



Glory Duda

BECOMING SUPER-ACTIVE



Five years ago when Glory Duda arrived at Anwatin Middle School as a sixth-grader, she decided that she would be like her older brother and join the Loppet Foundation's ski team at the North Minneapolis school. She planned to ski for just one year. But she was hooked from the start. Over time the program changed her life.

Glory transformed from an inactive girl to a year-round outdoor athlete.

She participated on the Anwatin Ski Team for all three of her middle school years, and she did not stop there.

Today Glory, 17, is a junior at Washburn High School in South Minneapolis where she competes in mountain biking, cross country skiing and badminton. Glory knows this ongoing physical activity contributes to her good health and well-being, and she credits the Loppet Foundation for revealing the path.

'I am more physically fit'

"I am always active," says Glory. "Had I not started this in middle school, I never would have done any other sports. I definitely would not have mountain biked. I feel as though it overall benefited my health. I am more physically fit."

Glory sees social and emotional benefits to being a part of the Loppet Foundation, too. The Loppet Foundation is her community; she knows many kids and adults through the Foundation, and has become a Loppet Adventure Camp counselor. When competing in high school mountain bike and ski races, she loves to see and chat with former Anwatin teammates, Loppet staff and other camp counselors.

"It is like a giant web of connections. I know this person because of this and that person because of that. And, they happen to know one another," Glory says. "The high school ski community is very important. I will see someone in another sport and say, 'Oh, I know you through skiing.' My female friends in mountain biking, one of them skis for South High, and another skis for Benilde. I see them at races, and we run around together being loud," she says with a laugh.

Glory exemplifies how the Loppet Foundation fosters leadership in youth. After eighth grade, Coach Allie Rykken asked Glory to become a summer Loppet Adventure Camp Counselor. In this role, Glory would teach girls ages 9 to 13 to mountain bike, roller ski, canoe and orienteer.

After three years as an Anwatin Ski Team member, with her coaches as role models, Glory felt confident in her ability to teach the skills she had learned in the program. She has been a camp counselor for Loppet summer and winter camps ever since.



A female athlete appreciates a female coach

As the only eighth-grade girl on the Anwatin team, Glory had to persevere. At times she wished for more female teammates. But she was lucky to have female coaches who served as role models and helped her develop as a competitive athlete. She went on to win mountain bike and ski races, including the J3 girls Nordic ski race series sponsored by the Minnesota Youth Ski League. "Having female coaches is very important," Glory says. "I understand that even more now because I have five male coaches."

Glory has developed a long-term vision for herself as a skier. "I saw a couple of older guys skiing while we were at practice, and they are skiing because it is fun. Skiing is a life-long activity. Whether you want to be on the Olympic team or complete in the Loppet or the Birkie, the point is to have fun doing it." Glory points out: "Keep the emphasis on fun. Don't let results rule your life."

Glory believes the Loppet Foundation is changing lives. "The Loppet affects so many people in high school, in middle school, in elementary school, and with adults. I look at the Loppet page on Facebook and have friends who do LNR, who do Fast Kids. I see so many people during the Loppet, and I love seeing how much the Loppet has grown. It is kind of amazing that I was a part of it, and now it has grown. I even see it on the news! It changes kids' lives and adult lives, and it benefits the community."

Glory brims with enthusiasm as she talks about the Loppet and all that it does for the community. She is an integral part of that work. With young leaders like Glory, there is no limit to what the Loppet can accomplish in the effort to promote year-round outdoor activity and health.

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