School Commons. Find great gear, sell your gear, get your skis waxed, and register and pick up skis for Junior Nordic.

**November 16: Annual Meeting, Dinner, and Auction**—6 p.m. @ Homer Elks Lodge.

**December: Groomers Clinic and Refresher**—Date and time TBA @ Lookout Mountain Maintenance Building. This is an important review/refresher for all KNSC groomers and an opportunity for those interested in becoming a groomer to sign up and learn the basics. Questions? 235-6018 or [homerbrann@gmail.com](mailto:homerbrann@gmail.com).

**December 26: Ski Your Age**—@ Lookout Mountain Ski Area.

**January 11: Beginner skate & classic ski clinic** – 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Lookout Mountain Ski Area. Register on KNSC website.

**January 11: Intermediate skate & classic ski clinic** – 1:30-4 p.m., Lookout Mountain Ski Area. Register on KNSC website.

**January 24-25: Friday Night Lights torch light ski and candle making** – @ Lookout Mountain Recreation Area.

**January 25: Junior Nordic Program** – Saturdays, First session on Jan. 25th @ Lookout Mountain Recreation Area. 1:00-2:30pm. Other locations TBA.

**February 1, 8, 15, 22: Junior Nordic Program** – Saturdays @ Lookout Mountain State Recreation Area 1-2:30pm.

**February 2: Ski/Walk/Run for Women** – @ Lookout Mountain State Recreation Area

**Backcountry Film Festival** – 7 p.m. @ Homer Theatre. Date and Details TBA

**February 16: Wine and Cheese and Wooden Ski Tour** – Sunday, noon-4 p.m. @ location TBA

**March 14: KNSC Nordic Ski Marathon** – Saturday @ Lookout Mountain Ski Trails (starting line)

**March 29: Sea to Ski** – Sunday, location TBA, based on snow

More information and updates for these events can be found online at [kachemaknordicskiclub.org](http://kachemaknordicskiclub.org) or on Facebook @ Kachemak Nordic Ski Club.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Mike Gracz** | President  
**Stacey Buckalew** | Vice President  
**Christine Anderson** | Secretary  
**Richard Burton** | Treasurer

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**Jason Neely**  
**Jasmine Maurer**  
**Derek Bynagle**  
**Glenn Seaman**  
**Annie Ridgely** | Administrative Assistant

### COMMITTEES AND EVENTS

Baycrest Upper  
**Alan Parks**

Baycrest Lower, Eveline State Recreation Site, Snowshoe Trails  
**Dave Brann**

Lookout Mountain  
**Mike Byerly**

McNeil Canyon School  
**Derek Stonorov**

Trail Signs  
**Mike Gracz**

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**Bob Glen**

Junior Nordic  
**Kathy Sarns**

Kachemak Women's Nordic  
**Jasmine Maurer**

Membership, Website  
**Richard Burton**

Alaska Nordic Skier  
**Jeannie Woodring**

School Races Coordinator  
**Leonard Miller**

Backcountry Film Festival  
**Dan Del Missier**

Winter Gear & Ski Swap  
**Mike Illg (Homer Community Recreation)**

Besh Cup Races  
**Jan Spurland**

Friday Night Lights  
**Stacey Buckalew**

Kachemak Bay Ski for Women & Haven House  
**Kris Holdereid/Shelly Laukitis**

Wine, Cheese & Wooden Ski Tour  
**Mike Gracz**

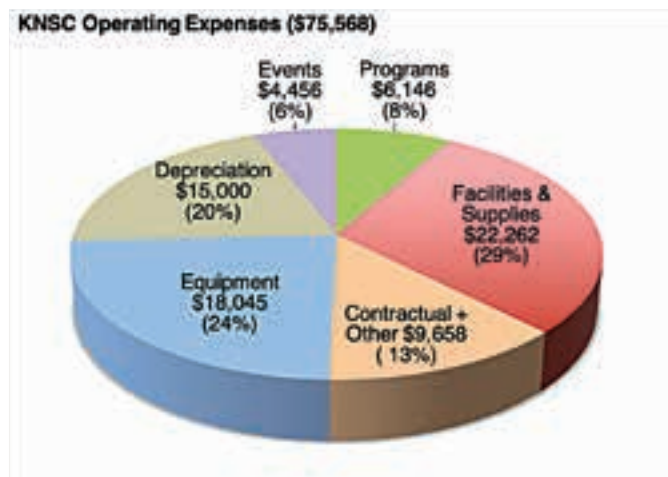
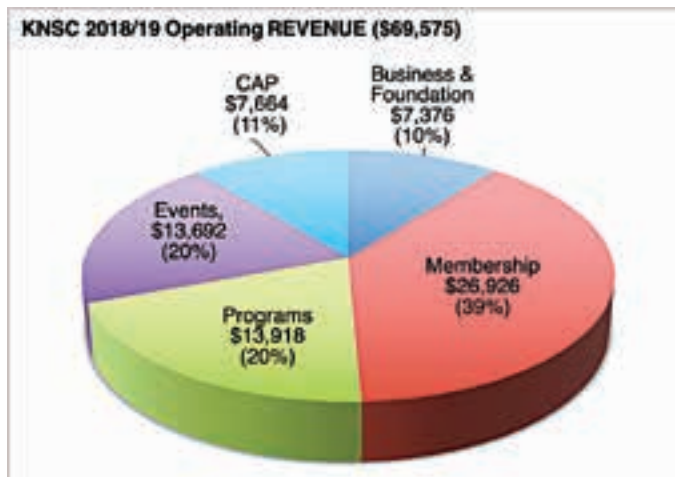
Kachemak Bay Marathon Ski  
**Deland Anderson**

Homer Epic 100  
**Homer Cycling Club**

Sea to Ski Triathlon  
**Derek Bynagle**

## Basic expenses for KNSC Are \$81 for each individual member

*Message from the President – Mike Gracz*



The members of Kachemak Nordic Ski Club deserve to know how their membership dollars are used to keep our great trails groomed and ready for events, programs, school groups and teams, and tons of fun skiing. Last season was the first time that KNSC separated the budgets for operating expenses from that for capital improvements. The rationale behind the split was that KNSC seeks grant money to fund capital projects, such as the construction of the new maintenance shed behind the Diamond Ridge Emergency Services building (aka the fire station). Tracking these expenses and revenues along with operating costs in a single budget made it difficult to see if KNSC was saving enough to buy new grooming equipment when the old equipment reached the end of its useful life.

Now that KNSC's hardworking treasurer Richard Burton has separated the operating budget from the capital budget, the Board of Directors can now more easily track the progress, or lack thereof, in saving for replacement equipment.

In KNSC's revenue pie, the largest slice comes directly from your membership contributions and the fees you pay when you register for a program, such as the Co-ed Masters ski program run this year by Kachemak Women's Nordic, or an event, such as the Marathon Race or Friday Night Lights. The revenue slice of pie from the community is even larger when we include the money received from our extremely supportive local businesses and foundations, such as Homer Saw and Cycle, Fritz Creek General Store, Ulmer's, The Grog Shop, Bear Creek

Winery, The City of Homer, and The Homer Foundation.

The revenue slice labeled CAP in the pie chart is the State of Alaska's revenue sharing program (Community Assistance Program), which provides funding for unincorporated areas such as Diamond Ridge and Fritz Creek. The long-term viability of this source of revenue is uncertain given the state's budget concerns, but it provides just over 10 percent of KNSC's revenues, mainly for trail maintenance. Make your voice heard!

Comparing KNSC's expense pie to revenues, you can see that programs and events pay for themselves, while generating a nice surplus to help meet the expense of keeping the trails groomed for the programs and events. Here, a special shout-out of thanks is owed to the Women's Nordic Program for keeping their expenses especially low!

Equipment and depreciation form the largest slice of the expense pie. Last season we had hoped that the maintenance portion of equipment expenses would actually be lower than the amount we budgeted for due to our preventative maintenance program, and because the year before we had some real disasters. It was looking good in August. However, costs are inevitably high to own and operate eight snow-machines, four tracked-ATVs, four ginzu-groomers, three mowers, and numerous other implements. In late August one ATV lost its transmission, which cost over \$3,000 to repair.

See MESSAGE, Page 10





# How one man brought Nordic skiing to hundreds of Alaska's children

BY JEANNIE WOODRING

One person can make a difference.

John Miles of Homer proves it. Back in the 1970s, he introduced Nordic skiing to hundreds of Western Alaska school children. With the support of the youngsters, their communities, the village schools, and the regional school district, John started a program that has lasted more than 40 years and has changed the lives of many who participated in the program.

Growing up in New Hampshire, John skied a lot – “alpine, ski jumping, and cross country,” he recalls. When he left New England as a young adult, he says, “I looked for states with snow because that’s where I wanted to go.”

The search for snow sent John ski bumming in Aspen for awhile, then, in 1969, he hitchhiked to Alaska in pursuit of more snow opportunities. For the first few years, he worked at all kinds of jobs, from construction labor to fishing.

In 1976, John got a job teaching in Council, Alaska. As the only principal/teacher for 8 to 9 children, he taught (among other subjects) the one subject he knew a lot about – Nordic skiing with used skis donated from Fairbanks.

Moving to Koyuk the next school year, John started the basics of his ski program for children. “I took all the kids in school (about 50), put them on skis, and said ‘go for it,’” he says. With few snow machines, no televisions and no gyms in those days, the children were a captive audience for skiing.

Other villages expressed interest in having the ski program. The Bering Straits School District (BSSD) offered John the position of sports coor-



PHOTO COURTESY JOHN MILES  
Young Koyuk skiers with their teacher-coach (taller lady in white shirt and multi-colored stocking hat, left of center) in the late 1970s.

ordinator. He jumped at the opportunity. With the district’s approval, he organized many sports activities for the school kids – and got funding to buy ski equipment and pay teachers to be coaches.

To set up a ski program in 12 rural villages, scattered over a wild and rugged terrain, John went into each village for a week every fall to get to know the school and community. He’d talk and have coffee with the adults and measure the kids for ski equipment. In winter, he would head back to the communities to teach PE classes, including, of course, Nordic skiing.

“For success,” he says, “I had to build relationships with the village and the school. For longevity, you have to get to know the community.”

The 2016 Alaska Cross Country Hall of Fame program biography for John notes, “The annual weeklong visit by John Miles was one of the most

highly anticipated events of the year in each isolated village.”

Soon, nearly every student in the school district had skis. The halls in most schools were full of ski racks. In the three villages with trees – Elim, White Mountain and Koyuk – John spent hundreds of hours building ski trails (the trails in White Mountain are still there). In 1976, he even had lighted trails in Koyuk.

John always searched for new opportunities for his young Nordic following. Tapping into local native hunting lore, he set up a biathlon program, with the guidance of Jim Mahassey, which used animal cutouts, such as seal heads, as targets. After he built the biathlon ranges, youngsters flocked to the new biathlon program and improved their marksmanship for hunting at the same time. “Getting a participatory ribbon in the hands of each entrant was always [John’s] highest priority,” says the 2016 Hall of Fame program.

The logical next step: hold ski meets between the schools. In 1978, John started a weekend of racing in Koyuk called The Koyuk Invitational. In 2019, the race marked its 41st anniversary. In 1979, White Mountain held a regional meet for junior high and high school Nordic skiers. This event, called the BSSD Ski and Biathlon Championships, still happens every year. Attendance at these two events has been some of the highest among similar Alaska races.

“Lots of times, the ski events between the villages marked the first time that the kids had been out of their villages,” John says.

See MILES, Page 11

## SPONSORED

## Food for the Entire Team!

For over 10 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, Football, Volleyball, Basketball, and Baseball. Firetap also supports numerous charities and participates in school-business partnerships with many South Anchorage schools.



Firetap is conveniently located at 10950 O'Malley Centre Drive, near the corner of Old Seward Highway and O'Malley Road. Call ahead to order your food or pizza to-go at (907) 561-2337, then grab a growler and/or some wine. The menu is online at [firetapalehouse.com](http://firetapalehouse.com).





# Mat-Su Ski Club

Palmer, Alaska

1150 S. Colony Way, Suite 3  
Palmer, Alaska 99645  
(907) 745-SKIS  
[www.matsuski.org](http://www.matsuski.org)

## AROUND THE VALLEY

### “Hatcher” Pass

If you haven't heard, Hatcher Pass is going off (for those born before 1970, there is a lot of snow up there). Our wonderful club is the first in the state to activate their grooming equipment, and most likely, will be the last to shut it down. And, this isn't unusual. We regularly begin grooming Independence Mine before the rest of Southcentral even contemplates pulling their hoses off their hose bibs.

This reality is not known to the skiing public, but it has been the club's responsibility for over too many years; way before the internet could regularly report “Groomed trails in Hatcher Pass!”

Back in yesteryear, I skied with Colony High, Colony Middle School. In that prehistoric age, being on a Valley ski team was a small adventure. Dry-land practice was a series of hill repeats up Crevasse Moraine sled hill or running MEA's easement, bounding up hills with ski poles, or just merely running the Colony High 3K trails in repetition until there was snow ... in Hatcher.\*

\* Every season I take way too much effort in making the point “Hatcher Pass” is no more plural or possessive, rather a name, “Hatcher.” Now back to our regularly-formed drivels by yours truly...

In recognizing that the statute of limitations has surely passed, I will begin to describe how “Valley folks” trained back in the day. Once “Hatcher” began holding snow there was a small contingent that worked with the State Parks to make skiable trails, much like those you may have seen the last few weeks near Independence Mine. To be honest, the trails were more like the Iditarod Trail, but we were hardly complaining. The skiable trail was the prize for us high schoolers, but the journey to get there was hardly what any parent today would consider “acceptable.”

I'd like to take a moment and state that this is where I am veering into the “back in my day” territory. Those older than 40-ish will easily recall driving up Palmer Fishhook Road into to “Hatcher” Pass without a paved surface ... And a few extra turns in the transit to Independence Mine.

Those who were willing to be a Nordic high school skier in the Valley had to accept that practice began at 2:30, but practice began when you pointed your vehicle towards north. ... Scratch that, when your buddy whom happened to have a driver's license and whose parents “ok'd” taking 6-plus fellow teammates along with them to the ski grounds that lie above 2,000 feet above sea elevation decided to take you “north.” Shockingly there were many “mates” whose parents had been fed a metric ton of lies and

agreed to this stupendous endeavor. I was one of those lads.

There was no less than three times where I found myself being the driver to the Hatcher Pass ski practice where I ended up in the ditch in-between Mile Maker 16 and 8 in the Pass. The good news is no one during my tenure of “driver extraordinaire,” aka too young to know otherwise, was injured.

The better news is that today the road to Independence Mine is paved, is maintained by DOT on the regular, the MSSC Club is grooming Independence Mine as soon as conditions permit, and me in my 1968 Landcruiser are not endangering anyone.

— By Hans Hill

### The Mat-Su Ski Club is looking for groomers

Imagine being the first person on the fresh, untracked trails. That could be you! The MSSC is looking for folks that are willing to give up their periodic evening to help their fellow skier. Contact Ed Strabel to enlist 4-6 hours a week, in the evening/late nights. Contact Ed at 745-4190.

### Chariots

Do you have a small child? Are you looking for a workout ... no, a real butt-kicker? Do you not have a Chariot? If you said yes, we have the perfect solution for you. The MSSC has Chariots (pulks for carrying small children) available for loan for free. Contact Ed Strabel 745-4190.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**VICE PRESIDENT**  
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**TREASURER**  
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Lori Straub

Terri Slaven

Jeff Kase

Ed Strabel

Mark Strabel

Chris Tomsen

Chris Gierymski

Gene Backus

### Adult Ski Lessons

Daryl Farrens will be doing adult lessons again this year. Please check the website for dates/times/ details.

### Government Peak Trail Work Party

This last month, over 40 club members helped upgrade the GPRA trails. Folks helped address erosion concerns, excavated ruts rocks, cleared the trail of branches and made the trail amazing for the snow to lay upon. Please consider assisting the club in the next trail party.

### Moonlight Ski

The first Moonlight Ski Tour is Saturday, November 9, at Independence Mine, starting at 7 p.m. Meet at the groomer inside the gate and bring a headlamp just in case it's cloudy.

## MESSAGE

Continued from Page 8

That expense put KNSC right on budget. This year, the Board kept the budget for equipment maintenance at the same level.

You might be alarmed to notice that expenses exceeded revenues by about \$6,000 last year. However, expenses include equipment depreciation. In other words, in 2018-19 KNSC was able to generate enough revenue to cover 60 percent of its depreciation expenses. That roughly translates into being able to buy a new grooming machine every two years. Of course, the Board of Directors would be happier if all of our depreciation expenses were covered each year.

In 2018-19, the basic operating costs of keeping the lights on, maintaining our trail system, and covering the depreciation of equipment, but not including event and program expenses (such as skis and boots for Jr Nordic participants), ran to about \$81 for each individual member (e.g. around \$320 for a family with four members).

Thank you for your continued support and enjoy the fine trails! Ski you out there!

## AROUND TALKEETNA

### Snow – and ski season – have official arrived

Days are getting shorter, temperatures are dropping. We're just waiting for that last ingredient to make it all happen. (There is already enough snow for Nordic skiing at Hatcher Pass!) And our club is already busy ramping up for the season.

— Laura Wright, Club Coordinator

### Annual Meeting, Party, Board Elections November 8

6-10 p.m. at Grove Birch Creek Blvd., pizza, beer, bonfire, fun. And, with your help there will be a slideshow featuring images and videos of your adventures from the past year. Please send pictures and clips of you in the great outdoors of Alaska ... summer or winter ... to [coordinator@denalinordicskiclub.org](mailto:coordinator@denalinordicskiclub.org).

### Other news

- The Oosik Ski Race date has been changed to March 14. Warm temperatures have forced us to move it up one week; it is now the second Saturday in March.
- There are two open seats on the board. Need some reasons to join?
- We don't do any fundraising! You get a voice in how the ski club works (trails, workshops, events). You are contributing to your community and that gives you the warm fuzzies.
- And... it is time to renew your membership. Renew-



Board Member Chad Smith and daughter enjoying the trails last season.

ing online is best: [denalinordicskiclub.org/membership/](http://denalinordicskiclub.org/membership/). There are paper membership forms on the bulletin board at the Talkeetna Library. Members get to vote at our annual board elections. Members get a discount on Ski Talkeetna hats. Members get to ski guilt-free knowing they're a supporter.

Learn more at [denalinordicskiclub.org](http://denalinordicskiclub.org)



# Girdwood Nordic Ski Club

Girdwood, Alaska

P.O. Box 337  
Girdwood, AK 99587  
skigirdwood.org

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**BRIAN BURNETT**  
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**BRIANA SULLIVAN**  
Secretary

**JUSTIN THOMAS**  
Treasurer

**JIM BRAHAM**

**PETER ZUG**

**ARI STIASSNY**

## MILES

Continued from Page 9

The BSSD Nordic program kept on growing. John took helicopters out to run the Nordic program at Diomed. He flew to the airports in Gambell and Savoonga to do the same thing. “We even had an inter-village ski race in Diomed on the ice,” he says, “and the male hunters stood guard for polar bears while the race was in progress.”

At one time, he knew 500 children involved in the Western Alaska Nordic program.

Funding for all this activity was a challenge. For the championships, the school district provided funding. For the local Nordic programs, the villages helped pay. In the early days of state oil wealth, the State of Alaska paid any skier’s way to the state meet. In the years when he had good funding, John would upgrade as much of the equipment he could.

As the Nordic program grew in these Western Alaska schools, so did the abilities of the skiers. Aelin Peterson, the daughter of a teacher in Unalakleet, got her first skis from John’s efforts – and went on to ski in the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City. Three students – Jim Oksoktaruk and Paul Lincoln from White Mountain and Helen Amaktoolik from Golovin – turned in stellar performances at high levels of the junior national in the 1980s and 1990s. At age 15, Oksoktaruk brought back three gold medals and a bronze when he skied at the U.S. Junior Nationals.

John says the accomplishments of these young skiers helped to grow the Nordic program.

How to open more doors for these rural youngsters – with limited funding? In 1986, John helped Western Alaska coaches work with Interior coaches to form the Western Interior Ski Association (WISA). Since 1987, WISA has offered an annual three-day race event for Alaska skiers who lived off the road system. John also helped WISA connect with Team Alaska so rural athletes could use a WISA meet to qualify for the Arctic Winter Games. Soon skiers and biathletes from faraway villages like Savoonga were competing internationally in places like Canada and Greenland.

After he retired from the BSSD in 1999, John continued to travel back to some villages and help with the ski programs. Finally, in 2010, he retired from coaching and returned to his longtime home next to Homer’s crown jewel of Nordic skiing – Lookout Mountain, where he is the chief groomer.

The accolades for John’s efforts come from all sides. In 2016, he was inducted into the Alaska Cross Country Hall of Fame. In 2018, the Kachemak Nordic Ski Club named him Volunteer of the Year. Robin Kornfield, co-founder of the SkiKu Nordic program that teaches crosscountry skiing to rural youngsters, sites the BSSD program: “John Miles started it 40 years ago in 12 villages. That was the model that was tremendous to expand on, to bring skiing to people in other parts of the state.”

From John’s perspective, “I happened to be in the right place at the right time,” he says, but “there were some very, very special people in the villages that helped make everything happen.”

John credits the rural Nordic program to:

- Individual villages that put time and effort into the ski program and helped provide funding.



## 2019-2020 Girdwood Nordic Ski Club Membership

### Membership Benefits Include:

- \* Early notification - ski & waxing clinics
  - \* Monthly Alaska Nordic Skier newsletter
  - \* Cool moose pins – RAINBOW this year!
  - \* Your name at the Trailhead Kiosk & Gazette
  - \* Fantastic trails groomed by volunteers
  - \* Support of Nordic skiing in the Girdwood Valley
- GNSC membership funds support events, communication, grooming and trail maintenance for the cross country ski and multi-use trails community.

Thanks for your support! GNSC is a 503(c)(3) corporation TIN# 30-0516522

### MEMBER INFORMATION

Name (Business) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
GNSC & Alaska Nordic Skier newsletters will be sent to this address – or emailed if you choose.

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ In case we need to contact you about an event change or other GNSC matter.

Email \_\_\_\_\_  Send me of NSAA newsletter by email  
We'll send you updates about events, renewal reminders, and other information. We don't share email addresses!!!

MEMBERSHIP and FEES			
NON-LOCAL / BASIC	(includes pin, newsletter)	\$15	\$
INDIVIDUAL	(includes one pin, one sticker, newsletter)	\$25	\$
FAMILY	(includes 2 pins, 2 stickers, newsletter)	\$40	\$
BUSINESS	Includes name on our website	\$100	\$
CORPORATION	Includes logo on website and map	\$300	\$
ADDITIONAL PINS & STICKERS (\$5) or WOOL HAT (\$40)		\$\$\$	\$
Additional contributions are ALWAYS appreciated		\$\$\$	\$
Total contribution. THANKS!!!			<b>TOTAL</b>

CHECKS TO: [Girdwood Nordic Ski Club](#) or [GNSC](#) or go to [www.skigirdwood.org](http://www.skigirdwood.org)

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION		
FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	AGE(kids)

**PLEASE READ CAREFULLY and SIGN**

I understand the risks and dangers inherent in Nordic skiing. I, for myself and my family members, accept and assume all such risks and agree to release and discharge Girdwood Nordic Ski Club, its officers, directors, employees and volunteers from any and all claims based on accidents or injuries, including death, directly or indirectly connected with any Girdwood Nordic Ski Club sponsored activity.  
I am responsible for all of my actions.

Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please notify me to help with the following area (circle one...or a few):  
Membership, Accounting, Community Events, Fundraising, Trail Maintenance, Grooming

GNSC is a 503(c)(3) corporation  
TIN# 30-0516522  
Check out our website!  
[www.skigirdwood.org](http://www.skigirdwood.org)



**Girdwood Nordic Ski Club**  
PO Box 337  
Girdwood, AK 99587



PHOTO COURTESY JOHN MILES

John Miles, after retirement, still coached youngsters, like these White Mountain skiers.

- Teachers who ensured longevity by having their students ski from kindergarten through high school; The teachers also served as coaches.
- The BSSD provided funding. In the early days, it was the only school district in the country with a biathlon program.

- Villagers who took over the ski programs after John retired. These were the same people who had started skiing in this Nordic program as youngsters.

- Students who grew up skiing became coaches at the local level.

“That was the ultimate success – having my own kids grow up and run the program,” John says. “Home-grown Alaskan Eskimos. And when the students became coaches – that was a very rewarding experience, too. It took years to develop that program.”

The introduction to John in the 2016 Alaska Cross Country Hall of Fame program says it all: “John Miles is Western Alaska’s ‘Johnnie Appleseed’ of skiing. With a gregarious smile and infectious enthusiasm, he has helped bring the joy of cross-country skiing to thousands of young rural athletes. He is one of the most beloved figures in Western Alaska.”



# Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks

Fairbanks, Alaska

P.O. Box 80111, Fairbanks, AK 99708-0111  
**Competition Office** — 907-474-4242  
**Competition Fax** — 907-474-2073  
**Racing Hotline** — 907-457-4434  
[nscfairbanks.org](http://nscfairbanks.org)

**SKIING UNDER THE NORTHERN LIGHTS**

## AROUND THE INTERIOR

### Beyond Birch Hill – White Mountains National Recreation Area

Early snow has made for great skiing from the Wickersham Dome Trailhead off Mile 28 Elliott Highway. Eager skiers have been heading up there since early October. The White Mountains National Recreation Area is an incredible resource in our backyard. The area has other access points off the Elliott and Steese Highways. To find out more about the trails, public use cabins and more check out the extensive website [blm.gov/visit/white-mountains](http://blm.gov/visit/white-mountains).

### 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 insur-



PHOTO BY ERIC TROYER

The Fresco-Cable clan ski back from Lee's Cabin in the White Mountains National Recreation Area in mid-October.

ance 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 Shelly Soderstrom at [adultlessons@nscfairbanks.org](mailto:adultlessons@nscfairbanks.org).

## Finishing the new terrain park and other summer work

BY ERIC TROYER

While our skis were in hibernation this summer, the NSCF Trail Crew was out improving the trails at Birch Hill Recreation Area.

“The bulk of the work was trying to finish up the New Terrain Park,” Head Groomer Tom Helmers wrote.

The new park replaced the Terrain Garden that was lost when parking expanded a few years ago.

“We installed culverts in the low spots, finished the ‘Black Spruce Trail,’ which included adding humps, and finished grading,” Helmers wrote. “The grooming crew installed three poles for additional lights.”

The poles were donated by Doyon Utilities, a longtime NSCF supporter.

The crew replaced more old trail signs, part of a multi-year project to improve signage at Birch Hill. On the equipment side, they built storage racks for the all the Tommy Fence so that it will no longer sit on the ground,

where it is more prone to rusting.

They also finished the “V-Board Trailer,” which will allow them to store the V-boards and C-boards in the stadium area for easy access during race set up and take down.

And then there was the usual list of spring and summer chores: repairing erosion and sinkholes from spring runoff, clearing downed trees off the trails, and brushing. On that last chore, they were assisted by volunteers. The SCUM, Andrew Ekblad,

and an anonymous volunteer all took to the trails to cut the brush back to make for easier grooming and skiing.

The wonderful skiing we enjoy at Birch Hill in the winter requires a lot of work in the summer. Many thanks to our grooming crew and all the volunteers who help them!

And you can especially thank them by donating to the Birch Hill Trail Fund! Donate at [nordicskicluboffairbanks.wildapricot.org/Donate/](http://nordicskicluboffairbanks.wildapricot.org/Donate/).

### Who's Who in the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks

**JUNIOR NORDIC HOTLINE**  
457-4437

**PRESIDENT**  
Steven Hansen  
[president@nscfairbanks.org](mailto:president@nscfairbanks.org)

**VICE PRESIDENT**  
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Chris Puchner  
Mark Winford

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**NEWSLETTER EDITOR**  
Eric Troyer  
[newsletter@nscfairbanks.org](mailto:newsletter@nscfairbanks.org)



PHOTO BY ERIC TROYER

New, large directional signs help people find their way on the Birch Hill trails.



3480 College Rd., Fairbanks, AK 99709 | (907) 479-2494 | [beaversports.com](http://beaversports.com)

# NSCF offers full schedule of races for 2019-2020

The NSCF once again has a full slate of ski races for this coming season. Whether you prefer short sprints or longer endurance marathons, intense competition or relaxed events, we've got something for you. Watch for updated information on the club's website's Races tab ([nscfairbanks.org/](http://nscfairbanks.org/)) and Facebook page ([facebook.com/NSCFairbanks/](https://facebook.com/NSCFairbanks/)).

Here's what's coming up:

## Wednesday Night Race Series

These races are for people who want to do a short race in warm temperatures (by Fairbanks standards). The courses are usually about two laps equaling 5 kilometers total with a one-lap option for being just wanted to go 2.5K. The temperature cut off is -5F. Races start at 6:30 p.m.

## Kinross/Fort Knox Town Race Series

A series of four short-to-medium-distance races held from November to through January and open to all ages of skiers. Each event features races at increasing distances for several different age/gender groups from kindergartners to adults. In addition to typical cross-country ski races, this series often features a sprint and a ski-cross.

## Alaska Coffee Roasting Company Turkey Day Relays

Get out on the day after Thanksgiving and burn some of those calories you packed away the day before. The Turkey Day Relays are open to skiers from kindergarten to adult. They feature teams of three skiers, each skiing one lap. Laps are usually 1 to 4 kilometers with the distance varying depending on age of the competitors. Costumes and unique team names add to the fun of this event.

## Buetow Dental and Pangaea Health Distance Series

If you like going the distance, the Distance Series is for you. The Buetow Dental and Pangaea Health Distance

Series features three events: The Gundeloppet 7.5K/15K, the January Jaunt 10K/20K, and the Raven Romp 10K/30K. Events switch between classic and freestyle in alternating years. All events are held in mass-start format.

## Denali State Bank Sonot Kkaazoot

Fairbanks' premiere springtime cross-country skiing event offers a variety of divisions attracting everyone from hard-core competitors to relaxed cruisers. Held in March, the Sonot offers the standard 50-kilometer freestyle ski marathon. The event also has 40- and 20-kilometer freestyle divisions. The start and finish are on the Chena River at the Centennial Bridge in downtown Fairbanks (unless poor ice conditions force a Birch Hill start and finish).

## Besh Cup Races

Every season Fairbanks hosts two of the six statewide Besh Cup races. These races allow skiers young and old compete against some of the best cross-country ski racers in the state. They also allow racers to gain points that can be applied for national rankings. The Fairbanks Besh Cup races, usually held in early February, allow locals to try out this intense racing to see if they're interested in more.

## ConocoPhillips Interior Youth Festival

This fun event, held over two Wednesday evenings in March, is all about young skiers. It is open only to skiers from elementary through junior high school. The shorter distances are geared for youth and allow the skiers to try multiple formats, including short sprints and ski-cross. The emphasis is on fun, relaxed competition. To help keep the mood light, food and prizes are offered on both nights.

## Skiathon

The 20-kilometer, classic-only Skiathon is a race and tour held at the University of Alaska Fairbanks ski trails. Participants are timed but can go as fast or as slow as they want. All finishers receive a Skiathon patch. This joint event of the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks and the UAF Trails Club is a fundraiser for the UAF trail system. The Skiathon has quite a history, reaching way back into the last century.

# Birch Hill grooming relies on your support

BY ERIC TROYER

People can ski for free at Birch Hill Recreation Area, but taking care of the trails isn't free. The trails rely on your generosity.

The NSCF grooms the trails at Birch Hill, not the Fairbanks Borough. All trail grooming is paid for by the NSCF, and our grooming program relies mostly on donations. Our grooming crew is one of the best in the nation, but they need our help. When you sign up for NSCF membership, please remember to make a donation to the Trail Fund.

If you have already signed up and forgot to make a donation, it's not too late. Go to [nscfairbanks.org](http://nscfairbanks.org) and click on "Support NSCF" dropdown menu. You can also feed the Iron Ranger, the large iron pole at the base of the stairs that lead to the stadium. Just put in cash or checks. If you pay with a check, make it out to "NSCFairbanks - Trail Fund."

And thank you! Without your support we couldn't groom the trails at Birch Hill.

Below are donation amounts suggested by the NSCF Board of Directors. These donations are based on trails program operating costs. These amounts are on the low side of fees typically paid at ski areas in the Lower 48, especially when you consider our ski season is usually weeks or months longer.

- Individual Season Pass / Youth (14 and under) - \$90
- Individual Season Pass / Junior-Student (high school or college student) - \$150
- Individual Season Pass / Adult - \$200
- Couples Season Pass / Adult - \$300
- Family Season Pass (includes children through high school) - \$400
- Sustaining donor levels: Tracksetter - \$500; Trailblazer - \$1,000

# Sweat, slide, glide. Repeat.

...and don't forget to sleep.

Book now for  
Besh Cup and  
High School  
State races in Feb!

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 3 miles from Birch Hill Cross Country Ski Center.



**WEDGEWOOD  
RESORT**

Locally owned and operated in Fairbanks  
[FountainheadHotels.com/wedgewood-resort](http://FountainheadHotels.com/wedgewood-resort)

Call 1-800-528-4916 for special nordic ski-centric rates!

- ❄ Ski waxing room
- ❄ 24-7 workout facility
- ❄ Free wifi
- ❄ Team meeting space
- ❄ Laundry rooms

Proud supporter of the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks.

## Skiers can enjoy early season skiing on Moose Mountain thanks to Bad Bob

BY DAVYA BAKER

“Bad Bob” Baker likes to lead—even if it’s short-lived, like racing the first few meters of a mass start or eating bowls of soup at the Sonot Kkaazoot Awards Banquet. In the last few years, he has probably led the most kilometers skied in October and early November in the Fairbanks area.

How does he do it? Bad Bob grooms his own trails out his backdoor on Moose Mountain. Bob isn’t selfish. Others can ski on his handiwork!

This year Fairbanks received snow in the first week of October. A few inches stuck above 1,000 feet but melted down lower, including the ski trails at UAF and Birch Hill. So, on October 11, Bad Bob hitched up his groomer (which he designed and built) behind his Ski-doo Skandic Super Wide Track snowmachine and drove up to the mid-mountain gate on Moose Mountain Road. Then he groomed the 3-5 inches of snow on the multi-use trail that parallels Moose Mountain Road from the gate to the downhill area bus turnaround at the top, which had about 8 inches of snow. But Bad Bob didn’t stop there. He groomed the entire powerline trail, which continues on to Old Murphy Dome Road.

The next day, a few friends met him, and they skied the 15 kilometers out-and-back.

A couple of days later Bad Bob received permission from the owner of the Moose Mountain Ski Resort



Bad Bob Baker, wearing his signature orange, spends time on his snowmachine so that he can spend time on skis.

to groom on the upper slopes. This added another 8-9 K of groomed trails for early skiing.

These trails are open to all. The multi-use trail is open to a variety of trail users – bikers, walkers, runners, snowmachiners – while the trails on the ski resort slopes are limited to skiers.

**IF YOU GO:** Please abide by the following rules so we don’t lose our privilege to groom for Nordic skiing on Moose Mountain during preseason.

1. When skiing on the Moose Mountain Ski Resort slopes, a Nordic skier must not deviate from the groomed

trail.

2. Parallel parking is allowed below the mid-mountain gate on Moose Mountain Rd., along the north side. That’s the right side as you are looking uphill. Do not park inside the gate, even if it is open. Or you may park along Monte Verde Road. Do not block driveways.

3. The powerline trail is public and multi-use.

4. Consider donating toward the Moose Mountain Nordic ski grooming gas fund!

For more information contact Bob Baker at 907-455-6689. Monetary



PHOTO BY DAVYA BAKER

Bob’s groomer, which he designed and built, can groom even thin layers of snow.



PHOTO BY DAVYA BAKER

Davya Baker is grateful for Bad Bob’s grooming along the Moose Mountain powerline trail.

(and/or food) donations are appreciated. Send checks to Bob Baker, 3020 Moose Mountain Rd, Fairbanks, AK 99709.

*Davya Baker is a mom, skier, NSCF board member, and daughter of Bad Bob.*

## Club needs tour leaders to guide adult and family tours around Fairbanks

BY ERIC TROYER

Have a favorite trail you want to share with other skiers? Have kids and want to ski with other families? 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.

Our tours have mainly aimed at adult skiers, but a member recently suggested we encourage family tours, too. What a great idea! So, please consider leading a tour aimed at kids and their parents. You’ll need to let Eric know what age group you are shooting for. There’s a big difference between 4-year-olds



Tour members enjoy an outing on the Skarland Trail in March 2019.

and 14-year-olds.

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 probably 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.

## NSCF board busy overseeing club operations

BY ERIC TROYER

The work the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks Board of Directors does is critical to NSCF programs. Here are a few of the issues that the board, often with the help of volunteers, has been dealing with recently:

- Working out SkiFest details, including how to increase participation
- Planning on how to expand the FXC Masters program and make it

more unified, including how to differentiate it from Adult Lessons

- Discussing ways to make roller-skiing more safe
- Overseeing personnel changes, especially a new administrator and new FXC head coach

The board and staff also met on a Friday night and Saturday in early September for a planning retreat to discuss strategic planning for the

club. During the retreat, the board:

- Heard updates from all programs, including plans for the season, challenges they’re facing, and support they need from the board
- Discussed the club’s financial situation (which is healthy)
- Heard about efforts to move more registration from paper to online
- Discussed ideas for improving club communication

- Discussed increasing trails donations, which were down last year
- Discussed possible additions to the Birch Hill trail system, including downhill practice trails and flatter, more beginner friendly trails
- Learned about club history
- Discussed making the board run smoother, more efficiently



# Eagle River Nordic Ski Club

Eagle River, Alaska

P.O. Box 770117, Eagle River, Alaska 99577

Club hotline — 689-7660

Junior nordic hotline — 689-7661

[cernsc.wildapricot.org](http://cernsc.wildapricot.org)

## AROUND EAGLE RIVER

### Masters Ski Group returns this season

We're delighted to announce that Masters Ski lessons will return this year, led by Alaska Nordic Racing

coach Katy Rehm. Look on the Alaska Nordic Racing site or CERNSC site for details in the next month; we expect Masters Group to meet 6:30-8 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Beach Lake trails.

### CERNSC calendar

**Ski Swap and Rental** — 9 a.m.-noon, Nov. 9, Birchwood ABC

**Annual Meeting and BBQ** — noon-3 p.m., Nov. 24, Beach Lake Chalet

**Jr. Nordic Kickoff** — 6:45-8 p.m., Dec. 2, Beach Lake Chalet

**Ski the Beach** — 1 p.m., March 1, Beach Lake Chalet

**Pizza Party and Ski Return** — 6-8 p.m., March 17, United Methodist

### BOARD MEMBERS

#### PRESIDENT

Jason Dennis

#### VICE PRESIDENT/RACING CHAIR

Mike Beiergrohslin

#### TREASURER

Bob Stehn

#### SECRETARY

Meg Stehn

#### JR. NORDIC

Rish Harty, Ryan Caldwell

#### MASTERS (ANR)

Katie Rehm

#### NEWSLETTER

Ros Singleton

#### AT LARGE

Jason Gray, Annette Brion, Jesse Bee, Andy Hall

## CERNSC Ski Tours in Chugiak/Eagle River area

Come tour with us! CERNSC is sponsoring ski tours for club members around Chugiak/Eagle River. We had a great turnout last year for tours of Homestead trail, Peters Creek, and South Fork. If you are interested in joining us, please e-mail Ros Singleton at [rosalynsingleton2@gmail.com](mailto:rosalynsingleton2@gmail.com) or call 907-229-1989 to get on the Ski Tour list.

**Requirements:** You must be a CERNSC member. If

you're not a member, you can register online at our new website [www.cernsc.org](http://www.cernsc.org) and pay a nominal fee to support the club's many activities! You should be an experienced skier and have touring or classical skis. You can bring dogs if they are well-behaved, stay with you, and don't fight with other dogs.

Here are proposed dates and times. The venues are dependent on conditions. We'll finalize the venue the week before the event and send an e-mail to the group.

**12:45 p.m. Sunday, December 8** — Ros Singleton, meet at Briggs bridge for tour on Eagle River or the Homestead trail along Eagle River

**12:45 p.m. Saturday, January 4** — Barb Johnson, tour Peters Creek trail from the trailhead

**12:45 p.m. Sunday, February 9** — Ros Singleton, meet at Eagle River Nature Center for a tour of the trails

**12:45 p.m. Sunday, March 22** — Jason Gray, meet at South Fork for tour to Symphony Lake

**ERJN KICK OFF**  
Event 2019  
Beach Lake Chalet  
November 16th  
1pm to 3pm

Equipment rental from 1-3  
Parent Meeting from 2-3

This will be your last chance for club equipment rental for the season. If possible please pre-sign up online at [CERNSC.org](http://CERNSC.org)



Online sign up is open now!!! GO to [cernsc.org](http://cernsc.org)

**WE ARE STILL LOOKING TO FILL SOME COACHING POSITIONS IN WHITE, AND POLAR CUB GROUPS. PLEASE CONSIDER BECOMING A COACH FOR THIS GREAT GROUP.**

Reminder: Head Coaches get \$60 dollars off enrollment. See Rish Harty for details.

New this year parents will be required to ski with kids 6 and under!!!

### CERNSC

Jason Dennis  
907.726.7092

Questions?

[jedennis@ft.nyl.com](mailto:jedennis@ft.nyl.com)

**CHUGIAK EAGLE RIVER NORDIC SKI CLUB**

General Membership  
Annual  
**BOARD MEETING**

@

Location: Beach Lake Chalet

**SUNDAY 11.24.19**

12:00 TO 3:00

Please bring food for the potluck. We need you there to help with the future of the club.

## EAGLE RIVER JUNIOR NORDIC/MASTER'S SIGN-UP & SKI SWAP

**SATURDAY 11.09.2019**

### @ Birchwood ABC Elementary

- ERJN Sign-Up and Gear Rental: 9:00-12:00
- Ski Swap Gear Drop Off: 9:00-10:00
- Ski Swap: 9:00-12:00
- Ski Gear and Money Pick-up: 12:00-1:00
- Alaska Nordic Master's Sign-Up see Katie Rehm

Eagle River Junior Nordic sign-up online at <https://www.cernsc.org/>

Online registration ends 11.16.2019

# Skiers and fans prepare: Besh Cup racing is coming soon!

BY LAURI BASSETT  
CCAK

The ConocoPhillips Besh Cup racing season is upon us! Beyond preparing your gear, there are other logistical concerns for cross country ski racing families to consider. Here are some items to check off your list. Hopefully the list will help new families and seasoned families to be prepared!

Join your local ski club. It's time to join or renew your membership to keep your trails groomed and managed. Cross Country Alaska shares a portion of entry fees with local clubs to help offset weekend expenses. Additionally, the race rotation allows each region (Interior, Southcentral and Peninsula) to offer home trail advantage and no travel expenses to their members for race one weekend – when Mother Nature allows. This year the races are scheduled for Anchorage (December 21-22), Homer (January 18-19), and Fairbanks (February 1-2). CCAK also encourages families to consider becoming members on some level with clubs outside of their home club as well. The more options for places to ski, the better for our sport!

Join US Ski & Snowboard. All racers are required to have a US Ski & Snowboard license. This must be in place prior to race weekend. There is not an option to purchase a license on-site.

- U14 and younger skiers only need a General license (To clarify: U14 skiers interested in Arctic Winter Games are required to have a General license, but can choose to have a Competition license.)

- Skiers in the U16, U18, & U20 age groups who are competing for a position on Team Alaska for Arctic Winter Games or Junior Nationals need a Competitive license. Team Alaska points will only be counted for races in which a license is a categorized as current Competitive license.

- Youth skiers not competing for a position on Team Alaska only need a General license.

- Adult skiers 18-39 need a Competitive license.

- Masters skiers, over 40, need a Master license.

Find a ski group. It's not a requirement but it is helpful to work with a training group and coaches to help navigate race weekends. Racers who are unaffiliated with training groups may reach out to training groups for

help with waxing and race weekend logistics. Younger skiers (U12 and younger) who aren't part of a traveling training group can check with the host ski club to meet up with local Junior Nordic skiers of that area.

Make travel plans. This may include flights, carpooling, accommodations, and food plans for the weekend. Rooms often fill fast!

Other things to know about CCAK operations

Weather & Trail Issues. The CCAK Competition Committee meets the Wednesday before each race weekend to make final weekend plans. If there are weather or trail issues to consider, the Committee meets the week prior to the regularly scheduled meeting to discuss relocation or postponement possibilities. Watch the CCAK Facebook page and Website the two weeks prior to each race.

CCAK Competition Committee: The Competition Committee is comprised of leaders in the cross-country ski community including host club representatives, training club coaches, UAA & UAF coaches, and U.S. Ski & Snowboard officials. The Committee meets monthly to assemble the race season; review team selection

criteria, identify coaching and race official development opportunities, and put together the details of each race weekend.

CCAK Board of Directors. The board is comprised of leaders in the cross-country ski community who are dedicated to keep the organization of CCAK sustainable in order to provide racing opportunities. The board keeps the Mission of CCAK in mind when making decisions. CCAK Mission is: To create and support a cross country skiing culture and environment that allows Alaskan cross country ski racers to succeed at regional, national and international competitions.

CCAK Administrator. The Administrator works with the host clubs to prepare for race weekends, manage registration and start lists, communicate race details, manage the points lists, and assist Team Alaska coaches with travel plans.

CCAK welcomes all skiers interested in racing to check out ConocoPhillips Besh Cup races! If you are curious about joining a training group, check with your local club or visit the Training Clubs tab on the CCAK website, [crosscountryalaska.org](http://crosscountryalaska.org).

Think snow!

## SPONSORED



## Why Sleep Matters

BY COLLIN ATKINSON, PT, DPT, COMT  
Advanced Physical Therapy

Most of us can think back to a recent time where we did not get an adequate night's rest. After waking in disbelief to the sound of what feels like a mistakenly early ring of our alarm clock, we grab our coffee and find ourselves bracing for the work day ahead.

Substantial sleep loss can cause significant side effects including fatigue, irritability, forgetfulness, and a decreased ability to concentrate. The effects of chronic sleep debt can also be difficult to identify and, unfortunately, have a great impact on overall health and wellbeing. Chronic sleep debt has been linked to chronic illness and limits the body's ability to recover and function optimally.

This is especially troubling if you consider the fact that a 2013 Gallup poll suggested that four out of every ten adults sleep less than seven hours a night – the minimum amount of sleep recommended by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.<sup>1,2</sup> Luckily, these side effects are reversible, and every effort you make to improve your sleep duration and quality will pay additional dividends.

With longer nights, and the end of daylight savings time coming in



November, it felt like a great time to discuss the physiological and psychological benefits of sleep.

There is a reason that several of sports' biggest stars, including Tom Brady and Justin Verlander, spend as many as nine hours a night sleeping. A period of 24 hours of sleep deprivation has been shown to interfere with the release of the anabolic hormones insulin like growth factor 1 (IGF-1) and testosterone for as many as four days.<sup>3</sup>

Sleep debt also facilitates the release of the stress hormone cortisol. The perfect storm of decreased anabolic hormone concentrations and increased cortisol secretion is the suggested mechanism of muscle breakdown observed with sleeplessness. However, sleep can be harnessed as nature's best recovery strategy as it facilitates the release of anabolic hormones necessary for muscle repair and regeneration including IGF-1 and testosterone.

Not only does an increase in sleep volume pay cellular dividends, it

has been shown to improve athletic performance. In a 2011 Study, Mah Et al. found evidence to suggest that increasing sleep duration for five to seven weeks improved Stanford collegiate basketball players' athletic performance.<sup>4</sup> In this study, these athletes increased the amount of time they slept with a goal of achieving 10 hours of sleep per night. At the conclusion of the study, the players that were able to increase the amount of time that they dedicated to sleep demonstrated improvements in shooting accuracy, reaction time, and sprinting speed. Lastly, the athletes also reported feelings of improved performance when it mattered most – during games.

Suggestions for improving sleep quality are ubiquitous and can be relatively straight forward – such as decreasing alcohol consumption, screen time in the evening, and caffeine intake after noon. However, it takes intentional behavior change to successfully increase the amount of time you devote to sleep.

Setting aside time for sleep can be difficult when we are spread thin with looming deadlines, but it is essential for physiological and psychological health and performance – especially if you are sleeping less than seven hours a night. Start by setting a short-term goal of going to bed 30 minutes earlier than you typically do and stick to it for five to seven weeks. After you achieve this short-term goal make sure to look back and ask if you've noticed any positive or negative changes in your life. Given our standard tendency to put sleep last, you can rest assured that any effort you make to increase your sleep quantity will improve your ability to recover and resist injury, and result in improved performance at work and on the Nordic ski trails.

### Citations:

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