



SPRING 2014

Notes from the Executive Director

By John Munger

As usual, lots going on in Loppet World.

May is the inaugural Salomon CITYTRAIL Loppet. We are planning to incorporate adult-child aspects - initially dubbed "Age Gap Relays" - to most events in order to encourage more whole family participation generally. With the addition of Northeast Middle School, we have created a network of middle school teams in the North Minneapolis area that are now competing against each other, helping each other improve and thrive, and fostering a culture of outdoor activity throughout the area. We are creating a development department. We are working hard to establish "manuals" for our events and to generally improve our procedures and our infrastructure (we just rented a warehouse space where we hope to store most of our stuff in an organized fashion). And, oh yeah, our Loppet Nordic Racing juniors just won national championships as the best boys club, the best girls club and the best overall club in the country!



But all of that is covered in other articles - by our talented array of directors and coaches. That's really the topic on my mind - how do we adjust as

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Ruminations on the New Loppet Foundation

By John Munger

Sometimes I wonder if I know the Loppet Foundation anymore . . . it used to be that when people asked what I did I would mumble something under my breath about skiing and then they would ask what I did all summer . . . Now, I look around and see something much different.

Professional coaching staff. Professionals in youth development. Event staff. Even a professional development department. Sophisticated board, with multi-layered budgeting, a long-term vision and strategic plan. Partnerships with organizations like the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, the Minneapolis Public Schools, the Minnesota Canoe Association, Beacons, the Minnesota Youth Ski League and Wilderness Inquiry, among others. A new warehouse space, giving us the opportunity to stage and organize for events and programs better

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Mission Statement

The Loppet Foundation provides opportunities and creates passion for year-round outdoor activities and adventures in the Minneapolis area, especially among inner-city youth.

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PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT

Steve Kotvis (f/go photography)



(Left) New Subaru Dogsled Loppet takes off. (Top Right) New Snowshoe Loppet kicks into gear. (Bottom Right) Comcast Luminary Loppet shines its brightest yet!

Notes from the Director

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an organization to having directors running the various parts of the organization rather than have an organization where everyone does a little (or a lot) of everything . . . ? How do we adjust management-wise? How do we adjust financially? How do we maintain and grow our partnerships with new leaders? How do we shift organizationally? How does the board adjust?

These are the challenges that we face as an organization. Good challenges to have as they are challenges that results from growth . . . but challenges nonetheless. We are working to ensure that the new people in the organization have the same sense of mission that we had when we were smaller. We have held board and staff retreats. We are revisiting our organizational chart and, for really the first time, truly defining job duties to empower staff with responsibility areas and to avoid stepping on each others' toes too much . . . The board is moving to more of a committee structure - with more work happening outside of board meetings.

Of course, finances are always a big part of change. And that is certainly the case here. Our budgeting process is more sophisticated. Cash flow forecasting is more important than ever - with ebbs and flows depending upon the time of the year. In the long run our new development department should help even out those ebbs and flows, but in the short run we are making financial investments just to establish the development department.

Because we are also investing in a special fundraising effort, our short-term finances are more challenging than ever. Kristen Spargo, our new Director of Advancement (fancy term that encompasses development, marketing and communications), has plans to reach out to you, as members, on a new Loppet Annual Fund - expect to hear more about that in the months to come.

If, with the help of our members, we can succeed in meeting these challenges without losing our sense of who we are, we can be an amazing organization that creates community, provides outdoor opportunities and makes the Minneapolis area a better, richer place to live. We can continue to provide great community events that help define what is great about the Minneapolis area. We can provide alternatives to traditional team sports so that today's youth (and adults) can enjoy a lifetime of year-round outdoor activities. And, hopefully, we can provide the physical infrastructure necessary for all of this - for gatherings, events, programming and camps for years to come . . .

As always, call or email with thoughts, opportunities, questions or suggestions. 612-604-5331 or munger@loppet.org.

FACES OF THE LOPPET



Photographs courtesy of Steve Kotvis (f/go photography), Ann Schley of Highland Studios, Juan Palomo of JPalomo Fine Art Photography, and Amy Johnson.

Ruminations on the new Loppet Foundation

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than ever before. In other words, the Loppet Foundation is becoming a mainstream non-profit organization that people know and respect - a far cry from the little "City of Lakes Nordic Ski Foundation" that I used to work for . . .

But I still recognize Loppet-ness all around. After all, the Loppet's brand was never about being small. The Loppet is about year-round outdoor activity. The Loppet is about a community of like-minded outdoor enthusiasts who have committed to outdoor activity whatever the weather: rain, snow (especially snow), cold - whatever mother nature throws our way. The Loppet is about a sense of adventure - that is the willingness to engage in activities with an uncertain outcome. For instance, if it's cloudy some will choose to exercise indoors or not at all - because of the risk of rain. Loppet-ness would dictate risking the rain . . . because if rain is not risked there is no chance of encountering an eagle or a fox or of seeing the rainbow that forms when the sun finally does peek out between the clouds. Yes, in the Loppet Way you might get wet - but you also might have one of those wonderful moments that defines a life well led . . .

These traits still thrive in Loppet World. Look at this past winter. When school was cancelled because of cold weather, Loppet programming - FAST KIDS, Wave 1 groups, etc. - went forward as planned. When Loppet Weekend came and the wind chill factor was below zero, record crowds came out anyway - gathered together not in spite of the cold, but because of the cold. A community of adventurous souls gathered together to celebrate a sense of adventure and the opportunities for outdoor activity we have right in our back yard, Yes, there was a risk of frost bit, but that "managed" risk was better than the certainty of a bland weekend spent indoors, complaining of the cold that had defeated us . . .

This sense of adventure manifests itself in different ways for different people. For the 53-year-old immigrant to Minnesota who has never experienced snow before, it is an experience with an uncertain outcome just to go out in the cold the first time. For the 12-year-old middle school student with no family tradition of outdoor activity, joining the Anwatin Ski & Bike Team is an experience with an uncertain outcome, as is working toward finishing the Tour or the UCare Tri-Loppet. For veterans Loppet Nordic Racing athlete finishing the

Tour or the UCare Tri-Loppet is no longer an experience with an uncertain outcome; they pretty much know they will finish. Instead, their adventures might be trying to go to Junior Nationals or qualify for a higher wave at the Loppet or the Birkie. But whatever the individual's adventure, we Loppet people are all seeking experiences with uncertain outcomes. That has not gone away over the years. If anything, there is more of it in Loppet World . . .

Which brings me to the Loppet community. Again, the Loppet community is not about being small. I was thinking about this while at a Twins game the other day. Why do people go to Twins games? The viewing is better on the couch in front of the television. I think it is the sense of being part of a community - of working together (that is, cheering) toward the same goals and sharing the experience. Better to have an obstructed view with the community than an unobstructed view by yourself on the couch.

The same is true with our Loppet community. Technically, the best skiing or biking happens on a lonely trail in the woods. Skiing the Loppet or jostling for position in the UCare Tri-Loppet is only worse from a technical skiing or paddling perspective. But there is something about working together toward a goal - and of sharing the experience - that draws us together for events or training. And that is the Loppet community - more alive and thriving than ever . . .

This is what makes us a community - the collective desire to help each other achieve success in our outdoor adventures. There may be an official "winner" in our race events - but all of us are cheering for each other, hoping that our experience with an uncertain outcome has a good outcome that day . . . That is Loppet-ness - still alive and well despite, and maybe even because of, our larger size . . .

LOPPET ADVENTURES.



On a sunny day at the Wolverine Ski Trails in Ironwood, Michigan, Quinlan Brogdon (left) gives us the okay signal. After a long morning of skiing, a group of Anwatin skiers decided to see how far up they could climb and ski down the old ski jumping hill. 15 feet up? Check. Multiple face-plants? Check. 20 feet? 30 feet? All the way to the top? The inner voice asking, “What would his mother think?” was hushed by the 3-4 feet of powder that covered the hillside. All brave hill-climbers crashed, but climbed out of the snowbanks with the biggest, silliest grins on their faces. How high will YOU climb?

ALL-GIRLS ADVENTURE CAMP PLANNED

BY ALLIE RYKKEN

As we approach our sixth year of Loppet Adventure Camps, we are on a mission to be better than ever! While we are upgrading many aspects of the camp - improved facilities, more involved counselor training and a new Adventure Race that will be a capstone of the week - one of the most exciting aspects is the introduction of a “Girls-Only” camp this summer, July 21-25.

At the Loppet Foundation we see the strength, support and friendship that can come from female camaraderie, particularly around being fit and active. (One of our most popular LNR skiing classes is the women’s group that meets on Wednesdays.) We look forward to seeing the girls in our Adventure Camps exploring outdoor adventures and activities with their other girls and female counselors, who will be strong role models for their young charges.

We always strive to create a safe and welcoming camp environment where all participants can try new things and push themselves. Our aim during this week of Girls-Only Adventure Camp is to

harness a bit of girl-power, helping to boost self-confidence, inner motivation, skills and even a healthy dose of competitive spirit! Stay tuned for the fall newsletter to hear how it goes!



Rosario Cantor shows fellow Adventure Camper how rollerskiing is done



Coach Kelly Underkofler with her Northeast Middle School team. Top Row (Left to Right): Alondra Mena-Landa, Xavier Igherighe, Andrea Gomez-Galdez, Kylo Alaakir, Leif Couillard. Bottom (Left to Right) Jada Chuyangheu, Logan Igherighe, Alex Worcester, Patrick Hott

INAUGURAL NORTHEAST MIDDLE SCHOOL SEASON A SUCCESS

BY KELLY UNDERKOFLE

The easiest way for me to measure the success of Northeast Middle School Ski Team's first season is the number of the athletes in the van. For the first few weeks our team was fairly small and the athletes were inconsistent, which resulted in a very quiet van.

But as the weeks ticked by our team grew into a dedicated crew of skiers. And as it did so did the volume in the van - in fact the latter went up exponentially! As a coach, I could not really ask for more than a group of youth who are learning a new activity, making new friends and having fun. Such a huge part of our work at The Loppet Foundation is to create community and foster love for the outdoors among youth. The excitement, camaraderie and commitment the Northeast athletes developed are clear indicators that we are doing just that.

Of course, there were also measurable ski successes! Though many of the athletes came up through the Minne-Loppet programs, none had ever learned to skate ski. By the end of the season, every athlete could V2. (Unfamiliar with that term? Then, join one of our ski groups or Loppet Nordic Racing classes!) Every athlete notched a few races, and we even had a few podium finishes.

The Northeast team is now in the transition from winter to spring, and that means pulling out the bikes. Through these warm(er) seasons we will spend time out on the trails. But do not just look for bikers. We are going to hike, run, rollerski, paddle and probably play some Ultimate Frisbee - pretty much my favorite things. Oh, and throw in camping and fishing and climbing and...

In my first year at the Loppet Foundation, I'm beginning to learn how much we love the word "and!"

See you out there!



Jackson and Ben Sonquist ride the Cuyuna Trails last August with the Anwatin and Nellie Stone Johnson bike teams.

PARENTS AND FAMILIES ENJOY THE FUN AS LOPPET ADVENTURES EXPANDS

BY ANTHONY TAYLOR

This year Loppet Adventures expanded our reach into the hearts and families of Loppet elementary program participants. Most of you are familiar with our Minne-Loppet program where we supply coaches and equipment and teach cross country ski lessons to youth. This year we invited parents and families to get in on the fun.

Park Brook Elementary

Park Brook Elementary offers a parent night once per winter where the kids are engaged in activities while the parents get a night out. This year we put a little Loppet twist on parent's night out by grooming a trail at the school and making skis and instruction available. Parents took a beautiful and romantic cruise around the fire-lit park. For many this was their first experience skiing but they had heard about it from their children and were excited and anxious to experience cross country skiing for themselves. It was a beautiful night, and Principal Scott Taylor exclaimed, "What a great opportunity for us to share active living and support family health!" We were excited to be able to make it happen.

Park Brook Elementary also was an active participant in the Luminary Loppet and brought more than 80 Park Brook family members to the event this year. In addition, Principal Taylor collaborated with the Loppet Foundation to offer Park Brook Adventure Day on May 15 and 16, when Park Brook sixth graders came to Theodore Wirth Park to experience mountain biking, orienteering, capture the flag and trail running.

Elizabeth Hall International

The Loppet Foundation also hosted families from Elizabeth Hall International Elementary School, a new Minne-Loppet program participant that came on thanks to a first-time General Mills grant. For the first time in the history of the Minne-Loppet program, we offered a Winter Wirth Family Adventure Day. More than 25 families and 132 participants joined the Loppet team for a day of tubing, skiing and snowshoeing. It was an amazing day!

This effort is an example of the programming that the Loppet Foundation is committed to expanding. We realize that active children are part of active families. In the future every Loppet event and youth program will offer parents and siblings of Minne-Loppet and Loppet Middle School teams an opportunity to experience the joy of outdoor fun in their neighborhood.



NELLIE STONE JOHNSON SPRING UPDATE

BY JON MILLER

The Nellie Stone Johnson team finished the winter competition strong at Midwest Junior Championships, with one of our relay teams taking first place in the fish-scale-frenzy relay division. Cesar Vasquez, Damarion Turner, Donovan Blatcher and Melvin Russell took home this relay victory over a rival Anwatin Team. This is the stirrings of what I believe to be an oncoming Golden Era for Nellie Stone Johnson skiing. It has been three years since we began, and we are now seeing kids move from the Minne-Loppet program onto our team. In addition to the relay victors, new team members like Quintrell Whiting, Nayeli Hernandez and Daryle Shelton have come out of our Minne-Loppet program and become mainstays on the team.

In developing this pipeline, we are extremely lucky to have the support of Jen Stecker and Julie Ellingson, the physical education specialists at Nellie Stone Johnson School. In addition to their work with the Minne-Loppet program at the school, they have invited us to provide biking experiences at their spring field day events. This spring we are testing a 7-week biking class for sixth graders. This close relationship is our best recruiting tool, and it has brought us to the point where we have more kids who want to be on our team than we have spots available.

From here we look forward to working toward our other major goal: involving more girls on the team. Sixth through eighth grades are when we see huge declines in physical activity among girls. We hope that the excitement that is being generated around the team will contribute to creating a culture of physical activity among both girls and boys at Nellie Stone Johnson.



ANWATIN ADVENTURES TEAM CRUISES FORWARD

BY ALLIE RYKKEN

The Anwatin team rounded off an incredibly successful winter, with 22 bright and enthusiastic team members, nearly all of whom are sixth and seventh graders, more than half of which were new to the team this fall. Being that most of the team was learning a new sport together, we built up a really unique and cohesive team that helped and encouraged each other, and even willingly dragged their coach out in the below zero degree temperatures.

The Anwatin Team had a lot of fun competing with the Nellie Stone Johnson and Northeast teams at an early-season classic scrimmage, as well as at the Farview Sprints. We also participated in the Rossignol Junior Loppet, and to top it off, the Midwest Junior Championships, where 17 team members raced, in addition to four younger siblings.

We celebrated our winter season with a trip to Wolverine Village in Ironwood with the Northeast team. We had a full day and a half to ski our hearts out on perfect conditions and stopped by the Bayfield Ice Caves on its last day of the season.

I'm still delighted to be blessed with such warm and eager personalities on the team, and hope we can carry our momentum into the spring and summer. We have been back at it for almost a month and a half now, biking, trail running, and building up some strength. We will include rollerskiing and paddling into the mix come summer. We have big plans for the summer, including the UCare Tri-Loppet, Loppet Adventure Camps, the LNR FAST KIDS Mountain Bike Series, and to top it off, a canoeing trip at the end of August.



(Right) Adaptive skiers practice at Elm Creek with Three Rivers Instructor Sam Tabaka. (Left) Kelly Underkofler working on one-pole skiing.

VOLUNTEERS HELP MAKE THE ADAPTIVE PROGRAM A SUCCESS

BY KELLY UNDERKOFLEK

We all know how cold it was this winter, but those of us involved in the adaptive program are convinced that the truly bitter nights fell on Thursdays, the night of our weekly lessons. Despite some weather-related cancellations, the skiers and volunteers enjoyed the adaptive program experience.

Our season kicked off with volunteer training. Nels Dyste, who for many years led the adaptive ski efforts through his role at the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute, directed the training as one of his last duties before leaving Courage Kenny. All of the volunteers learned the basics of how to assist people with disabilities while skiing. Many of us had either taken or taught ski lessons before and recognized the importance of breaking down the process into the smallest components. A much-easier process with typical-needs students!

Creativity and vigilance are two of the most important things for an adaptive volunteer. The ability to see outside your own physical capabilities and identify the physical capabilities in others is invaluable. Try to imagine what it would be like if you were blind. With a sighted skier a coach can show you the ski binding, and then you can (more or less) put on the ski. But the inability to see the

contraption requires several more preliminary steps and detailed explanation - and that's just to put the ski on. Now consider all of the nuances of cross country skiing...During the training, Nels asked us to spend some time as the teacher and some with our eyes closed as the student - and I would say both roles were equally difficult!

For some participants in the adaptive program, skiing is a time to decompress. For others it is about improving their ski skills. But for all, and perhaps most important, adaptive skiing is about enjoying the trails in a way that you would not be able to do without the necessary equipment and training. As a life-long adaptive skier myself, it is such a joy to see new adaptive skiers getting out for the first time. I am so grateful to all of our intuitive and talented volunteers this winter. Because of their commitment more people got to experience skiing, an activity they enjoy, and more people had an opportunity to free themselves from some of the limitations they face daily.

To participate in or volunteer for our adaptive programs email underkofler@loppet.org

Special thanks to our adaptive program partners – Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute and Three Rivers Park District.



THREE WAFFLE LOPPETS DELIGHT PARTICIPANTS

BY KELLY UNDERKOFER

As it turns out, tons of people like to eat waffles while out for a morning ski. Who can blame them? This winter each of the middle school teams hosted a Waffle Loppet. The first host team, Anwatin, took the prize for most delicious waffles as Coach Allie made the batter from scratch! They set a course through Theodore Wirth Park, and then held their feast in the Anwatin cafeteria. I say "feast," because a family from the team even brought specially made sushi! That first Waffle Loppet set a high bar.

The Nellie Stone Johnson team hosted the second Waffle Loppet of the season, in partnership with the Hiawatha Ski Club, which is based at Hiawatha Golf Course in South Minneapolis. Lots of folks came out, eager to explore new trails. With Coach Mom (aka Nancy Nelson) working furiously to keep up, skiers/waffle eaters got a chance to hang out in the clubhouse and watch the Olympics while they waited for their treats. It was a valiant effort, and by the end of the morning everyone had full bellies and big smiles.

The Northeast team hosted the final Waffle Loppet of the year at the Midwest Junior Championships. Having learned from Coach Mom, I recruited any and all hands I could find! Not only did the athletes help but their families joined in to make and serve waffles and hot chocolate. These volunteers were hearty souls - our Waffle Loppet was all outdoors! So the family volunteers really deserve our thanks. Plus, it was hopping with hundreds of racers and their families! Between heats and races the Northeast athletes helped out and still managed to have some of their best races of the year! It was a busy morning, but the third and final Waffle Loppet of the season went off beautifully.



SHOUT OUT TO LOPPET VOLUNTEERS

BY NANCY NELSON

You have heard this before but it bears repeating: the success of the Loppet events and consequently Loppet programs can be attributed to the wonderful Loppet volunteers!

Sure, we had good snow, the weather was near perfect, we found a great venue for Loppet Village... but the volunteers setting up Loppet Village, parking cars, directing skiers, feeding skiers, etc. made the weekend a huge success.

I am so grateful to have the best volunteers ever. Given the exponential growth in this year's Loppet, I wondered if we would have enough volunteers. But there was never a need to worry. Anytime a lead volunteer requested more help in a momentarily overwhelmed area, I could find volunteers who were willing to step in! Confession: we provide hats so we can easily round you up and move volunteers as needed! All kidding aside, I was amazed by the number of volunteers who were willing to stand outside in the cold or who were willing to help out somewhere else or who worked longer hours than they had signed up for. Wow. Each and every volunteer contributed toward making the 2014 City of Lakes Loppet the best yet.

Please know that your volunteerism extends far beyond the event. Because of the continued success of our events we are able to enhance and expand our youth programs, teaching North Minneapolis youth how to ski, mountain bike, paddle and generally appreciate the outdoors. We also can help improve the trails in and around Theodore Wirth Park.

We invite you to also get involved in our upcoming events - the UCare Tri-Loppet on June 28 and the Surly Trail Loppet on September 20.

12 LOPPET EVENTS



COOK COUNTY MINNE-LOPPET: A “PHENOMENAL” EXPERIENCE

BY ANTHONY TAYLOR

On the Monday following the Cook County Minne-Loppet, Principal C. Bennice Young at Elizabeth Hall International Elementary School watched as a few of her young charges proudly displayed their medals. Principal Young did not need to talk to the teachers involved in the program to know that Loppet event was a phenomenal experience for the students: their ear-to-ear smiles said enough. "It was an experience they will not forget," she noted.

Elizabeth Hall International was an exciting last-minute addition to the Loppet Foundation's Minne-Loppet program, a program that teaches North Minneapolis elementary school children how to ski over the course of 10 weeks. Elizabeth Hall International had just three weeks. But despite the shortened course the kids embraced skiing and had a blast.

In addition to Elizabeth Hall International, the Loppet Foundation has Minne-Loppet programs in Loring, Pillsbury, Nellie Stone Johnson, Lucy Craft Laney, Bethune and Park Brook elementary schools. Thanks to the collaboration between the Loppet Foundation and the Minneapolis Public Schools, cross country skiing is now part of the culture

of play at these schools. We hope to continue to expand the Minne-Loppet program so even more students can learn to ski and participate in the Cook County Minne-Loppet.

Race day was an exciting experience for the students. They got on a school bus and then rode with their families to Loppet Village at Lake Calhoun Center where Loppet volunteers and I met up with them to show them around the festival grounds and prepare them for the race. After they got on their skis, they headed down to the start line in their matching school hats - worn so the teachers can distinguish their crew in a sea of small children! After they were all lined up and ready to go, the race organizer noticed they were pointing in the wrong direction! So en masse the kids turned around to head in the other direction. It was quite a sight! But after the misdirectional mishap, the young participants in the Cook County Minne-Loppet were off and skiing. The fans were cheering and the kids were smiling on a beautiful, sunny winter day.

We are so excited that we had the opportunity to share the Minne-Loppet program with additional schools and youth this year. We look forward to continuing to expand the program itself and the Cook County Minne-Loppet event.

Thanks to our Minne-Loppet sponsors Allina Health, General Mills, The Pohlad Family Foundation, and UCare for their generous support.

CONNIE BAILLIE: VOLUNTEER PROFILE

BY NANCY NELSON

The Loppet Foundation has thousands of volunteers who make the event a success. In my first year as the volunteer coordinator, one volunteer stood out: Connie Baillie. I would like to name her the “Loppet Most Valuable Volunteer” from my perspective as the volunteer coordinator.

Connie has served as the Assistant Volunteer Coordinator for nearly all of the Loppet events. My first chance to work with Connie was at the 2013 Surly Trail Loppet. I had never coordinated volunteers at an event this large, and we had a larger-than-expected turnout and we could have used a few more volunteers. Connie’s experience was invaluable in helping us to manage the event. I was delighted to find out that she had also been assistant to the Volunteer Coordinator at the City of Lakes Loppet Ski Festival and would do so again in 2014.

Connie staffs the Volunteer Check-In area, sends volunteers where they have signed up to help or gently suggests that they might be more useful at a

different location if a lead volunteer is asking for more help. In her role, she has been the trustworthy radio check-out person and has to answer more than 100 times each day that “Sorry, no, the volunteer hats are not for sale.”

Connie was at Volunteer Check-In every day and still had a smile on her face on Sunday afternoon. I would like to think it was because she was in awe of how smoothly everything ran - but perhaps it was because she had just retired the week prior to the Loppet and was thinking about sleeping in on Monday morning! Thanks, Connie, for your commitment to the Loppet. What a way to spend your first weekend of retirement!



View of Loppet Village as skijorers finished up one of their many events. Photo provided by Allan Amis.

REFLECTIONS ON MY FIRST LOPPET

BY KRISTEN SPARGO

I'm an all-in type. So that it took me until the eve of the Loppet to realize just how much I hate being cold does not surprise me. Panicking, I emailed John Munger asking how best to prepare. "Layers," he responded. "But we can talk about that on Monday." He thought I was referring to my LNR class. When I clarified that I was asking him because of this three-day event where I would be spending considerable time outside, he replied, "Oh, that. I think we should cancel it."

Obviously, he was kidding because it was lining up to be the best Loppet yet: snow, above-zero temperature (mostly), sold-out events, record participants (almost 11,000!) separate skate-classic days, a marathon course and a central festival area. After months of writing about the Loppet, I would finally see it unfold. I admit I was a bit anxious. While the Loppet staff has jumped in size, there are still only seven full-time employees – and 11,000 is a big number. How would all of this come together... I wondered aloud (...aloud until I realized that my anxiety was fueling Munger's...) Then, I just wondered.

I now know the answer: all of you.

Volunteers who mark courses, build ice structures, manage logistics, register participants, announce races, photograph events, heal injuries, direct traffic, create ramps and organize food. Sponsors who offer financial support or goods and services needed to run the event. Participants who return year after year to challenge themselves and to compete for personal records, age-class recognition or an overall victory and who, in the meantime, enjoy a community event with friends and family. New participants who wanted to join in the fun. Coaches who teach, mentor and compete – oh, and bring high school kids to volunteer en masse. And, finally, donors who support the Loppet Foundation and thereby make the City of Lakes Loppet happen.

I had many favorite Loppet moments. One was R.T. Rybak's antics before his media interviews to speak about his first time on skis since his much-publicized heart attack. The former Minneapolis mayor casually walked up to awaiting T.V. cameras and then proceeded to fall on the ground. With a smile, he looked up and said,

"Too soon?" The reactions of his wife, several reporters and Comcast's John Gibbs all answered, Yes, too soon...way too soon! Then, in the interview R.T. made a comment that warmed my PR-professional heart because it was the perfect sound bite: "I had a heart attack because of genetics; I had no heart damage because of lifestyle."



Frances Wise (left) and Kristen Spargo at the Loppet

I remember seeing R.T. at the Twin Cities 10 Mile when I first moved to Minnesota in 2003. I was so impressed that he was out there setting a great example for people to get outside and be active. Now as I settle back in after my second move to Minnesota and my job at the Loppet Foundation, I am even more impressed with R.T. and all of you for embracing an outdoor-active lifestyle and finding ways to not only survive winter and the cold but to celebrate it. Thanks for welcoming me to the party.

2014 CITY OF LAKES LOPPET RECAP

BY MIKE ERICKSON

We moved again in 2014. We were in our fourth Loppet Festival Finish area in as many years this last very long, cold winter. After being banished from the streets of Uptown the Loppet moved to the Northwestern shores of picturesque Lake Calhoun. New views, new opportunities and holy cow, new events!

I think it is safe to say that people who participated in the Loppet Challenge (racing both the Saturday Hoigaard's Classic and Sunday's Marathon Skate race) found that they got a really, really good workout over Loppet weekend. I've heard some great "war" stories from those who went hard on Saturday, started hard on Sunday and ran out of gas (Matt Liebsch does not count as one of those people...I'm not certain he broke a sweat in

HOIGAARD'S CHALLENGE ADDS A FOURTH EVENT

BY MARGARET ADELSMAN

With the addition of the Salomon CITYTRAIL Loppet there is officially no "off season" at the Loppet. We now have an event in every season: the City of Lakes Loppet (winter), the Salomon CITYTRAIL Loppet (spring), the UCare Tri-Loppet (summer) and the Surly Brewing Co. Trail Loppet (fall) - and a fourth event to add to Hoigaard's Challenge. According to John Munger, "Now Hoigaard's Challenge members do not have to wait until the summer to compete in the next aspect of our 'ultimate test of Minnesota-ness'.

To contend for the Overall Male or Female title in the Hoigaard's Challenge racers must complete the most competitive category of all four events organized by the Loppet Foundation (e.g. the skate marathon or Hoigaard's Classic Loppet, the 10 Mile Salomon CITYTRAIL run, the individual category at the UCare Tri-Loppet and the half-marathon at the Surly Trail Loppet.) A trip to Bearskin Lodge on the Gunflint Trail awaits the hardest (and speediest) overall man and woman.

The rules are somewhat more relaxed for Age-Class Award Contenders in the Hoigaard's Challenge as racers can choose any three of the four approved races within the four Loppet events to qualify, with the lowest score winning. These racers may compete for age-class recognition and prizes, and we enter them into a drawing to receive a one-week stay at Bearskin Lodge.

The Foundation also recognizes all racers who complete ANY event within each of the festivals as Hoigaard's Challenge participants. For example, one could ski the Luminary Loppet, participate in the Salomon CITYTRAIL Loppet 10K, the UCare Tri-Loppet Family Relay and the Surly Trail Loppet half-marathon. These participants receive a commemorative Hoigaard's Challenge pin, and we enter them into the win-a-week-long-trip-to-Bearskin-Lodge drawing.

The Loppet Foundation celebrates all successful participants, age-class award contenders and overall male and female competitors at the annual Hoigaard's Challenge banquet in the fall. Do not miss this year's chance to show your true "Minnesota-ness" and be a part of the growing legend. See you at the starting line!

winning the MinneTour, which also included Sprints on Friday night).

Minikahda Country Club, being gracious enough to allow our long race to add its trails to the mix, allowed for a 42K marathon distance. As a shout out to those of you who weren't happy with the snow "bridge" over and back to Minikahda, that's on the list of improvements for next year.

Yes, we will be heading back to the same location, barring any crazy weather issues, going forward. The venue allows room for us to continue to grow. It gives us the ability to keep all of the finish-area pieces in one spot. I would like to personally thank Bill Dossett, long-time Loppet volunteer, for creating a beautiful Festival Area on what is basically a soccer, softball and bike polo field the rest of the year. As you can see from the photo of the Festival Grounds (p. 13), he knows his s\$%&! And a mine shaft? Are you joking?

The Comcast Luminary Loppet continues to grow in popularity, as evidenced by a "sold-out show" this year. David Bryan and his crew of Mad

Scientists put together another breathtaking exhibition of frozen water and candles. Words like "magical," "fantastic," "serene," and "amazing" fail to fully describe what the Loppet Luminary Team creates year in and year out. These folks are volunteers; they do it because they love it. They freeze their butts off to make it happen and are sometimes so tired from putting it all together that they are at home zoning out while the event is actually happening. (This is a hint to all of you who have thought about volunteering but have not yet, your Loppet needs you).

Our added events brought even more people into the mix: snowshoe racers, dogsled teams, tons of Fat Tire Racers to name a few. I dare say our snow sculpture contest was the best ever. Kind of sad the sculptures have to melt.

So yes, we'll be back, we'll be bigger, we'll be better, we'll throw in a twist or two and add a surprise for an oooh or an ahhh. But mark my words, we'll be back.

LOPPET STEWARDSHIP.



“The Loppet Foundation is committed to constantly improving the sustainability of the ski and hiking trails in Theodore Wirth Park not only to keep offering high-quality events into the future, but also to make sure that our North Minneapolis students, as well as all outdoor enthusiasts throughout the Metro Area, have access to inspiring places to be physically active and connect with the outdoors for years to come.”

- John Munger

SUMMER TRAILS WORK

BY JOHN MUNGER

With our stewardship efforts we aim to make sure the trails we use have as little impact on the natural environment as possible. To continue this important work, we are employing a group of Minneapolis School Public students this summer to install erosion-control measures and remove invasive species from areas around the trails.

We will assemble a crew by partnering with the STEP-UP youth employment program through the City of Minneapolis. We will provide a crew supervisor and experience in trail construction and maintenance, and STEP-UP will provide youth workers from lower-income households in Minneapolis who will gain valuable summer work experience through the summer. Some, if not all, of the STEP-UP workers will be youth who have been involved in Loppet fall and winter programs and therefore will also be able to take pride in their work when they use the trails.

The Park Board's recently approved Theodore Wirth Park Concept Plan calls for improving and stabilizing the ski and hiking trails in the Eloise Butler and Quaking Bog sections of the park. The Eloise Butler trails are a crucial link in the network of ski trails in Theodore Wirth Park that stretch from the main chalet to the Chain of Lakes, making them among the longest urban ski trail networks in the country. This provides an inspiring opportunity for adventures in the park like skiing through the woods and onto the lakes and stopping in Uptown for lunch and skiing back.

These adventures are not just for dedicated skiers and racers; thousands of recreational skiers use the trails each winter and high school and youth teams learn to ski on these trails, including teams from Anwatin, Nellie Stone Johnson and Northeast Middle Schools. Additionally, the Eloise Butler Trails and the connected Quaking Bog Trails provide an opportunity for hiking and trail running through the summer on beautifully wooded trails that are rarely found so close to a major downtown. The Quaking Bog is a unique and rare bog ecosystem that requires special environmental attention.

The Loppet Foundation is committed to constantly improving the sustainability of the ski and hiking trails in Theodore Wirth Park not only to keep offering high-quality events into the future, but also to make sure that our North Minneapolis students, as well as all outdoor enthusiasts throughout the Metro Area, have access to inspiring places to be physically active and connect with the outdoors for years to come.



PARK BOARD UPDATE: COLLABORATING ON WINTER RECREATION

BY JOHN MUNGER

For better or for worse, 'til death do us part, the Loppet Foundation and the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board are married. As with any marriage, there are good days and bad. Both parties need to constantly work to make the marriage a good one; communication and compromise are critical.

This marriage has already fostered great things. Together, we have taught more than 6,500 youth, 5,500 from North Minneapolis, the joys of being outdoors and active. We have taught them to ski and to mountain bike and to enjoy orienteering, paddling, adventure running and capture-the-flag. We have leveraged their love for the outdoors to teach them about fitness and nutrition more broadly. We have built middle school teams that go beyond just exposing youth to outdoor activities - we have worked with the students year-round, imbuing them with passion for skiing and biking and competition. We have kindled in them their own motivations to get outside and be active - a passion they will hopefully carry with them throughout their lives.

Beyond our work with youth, we have planted trees. We have built an urban ski trail network that is unparalleled in the country. We have lighted the trails and through snowmaking capabilities, ensured that there is always good skiing. We have constructed a competition loop that is certified for national and international events, and we have developed a hiking and running trail that allows for an urban half marathon that is almost completely run on trails. And we stand poised to create an adventure center that will allow us to serve even more kids, attract more events and provide a beacon for year-round outdoor opportunities right in the middle of the Minneapolis area.

The marriage has resulted in a winter festival that has become a defining feature of Minneapolis: how many other cities can boast a candle-lit event in the shadow of downtown that happens on a frozen lake, with 7,000+ people celebrating together in sub-zero temperatures in the middle of winter? And loving it!

And the children are growing up as we have highlighted in articles about the Patrick Henry High



Loppet worker Lindsey Johnson's grandparents prove that people have been happily recreating at Theodore Wirth Park for quite some time. Let's continue that tradition!

School ski team that re-started with 18 of 22 skiers from Loppet programs, including Anwatin Middle School team alumnus Xavier Mansfield who skied at Junior Nationals this year. As more of our middle school athletes are looking to ski in high school we are in conversations with the other North Minneapolis high schools to start programs there.

So overall the marriage has been fruitful for all involved: Minneapolis, the parks, North Minneapolis, and the entire region have all benefited . . .

Over the past year the marriage has only become stronger. Last August the Park Board and the Loppet Foundation signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) related to the proposed adventure center at Wirth Park. And around the first of the year, the Park Board and the Foundation began working together on the joint management of the winter recreation area. What does this mean exactly? This past winter there was some trial and error, but overall things went very well. Our next job is to formalize our agreement...the next step in the marital dance with the Park Board.

18 LOPPET NORDIC RACING



(Left) Xavier Mansfield making the Midwest proud at Junior Nationals. (Right) FAST KIDS Team Gregg event

LNR JUNIORS TAKE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP HONORS IN MEN'S & WOMEN'S CLUB COMPETITION AT JUNIOR NATIONALS

BY PIOTR BEDNARSKI

The LNR Junior Training program starts 11 months before the first ski race so this winter's juniors (ages 13-19 with abilities ranging from intermediate to advanced) started training on April 1, 2013 (no joke!). Starting out in April, our most basic goal is to prepare athletes to compete to their highest individual potential, whether that means racing JV on their high school team or shooting for the podium at the Junior National Championships in March. We work with more than 180 junior athletes over the course of the year, and we strive to get as many as possible a chance to travel around the Midwest as well as nationally to experience high-level racing.

For young athletes (and most older athletes!), pursuing racing goals that are so far in the future takes a lot of patience and dedication. But that's precisely what many of the athletes on the LNR Competition Team do.

Loppet Nordic Racing has athletes competing in both cross country skiing and biathlon, though the number competing in cross country is much higher. The high-profile events for cross country are Junior National Qualifiers/Super Tours, Senior Nationals,

and Junior National Championships. For those competing in Biathlon, there are the Biathlon World Team Trials, and US National Championships, and World Junior Championships. Fifty LNR juniors competed in the Junior National qualifiers, which is a series of four weekends of racing that are scored for Minnesota and Wisconsin juniors so they can try to qualify for spots the Midwest Team, which will go on to compete at the Junior National Championships.

At a national level, LNR sent six athletes and three coaches to compete at the Senior National Championships in December in Soldier Hollow, Utah. They included Vivian Hett and Hannah Rudd as well as Scott Harrison, Zak Ketterson, Sam Boardman and Ian Torchia. The coaches included Reid Lutter, Chris Harvey and Evan Pengelly. For most of these athletes this was a first experience at the big show. Juniors can compete for spots on the World Junior Championship Team (U20) or the Scandinavian Cup Team (U18). Vivian Hett made a great showing for her first time at US Nationals and qualified for the Scandinavian Cup Team for four days of racing in Finland in January. With the Senior Nationals coming to Houghton, Michigan for 2015 and 2016, this was a practice run for what will be a much larger effort over the next two years.

In December biathlon racing, Jakob Ellingson, Siena Ellingson, and Amanda Kautzer competed at the US Biathlon Junior Trials in Presque Isle, Maine. Jakob and Siena both qualified for the US World Junior Championship Team, and Jakob also qualified for the European Championships. Siena Ellingson placed 39th in the Youth Women's Sprint and 44th in Pursuit, and Jakob Ellingson placed

53rd in the Junior Men's Sprint and 50th in the Pursuit.

The biggest focus for Loppet Nordic Racing is the Junior National Championships, which were held in Stowe, Vermont this year, March 3-8. Twenty three LNR athletes qualified for the team, out of a total Midwest Team of 48 athletes. LNR ended up taking home the overall club championship title - the first Midwest Team to ever do so. National champions! Most notable results were:

- 1) Amanda Kautzer
National Champion Classic Sprint U16
- 2) Vivian Hett
2nd place 5k Classic U18
3rd place 10k Skate U18
3rd place Sprint U18
- 3) Zak Ketterson
2nd place 10k Classic U18
- 4) Ian Torchia
3rd place 10k Classic U18
3rd place 15k Skate U18
- 5) Tom Bye
3rd place 15k Skate U20

LNR Athletes Qualifying for the Midwest Jr Team:

Men:

Tom Bye - U20
Andrew Egger - U20
Scott Harrison - U20
Luke Brown - U20
Jan Ketterson - U20
Sam Boardman - U20
Zak Ketterson - U18
Ian Torchia - U18
Sean Cork - U18
Xavier Mansfield - U16
Nate Blichfeldt - U16

Women:

Sonja Hedblom - U20
Allison Ternes - U18
Anna French - U18
Sarah Bezdicek - U18
Vivan Hett - U18
Margie Freed - U18
Amanda Kautzer - U16
Claire Benton - U16
Kelly Koch - U16
Dottie Anderson - U16
Hannah Rudd - U16

Another national competition that has become important in the last few years is known as the U16 NENSA Nationals. It's the next tier for U16 athletes to gain experience by competing at a national event that is at a slightly lower level than the Junior Nationals. LNR sent four athletes out of a Midwest Team of eight athletes to Ripton, Vermont, March 5-9.

LNR Athletes Qualifying for U16 Nationals

Men:

Torsten Brinkema
Alex Larson

Women:

Kyra Jackson
Rena Anderson



Caitlin Gregg instructing proper critter-crawl technique at the FAST KIDS Team Gregg event.

Brian and Caitlin Gregg

LNR does not have an official Senior/Elite Team yet, but a number of seniors (age 20+) and college athletes do train with our juniors on a regular basis. Most notably, Brian and Caitlin Gregg join us for training when they are in between training camps. Brian and Caitlin were both training full time in hopes in qualifying for the Olympic Team. Brian's hopes were realized, and he made the trip to Socchi after a nerve-wracking run up to the Olympic Games, trying to get score the FIS points needed to make the team. He had a several excellent races at the Olympics, with a 47th place 30km Skiathlon, 47th place 15km Classic, and 51st place 50km Skate. After the Olympics, Brian hit the road in central Europe on the OPA Cup circuit, to gain more international race experience.

Caitlin's run up to the Olympics was highlighted by a 3 min 37 sec margin of victory in the Women's 20km Skate race at US Nationals - it was an amazing, dominating performance. Unfortunately, Caitlin did not qualify for the very strong US Women's Cross Country Team. She kept up a very positive attitude after narrowly missing the team, and focused on bringing it home at the American Birkebeiner, which she did with a big victory. After leading the Super Tour for the domestic season, Caitlin was on the road for three weeks of World Cup racing in Finland, Norway and Sweden. Caitlin and Brian have been sporting custom made LNR race uniforms this season. It's been fun to see the Loppet Nordic Racing club affiliation next to their names in the FIS World Cup results!

Thank you to the Donors and Members of the Loppet Foundation!

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- EIGHT Loppet Adventure Camps, including a Girls-Only Camp
- Mountain Bike Clubs for beginners
- LNR Yoga classes
- Age-Gap Relays at the Surly Trail Loppet

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June 28, 2014

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October 14, 2014

January 30 - February 1

UCare Tri-Loppet

Surly Brewing Co. Trail Loppet

Loppet Foundation Annual Meeting

City of Lakes Loppet Festival Weekend